

Circular No 0070/2014

Circular to the Management Authorities of Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools and the Chief Executive Officers of the Education and Training Boards

Guidance for post-primary schools on the provision of resource teaching and learning support

1. Purpose

The main purpose of this circular is to provide guidance to mainstream post-primary schools on the deployment and organisation of teaching resources for students who need additional teaching support arising from special educational needs and low achievement.

2. Background

Circular 0010/2012 (http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Archived-Circulars/cl0010_2012.pdf) advised post-primary schools of the resource teaching arrangements which were being made available for the 2012/13 school year. These arrangements were put in place following consultation between the DES and post-primary school management bodies and pending the development of a revised model for allocating additional teaching supports. To reduce the administrative burden on schools, the circular advised that there was no longer a requirement for post-primary schools to submit applications and assessments for high-incidence resource teaching hours (other than for schools which have no current high-incidence allocation). (See Appendix A) The NCSE continues to process individual resource teaching applications from post-primary schools for low-incidence special educational needs, supported by professional reports. (See Appendix B)

3. High-incidence resource teaching allocation

Resource teaching hours are provided to schools in respect of students with borderline mild general learning disability, mild general learning disability and specific learning disability. These categories of special educational needs are referred to as 'high-incidence' due to the higher incidence or prevalence of children with these special educational needs and the more even distribution of these children within the general population.

4. Identification of students for high-incidence support/learning support

Schools should identify the students for resource teaching and learning support, taking into account the following:

- 4.1** Standardised tests can be used to screen and identify students who are performing at or below the 10th percentile in reading or mathematics. Such students should be prioritised for additional support from the school's annual allocation of resource teaching/learning support teaching hours.
- 4.2** Students who were previously in receipt of supplementary teaching from a resource or learning support teacher and who continue to experience significant learning difficulties. Professional assessment reports will be available for some of these students and can assist schools in identifying students for support.
- 4.3** Students identified as having significant needs through a process of ongoing assessment and intervention as set out in the continuum of support process (DES, 2010). This will be evidenced through school-based assessment of attainment and behavioural, social and emotional functioning and ongoing monitoring of learning outcomes. Schools seeking advice regarding which tests are appropriate should be referred to the list of approved tests which can be found on the Department website (www.education.ie), as well as the Special Education Support Service website (www.sess.ie) and the website of the National Centre for Guidance in Education (www.ncge.ie). The National Educational Psychological Service can also assist in this regard.
- 4.4** Students who previously received learning support or resource teaching under the General Allocation Model in their primary schools and who continue to show marked learning difficulties. Information available from primary schools may include results of standardised test and individual education, behaviour or transition plans. (From 2013/2014, primary schools are required to transfer student information to the relevant post-primary schools using a *standard* end-of-year 6th class report card developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). This information transfer is contingent on the primary school receiving confirmation from the post-primary school of a student's enrolment for the new school year. From 2014/2015, the 6th class report card will be complemented by a student self-profile that will also include an option for parent/guardian input. Structures to support the transfer of information relating to a student's special educational needs will be introduced in parallel to the introduction by the DES of a new allocation model for schools. More information is available at www.ncca.ie/transfer.)
- 4.5** Students with mild or transient educational needs that are associated with speech and language difficulties, social or emotional problems, or mild co-ordination or attention control difficulties associated with identified conditions such as dyspraxia, ADD, and ADHD.

4.6 Schools should also carefully consider the needs of other students who may present with a range of learning difficulties that, in themselves, may not meet eligibility criteria for resource teaching or learning support, but whose complex interaction may present a significant barrier to the students' learning and ability to access the curriculum.

The intensity of additional support that is provided for students with low achievement and students with special educational needs should be based on their needs and should be provided differentially through the continuum of support process. Individualised learning targets should be set for each student in accordance with their abilities and needs. The range of teaching supports should include team-teaching, small group teaching and, where necessary, individualised teaching to address specific learning needs. Individualised learning needs can be addressed in a variety of ways and should not be solely equated with withdrawal from class for one-to-one or group tuition. Configurations of team-teaching have been shown to provide an appropriate model for engaging with individual needs in the collective setting of the classroom.

5. Identification of students for low-incidence support

Students who are identified as having low-incidence special educational needs have all undergone individualised professional assessment which has identified their areas of disability and special educational needs, as set out in Appendix B. A specific allocation of resource teacher hours is made to their school on their behalf by the SENO. Further in-school assessment and intervention through the continuum of support process assists in identifying their specific educational needs. The information gathered through these processes forms a valuable baseline for planning an appropriate educational programme for each student. Schools may request advice and support for these students through the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Visiting Teacher Service, Special Education Support Service (SESS) and the National Behavioural Support Service (NBSS) where available. Some of these students receive therapeutic and other supports from the Health Service Executive (HSE).

6. Deployment of additional teaching resources for students with special educational needs

The following guiding principles are set out for schools in organising and allocating teaching resources for students who need additional supports:

6.1 Schools should ensure that the additional teaching resources (learning support, high-incidence support and low-incidence support) are used in their entirety to support students identified with special educational needs, including the conducting of co-ordination activities required to ensure the most effective and optimal use of the resource hours for those children. Effective use of resources will be dependent upon effective timetabling practices that ensure continuity and avoid undue fragmentation of provision.

6.2 Schools should allocate learning support and resource teaching in line with students' needs, ensuring that those with the greatest need receive the highest level of support, regardless of category (learning support, high-incidence support or low-incidence support). The model of support used should also be based on the students' needs and should be informed by regular reviews of progress and ongoing consultation with relevant teachers, parents, professionals and the students themselves.

6.3 Schools should utilise these teaching resources to promote early intervention and learning in an inclusive school environment and to provide additional targeted support to students within the context of a mainstream subject lesson through team-teaching, through withdrawal either individually or in a group or, through a combination of these modes of intervention.

6.4 Additional supports provided should be tailored to meet the unique needs of students, addressing social, emotional and vocational/life skills, as well as literacy and mathematical needs.

6.5 The supports should be used to address the specific learning objectives of individual students as set out in their educational plans following consultation with relevant teachers, parents, professionals as necessary, and the students themselves.

6.6 The acquired professional development and expertise of teachers should be taken into account by the principal when allocating teaching responsibilities, in order to ensure that students with the greatest needs are supported by teachers who have the relevant expertise, and who can provide continuity of support.

6.7 Schools should establish and maintain a core team of teachers for special educational needs. Members of this team should have the necessary experience and ongoing access to professional development to support the diverse needs of students with special educational needs. A member of the special educational needs team might be assigned the responsibility for co-ordinating provision for special educational needs within the school (see Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs- Post-Primary Guidelines, p. 68). Where possible, the teacher with this coordinating role should have accessed professional development and attained recognised qualifications in special education.

7. A whole school response to meeting the needs of students with special educational needs

The effective inclusion of students with special educational needs requires a whole-school approach which enables schools to meet the diverse needs of their student population in an efficient and timely manner. Details regarding whole school planning for these students are set out in the "Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs - Post-Primary Guidelines" and "A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Teachers". Key elements of a whole school approach include the following:

7.1 A continuum of support

Schools are advised to implement the continuum of support process which uses a problem-solving model of assessment and intervention across three distinct school-based processes, comprising Support for All, Support for Some and Support for a Few.

7.2 Evidence-based programmes

It is recommended that schools implement effective interventions which are supported by research to address the needs of students with special educational needs and students with low achievement literacy, numeracy and/or social and emotional functioning. Response to intervention should be carefully monitored and appropriate adaptations made to the students' plans. For additional information on intervention programmes schools can consult with NEPS, SESS or NBSS. Useful support and advice is also available on the [NEPS](#), [SESS](#) and [NBSS](#) websites.

7.3 Differentiation

Differentiation refers to responding to individual needs in a classroom context. It involves matching teaching strategies, approaches and expectations to the variety of experiences, abilities, needs and learning styles of the students. The needs of the majority of students within a mainstream class can be met by differentiating teaching approaches. Further information on differentiation can be found in 'Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines' (Section 3.5.1) and at www.ncca.ie/inclusion.

7.4 Appropriate curricula and accreditation

There should be a careful match between the range of curricular and programme options available to students and the individual needs of students.

7.5 Educational planning

Educational planning is an essential element of a whole-school approach to meeting students' needs. Educational plans should be differentiated in line with students' needs. Educational plans should include clear, measurable learning targets, and specify the resources and interventions that will be used to address student needs in line with the continuum of support process. Individualised plans for students should be developed through a collaborative process involving relevant teachers, parents/guardians, the students themselves and outside professionals, as necessary. The individualised planning process should include regular reviews of learning targets as part of an ongoing cycle of assessment, target setting, intervention and review.

7.6 SEN record for students

It is also good practice for a school to demonstrate a link between allocation, provision and outcomes. This can be done through a student record. Schools should maintain a record of students with special educational needs and the deployment of teachers in special education roles. The record should include details of educational planning for groups and individual students, main intervention programmes covering both literacy and mathematics as well as programmes addressing social, emotional and mental health needs, as appropriate. The record should track the impact upon student learning and should be

incorporated into the school plan as part of an ongoing process of planning and monitoring for special educational needs provision. This process is already well established in a growing number of schools. (See Appendix C)

7.7 Roles of school staff

Whole school planning is supported when there are well established support structures and clarity of roles. Thus the role and functions of the special educational needs team, student support teams, teacher with responsibility for co-ordinating special provision, class teachers, guidance counsellors and support teachers needs to be clearly stated in the school's policy for learning support and special educational needs. All additional teaching support should build on and complement the support planned and delivered by the subject teacher.

8. Supports for schools

Additional support and guidance is available for school management and staff from Department agencies and services such as the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the Visiting Teacher Service, the Special Education Support Service (SESS), the DES Inspectorate and the National Behavioural Support Service (NBSS).

9. Supporting circulars and guidance

This circular should be read in conjunction with:

- Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs Post-Primary Guidelines (DES, 2007) (http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/insp_inclusion_students_sp_ed_needs_pp_guidelines_pdf.pdf)
- A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools, Guidelines for Teachers (DES, 2010) http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/Educational-Psychologist-NEPS-/neps_post_primary_continuum_teacher_guide.pdf
- A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools, Resource Pack for Teachers (DES, 2010) http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/Educational-Psychologist-NEPS-/neps_post_primary_continuum_resource_pack.pdf
- Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process (NCSE, 2006) http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/final_report.pdf
- Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities (NCCA, 2007) http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Inclusion/Special_Educational_Needs/Download_Special_Educational_Needs_Guidelines/Guidelines_for_teachers_of_students_with_general_learning_disabilities.html

- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (Inter departmental DES, HSE, DoH, 2013)
http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Well_Being_PP_Schools_Guidelines.pdf
- Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools (DES 2014)
<http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2014-Press-Releases/PR14-02-18.html>
- Inclusive Education Framework guide for schools on the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs (NCSE 2011)
http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/InclusiveEducationFramework_1.pdf
- NCSE circulars on Resource Teaching allocation
- Department of Education and Skills circulars on staffing arrangements in Post Primary schools
- NCSE information for schools on resource allocations
- Circular on the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Scheme (DES Circular 0030/2014)
http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0030_2014.pdf

If you have any queries with regards to this circular please contact Special Education Unit on 090-648 3747.

This circular can be accessed on the Department's website www.education.ie

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Appendix A

High-Incidence Special Educational Needs

Appendix A sets out the various categories of high-incidence special educational needs. An allocation of resource teaching support for high incidence special educational needs is made to each post-primary school in respect of these students. These resources should be deployed differentially by the school in order to provide appropriate support for these students.

Mild/ Borderline Mild General Difficulty

The Report of the Special Education Review Committee set out that pupils with mild or borderline mild general learning disability have significantly below-average general intellectual functioning, associated with impairment in adaptive behaviour.

Insofar as an Intelligence Quotient may be used as an indicator, students with a mild general learning difficulty lie within the I.Q. range 50 to 69 while those with borderline mild general learning difficulty lie within the IQ range 70 to 79.

Children with borderline mild general learning disability may be considered for resource teaching support on account of a special learning problem such as:

- Mild emotional disturbance associated with persistent failure in the ordinary class (disruptive behaviour on its own, however, would not constitute grounds for special class placement or additional teaching support);
- Immature social behaviour;
- Poor level of language development in relation to overall intellectual level.

Specific Learning Disability

Students with Specific Learning Disability have been assessed by a psychologist as:

- being of average intelligence or higher; and
- having a degree of learning disability specific to basic skills in reading, writing or mathematics which places them at or below the 2nd percentile on suitable, standardised, norm-referenced tests (e.g. Dyslexia, Dyscalculia).

Appendix B

Low-Incidence Special Educational Needs

Appendix B sets out the various categories of disability for which low incidence resource teaching hours are provided to schools.

Physical Disability

Such pupils have permanent or protracted disabilities arising from such conditions as congenital deformities, spina bifida, dyspraxia, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, brittle bones, or severe accidental injury.

Because of the impairment of their physical function they require special additional intervention and support if they are to have available to them a level and quality of education appropriate to their needs and abilities.

Many require the use of a wheelchair, mobility or seating aid, or other technological support. They may suffer from a lack of muscular control and co-ordination and may have difficulties in communication, particularly in oral articulation, as for example severe dyspraxia.

Pupils with a physical disability who have learning difficulties arising from the disability may need resource teaching where there are consequent significant learning difficulties. Others may need assistive technology only.

Hearing Impairment

Such pupils have a hearing disability that is so serious it impairs significantly their capacity to hear and understand human speech, thus preventing them from participating fully in classroom interaction and from benefiting adequately from school instruction. The great majority of them have been prescribed hearing aids and are availing of the services of a Visiting Teacher. (This category is not intended to include pupils with mild hearing loss.)

Where a pupil with a hearing impairment also meets the criterion for another low-incidence disability category, provision is allocated as for multiple disabilities.

Visual Impairment

Such pupils have a visual disability which is so serious as to impair significantly their capacity to see, thus interfering with their capacity to perceive visually presented materials, such as pictures, diagrams, and the written word. Some will have been diagnosed as suffering from conditions, such as congenital blindness, cataracts, albinism and retinitis pigmentosa. Most require the use of low-vision aids and are availing of the services of a Visiting Teacher. (This category is not intended to include those pupils whose visual difficulties are satisfactorily corrected by the wearing of spectacles and/or contact lenses.)

Where a pupil with a visual impairment also meets the criterion for another low-incidence disability category, provision is allocated as for multiple disabilities.

Emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems

Such pupils are being treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist for such conditions as neurosis, childhood psychosis, hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and conduct disorders that are significantly impairing their socialisation and/or learning in school. (This category is not intended to include pupils whose conduct or behavioural difficulties can be dealt with in accordance with agreed procedures on discipline.)

Some pupils in this category may need resource teaching support. Care support from a special needs assistant may be required where a pupil's behaviour is a danger to himself or others or where it seriously interferes with the learning opportunities of other pupils. In certain circumstances, some pupils may require both supports.

Moderate General Learning Disability

Such pupils have been assessed by a psychologist as having a moderate general learning disability (the pupil's full-scale IQ score will have been assessed in the range 35 – 49).

Severe or Profound General Learning Disability

Such pupils have been assessed by a psychologist as having a severe or profound general learning disability. In addition, such pupils may have physical disabilities (the pupil's full-scale IQ score will have been assessed as being below 35).

Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

A psychiatrist or psychologist will have assessed and classified such pupils as having autism or autistic spectrum disorder according to DSM-IV or DSM-V or ICD-10 criteria.

In the interest of the pupil with an ASD and in order that the needs of the pupil are adequately addressed, it is important, where feasible, that for a definitive assessment of ASD, a multi-disciplinary assessment team should be involved. The need for a multi-disciplinary assessment is also in keeping with the policy of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

Specific Speech and Language Disorder

Such pupils should meet each of the following criteria:

- The pupil must also have been assessed by a speech and language therapist and found to be at two or more standard deviations (S.D.) below the mean, or at a generally equivalent level (i.e. - 2 S.D. or below, at or below a standard score of 70) in one or more of the main areas of speech and language development.
- The pupil's non-verbal or performance ability has been assessed by a psychologist and found to be within the average range or above (i.e. non-verbal or performance IQ of 90, or above).
- The pupil's difficulties are not attributable to hearing impairment; where the pupil is affected to some degree by hearing impairment, the hearing threshold for the speech-related frequencies should be 40Db;
- Emotional and behavioural disorders or a physical disability are not considered to be primary causes.
- Pupils with speech and language delays and difficulties are not to be considered under this category.

Two assessments, a psychological assessment and a speech and language assessment are necessary in this case.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs Arising from an Assessed Syndrome

The level of additional support to be provided for pupils who present with a particular syndrome e.g. Down syndrome, William's syndrome and Tourette's syndrome will be determined following consideration of psychological or other specialist reports which describes the nature and degree of the pupils special educational needs.

Where a pupil with an assessed syndrome also has a general learning disability, resource teaching support will be allocated to schools in line with hours allocated to pupils assessed as being within the same IQ band (moderate/severe/profound GLD). Where a pupil with an assessed syndrome has any of the other low-incidence disabilities, resource teaching support will be allocated on that basis.

Multiple Disabilities

Pupils assessed with multiple disabilities meet the criteria for two or more of the disabilities described above.

Applications for resources for pupils with special educational needs arising from low-incidence disabilities should be made to the assigned Special Educational Needs Organiser.

Appendix C

Record of staff allocation to students with special educational needs (SEN)

School year 2014/15

School: _____ **Roll number:** _____

Teaching hours allocated to the school	
NCSE hours for pupils with low incidence SEN	
Learning Support and High Incidence hours	
Total hours	

Teacher name	Hours timetabled for pupils with Low Incidence SEN (allocated by the NCSE)	Hours timetabled for pupils with Learning Support or High Incidence SEN

Total:		

Student name	Allocation			Weekly Provision			
	Category of Disability/ SEN	Low incidence hours (tick)	Learning Support/High Incidence hours (tick)	Team teaching Sessions (insert number)	Group withdrawal (no. of sessions)	1:1 withdrawal (no. of sessions)	SNA allocation (tick)

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