



<b>Policy / Procedure Details</b>	Title:	<b>Education for Children Policy</b>		
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<b>Current Version Details</b>	Written By:	<b>Children’s Respite Services</b>		
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*“Children with special educational needs are children first and have much in common with other children of the same age. There are many aspects to a child’s development that make up the whole child - personality, the ability to communicate (verbal and non –verbal), resilience and strength, the ability to appreciate and enjoy life and the desire to learn. Each child has individual strengths, personality and experiences so particular disabilities will impact differently on individual children. A Child’s special educational need should not define the whole child”.*

National Council for Special Education 2011

Children availing of Western Care supports are aged between the ages of 6- 18 years and may be either attending a mainstream school or a special needs school. We believe that children with special educational needs can be fully included in a mainstream school with or without support as needed. Other children, depending on their support levels may benefit from attending a special school. This decision rests with the family and the child in question and is often part of a psychological assessment which pays particular emphasis to the needs of that child.

Some children with a learning disability find it more difficult to understand and do things than other children of the same age. However, we believe that this should not impede any child in pursuing their dreams. We believe that each child is a unique individual who needs a secure, caring, and stimulating atmosphere in which to grow and mature emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially. Every child is unique with individual strengths and learning needs. This recognises that there are different kinds of learning and that children learn in different ways.

It is our intention to support people to meet their potential by providing an environment that is safe, supports risk-taking, and invites a sharing of ideas. We believe in providing young people with access to hands-on activities and allowing adequate time and space to use materials which create an opportunity for individual discovery. It will always remain our philosophy to support each individual child to achieve their potential. We work with parents and families in supporting children to have a positive approach to learning and will strive to support children to reach their potential, whatever that may be.

It is Western’s Care philosophy to engage with the identified schools and to follow through on all programs identified for the children we support. We liaise with each individual teacher and participate in their IEP (Individual Educational Plan) meetings with families. As a service we include all teachers in our discussions with families in identifying other priorities. We communicate with schools almost daily around the children’s needs around their academic, medical and social needs. We strive to build and maintain good communication and working relationships with the identified teachers and SNA’s who support the children. We engage with all disciplines to work through any issues that are being addressed within the school setting and are active in problem solving around all identified concerns.

In most situations, an Individual Educational Plan is identified for each child based on their individual need. This plan is inclusive of all identified priorities within the school setting and may be related to academic targets, skills ability and/or sensory needs. Parents/Guardians hold and maintain their Childs record of educational history and also their Individual Educational Plan. Parental feedback is provided to respite staff through parent/teacher meetings and school and parents engagement with the respite service.

A special educational need represents only ones aspect of a child's development; it does not define the child. The class teacher plays the key role in assessing, supporting, and teaching children with special educational needs. However it is important that all work is carried through with each child in other environments through the work that they may bring home.

We support educational development in the following practical ways:

- We encourage each child's language skills and communication skills through fluent conversations and ensuring consistency with all types of communication in place.
- We encourage the children's engagement in practical tasks within everyday life from developing their independence skills and learning to managing their money, to following through on Occupational Therapy and/or Physiotherapy Programmes.
- We liaise with all disciplines and attend information days within school which will enhance our knowledge and skills in supporting children with more complex needs.
- Children are encouraged to prepare for school by helping them to gather what they need such as equipment, clothes, lunch and so on.
- We engage with children and young adults, who have established friendships within school, toward enhancing these relationships within our respite setting and exploring and encouraging new friendships. School is a much happier place when you have friends who you can enjoy your day with, share a laugh and mark special occasions with. These are the memories that children will carry away with them.
- Children and young adult are encouraged to access the School Leavers Process within Western Care. The service aims to advocate with and on behalf of each young adult with regard to their future aspirations towards further education or employment.

*"Often, it's not about becoming a new person, but becoming the person you were meant to be, and already are, but don't know how to be."*

Heath L. Buckmaster, *Box of Hair: A Fairy Tale*