



# *Island Academy International*

**An IB World School**



## **Special Education Needs (SEN) Policy**

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# Special Education Needs Policy

## **Philosophy**

Island Academy recognizes that every student, regardless of circumstances, has the ability to learn and to be a Life Learner. IA's focus is to challenge and inspire all its students, and to foster compassion, self-esteem and global community.

Island Academy recognizes and supports the principle that the IBDP program, and education across IA's rigorous curriculum at all grade levels K-13, should be accessible to as broad a student body as possible, and with the minimum of barriers despite IA's limited resources.

IA's school motto "Unity through Diversity" is reflective of this inclusive policy.

## **Profile**

Island Academy is the most culturally, socially, economically and racially diverse school in Antigua Barbuda, and also demonstrates a wide range of learning strengths and challenges in its student complement.

Island Academy offers national, regional and global examinations, and qualifications for its students. Additionally, over 40% of IA students join the school on some kind of financial bursary, despite school fees being far below other regional and global IBDP educational institutions.

Island Academy staff is international and diverse, and dedicated to creating an open and inclusive learning environment.

## **Definition of SEN**

IA students with special education needs may include conditions such as:

- ADD/ADHD
- Autism
- Asperger's Syndrome
- Dyscalculia
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Gifted and talented, or especially able
- Hearing impairment or deafness
- Physical disabilities
- Speech, language and communication challenges
- Visual impairment
- Permanent, or temporary challenges

## **Diversity of Learning**

Island Academy supports the following IB principles in diversity of learning practice:

A9 Support access for students to the IBDP, and its philosophy.

B1:5 Develop and implement policies and procedures that support the programs.

B2:8 Provide support for students with learning and/or special educational needs, and support for their teachers.

C1:6 Incorporate differentiation for students' learning needs and styles in collaborative planning and reflection.

C3:10 Differentiate instruction to meet students' learning needs and styles.

It is further the goal and expectation that all students will experience a positive learning environment based upon affirming identity and building self-esteem; scaffolding strategies including modeling, tapping into prior knowledge, visual aids, structured discussions, open-ended questioning and regularly trying new approaches; and extended learning opportunities.

### **Differentiated Instruction**

Instruction, content, student projects and work, as well as assessments, may be modified or adapted to a classroom's best ability and resources in order to meet the learning needs of all students K-IB2. IA and its teachers recognize that all students are different and learn differently, and this should be included in a productive learning environment.

Differentiation could include resources both inside and outside of the classroom, based on the learning and emotional needs of a student.

SEN students are normally taught within their regular classrooms, using the different teaching methods used with non-SEN students. As acknowledged in the 2010 publication, *Special educational needs within the International Baccalaureate programme*, "research has found that certain individuals or groups of children may benefit from adaptations to general teaching approaches, but in general pupils with SEN do not need qualitatively different pedagogy" (International Baccalaureate). At times, to maximize learning, students may be withdrawn to work in small groups or one-on-one situations in order to close significant achievement gaps.

### **Process**

Students with documented SEN are admitted after positive interviews between the HOS, and the student and parent(s).

Academic, behavioral and counselor records are considered in this process. The HOS may require further information or testing if s/he thinks this is necessary. The HOS may also refer parents to seek additional remedial or other out-of-school education to best support the student.

### **IB Diploma Program**

All DP students' academic plans are considered on a case-by-case basis. Where our practice is to encourage all students to enroll in the full diploma program, we recognize that students' individual learning needs may preclude this from being the best way forward. Therefore, we work with our SEN students to design a program of study that allows them access to the maximum educational benefit possible, while being mindful not to overburden them when it would not be conducive to their academic or emotional strengths. This sometimes

results in SEN students becoming Diploma Course candidates. With regards to their IB exit exams, IA works with students and their families to ensure that proper documentation about their SEN is available so that appropriate testing accommodations through the IB can be requested, commensurate with their SEN.

### **Individual Education Plan (IEP)**

Island Academy does its best to accommodate IEP's from established and recognized private or public health agencies. Teachers are made aware of any IEP's, and are consulted to determine to what extent the requirements can be met without additional support. Depending on the level of need, and as IA's resources are limited, parents may be advised to seek the advice of a specialist or a private or public health agency; or secure an in-class specialist that can work with the student in each class, as well as partner with the teachers, to best support the student. This type of scenario would be at additional cost(s) to the parent.

### **Tracking Documentation**

Student strengths are supported and celebrated by documenting learning progress, school interventions, and the learning support procedures that are in place. School documentation is available to support school meetings with students, parents, specialists, school evaluation visits, and any collaborative approaches to meeting learning diversity. Developing a positive classroom climate conducive to supporting the learning of all students requires that students are appropriately challenged by their learning, that expectations of them are high but realistic, where students belong to the community and feel cared for, trusted, understood, and valued. Students need to be listened to, have their opinions sought, and be provided with opportunities to succeed. It is important that all students have the opportunity to develop the attributes of the Learner Profile, and to understand themselves as learners.

### **Accommodation for Assessment**

Ongoing assessment will be differentiated at the teacher's discretion and in agreement with the HOS. For IB external and internal assessments, the IB Organization authorizes the school, under certain conditions, to proceed to "Special Arrangements" regarding testing. In this case, a professional assessment, not older than two years old, must be provided to the school and to the IB Organization. No special arrangement will be done without these documents, and only the IB Organization is authorized to allow "Special Arrangements". When granted, these arrangements may include:

- Modification to exam papers;
- Extension to deadlines;
- Assistance with practical work;
- Additional time;
- Rest periods;
- Information and communication technology;
- Scribe and transcription.

### **Legislative Compliance**

There are no statutory requirements in Antigua Barbuda regarding SEN support within schools nationally or parochially.

IA is not a certified SEN institution, and it does not have dedicated educators trained in SEN or remedial education, since resources are limited. IA has a strong and mutually supportive relationship with the Ministry of Education of Antigua Barbuda. Still, professional resources to support SEN are unavailable, as the resources available to Antigua Barbuda's Ministry of Education are equally limited.