An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Síceolaíochta Oideachais | National Educational Psychological Service

Student Support File: Guidelines

Rationale for the use of the Student Support File:

- The Student Support File allows the school to **track the student's pathway** through the Continuum of Support – right from the start of the support process, and onwards, if necessary, through to the School Support (for Some) and School Support Plus (for a Few) levels.
- The Student Support File allows the school to **document progress and needs over time**
- The Student Support File ensures **continuity of support** for a student, including transition from primary to post-primary school
- The Student Support File may **encourage parental collaboration** and **parental engagement** in the student's learning
- The Student Support File assists schools in providing an **appropriate level of support to students**, in line with their level of need
- The Student Support File **keeps together all the information** about the support of the student: information gathered, plans and interventions, consultations and reviews

Support Plan- This is a general term. Many different types of plans can be support plans. A support plan can take the form of a general plan for support, a behavioural plan or contract, an individual learning profile, an individual educational plan, a personalised learning plan etc. The support plan format suggested in this document is just one example and schools may wish to modify and adapt, as needed.

Student Support File: Classroom Support (Primary) OR Support for All (Post-Primary)

Primary Schools

In Primary schools, classroom support is the most common and typically the first response to emerging needs. The **starting point** for the Classroom Support process is when a teacher and parent(s)/guardian(s) **share concerns** regarding a student's learning and/or social development in school.

At this point some simple classroom interventions will have already been tried - such as differentiation, adjustments to the learning environment and/or adjustments to teaching style. Concerns, however, will have remained about:

- student skills and/or behaviour that appear to be falling in below the typical range for his/her age and appear to be impacting on the student's learning and/or socialisation
- the student's response to the simple classroom interventions that have been already tried

These concerns will have suggested that this student has distinct and individual needs that will require a Classroom Support Plan.

Concerns are **recorded**, as well as the student's strengths and interests. This step in the process may be informed by the data gathered when completing some/all of the Support Checklist.

Ideas are discussed with regard to **strategies/interventions** to address the student's needs within the classroom.

A Support Plan is drawn up and signed by the class teacher and parent(s)/guardian(s) and implemented for an agreed time span.

The plan is reviewed on an on-going basis.

The Support Plan, together with reviews, checklists used and other related documents (such as a records of consultation with the NEPS psychologist) will be kept within the **Student Support File** – a file specifically for that particular student - allowing the school to track the student's progress and needs over time.

Further information about completing the Classroom Support Plan is available in the NEPS publications listed on page 6, which are available in hard copy in your school or to download from the website of the Department of Education and Skills

http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Model-of-Service.html

Post-Primary Schools

In Post Primary Schools the emphasis is on whole-school approaches to developing best practices in responding to the need of all students (Support for All). At this stage, the school will be identifying those students who may be of concern, through screening and information gathering, especially during first year intake.

Schools will find it helpful to have a Student Support Team in place to assist with the systematic tracking of students. Such teams also can provide a useful mechanism for implementing whole school approaches.

Support for ALL aims to support and promote positive student learning and behaviour. Key elements of this approach are:

- Creating positive learning environments
- Best practice in teaching, with a diversity of learning opportunities
- Establishing and teaching clear behavioural and learning expectations for students
- Having a system for reinforcing and monitoring students
- A student support team
- Listening to the voice of the student

The focus in Support for All is on preventative approaches and identifying needs through whole-school systems. Interventions at this level arise directly from the information gathered. Interventions will tend to be local, specific and relatively low-key and would normally reflect the good practice already evident in schools. For example, a student who is having difficulty settling might be supported by the class tutor and perhaps be allocated a peer buddy. Where a subject teacher is aware of a student struggling with curriculum content, that student might be offered differentiated homework, or teaching methods might be adapted.

Additionally, students about whom there are significant concerns may be discussed at the Student Support Team and interventions agreed may address the needs of groups of students, or individual students.

Further information about supporting all students in Post-Primary schools is available in the publications listed on page 6, which are available in hard copy in your school or to download from the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Model-of-Service.html

An additional resource, Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools -Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (2013) will also be helpful to schools in planning how best to support all students in post-primary schools.

http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Well_Being_PP_Schools_Guidelines_Summary.pdf

Student Support File: School Support (Support for Some)

While most student's initial needs will be met through classroom based interventions, in some cases interventions at Classroom Support level (primary school) or at the Support for All level (post primary school) are not sufficient to fully meet the student's educational needs. A **School Support Plan** may be needed. In primary schools, the decision to initiate a School Support Plan is usually taken as a result of the review of a Classroom Support Plan, by the class teacher and parent(s)/guardian(s), in collaboration with support teacher(s) in the school. In post-primary schools, the decision to initiate a Support Plan may follow actions already taken at the Support for All phase, such as a meeting of the Student Support Team, or the outcome of school-based screening and monitoring.

Steps in developing a Support Plan

The concerned teacher(s), parent(s)/guardian(s), and support teacher(s) **share** and **record** on-going concerns regarding the student's progress in school, as well as noting the student's strengths and interests.

The concerned teacher needs to involve the learning support/resource teacher(s)/ guidance counsellor/ Year Head in the problem-solving process at this point.

The School Support Plan will be informed by a more systematic gathering of information about the student, which may include diagnostic assessment and observation of the student's learning and/or behavioural/emotional/social skills. This step in the process may be informed by data gathered when completing the Support Checklist.

The Support Plan is **drawn up** and **signed** by the concerned teacher/ support teacher(s) / guidance counsellor/ Year Head and parent(s)/guardian(s) and implemented for an agreed time span.

The plan is **reviewed** on an on-going basis.
The School Support Plan, together with reviews, checklists used and other related documents (such as a record of consultation with the NEPS psychologist), will add to the body of information that is already contained within the **Student Support File** – a file specifically for that particular student. This allows the school to continue to track the student's progress and needs over time.

Further information about completing the Support Plan is available in the publications listed on page 6, which are available in hard copy in your school or to download from the website of the Department of Education and Skills
http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Model-of-Service.html

Student Support File: School Support Plus (Support for a Few)

The School Support Plus (for a few) process will be initiated if, in reviewing the Support Plan, it is agreed that the student is not making adequate progress, despite purposeful efforts. This process will generally involve external professionals and support services in a more detailed problem solving process. It is expected that the students who are receiving support at the level of School Support Plus, will be those with greatest need.

Students needing support at this level will have their needs and interventions detailed and monitored in a School Support Plus Plan. A review of work already done at the levels of Classroom Support/ Support for All and School Support/ Support for Some, and contained within the student's Student Support File, will provide important information for this School Support Plus Plan.

The School Support Plus Plan, together with reports from other professionals, consultation records and other relevant documents, will add to the body of information that is already contained within the **Student Support File** – allowing the school to continue to track the student's progress and needs over time.

Further information about completing the School Support Plus Plan is available in the publications listed on page 6, which are available in hard copy in your school or to download from the website of the Department of Education and Skills

http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Model-of-Service.html

The NCSE Guidelines on the IEP process provide examples of support plans and guidance about good practice which may be helpful at the School Support Plus level (www.ncse.ie).

The following NEPS documents may be helpful to schools when developing a Student Support File

Primary and Special Schools

Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support: Guidelines for Teachers

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

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

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

Primary and Special Schools

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

Post-Primary Schools

A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Teachers & Resource Pack for Teachers

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

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

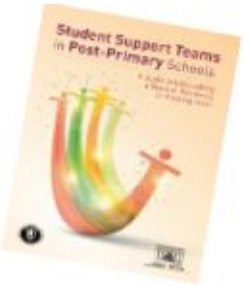
For a leaflet outlining how to support students in post-primary schools:

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

Post-Primary Schools

Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools

http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Student-Support-Teams-in-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf



Post-Primary Schools

Well-being in Post-Primary Schools- Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention

http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Well_Being_PP_Schools_Guidelines_Summary.pdf