
Guidelines for Primary Schools

Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools



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Guidelines for Primary Schools - Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Introduction

The main purpose of this document is to provide guidance to schools on the use, organisation and deployment of additional teaching resources for pupils with special educational needs. This guidance is provided in the context of a revised model for allocating special education teaching resources which is being introduced by the Department of Education and Skills (the Department) in September 2017. Effective provision for pupils with special educational needs is situated within an inclusive whole-school framework which emphasises effective teaching and learning for all and good collaboration and engagement between schools, parents/guardians¹ and pupils. These guidelines are intended to build on existing good practice in schools to support pupils with special educational needs.

About these guidelines

These guidelines reflect good practice in the education of pupils with special educational needs and are provided to assist schools in addressing the following questions:

1. Why is the allocation model changing?
2. What are the main features of the revised allocation model?
3. How can schools implement the revised allocation model effectively?

A three-step process to support pupils with special educational needs:

- How can we **identify** needs?
 - How can we **meet** needs?
 - How can we **monitor and report** on progress?
4. How can schools allocate special education teaching resources to effectively meet needs?
 5. How can a whole-school approach enhance provision for pupils with special educational needs?

¹ Hereafter the term parent will be used to describe **both** parents and legal guardians.

1. Why is the allocation model changing?

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Report *Delivery for Pupils with Special Educational Needs* (NCSE 2014), highlighted a number of shortcomings associated with the system for allocating special education teaching resources to schools. On this basis, the NCSE recommended a revised allocation model. Following successful piloting in forty-seven primary and post-primary schools during the 2015-2016 school year, the Department decided to introduce a revised allocation model for all mainstream schools with effect from September 2017.

Special Education Circular 0013/2017 provides full details on the revised Special Education Teaching Allocation.

2. What are the main features of the revised model for allocating special education teaching supports?

Under the revised model, the Department provides special education teaching supports directly to schools based on their educational profiles (including a baseline component). This gives stability to schools' staffing arrangements over a number of years. It offers schools greater autonomy to allocate teaching resources flexibly, based on pupils' needs, without the requirement for a diagnosis of disability. A key principle underpinning this revised model is that all pupils, irrespective of special educational needs, are welcomed and enabled to enrol in their local schools. In addition, a fundamental objective is that special education teaching resources are utilised in the optimum manner to improve learning experiences and educational outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.

3. How can schools implement the revised allocation model effectively?

The following principles should be used by schools to guide the implementation of the revised model for allocating special education teaching supports. The Department acknowledges that these principles and practices are already well embedded in many schools.

Principles to guide the implementation process

- Resources provided to support pupils with special educational needs should be used to facilitate the development of truly inclusive schools.
- Supports provided to pupils with special educational needs should be based on identified needs and be informed by regular reviews of progress (in consultation with parents and pupils) as outlined in the Continuum of Support Guidelines.
- The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all pupils in the classroom, including pupils with special educational needs.
- Special education teaching supports provided to schools should be used solely for the support of pupils with identified special educational needs, including those pupils for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL). The special education teaching supports **cannot** be used to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio in mainstream classes. Neither can they be used to allow any special education teacher sole responsibility for the delivery of any curriculum subject to any particular class.
- Pupils with the greatest levels of need should have access to the greatest level of support, and whenever possible, these pupils should be supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support.
- Schools with more than one support teacher should establish and maintain a core team of teachers to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. All members should have the necessary experience and access to continuing professional development to support the diverse needs of pupils with special educational needs.

These principles are further explored throughout this document and should inform a whole-school approach to provision for pupils with special educational needs.

A three-step process to support pupils with special educational needs

This section sets out a three-step process to guide identification, intervention and monitoring of outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.

Step 1: How can we identify needs?

The first step outlines a process for identifying pupils' special educational needs using the Continuum of Support. This is followed by guidance on planning interventions for these pupils.

The Continuum of Support

The Department has set out the Continuum of Support framework to assist schools in identifying and responding to pupils' needs. This framework recognises that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long term, and that pupils require different levels of support depending on their identified educational needs. Using this framework helps to ensure that interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support, and that they are informed by careful monitoring of progress.

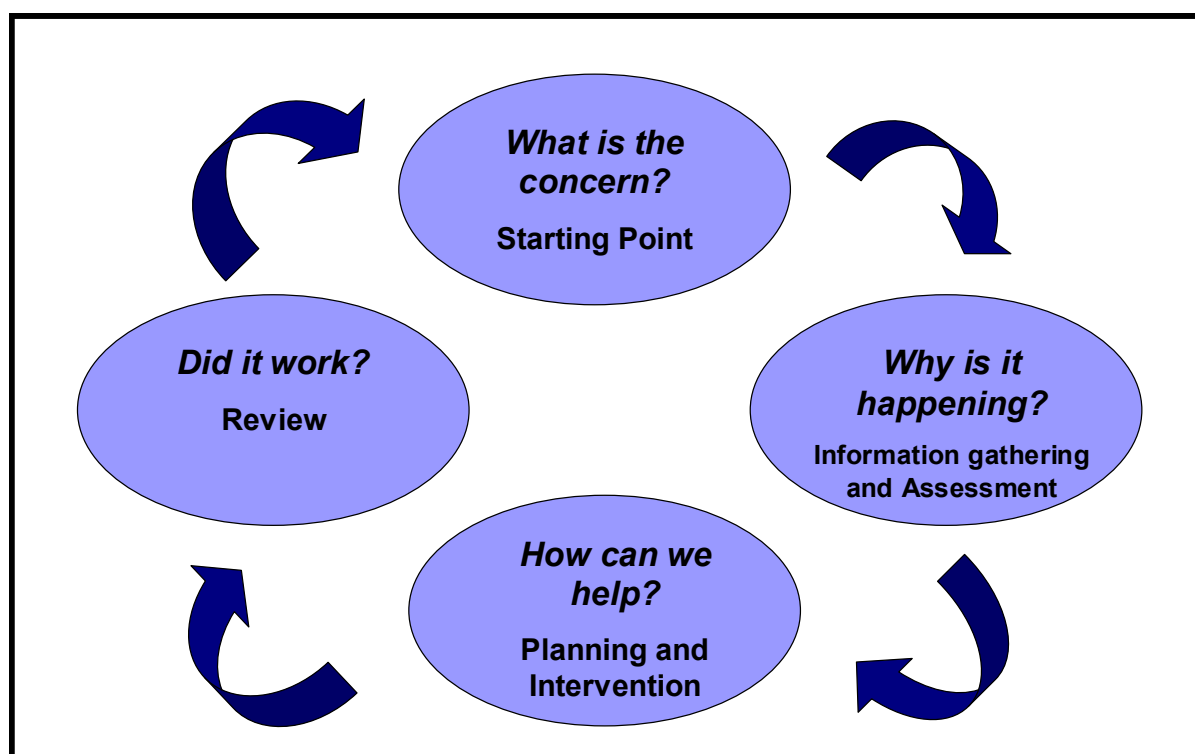
Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support: Guidelines for Teachers & Resource Pack for Teachers

www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_special_needs_guidelines.pdf

https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_special_needs_resource_pack.pdf

The Continuum of Support is a problem-solving model of assessment and intervention that enables schools to gather and analyse data, as well as to plan and review the progress of individual pupils.

This **problem-solving process** is illustrated as follows:



Identification of educational needs is central to the new model. Using the Continuum of Support framework, schools can identify pupils' educational needs, to include academic, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties. The framework emphasises the importance of looking at a pupil's needs in context, and provides useful resources to support this (for example, Learning Environment Checklist, Teacher Checklist for Whole-class Structures and Supports).

The Continuum of Support enables schools to identify and respond to needs in a flexible way. This means that needs can be responded to as early as possible. Of course, the principle that *pupils with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest levels of support* is of primary importance. This approach is also supported by information and engagement with external professionals, as required.

The Continuum of Support suggests the following levels of support:

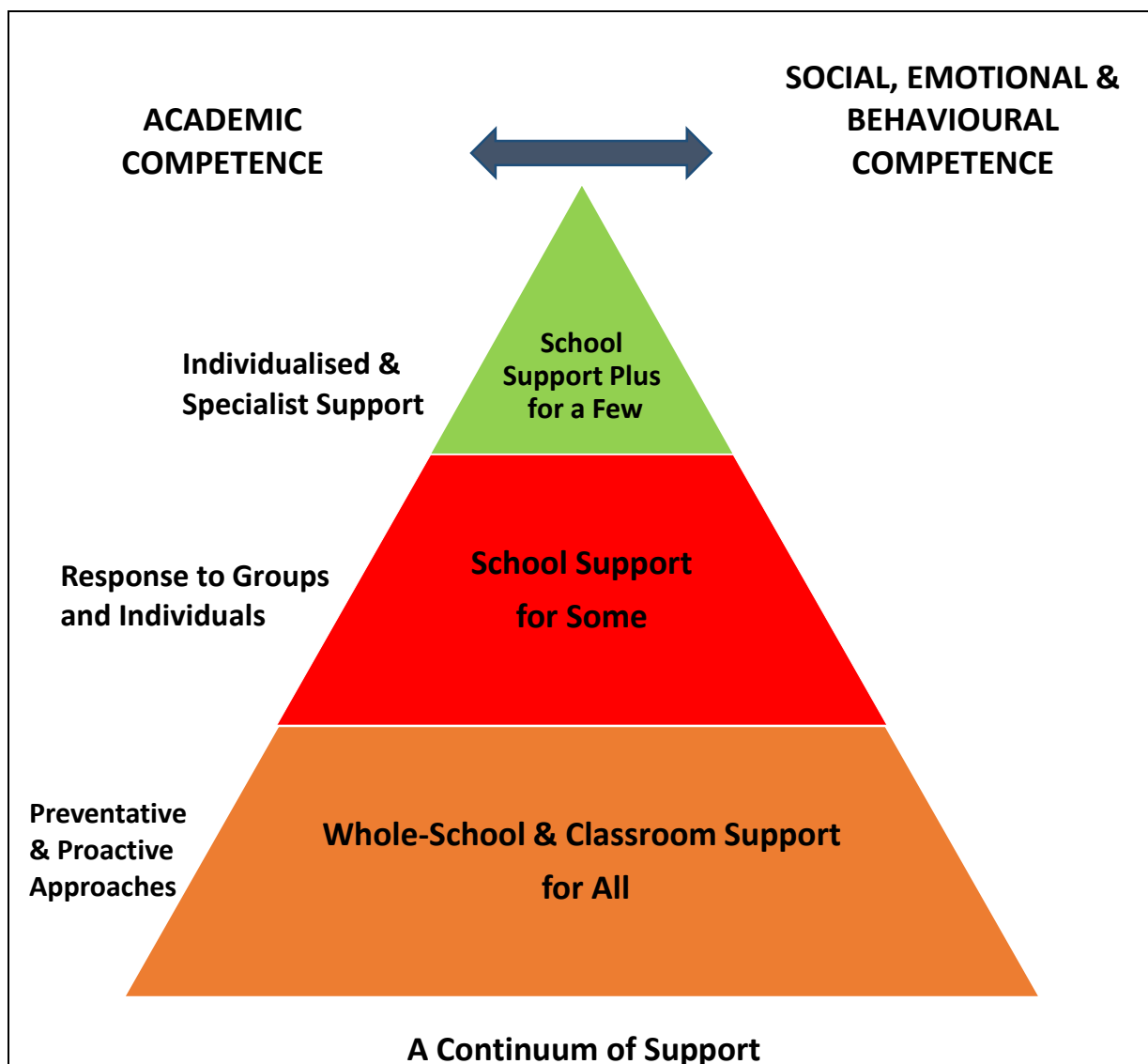


Table 1 below outlines how a school can collect evidence about pupils' educational needs at each level of the Continuum of Support. This evidence can then be used to adapt teaching, to plan the next steps in pupils' learning and to gauge their responses to interventions. When data are carefully collected, shared and compared, schools can identify and respond to all those pupils who have special educational needs.

Table 1: Identification of Educational Needs through the Continuum of Support Process

<p>Classroom Support</p>	<p>The class teacher considers how to differentiate the learning programme effectively to accommodate the needs of all pupils in the class.</p> <p>A classroom support plan is developed and / or adjusted over time for those pupils who do not respond appropriately to the differentiated programme.</p> <p>This is informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental consultation • Teacher observation records • Teacher-designed measures /assessments • Basic needs checklist * • Learning environment checklist* • Pupil consultation - My Thoughts About School Checklist • Literacy and numeracy tests • Screening tests of language skills <p>A Classroom Support plan runs for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.</p>
<p>School Support</p>	<p>At this level a Support Plan is devised and informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher observation records • Teacher-designed measures / assessments • Parent and pupil interviews • Learning environment checklist • Diagnostic assessments in literacy/numeracy • Formal observation of behaviour including ABC charts, frequency measures • Functional assessment as appropriate, including screening measure for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties <p>A support plan at this level may detail suitable teaching approaches including team-teaching, small group or individual tuition.</p> <p>A School Support Plan operates for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.</p>
<p>School Support Plus</p>	<p>This level of the Continuum is informed by a detailed, systematic approach to information gathering and assessment using a broad range of formal and informal assessment tools, reports from outside professionals (as appropriate) and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher observation and teacher-designed measures • Parent and pupil interviews • Functional assessment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of standardised testing such as measures of cognitive ability; social, emotional and behavioural functioning; adaptive functioning etc. <p>Data generated from this process are then used to plan an appropriate intervention and can serve as a baseline against which to map progress.</p> <p>A support plan at this level is likely to be more detailed and individualised, and to include longer term planning and consultation.</p>
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*These checklists are available in the *Continuum of Support Guidelines for Teachers*

Educational planning

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is enhanced through clear identification processes and careful planning of interventions to address academic and/or personal and social development needs. Identification of needs, planning, target-setting and monitoring of outcomes are essential elements of an integrated and collaborative problem-solving process. The process involves the class teacher, special education teachers, parents, the pupil and relevant professionals. Interventions should draw on evidence-informed practice and the professional knowledge and experience of teachers. These interventions should reflect the priority learning needs of pupils, as well as building on their strengths and interests. Support plans should set out the agreed targets, the resources required, the strategies for implementation and a time-frame for review.

Student Support File

A Student Support File has been developed to enable schools to plan interventions and to track a pupil's pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates teachers in documenting progress and needs over time and assists them in providing an appropriate level of support to pupils, in line with their level of need. Following a period of intervention and review of progress, a decision is made as to the appropriate level of support required by the pupil. This may result in a decision to discontinue support, to continue the same level of support, or move to a higher or lower level of support.

The Student Support File, is available on the Department’s website and has the following features:

- A Word-formatted **Student Support File**, which allows schools to insert their own logo and to use and adapt the format as required
- A checklist which can be used (in part or in full) across all levels of the Continuum
- A flexible, generic ‘Support Plan’ and ‘Support Review Record’ that can be used at all levels of support
- An easy-to-view ‘Log of Actions’ page to summarise actions taken by the school

The screenshot shows the top portion of the Student Support File template. At the top, there is a box labeled 'Insert school logo here' with a blue logo icon. Below this is a table titled 'STUDENT SUPPORT FILE' with the following fields: Name of Student, Date of Birth, Gender, Date of Onset, and Date of Closure. Below the table is a diagram of the 'Continuum of Support'. It features a triangle with three levels: 'SCHOOL SUPPORT (Support for Some)' at the top, 'CLASSROOM SUPPORT (Support for All)' at the bottom, and 'ACADEMIC SUCCESS' on the left and 'SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL & BEHAVIOURAL COMPETENCE' on the right, connected by a double-headed arrow. Below the triangle is the text 'A Continuum of Support' and a small paragraph: 'Developing a student support plan is the outcome of a problem solving process. Involving school staff, parents/guardians and the student. We start by identifying concerns, we gather information, we put together a plan and we review it.'

Student Support File Guidelines

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Student-Support-File-Guidelines.pdf>

Many different types of support plans can be included in the support file. A support plan can take the form of a general plan for support, a behavioural plan or contract, an individual profile and learning programme, an individual educational plan or a personalised pupil plan. The support plan format suggested in this document is just one example of formats, and schools may wish to modify and adapt, as appropriate.

As special educational needs can vary from mild to transient to significant and enduring, educational planning should reflect the level of need of the individual pupil. In this regard, the Student Support File facilitates a graduated response across the different levels of the Continuum: Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus. For pupils with significant, enduring and complex needs, collaboration with external professionals, including

multi-disciplinary teams, is advised (for example, occupational therapist, speech and language therapist and psychologist).

Step 2: How can we meet needs?

Having identified a pupil's needs and the educational planning required to meet those needs, this second step emphasises the importance of effective teaching and learning strategies. The benefits of early-intervention and prevention programmes are highlighted. Guidance is also provided on target-setting.

Effective teaching and learning: The role of the class teacher

Effective teaching and learning is critically important for all pupils, and especially for those with special educational needs. Meaningful inclusion implies that all pupils are taught in stimulating and supportive classroom environments where they are respected and valued. Mainstream class teachers have first-line responsibility for the education of all pupils in their classes. Accordingly, classroom teachers should ensure that they plan their lessons carefully to address the diverse needs within the classroom. They may need to adapt their teaching approaches for some pupils whose individual progress, application, motivation, communication, behaviour or interaction with peers are causes for concern. This may require targeted interventions² to develop relevant adaptive skills related to these needs. All mainstream class teachers should implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. These include:

- Co-operative teaching and learning within mainstream classrooms
- Collaborative problem-solving activities
- Heterogeneous group work
- Differentiation
- Interventions to promote social and emotional competence
- Embedding Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in teaching, learning and assessment

² For information on training and support for interventions, please see section on Continuing Professional Development, page 26

Every pupil needs to be taught a broad and balanced curriculum that is appropriate to his/her developmental level. Pupils' levels of interest, attention, concentration and persistence should be gradually developed, extended and rewarded, using appropriate teaching strategies. To cater for the range of learning needs in any class, mainstream class teachers will regularly need to differentiate their lessons. This can be achieved by:

- Varying the level, structure, mode of instruction and pace of lessons to meet individual needs
- Adapting lessons to take account of pupils' interests
- Matching tasks to pupils' abilities and needs
- Adapting and utilising resources, including the use of technology
- Aspiring towards suitably challenging learning outcomes and assessing accordingly

Teachers can make lessons accessible to a broad range of pupils through the use of a variety of appropriate teaching approaches and methodologies, including active learning, small-group tuition, individual teaching, and scaffolded instruction. This may also require environmental adaptations to promote curricular access.

Effective teaching and learning: The role of the special education teacher

Special education teachers should be familiar with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning styles and to meet a variety of needs. Teaching approaches will include a combination of team-teaching initiatives, co-operative teaching, early intervention and small group or individual support. Depending on the learning needs identified, a pupil with special educational needs may be supported at classroom level, or through mainstream classroom placement with additional teaching delivered through in-class or withdrawal support models.

Some pupils with more complex and enduring needs may require specific methodologies, teaching approaches and/or learning activities. Such interventions should be based on careful identification of strengths and needs, including multi-disciplinary assessment, when necessary.

Special education teachers, in consultation with class teachers, should plan their interventions carefully to address pupils' priority learning needs and to achieve the targets identified in the relevant Continuum of Support plan. Short-term planning should reflect the Support Plan targets and should break down the development of skills and content into small incremental steps to address each pupil's specific needs on a weekly basis. Outcomes for pupils should be routinely assessed, recorded and used to review progress. These outcomes should also be used to inform the targets for the next phase of intervention. Useful curricular resources include:

Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities³

https://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

Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT)

www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Inclusion/English_as_an_Additional_Language/IILT_Materials/Primary/

Early intervention and prevention

In view of the substantial international evidence that early-intervention and prevention programmes can lead to improved outcomes for pupils, school leaders should ensure that some teaching resources are used for this purpose. As schools engage in a process of self-reflection and review, they will become aware of whole-school issues that may be addressed through early-intervention programmes, which are evidence-based and which are responsive to the local context.

Schools have the flexibility to innovate by developing and trialling new approaches and by using assessment data to evaluate the efficacy of these interventions. Developing and sharing successful practice has the potential to contribute to improvements in the overall provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Schools may find it helpful to deploy additional teaching resources in junior classes to strengthen station teaching approaches which target the promotion of language, literacy and numeracy skills. The use of early-intervention and prevention programmes helps mitigate the development of learning, social and emotional difficulties. *A Balanced Approach to Literacy*

³ These guidelines were developed for the National Primary Curriculum (1999) although much of the content remains useful

Development is an example of a resource for early-intervention and prevention of literacy difficulties.

A Balanced Approach to Literacy Development in the Early Years

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Balanced-Approach-to-Literacy-Development-in-the-Early-Years-.pdf>

Schools could also seek advice and training in well-validated programmes to address behavioural and emotional needs, for example, the *Incredible Years – Teacher Classroom Management* programme as a means of preventing the emergence of behavioural difficulties; *FRIENDS for Life* as a means of preventing anxiety and building resilience, or similar evidence-based programmes.

Incredible Years: Teachers Classroom Management

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Incredible-Years-TCM-Programme.pdf>

FRIENDS for Life

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/FRIENDS-Programmes.pdf>

In addition, the Department’s support services offer a wide range of programmes and resource materials related to the social, emotional and behavioural needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. These programmes cover such issues as bullying, transition and behaviour management. A sample of programmes currently available includes:

Anti-Bullying Support Materials

www.pdst.ie/primary/antibullying

Transition from Primary to Post-Primary

www.sess.ie/resources/transition-primary-post-primary

Challenging Behaviour, Social Skills and Pupils with Special Educational Needs

<http://www.sess.ie/challenging-behaviour-and-social-skills-students-special-educational-needs>

Challenging Behaviour; Pathways to Prevention - a three-day course for teachers focusing on management of challenging behaviour in the classroom setting

<http://www.sess.ie/challenging-behaviour-pathways-prevention-1>

All intervention programmes should be carefully monitored to assess and record their impact on pupil progress, participation in learning and in school life. These programmes are most effective and achieve better outcomes when they are implemented as intended by the designers and when implementation is intensive and includes frequent opportunities for pupils to practise skills.

Target-setting

Good target-setting is central to effective teaching and learning for pupils with special education needs. There are four guiding principles when devising targets for pupils. Targets should be:

- Linked to assessment
- Strengths-based
- Linked to interventions
- Developed collaboratively

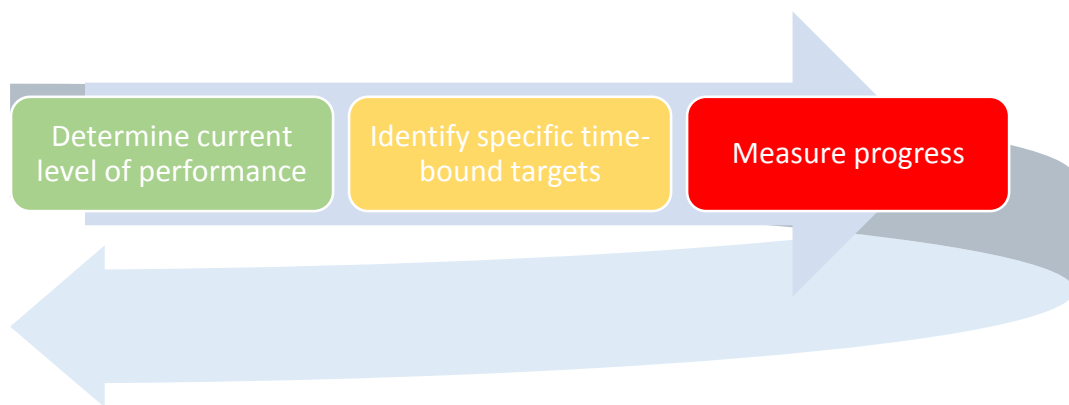
Best practice indicates that targets should be few in number; they should be informed by priority learning needs and directly linked to suitable interventions. Targets should be based on the evidence collected through both formal and informal assessment approaches. Schools should consult with parents when setting targets and reviewing progress. The views of pupils should also be included in this process, through their direct involvement in the discussion or by gathering their views in advance of the review process. This collaboration will help ensure that targets are relevant, meaningful, realistic, and that they draw on the strengths and interests of pupils.

Targets should be expressed in a way that is measurable and observable, and should reflect the specific special educational needs of individual pupils (for example, focus on social and emotional difficulties if that is a primary area of concern). While targets should be achievable within a specified time frame, they should also challenge and build on existing knowledge and address pupils' holistic needs.

Appendix 1 illustrates how target-setting is an integral part of the problem-solving framework to support pupils with special educational needs.

Step 3: How can we monitor and record outcomes for pupils with special educational needs?

It is important that school leaders oversee a whole-school approach to monitoring and recording of progress. Pupils' progress in relation to achieving their targets should be regularly and carefully monitored. This stage of the process is informed by effective measurement of baseline performance, including the use of criterion-referenced tests and other methods of assessment (for example, teacher-designed tests, checklists, samples of work, observation) that allow pupils to demonstrate their progress. This should lead to the establishment of specific targets to be achieved within a defined timeframe as outlined below.



Monitoring outcomes is part of a dynamic process of identification, target-setting, intervention and review, which in turn should lead to adjustments in support plans. The Student Support File provides schools with a useful resource to support and record this process. It includes a Support Review Record to guide teachers when monitoring progress and reviewing outcomes with parents and pupils. Such monitoring of progress, and subsequent adaptation of support plans, are key drivers of effective practice.

In addition to monitoring outcomes at the individual level, it is also important to review outcomes at group, class and whole-school level. This review could include measures of attainment, communication, independence, attendance, social inclusion and well-being (for example, sense of belonging and connectedness to school) for pupils with special educational needs.

4. How can schools allocate special education teaching resources to effectively meet needs?

Special education teachers must be deployed to address the needs of pupils with special educational needs in schools. An important aspect of the revised allocation model is that additional teaching supports are deployed according to identified needs, rather than being based on a diagnosis of disability. This gives schools greater autonomy and flexibility in how they allocate special education teaching resources. Schools may deploy special education teachers in a variety of ways in order to effectively meet pupils' needs (for example, in-class support, group withdrawal). Schools' previous experiences of allocating resources under the general allocation model will be useful in guiding them as they allocate resources under the revised model.

Effective communication and engagement with parents is critically important in moving towards a needs-based approach to the allocation of additional teaching resources. This is enhanced when parents are consulted in relation to their child's needs, support plan, and are involved in regular reviews of progress.

When allocating teaching resources, schools should be mindful of the benefits of early-intervention and prevention programmes and should allocate teaching resources as required, based on identified needs and school context. Schools should also aim to strike a balance between in-class support, group and individual support. Importantly, the level and type of support should reflect the specific targets of individual pupils as set out in their support plans and be informed by careful monitoring and review of progress. In this way, following a period of intervention, some pupils may no longer require additional teaching supports, some may require the same level, while others may require more intensive supports.

When deploying teaching resources, schools need to maintain time for co-ordinating, planning and reviewing activities to ensure effective and optimal use of supports. Co-ordination time should, however, be kept to a minimum in order to ensure that teaching time is maximised. Additionally, flexibility in terms of resource allocation is required to allow for emerging needs during the school year. School principals should also take into account the professional development record and acquired expertise of teachers when allocating teaching roles and supports.

Planning the allocation of special education teaching supports

In planning the allocation of additional teaching supports, the over-riding principle is that resources are deployed to address the identified needs of pupils. **Importantly, those with the highest level of need should have access to the greatest level of support.** In addition to literacy and numeracy difficulties, many pupils will have specific needs in such areas as oral language, social interaction, behaviour, emotional development and application to learning. To guide them in allocating teaching supports, schools are again referred to the principles set out on page 5 of these guidelines. A planning template is provided in Table 2 to assist schools in the allocation of special education teaching. In addition, a school provision planning template is provided in Appendix 2 to support schools in planning and documenting provision for pupils with special educational needs at whole-school level.

Table 2: Planning Template to Guide the Allocation of Additional Teaching Supports for Pupils with Special Educational Needs	
Action 1: Identification of pupils with special educational needs	<p>Review existing information on pupils' needs, using school-based data, and any information from parents and external professionals.</p> <p>Engage in additional screening and data gathering as required, using informal and formal assessment approaches (for example, teacher observations, information on social and emotional competence, standardised tests, diagnostic tests).</p> <p>Identify all pupils with special educational needs in the school. Match their needs to the appropriate level on the Continuum of Support.</p>
Action 2: Setting targets	Based on individual needs, set clear learning targets for each pupil at each level of the Continuum of Support.
Action 3: Planning teaching methods and approaches	<p>Identify the level and type of intervention required to meet targets for each pupil on the Continuum of Support.</p> <p>Schools should consider methodologies best suited to promoting meaningful inclusion such as differentiation, heterogeneous grouping, team-teaching and small group teaching.</p> <p>They should also be mindful that the interventions and supports that they are using are evidence-informed.</p>
Action 4: Organising early-intervention and prevention programmes	Based on identified needs, choose evidence-informed early-intervention/prevention programmes to address concerns. Identify time needed and staffing commitment required.

Action 5: Organising and deploying special education teaching resources	<p>Cross-reference the needs of pupils at School Support and School Support Plus levels and consider common needs that can be met by grouping to ensure effective and efficient teaching and learning approaches.</p> <p>Agree which teacher(s) will cater for these groups/individuals and when and where the teaching will take place. Be mindful of the requirement that pupils with the greatest level of need should receive the greatest level of support from teachers with relevant expertise.</p>
Action 6: Tracking, recording and reviewing progress	<p>Establish a tracking and recording system, to ensure that the progress of all pupils in meeting their identified targets is monitored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At Whole-school and Classroom Support level by all teachers • At the School Support and School Support Plus levels by class teachers and special education teachers

Two case studies from the pilot schools and a worked example of how teacher allocation can be applied in a school setting are provided in Appendices 3 and 4. While it is not feasible to illustrate the application of the model to all types of schools, it is intended that these examples will be helpful in demonstrating how the revised allocation model can be used to meet the diverse needs in any given educational setting.

Appendix 5 provides contextualised guidance for the implementation of the revised allocation model in Gaeltacht schools and in Gaelscoileanna.

5. How can a whole-school approach enhance provision for pupils with special educational needs?

Good practice in the identification of need, education planning, and allocation of special education teaching is supported through effective whole-school planning. This section outlines key elements of an inclusive whole-school approach to supporting pupils with special educational needs.

It also explores key features related to

- Inclusive education
- Whole-school planning

- Role of school principal
- Parental engagement
- Pupil engagement
- Engagement with external bodies and agencies
- Transitions
- Continuing professional development

Inclusive education

The NCSE (2011) described inclusion as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners. It involves removing barriers so that each learner will be enabled to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her schooling.

The Department acknowledges the very significant progress made by schools in developing inclusive practices and provision whereby the vast majority of pupils with special educational needs now attend mainstream schools. It also recognises that a small minority of pupils with significant and enduring needs may require a more specialist setting (for example, special class or special school placement).

A whole-school approach to special educational needs provision should reflect the Department's commitment to the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools. Schools with strong inclusive cultures are characterised by:

- A positive ethos and learning environment whereby all pupils, including those with special educational needs, feel welcome and experience a sense of community and belonging
- An emphasis on promoting pupils' participation and active engagement in their learning and in the life of the school
- A commitment to developing pupils' academic, social, emotional and independent living skills
- A focus on high aspirations and on improving outcomes for all pupils

The following resources are available to schools to help them to identify and enhance inclusive education practice:

Inclusive Education Framework

<http://ncse.ie/inclusive-education-framework>

Inclusion of students with special educational needs: A checklist

<http://www.sess.ie/cpd-audit-tools>

Whole-school planning

When implementing the revised allocation model to address the needs of pupils with special educational needs, schools should adopt a whole-school approach to programme planning and to the implementation of early-intervention and prevention programmes. In order to achieve this, schools will need to adapt their existing special educational needs policies to guide the new approach to the allocation of resources. A whole-school approach involves collaborative action by the school community (in consultation with parents and pupils) to improve pupil learning, behaviour and well-being. It encompasses a process of reflection, planning and review of policies and practices, and includes an evaluation of how pupils with special educational needs are identified by the school, the interventions that are put in place to meet their needs and how the outcomes of those interventions are measured and monitored. A whole-school approach should address the full continuum of needs - ranging from milder and more transient needs to difficulties that are severe and enduring (for example, significant learning, sensory, physical, communication, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties).

Schools have been engaging in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process and are familiar with the six-stage evaluation process - *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016 – 2020* (DES, 2016). In September 2016, the Inspectorate published *Looking at Our School 2016 – A Quality Framework for Primary Schools* (DES, 2016). When applied to a school's provision for pupils with special educational needs, the domains and statements of practice enable teachers and school leaders to review their practices, to identify what they are doing well, and to recognise aspects of the school's work that could be further developed to improve learning experiences and outcomes for these pupils (Appendix 6).

To assist schools in reflecting on their provision for pupils with special educational needs a Self-Reflective Questionnaire is provided (Appendix 7).

School Self-Evaluation Guidelines for Primary Schools

<http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/School-Self-Evaluation-Guidelines-2016-2020-Primary.pdf>

Looking at our School 2016 – A Quality Framework for Primary Schools

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Primary-Schools.pdf>

Role of school principal

The *Learning Support Guidelines* (2000, p.39) outlined the principal teacher's overall responsibility for the education of children with special educational needs. Under the new allocation model the principal's leadership role is central and includes the following:

- Developing inclusive whole-school policies and monitoring their implementation
- Assigning staff strategically to teaching roles, including special education roles
- Co-ordinating teachers' work to ensure continuity of provision for all pupils
- Ensure that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents, pupils and external professionals / agencies
- Ensuring that effective systems are implemented to identify pupils' needs and that progress is monitored methodically
- Facilitate the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to education of pupils with special educational needs, and ensure that all school staff (class teachers, special education teachers and special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area

Depending on the school's size and context, some of these actions will be delegated to teams or other members of staff while the principal retains overall responsibility for the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Parental engagement

Good parental engagement is a critical factor in enhancing outcomes for pupils with special educational needs. This is recognised by schools and is seen in the many good practices and initiatives they use to promote parental involvement. Parental engagement is enhanced when parents are consulted in relation to their children's needs and strengths, on the supports and

strategies being developed to support their children, and when they are involved in regular reviews of progress. The Continuum of Support process and use of the Student Support File provide valuable opportunities to engage with parents and to build a collaborative approach to identifying and responding to the needs of pupils with special educational needs. There may also be opportunities for parents to work collaboratively with the school through initiatives such as paired reading or Children and Parents Enjoying Reading (CAPER).

In addition to consultation around the individual needs of their child, parents also value receiving good information on the nature and type of the special educational needs provision available in the school. Schools should consult with parents when developing and reviewing policies relating to the education of children with special educational needs. This helps to ensure that parents understand the school's approaches and better enables them to support their children in transitioning through the school.

Appendix 8 sets out some key questions which schools can use when reflecting on and reviewing their existing practice in promoting parental engagement.

Pupil engagement

Good engagement and participation in their own education has many associated benefits for pupils. This is particularly important for pupils with special educational needs and can help enhance their academic and social and emotional outcomes.

Engagement is enhanced when schools listen to and build on pupils' interests, aspirations and strengths when developing educational interventions. This involves actively including pupils in a shared assessment for learning process, setting shared learning objectives, and jointly reviewing progress. Pupil participation is supported through teaching that is responsive to the personal needs of the learner, and is further enhanced by structuring and pacing learning experiences that are challenging, engaging and enjoyable. The Student Support File offers a useful framework for promoting pupil engagement and participation at all stages of educational planning and review.

At the whole-school level, schools are encouraged to review their approaches to pupil engagement and participation so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have opportunities to share their views on issues that affect them in school, and so contribute

to reviews of relevant policies and practices in schools. The resource below can be used to support pupil engagement.

My Thoughts about School (See page 97 of Behavioural, Emotional & Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support – Guidelines for Teachers)

https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_besd_continuum_teacher_guide.pdf

Engagement with external bodies and agencies

Support and guidance is available to teachers from external professionals such as NEPS Psychologists, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO), the NCSE Support Service⁴, the Inspectorate, and allied health professionals. It is important that schools have established procedures / protocols for liaising with these services and bodies in order to optimise the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs at the individual, group or whole-school level. This is especially important for those pupils with more significant and enduring needs who benefit from a multi-disciplinary approach to identification of need and the development of interventions.

The needs of many pupils span both health and education services. Health services (HSE and HSE-funded services) will continue to play an important role in early identification, assessment and diagnosis, intervention and review for pupils with special educational needs. It is important that schools are familiar with the range of health services in their locality, including referral pathways. Co-ordination is enhanced when schools liaise with and contribute to health-led assessment and delivery of interventions and when they facilitate meetings between parents and various support services. Schools should endeavour to incorporate relevant recommendations from health professionals in developing support plans at each level of the Continuum of Support.

⁴ It is planned that an NCSE Support Service will be established incorporating the Special Education Support Service (SESS), National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS), and the Visiting Teacher Service. The focus of this service will be to improve the capacity in schools to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs.

Transitions

Good planning and support for transition helps to ensure the successful transfer of pupils from pre-school to primary school, from primary school to post-primary school and between special and mainstream settings. Effective transition support and planning can enhance the educational experience of the child and help reduce potential anxiety. Many schools already have excellent practices in place to support pupils at various transitional points.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has developed a suite of materials to support the reporting and transfer of pupil information from primary to post-primary schools. The materials are presented under the umbrella title of Education Passport and are available at www.ncca.ie/transfer. They include:

- 6th Class Report Card
- My Profile sheet (for children)
- My Child's Profile sheet (for parents)
- A Special Educational Needs Summary Form is included to support the sharing of information for children with identified learning needs.

Since the 2014/15 school year schools have been required to use the Education Passport materials detailed above and forward to the relevant post-primary school, following confirmation of enrolment, ideally by end of June (Circular 45/2014).

Additional resources for schools in planning for effective transitions are provided below.

Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs to Make Successful Transitions

<http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/02156-NCSE-2016-Changing-Schools-PrimarytoPost-final-08.02.16.pdf>

<http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/5-NCSE-2016-Supporting-Students-final-web-27.01.16.pdf>

Transfer from Pre-school to Primary

<http://aim.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/AIM-Level-4-Access-and-Inclusion-Profile.pdf>

Transfer from Primary to Post-primary School

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/NEPS-Guidelines-Handouts-and-Tips/Transfer-from-Primary-to-Post-primary/Transition-to-Post-Primary-School-Staff-Room-Notice.pdf>

Transition from Primary to Post-Primary School: An information and support pack for parents and teachers

<http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/NEPS-Guidelines-Handouts-and-Tips/Transfer-from-Primary-to-Post-primary/Transition-from-Primary-to-Post-Primary.pdf>

Transition Booklet

<http://www.sess.ie/resources/transition-primary-post-primary>

Continuing professional development (CPD)

Research has consistently shown that the quality of teaching is the most critical factor in enhancing pupils' learning and educational experiences. The revised allocation model provides more stability in staffing levels (and less part-time clustering). It is envisaged that schools will establish and maintain skilled special education support teams to guide provision. Since all teachers have responsibility for teaching pupils with special educational needs, it is important that all staff members engage in appropriate CPD to develop the capacity of schools to meet the educational needs of all pupils.

Schools should regularly review their ongoing professional development needs, with reference to the provision of quality teaching and learning in both the mainstream classroom and special education settings. Educational leaders should consider their own training needs in order to develop an inclusive whole-school approach to special educational needs provision. Schools can use the self-reflective questionnaire (Appendix 7) and other audit instruments (see CPD audit tool below) to review their professional development needs and to plan suitable training initiatives. It is also beneficial for teachers to become involved in local professional networks (within the school itself and with other schools) where good special educational needs practice and disability awareness can be shared and promoted. The links below can be used to access supports from the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and the Special Education Support Service (SESS). Support from NEPS is progressed through the regular school planning process with the assigned NEPS psychologist.

PDST

<http://www.pdst.ie/sse/p>

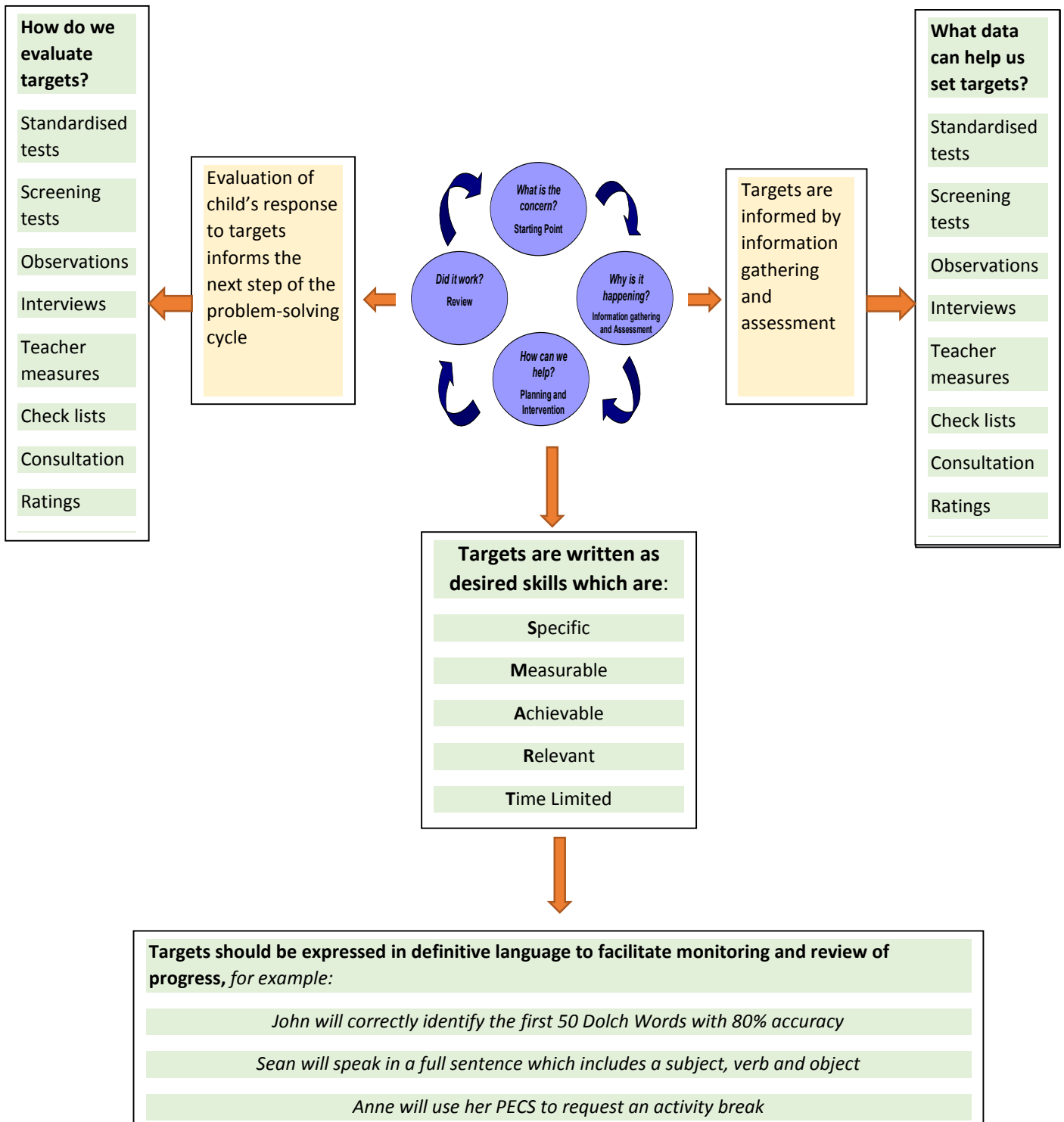
SESS

<http://www.sess.ie/support>

CPD Audit Tool

<http://www.sess.ie/cpd-audit-tools>

Appendix 1: Target-setting as part of the problem-solving framework



Appendix 2: School provision plan for pupils with special educational needs

School: _____ **Roll No:** _____

School Year: _____ **Reviewed:** _____

Special Educational Needs Teaching: _____ **hours**

Teacher Name:	Hours	Brief description of role and duties

Pupils with Special Educational Needs who are in receipt of interventions through the Continuum of Support Framework⁵

Classroom Support				
Pupil Name	Class	Description of SEN	Nature of Supports Literacy, numeracy, social, emotional, behavioural, life-skills	Focus of Support In-class, withdrawal in small groups or individual, school yard
School Support				
Pupil Name	Class	Description of SEN	Nature of Support	Focus of Support
School Support Plus				
Pupil Name	Class	Description of SEN	Nature of Support	Focus of Support

⁵ Schools may hold information on pupils and level of support on a class basis, as an integral part of classroom planning.

Appendix 3: Case studies from pilot project

CASE STUDY 1: SCHOOL A

School A is a two-teacher school with two part-time support teachers. The school did not gain additional staffing under the pilot. It decided to use the themes of the pilot to help in the flexible deployment of its teaching resources to specifically target needs identified by the teachers.

Step 1:

Identification of pupils with special educational needs

The new model allowed the school to blend the duties of the existing learning-support and resource teacher roles into one flexible approach allowing greater continuity and catering for a greater number of pupils. At the beginning of the pilot year, the school reviewed its existing approaches to identifying pupils' needs, in light of the staffing arrangements and the needs of all of its pupils. Teachers analysed the results of standardised tests and also shared their own observations of pupils' learning needs. They identified some pupils with learning needs who had not been entitled to additional teaching under the old allocation model and the school was now able to provide substantial support to these pupils without the requirement for a professional diagnosis. The school used the group consultation method as part of its problem-solving approach to agreeing interventions.

Step 2:

Setting learning targets

The teachers found the Continuum of Support approach to be very useful in matching interventions to pupils' needs. The pilot project allowed the school to deploy the Continuum of Support earlier in the pupils' educational journey in order to proactively meet their needs. Targets were set using the Continuum of Support to guide interventions for pupils, with a focus on literacy, numeracy, language and social and behavioural needs. By using the pilot guidelines and by availing of CPD during the pilot the school improved the quality of its target-setting. Pupil support plans were designed to meet pupils' needs and to affirm their efforts.

Step 3:

Planning teaching methods and approaches

The school increased its emphasis on identifying and addressing the needs of pupils in the mainstream classrooms as part of its approach to the Continuum of Support. Pupils were supported through differentiation in mainstream classes, in-class support teaching and small group withdrawal. In planning teaching approaches, the staff paid particular attention to matching the interventions to pupils' needs and to ensuring that teaching led to continuity and progression in pupils' learning. The incorporation of specific targets and objectives in planning helped the school to successfully break down learning into logical and incremental steps related to pupils' abilities and priority needs.

Step 4:

Organising early-intervention and prevention programmes

The teachers engaged very positively with NEPS and SESS, and were able to access supports on programmes relevant to the school's identified needs. During the pilot year the school introduced programmes such as *Toe by Toe*, phonics programmes, precision teaching, elements of *Reading Recovery*, *Mata sa Rang*, Lego group, social stories and early-intervention and multi-sensory approaches.

Step 5:

Organising and deploying teaching resources

The school welcomed the flexibility and professional autonomy associated with the allocation model which enabled them to intervene earlier based on pupils' needs. The school was able to allocate responsibility to better address particular academic, language and social needs. In reviewing the pilot project, the staff emphasised the real contribution of class teachers in identifying and addressing needs proactively. The teachers decided to offer some interventions at class level and others through small group withdrawal. The school used the flexibility of the model and good communication with parents to provide support to a greater number of pupils.

Step 6:

Tracking and recording

Planning and assessment for pupils with special educational needs improved in the school and this enabled teachers to monitor and record progress for pupils using a range of formal and informal measures. At the end of the pilot year, teachers were able to demonstrate substantial progress, particularly in behaviour, social skills and reading.

CASE STUDY 2: SCHOOL B

School B is a large boys' school in an urban area with over 400 pupils.

Step 1:

Identification of pupils with special educational needs

The school sought to ensure that its additional teaching resources were used to facilitate the development of an inclusive school, and that support provided to pupils was based on their identified needs and informed by regular reviews of progress. Summaries of professional reports, teacher checklists, as well as standardised test results (Senior Infants to 6th class) were examined. Parents were consulted when planning Classroom-Support interventions.

A staged response in keeping with the Continuum of Support was utilised. The deputy principal, as lead resource teacher, consulted with class teachers to identify needs and to use documented evidence to signal any changes to be made in provision. This was used to inform the pupils' new teachers about their needs in June in preparation for September. Through the use of the Continuum of Support, decisions could now be made earlier on how best to support pupils in their new classes. The school used a wider range of standardised tests than previously to establish baselines before and after intervention. Teachers also used their own checklists for Classroom Support interventions.

Step 2:

Setting learning targets

Special education support teachers worked more collaboratively with each other and with class teachers. Teachers targeted key areas of oral language, literacy social skills and numeracy.

Step 3:
Planning teaching methods and approaches

Class teachers liaised with the learning support teachers. They were able to identify learning needs early and to use differentiation effectively within mainstream classes. Strong team work was a significant strength of the school. Support teachers worked collaboratively with class teachers to provide in-class support. *Reading Recovery* and its spin-off, *Literacy Lift off*, were introduced in Senior Infants. Staff members availed of relevant CPD from the various support services for schools to develop their capacity.

Step 4:
Organising early-intervention and prevention programmes

As a result of the teachers' collaboration, there was a greater emphasis on using additional support as a preventative measure. For example, interventions were provided for pupils for whom English is an additional language, and homework clubs and chess club were established as after-school activities. Teachers drew effectively on the NEPS guidelines for pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Support for younger pupils improved as a result of participation in the pilot and the introduction of *Aistear*. The school introduced other innovations, including the use of an individualised reading scheme and enrichment programmes, particularly in the area of comprehension, for all pupils in senior infants. As part of its early-intervention programme with junior infants, a particular set of pupils was selected for small group tuition in literacy and numeracy for up to fourteen weeks. Maths Recovery was implemented over the fourteen-week period with pre-test and post-test assessments. Reading Recovery was implemented and monitored over twenty weeks. Intensive interventions on phonics (sound linkage) were provided over four to six weeks through the English Learning Support group.

Step 5:
Organising and deploying teaching resources

The model gave the school the 'leeway' to devise new approaches and to optimise its allocation of resources. This applied especially to pupils with social and emotional difficulties, including pupils with anxiety. A decision was made to create teams of support teachers who would use discrete time-bound interventions for social skills teaching. The school operated a mixture of team-teaching and withdrawal for English and Mathematics which worked very well, while in-class team-teaching was used to develop social skills, with small group withdrawal to reinforce the teaching of key skills.

Step 6:
Tracking and recording

The school developed a register of pupils with a clear description of the how pupils were supported at each level of the Continuum of Support. In a simple clear document, the principal and Special Educational Needs team could monitor where pupils were on the Continuum of Support. As a result, record-keeping for pupils with special educational needs has improved. More consultations now take place between the class teachers and the learning support teachers. Target-setting is more precise. The school has reviewed how information relevant to each class is transferred towards the end of each school year. Each classroom teacher maintains a specific support file for pupils in the class. These files contain samples of pupils' work,

professional assessments, pupil feedback and target-setting signed by parents, teachers and pupils. Checklists from the NEPS Behavioural, Emotional & Social Difficulties guidelines were adjusted and tailored to the school's needs.

Meetings with parents about devising individual education plans (IEPs) take place during parent-teacher meetings in November. Since adopting the new approach, the school also arranges additional follow-up meetings to review IEPs in April. This is much appreciated by parents, and the emphasis is on reviewing progress in literacy, numeracy, behaviour and social development and other IEP targets. The school has seen a 90% attendance rate by parents at these meetings. Informal meetings also take place between members of the special education team, class teachers and parents when the need arises. These meetings may be face-to-face meetings or may be carried out by phone call.

Appendix 4: A Worked Example

An example of how the revised special education teaching allocation model could be applied in a school setting

This is a worked example of how the allocation model could be applied using the case of a mixed national school with 230 pupils. This example uses the planning template, outlined in Table 2 of these Guidelines, and follows the actions suggested there.

While it is not feasible to show all possible types of schools and settings, this example is intended to illustrate how the revised allocation model could be implemented. A sample timetable is provided as a guide only and doesn't cover the full range of possible options.

A mixed school with an enrolment of 230 pupils. Allocation under new model: 75 hours, three full-time special education teachers.

Action 1: Identification of pupils with special educational needs	Review existing information on pupils' needs, using school based data and information from external professionals where available. Engage in additional screening and data gathering as required, using both formal and informal assessment approaches (e.g. standardised tests, diagnostic tests, information on social and emotional competence etc.). Identify all the pupils at each levels of the Continuum of Support.
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The following **extracts** from the school's provision plan illustrate how the needs of some pupils with SEN might be met. These extracts are not intended to be comprehensive but provide examples of provision planning at each level of the Continuum of Support.

School Support				
Pupil Name	Class	Description of SEN	Focus of Support	Type of Support ⁶
Jamel	S. Inf	EAL	Language support	Small group support, In-class support
Sinéad	1 st	Literacy	Reading and spelling	Station teaching
Peter	1 st	Literacy	Reading and spelling	Station teaching
Carl	1 st	Literacy	Reading and spelling	Station teaching
Fran	2 nd	Numeracy	Addition and subtraction	Team-teaching, small group support
Ciara	3 rd	Motor co-ordination	Fine and gross motor skills	Small group support
Leigha	4 th	Needs arising from language difficulties	Specific difficulties with receptive language	Individual support initially, followed by small group work

Classroom Support				
Pupil Name	Class	Description of SEN	Focus of Supports Literacy, numeracy, social, emotional, behavioural, life-skills	Type of Support Classroom support, small group or individual, school yard
Sam & Vikram	J. Inf	Learning	Pre-literacy and numeracy	Classroom support Team-teaching / In-class support
Eva	S. Inf	Behaviour	Turn-taking accepting correction	Classroom support
Tom, Abdullah and Emily	S. Inf	Literacy	Literacy – phonic skills	Classroom support Team-teaching
Shazia, Peter and Laura	1 st	Literacy	Reading accuracy	Classroom support Team-teaching
Damien	2 nd	Literacy Numeracy	Spelling, handwriting, numeracy (computation), automaticity of number facts	Classroom support
Abeo	3 rd	Needs arising from mild hearing loss	Environmental adaptations Language needs	Classroom support
Oisín and Ethan	4 th	Behaviour and emotional	Support for concentration and anxiety	Classroom support
John	6 th	Behaviour	Support for emotional regulation, including use of social stories	Classroom support

⁶ All pupils also receive differentiated support in the classroom. Type of support is subject to review and may be amended according to need.

Feargal	4 th	Needs arising from ASD	Reading comprehension and Self-organisation	Small group support
Simon	4 th	Behaviour	Self-regulation and attention	Small group support
Seán	4 th	Behaviour	Self-regulation	Small group support
Matthew	6 th	Needs arising from ASD	Self-organisation and independence skills Transition planning	Individualised, small group support
James*	6 th	Literacy and well-being	Literacy	Individual, peer tutoring and small group support

School Support Plus Pupil Name	Class	Description of SEN	Focus of Support	Type of Support ⁷
Adam	J. Inf	Needs arising from Down syndrome, including significant learning and language delay	Self-organisation Independence skills Pre-literacy Pre-numeracy	In-class, individual support, peer tutoring
Caroline	2 nd	Needs arising from Intellectual Disability	Literacy and numeracy– (NCCA curriculum) Independence skills Social skills	In-class, small group support
Barry	3 rd	Physical needs arising from Cerebral Palsy	Academic skills Fine and gross motor Assistive technology	In-class, small group support
Kevin	5 th	Behaviour and emotional needs arising from ADHD	Following instructions Initiation and completion of tasks Turn taking Yard behaviour Self-esteem	Individual, small group support
Sophie	5 th	Severe literacy difficulty	All areas of literacy Use of assistive technology	Individual, small group support
Philip	6 th	Needs arising from ASD and Intellectual Disability	Communication skills Anxiety Transition planning Academic skills Social skills	Individual, small group support

*James' School Support plan is illustrated under Action 2 overleaf.

⁷ All pupils also receive differentiated support in the classroom. Type of support is subject to review and may be amended according to need.

Action 2: Setting learning targets	Based on individual needs, set clear learning targets for each pupil at each levels of the Continuum of Support.
For each child with identified needs, the school generated targets for learning and set these out in a Support Plan. See James' Support Plan below.	

SUPPORT PLAN*

Classroom Support
School Support ✓
School Support Plus

To be completed by the teacher(s).

For help, see *SEN: A Continuum of Support - Guidelines for Teachers: BESD: A Continuum of Support – Guidelines for Teachers* pp.71-74; *A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools, Resource Pack for Teachers*, pp. 51, 53, 54, 57.

Student's name	James Hickey	Age	11 years 6 months
Lead teacher	Mr. Ward (6 th Class Teacher)	Class/year	6 th
Start date of plan	October 2016		
Review date of plan	February 2017		
Student's strengths and interests			
James loves sport and is good at hurling. He is a kind, gentle boy, who is sensitive to the needs of others. James is motivated to do well and always tries his best. He is very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about sport.			
Priority concerns			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> James does not like to read aloud in class and his reading is slow and hesitant. He finds spelling very difficult and avoids using words he does not know how to spell in written work. James is very aware of his difficulties and rarely offers to participate in class discussion. 			
Possible reasons for concerns			
James' difficulties arise in the context of an identified specific literacy difficulty. His reading and spelling skills have been slow to respond to intervention to date. He also has had a number of losses in his personal life that have impacted on his confidence and well-being.			
Targets for the student			
James to be able to read independently for pleasure from a range of differentiated materials. James will prepare and read a short passage, from his levelled reader, to his class teacher each week. James will offer more frequent contributions to classroom discussion – put up his hand and answer a question once per day, initially, increasing to two and three contributions per day by the end of term.			
Strategies to help the student achieve the targets			
James to participate in a reading partners scheme- to be matched with a younger child (1 term). James to complete the SNIP word reading programme to increase word reading and fluency skills. James to be encouraged to do his class project on an aspect of sport and to co-present with his good friend Paul. James to have a key words notebook, for use in class and at home. Teacher to continue to differentiate spelling homework and mark his work with a focus on the spelling of key words only. James to be encouraged and quietly praised for contributing in class. James to participate in weekly small group cookery class to build his self-esteem and sense of belonging to school.			
Staff involved and resources needed			
Mr. Ward and Ms McMahon (see timetable)			

Action 3: Planning teaching methods and approaches	Identify the level and type of intervention required to meet targets for each pupil on the Continuum of Support. Schools should consider methodologies best suited to promoting meaningful inclusion such as differentiation, heterogeneous grouping, team-teaching small-group teaching, and individualised support, where necessary. They should also be mindful of the need for interventions and supports to be evidence-informed.
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When the school reflected on the needs of the pupils, they identified a number of key areas for intervention. Among these were:

- The identified needs of each pupil were considered at School Support and School Support Plus. Appropriate groupings and pairings were identified. Some pupils were identified for additional individualised support.
- At infant level, team-teaching was considered the most appropriate support for most pupils.
- Clusters of literacy needs were identified in the middle and senior classes. Evidence-informed literacy interventions, such as *Paired Reading*, *SNIP*, and *Toe by Toe* were used as appropriate. The NEPS literacy resource *Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers* was used as a good practice guide by teachers.
- A number of pupils in 3rd and 4th class, including one child with ASD, were identified as having social, emotional and behavioural needs. Small-group work and in-class support were considered as effective ways to support these pupils.
- A number of pupils in 5th and 6th class required support with social skills, self-regulation and organisation arising from needs associated with ASD. There was a need to include transition preparation and planning for these pupils in advance of their transfer to post-primary school.

Signature of parent(s)/ guardian(s)	
Signature of teacher	

Action 4: Organising early intervention and prevention programmes	Based on identified need, choose evidence-informed early-intervention/prevention programmes to address such needs. Identify time needed and staffing commitment required.
<p>A review of school-based data and teacher reports highlighted a number of areas for interventions. Among these were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the junior and senior infant classrooms, there was a need for in-class support to develop language and literacy skills. The school implemented suggestions from the NEPS resource, <i>A Balanced Approach to Literacy Development in the Early Years</i>. In addition Ms McMahon provided in-class support each morning for a few pupils for one hour, over a term, and Mr O’Neill providing in-class support for senior infants for 45 minutes, three mornings a week, over a term. • In the 4th class group, there were a number of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs. The evidence-based <i>FRIENDS for Life</i> programme was identified as an appropriate intervention at whole class level. The programme was delivered by the 4th class teacher in collaboration with Ms McMahon for 80 minutes per week, over a term. • It was decided to run a <i>Reading Partners</i> programme that matched 5th and 6th class pupils with pupils in infants, for one term. Ms McMahon and the class teacher delivered this intervention three days a week for thirty minutes. • A transition programme for all 6th class pupils was implemented to support the move to post-primary school. Lessons explored: reading timetables, managing lockers and organisation of homework. Intensive group intervention was provided for some pupils with more specific needs. The NEPS resource – <i>Transfer from Primary to Post-Primary School</i> was used. This involved the class teacher and Ms McMahon for 45 minutes a week over the course of the summer term. 	
Action 5: Organising and deploying special education teaching resources	Cross-reference the needs of pupils at the School Support and School Support Plus levels and consider common needs that can be met by grouping to ensure effective and efficient teaching and learning approaches. Agree which teacher(s) will cater for these groups and when and where the teaching will take place. Be mindful of the requirement that pupils with the greatest level of need, receive the greatest level of support from teachers with relevant expertise. Consider co-ordinating activities to ensure the optimal use of teaching resources and the most appropriate time for these activities to take place
<p>There are three special education teachers in this school: Ms McMahon, Ms Doyle and Mr O’Neill. Some aspects of Ms McMahon’s caseload are outlined below, including a sample timetable:</p> <p>Ms McMahon has a particular interest in early literacy development and undertook team teaching with junior infants, guided by <i>A Balanced Approach to Literacy Development in the Early Years</i>.</p> <p>The school recognised the importance of the requirement for pupils with the greatest level of need to receive the greatest level of support. Therefore, Adam (JI) who has significant needs was supported through one hour of in-class support every morning (shared, of course with others), and 30 minutes individual teaching time per day, broken into 2 or 3 ten-minute activities.</p>	

Kevin, who has social, emotional and behavioural needs, received support at break time, facilitated by his class teacher who reminded him of his behaviour targets prior to going out. He was also supported by staff members on yard duty. All teachers were briefed to ensure consistent behavioural reinforcement strategies.

Kevin was supported with short end-of-day sessions to help him reflect on his behaviour, focusing on what went well and preparing for the coming day. To facilitate this, Kevin had a twenty-minute individual session with Ms Mc Mahon from Monday to Wednesday. On Friday afternoons, he joined a cookery / practical numeracy group to develop his self-regulation skills, functional numeracy and to improve his sense of connectedness to school.

Action 6 Tracking recording and reviewing progress	Establish a tracking and recording system, to ensure that the progress of all pupils in meeting their established targets is monitored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At whole school level by teachers • At the Classroom Support level of the Continuum by class teachers and whole school approaches • At the School Support and School Support Plus levels by class teachers and support teachers
The school used the Student Support File and the Continuum of Support to track and monitor progress.	
Teachers used class and whole-school data to monitor and review the progress of pupils.	

Sample Timetable for Ms McMahon* (Summer term)

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9.00-10.00	In-class support for Language and Literacy, Junior Infants. Focus on Adam, Sam and Harry.				
10.00-10.45	Sinéad, Peter and Carl 1 st class Literacy	Sinéad, Peter and Carl 1 st class Literacy	Sinéad, Peter and Carl 1 st class Literacy	Sinéad, Peter and Carl 1 st class Literacy	Sinéad, Peter and Carl 1 st class Literacy
10.45-11.00	Break				
11.00-11.30	Adam (JI)	Adam (JI)	Adam (JI)	Adam (JI)	Adam (JI)
11.30 - 12.00	Team teaching (numeracy) 2 nd class	Team teaching (numeracy) 2 nd class	Team teaching (numeracy) 2 nd class	Team teaching (numeracy) 2 nd class	Team teaching (numeracy) 2 nd class
12.00-12.30	5 th and 6 th class pupils; Reading Partners with Adam, Sam and Harry	James 6 th class Literacy	5 th and 6 th class pupils; Reading Partners with Adam, Sam and Harry	James 6 th class Literacy	5 th and 6 th class pupils; Reading Partners with Adam, Sam and Harry
12.30- 1.00	Lunch				
1.00-1.45	Leigha 4 th class (focus on receptive language and	<i>FRIENDS for Life</i> 4 th class	Leigha 4 th class (focus on receptive language and	Sixth class transition programme	Cookery / practical numeracy/social skills/self-

	reading comprehension)		reading comprehension)		esteem development (Kevin, James, Philip and Leigha)
1.45-2.20	Small group transition programme		Small group transition programme	Lego group (language / social skills)	
2.20-2.40	Kevin Day review and planning session	Kevin Day review and planning session	Kevin Day review and planning session	Feargal, Sean and Leigha (4 th class)	

*When deploying teaching resources schools can maintain time for co-ordinating, planning and review activities to ensure effective and optimal use of supports. Co-ordination time, should however, be kept to a minimum in order to ensure that teaching time is maximised.

Appendix 5: Advice for Gaeltacht schools and Gaelscoileanna on the implementation of the revised model for allocating special education teaching

The Context

Irish-medium education should provide for the needs of all pupils including those with special educational needs. Pupils from various linguistic backgrounds attend Irish-medium schools located in both Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht areas.

There are different linguistic contexts both inside and outside of Gaeltacht areas, and inside and outside of every class in all-Irish schools or in schools located in the Gaeltacht. These backgrounds should be recognised and taken into account as supports are allocated. Schools are reminded that, in the context of Irish-medium education, the development of pupils' proficiency in both Irish and English literacy should be addressed in accordance with pupils' educational needs, as appropriate.

To support the implementation of the revised allocation model, Irish-medium schools should consider the following issues:

- School communities should be made aware of the efficacy and suitability of Irish-medium education to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs.
- In developing their whole-school approaches to literacy, Irish-medium schools should consider both the social and academic language needs of the child.
- Schools should revise their assessment and special education policies to identify pupils' needs in Irish, English and Mathematics on the appropriate standardised tests. Results from these tests should be used to identify needs and to guide the allocation process appropriately.
- Schools should use some of their allocation to provide supports in Irish to pupils with special educational needs where this is needed for them to access the curriculum in its entirety.
- It may be beneficial to draft an oral language support programme, in accordance with the linguistic needs of the child at infant level, with a focus on language acquisition and enrichment. In-class and / or team-teaching approaches have been shown to may be the most effective way to implement such programmes as an approach to early intervention.
- In the context of schools practising full early-immersion education, supports should be provided through the medium of Irish at infant level for Irish and Mathematics.
- Irish-medium schools should communicate and collaborate at local level to identify their continuing professional development needs in the area of special education. These needs should be discussed with the support services with a view to accessing training and identifying and sharing best practice.

DES Circular 0013/2017, on Special Education Teaching Allocation, notes that in Irish-language schools the support provided for pupils by schools to assist with pupils' literacy development may be conducted in Irish or English, or a combination of both, as considered necessary by the school.

Appendix 6: Looking at our school 2016 – A quality framework for primary schools

Schools may find the following standards from the teaching and learning dimension of the quality framework particularly helpful in providing for pupils with special educational needs.

Domain: Learner Experiences

All pupils should be enabled to:

- Engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities
- Grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive
- Reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning
- Experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning

In order to achieve this, all teachers should:

- Plan for assessing pupils' attainment of the intended learning objectives of the lesson, or series of lessons, using both assessment of learning and assessment for learning
- Maintain assessment records that are clear, useful and easy to interpret and share
- Meaningfully differentiate content and activities in order to cater for the varying needs and abilities of pupils

Appendix 7: Self-reflective questionnaire

Better Services, Better Outcomes for Children with Special Educational Needs

Self-Reflective Questionnaire

This questionnaire is provided as a resource to schools for the revised allocation model. The self-reflective questionnaire is designed to help schools and teachers to address the following questions outlined in these *Guidelines for Primary Schools*:

- How can we **identify** pupils' needs?
- How can we **meet** these needs?
- How can we **monitor and report** on progress?
- How can a school allocate its resources to effectively meet needs?
- How can our school plan at whole-school level to ensure effective provision for pupils with special educational needs?

The questionnaire is intended for use by the school itself and should be used as a dynamic, developmental document to inform implementation of the revised allocation model in schools. Ideally, the questionnaire should be completed collaboratively within the school and the questionnaire itself should serve as a stimulus for reflection and discussion. The prompt questions in the questionnaire encourage teachers to examine their existing practices and to identify any changes needed to implement the revised allocation model. Schools may also wish to use or modify the questionnaire to review their special educational needs policies or to evaluate their progress in implementing the allocation model. Schools will not be required to submit the questionnaire to the Department or any of its agencies.

How can we identify pupils' needs?

How do we use the Continuum of Support and Student Support Files to provide a documented and staged-approach to identifying pupils' needs?

- *When do our class teachers decide to initiate Classroom Support Plans?*
- *Do we consider individual needs across a broad range, including academic, social, communication, emotional, behavioural?*
- *Do we identify environmental and contextual issues which need modification (visual, hearing, physical, sensory)?*
- *How often are support plans developed and reviewed and who should be involved in this process?*

How do we gather the information we need to inform our decision making so that we can provide the greatest level of support to those with the greatest needs?

- *What observational records help us with identifying needs?*
- *What types of assessment help us with screening and identification of needs?*
- *How do we integrate information from pupils, parents, external professionals and early education settings to assist with identification of needs?*

What are our strengths?	What are our areas for improvement?

How can we improve?

How can we meet these needs?

What steps are class teachers taking to exercise their primary responsibility for the learning and well-being of all pupils in their classes?

- *Are all teachers using a variety of teaching approaches (including multi-sensory) in response to diverse needs?*
- *What strategies are employed at class level to overcome barriers to learning and participation?*
- *How is learning broken down into logical and manageable steps to ensure appropriate learning challenges for all?*
- *To what extent are lessons co-operative, collaborative and hands-on?*
- *Are there any standards or statements of good practice from Looking at Our Schools 2016 which would be useful in providing for better learning experiences and outcomes for our pupils?*

How do our special education teachers and class teachers collaborate to meet the needs of pupils and to ensure their progress?

- *Do we use early-intervention programmes in our mainstream classrooms across the school?*
- *How do special education teachers support class teachers with in-class supports, group and individual withdrawal?*
- *How do all staff work together to support pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs?*

What are our strengths?

What are our areas for improvement?

How can we improve?

How can we monitor and report on progress?

Are we using a cyclical problem-solving approach to planning, teaching and review which results in the devising of clear targets relevant to our pupils' priority learning needs?

- *How do we set targets and devise plans for our pupils which identify needs and which can be monitored and recorded?*
- *How do class teachers and special education teachers collaborating around the development and review of support plans?*
- *How do we ensure that progress on the targets is incremental for pupils over time?*
- *How can we assess the effectiveness of programmes/interventions we use?*
- *How do we monitor at group, class and whole-school level?*
- *Can we innovate and extend our practices?*

Who do we consult with and what is involved in monitoring the outcomes/progress?

- *How do we involve parents and pupils in monitoring progress?*
- *How do we communicate the progress our pupils have made?*

What are our strengths?	What are our areas for improvement?

How can we improve?

How can our school allocate its resources to effectively meet needs?

How do we identify the needs of all pupils with special educational needs in the school and use the Continuum of Support approach to ensure that the greatest level of support is provided to pupils with the greatest needs?

- *Could we quantify and organise our support for pupils with special educational needs through use of the School Provision Plan (Appendix 2)?*
- *When devising support plans, how do we use the Continuum to identify priority learning needs at all three levels (Classroom Support, School Support, and School Support Plus)?*
- *What kind of approaches and interventions are we using at a whole school level to support early intervention and prevention?*

How can we best decide on roles and responsibilities in providing supports for pupils, monitoring progress and contributing to future plans for the pupils?

- *How can we merge the existing responsibilities of the resource and learning-support teachers into a special education team approach?*
- *Can we timetable and co-ordinate interventions efficiently with reference to*
 - *available resources (in-class approaches, group work and minimal individual withdrawal)?*
 - *continuity of support (avoiding a pupil having several different teachers)?*
 - *the particular needs of pupils?*

What are our strengths?	What are our areas for improvement?

How can we improve?

How can our school plan at whole-school level to ensure effective provision for pupils with special educational needs?

How do we plan at whole-school level to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs?

- *How do we foster an inclusive approach to address the diversity of needs in our school?*
- *How do we promote pupils' sense of connection to their school, peers and teachers?*
- *Have we reviewed our ongoing professional development needs, with reference to quality teaching and learning in both the mainstream classroom and special education support settings?*
- *How do we consult with parents in relation to the supports and strategies being used in our school?*
- *How do we foster pupil engagement and participation in their learning and in the life of the school?*
- *Have we established procedures / protocols for liaising with support services?*

What are our strengths?

What are our areas for improvement?

How can we improve?

Appendix 8: Parental Involvement

In reflecting on and reviewing a school's existing practice in encouraging parental involvement the following points could be taken into consideration, both in terms of **existing** and **future actions**:

- How are parents consulted and informed about the nature of special education needs provision and policy in school?
- How are parents consulted when special education supports (for example, Classroom Support/School Support/School Support Plus) are being proposed for their child?
- Do we involve parents at each level of the Continuum of Support process?
- To what extent is regular communication facilitated with parents who have a child with a special educational need?
- What barriers might prevent parents from being fully involved in supporting their child in school? What may be helpful in overcoming these barriers?
- Do we provide opportunities for parents to learn more about special education issues through contact with other agencies and services?
- How can we support staff members in engaging effectively with parents?

Schools may wish to access the following resources to meet the diverse needs of their pupils

Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support: Guidelines for Teachers & Resource Pack for Teachers

https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_special_needs_guidelines.pdf

http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_special_needs_resource_pack.pdf

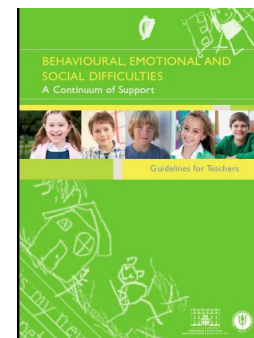


Behavioural, Emotional & Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support – Guidelines for Teachers

http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_besd_continuum_teacher_guide.pdf

For a Leaflet Outlining How To Support Children in Primary Schools

http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Resources-Guidance/sped_guidelines_pupils_difficulties_p.pdf



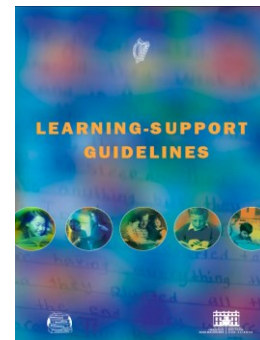
Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools

<http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/publications/assess%20%20guide.pdf>



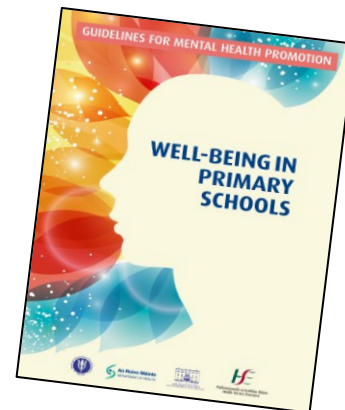
The Learning Support Guidelines

http://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/Documents_Publications/Learning_Support_Guidelines.pdf



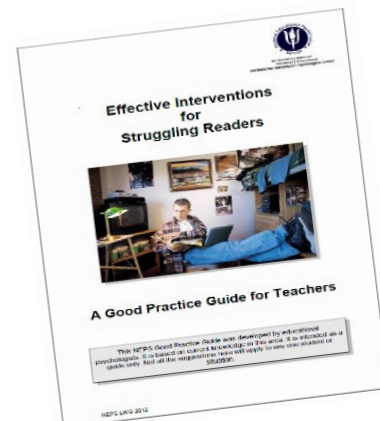
Well-Being in Primary Schools

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Well-Being-in-Primary-Schools-Guidelines-for-Mental-Health-Promotion.pdf>



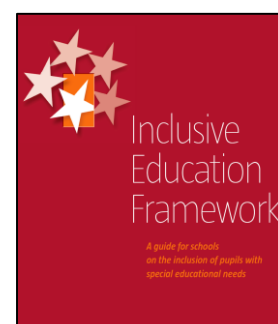
Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers

http://www.education.ie/en/Education-Staff/Information/NEPS-Literacy-Resource/neps_literacy_good_practice_guide.pdf



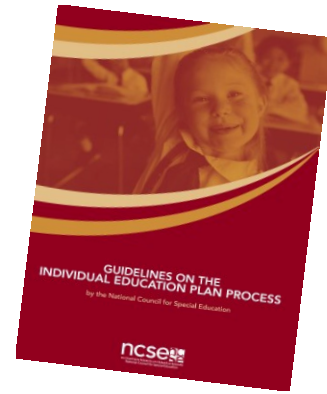
Inclusive Education Framework

<http://ncse.ie/inclusive-education-framework>



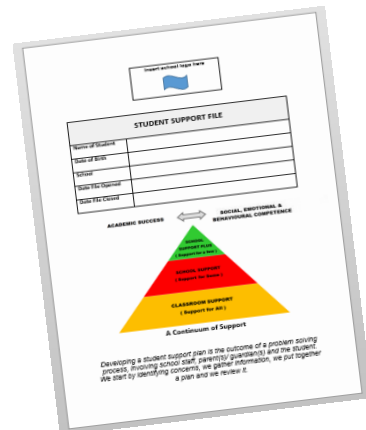
Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process

http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/final_report.pdf



Student Support File

<http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Student-Support-File-Form.docx>



Signposts

<http://www.sess.ie/categories>



Webcast

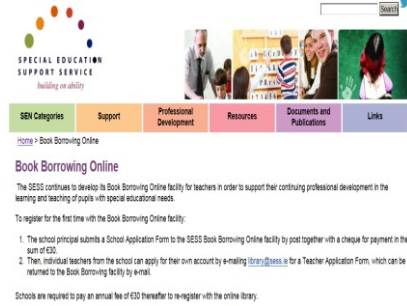
<http://www.sess.ie/resources/metacognition>



The Metacognitive Teacher and Learner:
An Introduction to
Metacognition in the Classroom

SESS Book-Borrowing

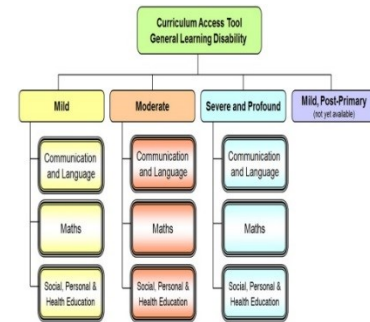
<http://www.sess.ie/ress-book-borrowing>



The screenshot shows the SESS Book-Borrowing Online page. At the top is the SESS logo with the tagline 'building on ability'. Below it is a navigation menu with tabs for 'SESS Categories', 'Support', 'Professional Development', 'Resources', 'Documents and Publications', and 'Links'. The main content area is titled 'Book Borrowing Online' and includes an introduction, registration instructions, and a list of two steps for registration. Step 1: The school principal submits a School Application Form to the SESS Book Borrowing Online facility by post together with a cheque for payment in the sum of €30. Step 2: Then, individual teachers from the school can apply for their own account by e-mailing library@sess.ie for a Teacher Application Form, which can be returned to the Book Borrowing facility by email. A note at the bottom states: 'Schools are required to pay an annual fee of €30 thereafter to re-register with the online library.'

Curriculum Access Tool for Students with GLD (CAT-GLD)

<http://cat.sess.ie/tool>



Functional Language and Communication Resource

<http://www.sess.ie/ress-functional-language-and-communication-resource-0>



The screenshot shows the SESS Functional Language and Communication Resource page. It features the SESS logo and the tagline 'building on ability'. The page title is 'SESS Functional Language & Communication Resource'. The content area is currently blank, suggesting the resource content is loaded dynamically or is a placeholder.

SESS Resources


<http://www.sess.ie/resources>



The screenshot shows the SESS Resources page. It features the SESS logo and navigation tabs. The 'Resources' section is highlighted, listing various categories such as Learning, Motivation and Organisation, Behaviour Management, Assessment, Inclusion, Professional Skills, ICT, and Curriculum. A 'Resources' list is provided, including items like 'Functional Language and Communication Resource', 'Inclusion', 'ICT', 'Curriculum Access Tool - General Learning Disability (CAT-GLD)', 'Communication Access Tool - General Learning Disability (CAT-GAD)', 'Library', 'Books', 'Documents and Publications', and 'Links'. A note at the bottom states: 'SESS Functional Language and Communication Resource: Special Education Support Service (SESS) is pleased to announce that the new version of the resource is now available for use on the platform.'

SESS Website

<http://www.sess.ie>



The screenshot shows the SESS Website homepage. It features the SESS logo and navigation tabs. The main content area is titled 'Welcome to the SESS Website' and includes a brief introduction. Below this is a 'Featured Events' section with a list of upcoming events, including 'SESS at Learning', 'Book Borrowing', 'Check on Shannon Education Centre', 'Autism, Mental Health and Managing Anxiety', 'Bridging Springs Meet', 'Primary, Secondary, Tertiary & Adult (Primary & Post-Primary)', 'Galway Education Centre', 'SESS at Learning', 'SESS at Learning', 'Lough Education Centre', 'Library, Memory and Adult (Post-Primary)'. There is also a 'CPD Courses' section with links for 'POST PRIMARY CPD' and 'PRIMARY CPD'.

NCCA's Special Educational Needs and the Primary Curriculum

[http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum and Assessment/Early Childhood and Primary Education/Primary-Education/SEN-and-the-Primary-Language-Curriculum/](http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum%20and%20Assessment/Early%20Childhood%20and%20Primary%20Education/Primary-Education/SEN-and-the-Primary-Language-Curriculum/)

The screenshot shows the NCCA website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'NCCA' and 'CURRICULUM' tabs, and an 'ACTION' button. Below this is a search bar and a breadcrumb trail: 'Early Childhood > Primary > Curriculum and Assessment > Early Childhood and Primary Education > Primary Education > Special Educational Needs and the Primary Language Curriculum'. The main content area features a large image of a teacher and a student working together at a table. To the left of the image is a vertical navigation menu with various categories like 'Curriculum and Assessment', 'Early Childhood and Primary Education', 'Primary Education', 'Planning Frameworks for the Primary Language Curriculum', 'Special Educational Needs and the Primary Language Curriculum', 'Primary School Curriculum', 'Assessment and Reporting', 'Review and Research', 'Primary Developments', 'Parents', 'Post-Primary Education', 'Parents', 'Assessment', 'Inclusion', 'Publications', 'Consultations', and 'News / Press'. The title 'Special Educational Needs and the Primary Language Curriculum' is displayed above the image. Below the image, there is a text snippet: 'Progression continua: Draft 'Early a' milestone'.