



REPUBLIKA HRVATSKA
XV. GIMNAZIJA
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SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY

This policy is developed in line with the requirements of Croatian Ministry of Education Policy for Children with special needs presented in the document “Pravilnik o postupku utvrđivanja psihofizičkog stanja djeteta, učenika te sastavu stručnih povjerenstava 94/2013” and IBO guidelines.

Principles guiding SEN provision in XV. Gimnazija

We recognize that:

- each person has intrinsic value and is of equal worth
- there is one human race composed of the richness and diversity of many cultures, languages and traditions
- all people should be treated with dignity, whatever their age, sex, religion, ability, appearance, social class or ethnic origin

We are, therefore, committed to valuing every individual and we aim to promote the creation of a secure environment in which every pupil has a sense of belonging to a caring community, can grow in confidence and can develop in character and ability.

XV Gimnazija is a school of equal opportunities, which provides access to the full range of the curriculum for all pupils, including those with SEN, and encourages full and active participation in all areas of school life. We firmly believe that all children have the right to achieve their full potential, regardless of their gender, race, culture, language, physical ability, special educational needs or socioeconomic background. All pupils, irrespective of ability, are encouraged to develop an awareness of and respect for individual differences.

Educational context of XV. Gimnazija

XV Gimnazija is a large, selective, independent secondary school of about 1,200 male and female students from First Year (year 9) to Fourth Year (year 12). As such, we are a school that maintains a strong academic tradition and would not be a suitable educational setting for children with below average ability. Our school aims to ensure curriculum breadth, balance, relevance and differentiation for all students.

We offer high quality teaching and set high expectations for all students. Provision for students with SEN is therefore planned, monitored and reviewed by the Special Needs Group.

Members of the Special needs Group are:

- Head of school
- MYP and DP Coordinator
- School psychologist
- ATL Leader

Regular or periodic meetings are held in order to plan suitable activities aimed at resolving difficulties and promoting a positive environment for students that face any obstacles to successful learning within the whole school.

This is mainly achieved by applying the Levels of Adjustment and Model of Differentiation as required in the national policy, with the majority of students having their needs met in the mainstream. Students whose individual needs require less extensive adaptations to teaching and learning are catered for within mainstream classes (with minimal support - Classroom Differentiation). Some students have additional individual support from teachers and school professionals and the curriculum is adjusted to a minor extent.

Definition of Special Needs

Students have special education needs if they have a learning difficulty that calls for special education provision to be made for them.

Students have a learning difficulty if they:

- have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of students of the same age
- have a disability which either prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities for students of the same age

The four broad areas of special educational need include problems in:

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Social, mental and emotional health
- Sensory and/or physical

Strategies used in XV. Gimnazija for addressing the needs of SEN students:

- Identifying and assessing of individual needs
- Designing individual learning programs
- Advising and working with colleagues and outside professionals
- Communicating with parents
- Attending to the welfare and self-esteem of students

The identification of SEN students is built into the overall approach of monitoring the progress and development of all students. Our intervention is designed to help pupils become independent learners. Therefore XV. Gimnazija incorporates this into its policy by providing a gradual response for SEN students that might have a range of different problems

- When students experience minor learning difficulties, or display social, mental and emotional health issues subject teachers or homeroom teachers contact the MYP or DP Coordinator. A record is made of the nature of the concern. Action can take any of the following forms: gathering information for family and previous school, observation, further screening, temporary differentiation/reasonable adjustment, formal assessment and continued monitoring. If considered highly necessary and for the students' benefit this profile and additional information is made available to all of his/her subject teachers.

- A student that has a formal psychological or medical diagnosis is given additional attention. For these students a more individualized plan will be made which collects guidance for all subject teachers. All subject teachers are responsible for meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties, and for providing a suitable environment in the classroom. Regular contact is made with parents through e-mail, meetings and phone calls in addition to the normal reporting procedures.

- In case of need, the school will make reasonable adjustments (architectural limits of no elevator should be taken into consideration) for disabled students to help alleviate any substantial disadvantage they experience because of their disability, and will not discriminate against them. Student and their parent will be involved as fully as possible in the decisions that affect them.

Teaching staff responsibilities:

All members of the teaching staff have a responsibility to ensure that each student is given as many opportunities as possible to fulfil his/her potential within the normal classroom environment. They are expected to address the learning support needs of the students in their lessons, and to recognize if and when a greater degree of intervention is appropriate to enable students to learn effectively. Subject teachers, when planning the curriculum, unit plans and assessment policy, take into consideration the SEN students' possibilities and their various learning abilities, so that differentiation strategies and flexibility of timing and approach are adjusted to their needs. Scaffolding is often used as a strategy for students to accomplish highest levels of achievement such as graphic organizers, visual aids, small groups, individual work or use of mother language, if possible and when necessary.

The homeroom teacher and whole teaching staff are also required to monitor and review the progress of students towards their individual targets.

When planning the range of new learning strategies, previous learning experiences or prior knowledge is also taken into consideration as well as students' individual needs and goals. It requires the learner to take a more active and responsible role in the planning, carrying out and reviewing of what is learned.

School professional responsibilities:

A wide range and degree of mental health problems might require special provision. These could manifest as difficulties such as problems of mood (anxiety or depression), substance abuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Some young people may have other recognized disorders such as attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), attachment disorder, autism or pervasive developmental disorder, an anxiety disorder, a disruptive disorder, schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

The school will identify steps to be taken in order to support such children, and manage the effect of any disruptive behaviour so it does not adversely affect them or other pupils. Within the school we offer professional support, which includes access to counselling sessions if needed to help our students with emotional, social or mental health difficulties. For students with more serious difficulties parents will be advised to seek further professional help out of school.

Outside agencies and professionals:

The School maintains a list of Educational Psychologists and Clinical Psychologists to whom parents may refer their child for further assessment and help. The School organizes workshops and presentations related to mental health issues including alcohol and drug related problems, eating disorders, bullying and others.

Inclusive assessment arrangements:

Inclusive assessment arrangements will be arranged for students according to the conclusion reached by IB MYP Coordinator, homeroom teacher and subject teachers after the meeting with parents and submission of supporting medical documentation.

Partnership with parents:

Parents have a vital role in the identification of and support for LDD/SEN pupils. Efforts are made to work in partnership with parents throughout the screening process, formal assessment, and during the subsequent target-setting, measurements of progress and reviews.

IB Coordinator and homeroom teacher attends parents' evenings and confers with parents about any issues/concerns relating to LDD/SEN provision throughout the year.

Complaints:

If any parent wishes to express concern about the LDD/SEN provision being made for their child, they should follow the standard procedures for raising concerns with the School. If at any stage the parent feels their concern has not been addressed they should then refer it to the head of school.

In the past there was a student with an ear implant so 2 workshops were organized to help both teachers and students understand the problem and act accordingly. During the years we had various students in the MYP who had dyslexia and dysgraphia, so the teachers have since been using various teaching strategies to help students achieve their full potential. In the IB programme we had a student with severe sight problems; his situation eventually got worse and he became blind. The teachers adjusted their classes to make it possible for this student to achieve the goal in their respective subjects. The peers helped the student and he was able to pass the IB DP final exams with highest grades and successfully enrol at a prestigious university in Great Britain.

Although the teachers in Croatia are not actually trained in helping and aiding students with special needs, there is the willingness of all teachers to adjust their teaching methods to the special needs of some students. The awareness among staff members and class peers was raised based on lectures and workshops they attended

Action plan for inclusion of students with special educational needs

ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) or ADD (attention deficit disorder)

After parents submit medical documentation, staff members meaning the coordinator, teachers and the school psychologist discuss what measures have to be taken in order to integrate the student and enable him/her to achieve the goals set for each subject. The first step is always asking for the recommendations and tips in a written form provided by experts (psychologist, speech therapist, doctor, medical staff, etc.)

- Allow students longer time periods for writing essays, tests, quizzes, etc.;
- Break a task into smaller activities to allow students to do it partially;
- Occupy the student with an activity when he/she starts to be nervous and not focused anymore (erasing the white board, going for a short walk, bringing something from the library, etc.);
- Structure instructions; divide them into smaller parts;
- Ask the student to repeat the instructions to be sure that he/she understood them;
- When possible allow the student to be assessed orally instead of via a written assessment – of course this is not applicable to all subjects and situations;
- Encourage the student whenever it is possible;
- The focus should be on the content, not on spelling, grammar or handwriting

Dysgraphia, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia

Learners with the above mentioned disorders, like all others with special educational needs, may benefit from specific arrangements that take their difficulties into account. Examples of such arrangements are:

- allowing extended time for tests, exams and assignments
- allowing breaks during tests and exams
- providing a quiet or separate testing area so there are fewer distractions and less noise
- use of a computer instead of handwriting for exams and assignments
- modified test papers – for example large print or braille.

Our school, like other schools that support these students, has a policy that outlines the services, supports and personnel available for children with special educational needs and makes this information accessible to parents. We also work collaboratively as a team as was previously mentioned in order to provide care holistically for the child with special educational needs. We are aware of the fact that it would be useful

for our staff to undergo professional development training so that all are informed. Workshops, online learning, teacher coaching and conferences are potential ways of addressing this issue.

Students with hearing problems

After parents bring medical documentation, staff members; the coordinator, teachers and the school psychologist discuss what measures have to be taken in order to integrate the student and enable him/her to achieve goals set for each subject. The first step is always asking for recommendations and tips in a written form and that should be provided by experts (psychologist, speech therapist, doctor, medical staff, etc.)

A student with hearing problems, ear implants etc. is always seated in the first row of the classroom.

All teachers must speak clearly, loudly and stand in front of the student. If needed, the teacher has to repeat what was said.

Students with sight problems

After parents submit medical documentation, staff members; the coordinator, teachers and the school psychologist discuss what measures have to be taken in order to integrate the student and enable him/her to achieve goals set for each subject. The first step is always asking for recommendations and tips in a written form which should be provided by experts (psychologist, speech therapist, doctor, medical staff, etc.)

The student has to be encouraged to use different methods in order to compensate for the sight problems.

Based on previous experience, we have learnt that computer programmes for the blind or partially sighted users were quite helpful, especially those which convert a text document into a spoken text.

The requirements which have to be met depend on various factors, for example whether a student knows the Braille alphabet or not...

Students with other medical issues

Students with various medical issues (diabetes, colitis, etc.) which can influence their learning abilities must bring medical documentation and written instructions and recommendations provided by experts.

In our school we have students who are home-schooled because of their health issues. They are taught by the school staff via Skype.

General regulation

If possible, the school community, especially teachers, will do their best to adjust their classes and teaching methods to students with special educational needs.

Students, teachers, parents and the whole school community are orientated to help each other; our students/volunteers regularly visit the hospital for children with chronic illnesses in Gornja Bistra. MYP students visit the Museum for the Blind, and sometimes go to see a play performed by a group of blind actors. The school cooperates with various institutions like kindergartens, old people homes and elementary schools where students tutor kids and help them with homework. They also participate at the Terry Fox Run and in many other activities .

‘The path is the goal.’ – Mahatma Gandhi

