
Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools

Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools



Introduction	3
1. Why is the allocation model changing?	4
2. What are the main features of the revised model?	4
3. How can schools implement the revised allocation model effectively?	4
A three-step process to support students with special educational needs	6
Step 1: How can we identify needs?	6
Step 2: How can we meet needs?	13
Effective teaching and learning: The role of the subject teacher	13
Early intervention and prevention	15
Target-setting	17
Step 3: How can we monitor and record outcomes for students with special	18
educational needs?	18
4. How can schools allocate special education teaching resources to effectively?	19
Timetabling	20
Planning the allocation of special education teaching supports	21
5. How can a whole-school approach enhance provision for students?	23
Inclusive education	23
Whole-school planning	26
Role of the school principal	27
Special education needs team	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Parental engagement	29
Student engagement	29
Engagement with external bodies and agencies	30
Continuing professional development (CPD)	32
Appendix 1: Target-setting as part of the problem-solving framework	34
Appendix 2: School provision plan for students with special educational needs	35
Appendix 3: Case study from pilot project	37
Appendix 4: Guidelines for Irish-medium post-primary schools	39
Appendix 5: Looking at our school 2016 – A quality framework for post-primary schools	42
Appendix 6: Self-reflective questionnaire	43
Appendix 7: Parental involvement	49
Resource Documents	50

Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools - Supporting Students 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 students 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 students 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 students. These guidelines are intended to build on existing good practice in schools and to complement the advice given in *Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines* (DES, 2007).

About these guidelines

These guidelines reflect good practice in the education of students 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 students 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 students 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 Students 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 the introduction of 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 0014/2017 provides full details of 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 students' needs, without the requirement for a diagnosis of disability. A key principle underpinning this revised model is that all students, 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 students 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 students with special educational needs should be used to facilitate the development of truly inclusive schools.
- Supports provided to students with special educational needs should be based on identified needs and be informed by regular reviews of progress (in consultation with parents and students) as outlined in the Continuum of Support Guidelines.
- The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all students in the classroom, including students with special educational needs.
- Special education teaching supports provided to schools should be used solely for the support of students with identified special educational needs, including those students for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL). The special education teaching supports **cannot** be used to reduce the student-teacher ratio for general subject teaching or to provide additional subject options for students who do not have special education needs.
- Students with the greatest levels of need should have access to the greatest level of support, and whenever possible, these students should be supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support.
- Schools should establish and maintain a core team of teachers to meet the needs of students with special educational needs. All members should have the necessary experience and access to continuing professional development to support the diverse needs of students with special educational needs.

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

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

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

Step 1: How can we identify needs?

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

The Continuum of Support

The Department has set out the Continuum of Support framework to assist schools in identifying and responding to students' 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 students 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 for Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Teachers

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

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

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 with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties in post-primary schools, go to:

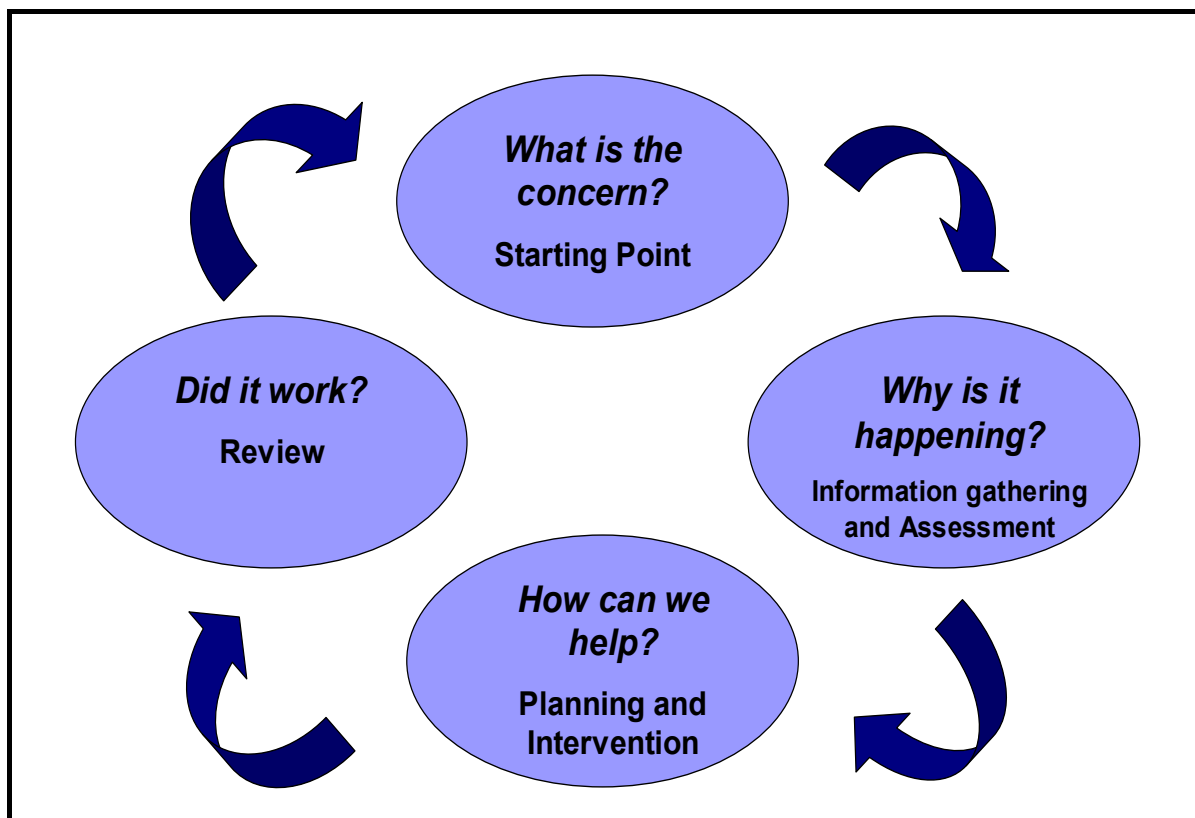
http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Resources-Guidance/sped_guidelines_pupils_difficulties_pp.pdf

English as an additional language guidelines for Teachers

http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Inclusion/English_as_an_Additional_Language/IILT_Materials/Post-primary/

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 students.

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



Identification of educational need is central to the new model. Using the Continuum of Support framework, schools can identify students' 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 student's needs in context, and provides useful resources to support this (for example, Learning Environment Checklist, Teacher Checklist for Whole-Class Structures and Supports).

Many students will have their special educational needs identified prior to their transfer to post-primary school. It is important for schools to gather information on students' learning from primary schools and parents in order to plan provision and to ensure continuity and progression in the students' education.

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 parent(s)
- 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 are required to use the Education Passport materials detailed above and to forward them to the relevant post-primary school, following confirmation of enrolment, ideally by the end of June (Circular 45/2014).

For students with a high level of need, transition meetings may be arranged between primary and post-primary schools in advance of transfer. The *Post-Primary Transfer Review Form* provides a useful template for collating assessment data relating to students' academic, attainment and personal development needs in order to inform intervention planning following transition.

A post-primary school may use its own assessment practices to provide further screening and diagnostic information to support the planning process for students with special educational needs. The following resources may be used to inform assessment and identification of need:

NCCA Passport

http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Early_Childhood_and_Primary_Education/Pri-ary-Education/Assessment/Report_Card_Templates/transfer/

Post-Primary Transfer Review Form

<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-Transfer-Profile.pdf>

Post-Primary Circular on Assessment Instruments

https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0034_2015.pdf

Drumcondra Online Testing System

http://trythetests.erc.ie/testdetail/Drumcondra_Post_Primary_Maths_test
http://trythetests.erc.ie/testdetail/Drumcondra_Post_Primary_Reading_Test

The Continuum of Support provides a framework for schools to enable them to identify and respond to students' needs in a flexible way. This process is also supported through engagement with external professionals, as required.

The Continuum of Support suggests the following levels of support:

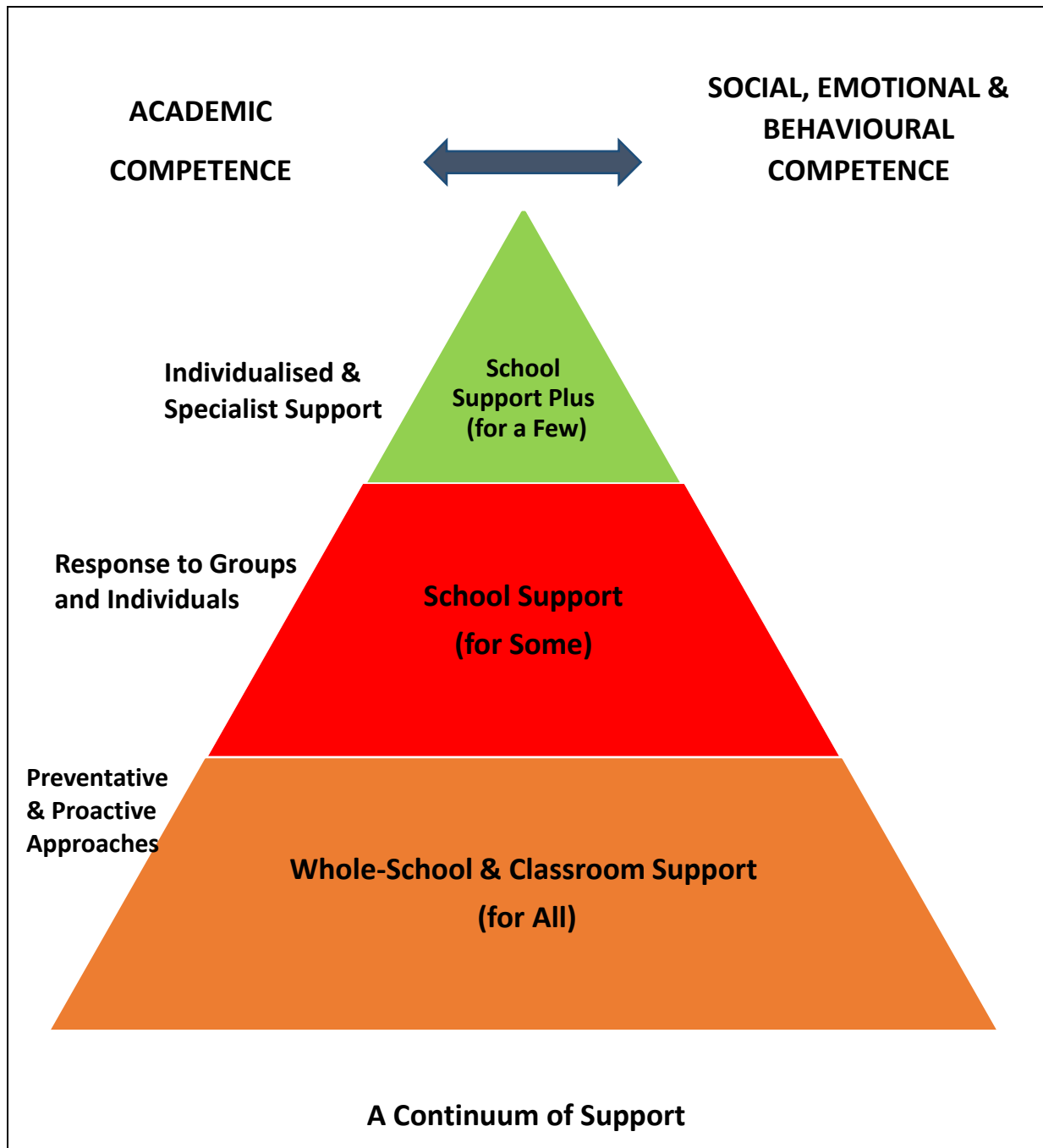


Table 1 below outlines how a school can collect evidence about students’ educational needs at each level of the Continuum of Support. This evidence can then be used to adapt teaching, to plan the next steps in students’ learning and to gauge their responses to intervention. When data and information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

Table 1: Identification of Educational Needs through the Continuum of Support Process	
Whole-School and Classroom (Support for All)	<p>The Post-Primary Continuum of Support contains a range of ideas and resources to assist in identification, intervention and monitoring of outcomes. The subject teacher considers how to differentiate the learning programme effectively to accommodate the needs of all students in the class.</p> <p>Identification of those needing additional support can be informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intake screening • Collection of information from primary schools, including Student Passport • Teacher observation • Teacher assessment • Learning Environment Checklist • Student Support Team involvement • Standardised tests of literacy/numeracy • Student consultation • Parental consultation <p>Where students continue to present with significant difficulties, despite whole-school interventions (such as differentiated teaching, a mentoring programme or social skills group), School Support (for Some) is initiated.</p>
School Support (for Some)	<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/student interview • Learning environment checklist • Diagnostic assessments in literacy/numeracy • Formal observation of behaviour including ABC charts, frequency measures • Functional assessment as appropriate, including screening measures for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties <p>Support at this level can take many forms, for example: team-teaching, small group or individualised tuition, peer mentoring, inclusion in social skills groups, behaviour reward and consequence systems.</p> <p>A Support Plan operates for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.</p>

**School Support Plus
(for a Few)**

At this level, subject teacher(s), parents and special education teachers, in collaboration with outside agencies, as required engage in a more detailed and systematic approach to information gathering and assessment. This involves using a broad range of formal and informal assessment and diagnostic tools, including teacher observation, student interview, measures of cognitive ability and social, emotional, behavioural and adaptive functioning, as appropriate.

Data generated from this process are used to plan an appropriate intervention and serve as a baseline against which to map progress.

A Support Plan at this level is likely to be more detailed, individualised, and to involve longer term planning and consultation.

Educational planning

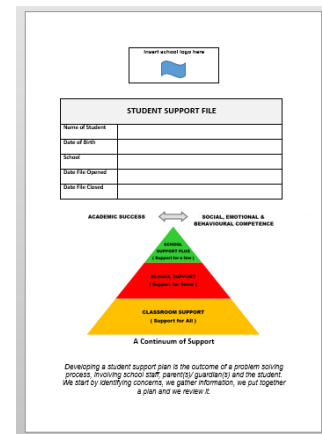
Provision for students with special educational needs is enhanced through clear identification processes and careful planning of interventions to address academic and/or personal and social development needs. Identification, planning, target-setting and monitoring of outcomes are essential elements of an integrated and collaborative problem-solving process. The process involves the subject teacher, special education teachers, parents, the student 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 students, 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 student’s pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates teachers in documenting progress over time and assists them in providing an appropriate level of support to students, 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 student. 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



Student Support File Guidelines

<http://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 student 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 and transient to significant and enduring, educational planning should reflect the level of need of the individual student. In this regard, the Student Support File facilitates a graduated response across the different levels of the Continuum. For students 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).

To support students with special educational needs effectively in schools and to ensure consistency of approach, it is important that all teachers (including subject teachers, special education teachers and guidance counsellors) have access to relevant information from the student’s support plan. This will help teachers to differentiate their subject teaching to meet the needs of their students, and to set specific targets related to their subject areas. Schools, therefore, need to develop systems for effective sharing of information, in accordance with data protection legislation.

Step 2: How can we meet needs?

Having identified a student's needs and the educational planning required to meet those needs, the 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 subject teacher

Effective teaching and learning is critically important for all students, and especially for those with special educational needs. Meaningful inclusion implies that all students are taught in stimulating and supportive classroom environments where they are respected and valued. Subject teachers have first-line responsibility for the education of all students in their classes. Accordingly, subject 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 students whose application, motivation, communication, behaviour or interaction with peers are causes of concern. This may require targeted interventions² to develop relevant adaptive skills related to these needs. Students should be provided with opportunities to be active participants in their own learning through lessons that are carefully planned to include independent and collaborative tasks and reinforcement of skills' development. All subject teachers should implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of students 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 of 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, pages 31-32.

Students' levels of interest, attention, concentration and persistence should be gradually developed, extended and consolidated, using appropriate teaching strategies. To cater for the range of learning needs in any class, subject 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 for students' interests
- Matching tasks and processes to students' abilities and needs
- Adapting and utilising resources, including use of technology
- Aspiring towards suitably challenging learning outcomes and assessing accordingly

Teachers can make lessons accessible to a broad range of students 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 appropriate environmental adaptations to promote curricular access.

Every student should be taught a curriculum that is appropriate to his/her developmental level. In matching programmes to students' needs, school leaders are encouraged to examine the range of curriculum options available, including Junior Certificate Schools Programme, Junior Certificate Level 2 Learning Programmes and Leaving Certificate Applied Programme.

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 preferences and to meet a variety of needs. Teaching approaches could include a combination of team-teaching initiatives, co-operative teaching, early intervention, small group or individual support.

Some students 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 subject teachers, should plan their interventions carefully to address students' priority learning needs and to achieve the targets identified in the relevant Student 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 student's specific needs. Outcomes for students 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 resources include:

Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities³

http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Overview_web.pdf

Junior Certificate Schools Programme

http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Post-Primary_Education/Junior_Cycle/Junior_Certificate_School_Programme/

Leaving Certificate Applied

http://ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Post-Primary_Education/Senior_Cycle/Overview-of-Senior-Cycle/Leaving_Certificate_Applied/

Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines (DES, 2007)

http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/insp_inclusion_students_sp_ed_needs_pp_guidelines_pdf

Level 2 Learning Programmes: Guidelines for Teachers

http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Inclusion/Special_Educational_Needs/Level_2_Toolkit/Guidelines_nc.pdf

NCCA Assessment: Toolkit at Junior Cycle:

<http://juniorcycle.ie/Assessment>

Early intervention and prevention

In view of the substantial international evidence that early-intervention and prevention programmes can lead to improved outcomes for students, 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. Focused interventions to develop literacy, social, emotional, life-skills and

³ These guidelines were developed for Junior Certificate subjects but a lot of the guidance remains useful for the Junior Cycle specifications.

well-being are particularly important for junior cycle students with special educational needs (see reference below to *Junior Cycle Well-being Guidelines* (NCCA, 2017)).

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 students with special educational needs.

Schools could seek advice and training in well-validated approaches to address literacy, behavioural and emotional needs, for example *Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers*, *My FRIENDS Youth*, as a means of preventing anxiety and building resilience, or similar evidence-based programmes.

Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers

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

My FRIENDS Youth - Emotional resilience programme

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

<http://www.friendsresilience.org/>

Junior Cycle Well-being Guidelines

http://www.juniorcycle.ie/NCCA_JuniorCycle/media/NCCA/Curriculum/Wellbeing/Wellbeing-Guidelines-for-Junior-Cycle.pdf

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

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

NBSS Interventions, Projects and Research

<https://www.nbss.ie/interventions-and-projects>

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

NBSS Transition and Transfer Programme

<https://www.nbss.ie/interventions-and-projects/behaviour-for-learning/belonging-plus>

Challenging Behaviour; Pathways to Prevention

<http://www.sess.ie/pathways-prevention-resources>

Behaviour for Learning Programmes and Resources

<https://www.nbss.ie/interventions-and-projects/behaviour-for-learning/why-try>

All intervention programmes should be carefully monitored to assess and record their impact on student 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 students to practise skills.

Student Support Teams serve an important preventative and early-intervention function, particularly in relation to addressing the needs of students with social, emotional, behavioural and well-being needs. The teams provide a forum to share concerns and to work towards solutions. They play an important co-ordinating role and facilitate monitoring and review of students' progress. For more information on Student Support Teams see:

Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools

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

Target-setting

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

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

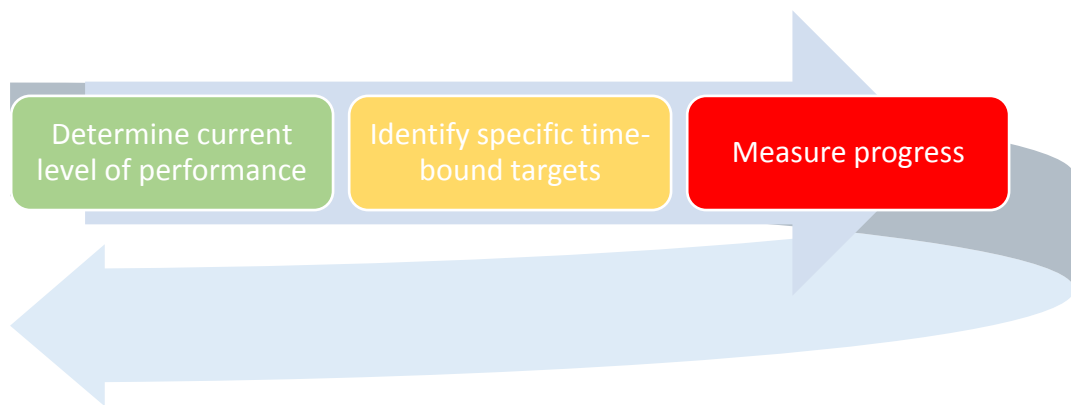
Best practice indicates that targets should be few in number. They should be informed by priority learning needs and directly linked to suitable interventions. Targets should be based on the evidence collected through both formal and informal assessment approaches. School personnel should consult with parents when setting targets and reviewing progress. The views of students 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 students.

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

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

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

It is important that school leaders oversee a whole-school approach to the monitoring and recording of progress. Students' 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 and reports from subject teachers, form tutors and year heads) that allow students 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 students. 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 students 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 students 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 students' needs (for example, in-class support, group withdrawal).

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 programmes and should allocate teaching resources as required, based on identified needs and school context. Schools should also aim to provide additional targeted support to students within the context of a mainstream subject lesson through team-teaching, through group or individual withdrawal or, through a combination of these modes of intervention.

Importantly, the level and type of support should reflect the specific targets of individual students 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 students may no longer require additional teaching supports, some may require the same level, while others may require more intensive supports. Accordingly, the groupings timetabled for withdrawal may change over time.

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 leaders should also take into account the professional development record and acquired expertise of teachers when allocating teaching roles and supports.

Timetabling

It is advised that a core team of teachers be allocated timetables dedicated to special education duties. Schools should adopt a flexible approach to timetabling to ensure that extra capacity is available to address changing needs during the year. Accordingly, some members of the special education team may be allocated flexible timetables with inbuilt capacity to respond to additional needs. In deciding their approaches to timetabling, schools are advised to consider the following:

- The overall school timetable should be designed carefully to make appropriate provision for students with special educational needs
- Members of the special education support team should be consulted when the timetable is being developed
- A core special education team should be developed in order to provide greater stability and continuity of support
- Provision should be made for the special education teachers to support subject teachers through team-teaching/in-class/co-operative teaching and joint planning
- Provision should be made for the withdrawal of students for focused individual and/or group intervention where warranted. Targeted small-group interventions, using evidence-informed programmes for students with similar needs, can be an effective way to use resources
- The impact of withdrawal on students' access to the curriculum with their year groups should be considered
- Timetables should be flexible to cater for the specific needs of students. For example, it may **not** be appropriate for all students who are exempted from Irish to be grouped for special education needs provision due to the diversity of their presenting needs
- A continuity of support to address the special educational needs of students in the senior cycle should be provided

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 identified needs of students. **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 students will have specific needs in such areas as communication, social interaction, behaviour, emotional development and application to learning. To guide the allocation of 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 students with special educational needs at whole-school level.

Table 2: Planning Template to Guide the Allocation of Additional Teaching Supports for Students with Special Educational Needs	
Action 1: Identification of students with special educational needs	<p>Review existing information on students’ needs, using school-based data, and information from primary schools, parents and external professionals. 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 students with special educational needs in the school. Match their needs to the appropriate level on the Continuum of Support.</p>
Action 2: Setting targets	<p>Based on identified needs, set clear targets at Support for All, School Support and School Support Plus levels of the Continuum of Support.</p>
Action 3: Planning teaching methods and approaches	<p>Identify the level and type of intervention required to meet targets for each student on the Continuum of Support. Schools should consider methodologies best suited to promoting meaningful inclusion such as differentiation, heterogeneous grouping, team-teaching, small group and individual teaching. 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	<p>Based on identified needs, choose evidence-informed early intervention/prevention programmes to address concerns. Identify time needed and staffing commitment required.</p>
Action 5: Organising and deploying special education teaching resources	<p>Cross-reference the needs of students at School Support and School Support Plus levels and consider common needs that can be met through in-class/team-teaching, small group and individual support to ensure effective and efficient teaching and learning approaches. Agree which teacher(s) will cater for these students and when and where the teaching will take place. Be mindful of the requirement that students 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 students in meeting their identified targets is monitored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At Whole-School (Support for All) level by all teachers • At the School Support (for Some) and School Support Plus (for a Few) levels by subject teachers and special education teachers

A case study from a pilot school is provided in Appendix 3 as a demonstration of how the revised allocation model was used to meet the diverse needs in that school.

Appendix 4 provides contextualised guidance for the implementation of the revised allocation model in Irish medium post-primary schools.

5. How can a whole-school approach enhance provision for students 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 a whole-school approach to supporting students with special educational needs.

It also explores key features related to:

- Inclusive education
- Whole-school planning
- Role of school principal
- Special Education Needs Team
- Parental engagement
- Student 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.

In line with inclusive principles, schools are advised to include students meaningfully in mainstream mixed-ability class groupings. This helps ensure high expectations and enables

students with special educational needs to learn alongside their peers. Mixed-ability teaching has beneficial effects for all students and helps promote social and personal development.

The Department acknowledges the very significant progress made by schools in developing inclusive practices and provision whereby the vast majority of students with special educational needs now attend mainstream schools. It also recognises that a small minority of students 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 students with special educational needs in mainstream schools. Schools with strong inclusive cultures are characterised by:

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

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>

Universal design for learning

www.cast.org/

The Special Education Support Service (SESS)⁴ also offers training for teachers that directly relates to promoting inclusive practices in post-primary schools. This includes:

<p>Leading Inclusive Learning Principals’ Seminar – Post-Primary. This is a one-day course for principal teachers in leading and managing an inclusive post-primary school.</p> <p>http://www.sess.ie/leading-inclusive-learning-principals-seminar-post-primary</p>	<p>Leading Inclusive Learning in Resource Teaching. This is a one-day course for resource and learning support teachers in mainstream post-primary schools. This course provides substantial insight into the current landscape of teaching and learning, and sets the context for whole-school and individual planning for the teaching and learning of students with special educational needs.</p> <p>http://www.sess.ie/leading-inclusive-learning-resource-teaching-post-primary</p>
<p align="center">Full Calendar of SESS Courses: http://www.sess.ie/calendar</p>	

The National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) provides support and training for a range of prevention and early intervention programmes and approaches that aim to promote positive behaviour and learning throughout the school by focusing on developing skills, attitudes and knowledge in the following areas:

- Behaviour for Learning
- Social and Emotional Literacy
- Literacy, Numeracy, Language and Learning
- Wellbeing

See www.nbss.ie for more information

⁴ It is planned that a 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 students with special educational needs.

Whole-school planning

When implementing the revised allocation model to address the needs of students 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 students) to improve student learning, behaviour and well-being. It encompasses a process of reflection, planning and review of policies and practices, and includes an evaluation of how students with special educational needs are identified by the school, the interventions that are put in place 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 Post-primary Schools* (DES, 2016). When applied to a school's provision for students 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 students (Appendix 5).

To assist schools in reflecting on their provision for students with special educational needs a Self-Reflective Questionnaire is provided (Appendix 6).

School Self-Evaluation Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools

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

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

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

Role of the school principal

The Department's post-primary guidelines on inclusion outlines the role of the school principal in supporting students with special educational needs. It states that 'Under current legislation the principal of the school has overall responsibility for ensuring that the special educational needs of students are met. As a consequence, the principal has the general responsibility for establishing and promoting whole-school policies and procedures that are supportive of the learning of all students, including those with special educational needs' (*Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines*; DES, 2007, p 67).

The role of the school principal includes the following:

- Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policies and procedures relating to the inclusion of students with special educational needs
- Oversee a whole-school approach to assessment and screening to identify needs and to guide the allocation of appropriate supports
- Ensure effective engagement with feeder primary schools to support the transition of students with special educational needs
- In collaboration with the in-school management team, discharge a key function in the deployment of staff, allocation of resources, organisation of students and timetabling
- Ensure that systems are in place for effective sharing of relevant information on students' needs with all subject teachers
- Facilitate the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to the education of students with special educational needs, and ensure that all school staff (subject teachers and special education teachers, guidance counsellors, special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area
- Ensure that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents, students and external professionals/agencies

In implementing the new resource allocation model, principals should give careful consideration to the formation of a special education needs team whose members have expertise and interest in special education so that provision can be co-ordinated efficiently and flexibly to meet a range of needs. Subject to his/her overall statutory responsibilities, the

principal may delegate the performance of specific responsibilities to other staff members, including members of the special education needs team.

Special education needs team

Schools should establish a core team of teachers with responsibility for special educational needs. Members of this team should have the necessary experience and ongoing access to professional development to support the diverse needs of students. A special education needs team helps ensure that those students with the greatest level of need have access to support from teachers with the necessary experience and expertise. The guidance counsellor should be a member of this team to help in promoting the inclusion of students with special educational needs.

The role of the special education needs team could include developing, implementing and monitoring a whole-school approach to the education of students with special educational needs. This would involve developing whole-school procedures for the selection of students for supplementary teaching, assisting in the implementation of whole-school strategies to enhance teaching and learning, and providing guidance to colleagues on the implementation of students' support plans.

A member of the special education needs team might be assigned the responsibility for co-ordinating overall provision for special educational needs within the school and might assume responsibility for:

- Co-ordinating data gathering, screening and testing
- Transition planning for students with special educational needs
- Taking a lead role in making arrangements for planning, implementation and review of student support plans
- Supporting the communication of information regarding students' needs to subject teachers, form tutors and year-heads
- Liaising with other agencies, NEPS and allied health professionals
- Liaising with parents and students

The core team will work closely with subject teachers, parents and with other support structures within the school, such as the student support team and guidance counsellor. In addition, the

core team can provide invaluable support to subject teachers to meet student needs within their classroom and subject areas.

Inclusion for students with Special Educational Needs Post Primary Guidelines p 67 – p 84

http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/insp_inclusion_students_sp_ed_needs_pp_guidelines_pdf

Parental engagement

Good parental engagement is a critical factor in enhancing outcomes for students 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 students with special educational needs.

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

Student engagement

Good engagement and participation in their own education has many associated benefits for students. This is particularly important for students 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 students' interests, aspirations and strengths when developing educational interventions. This involves actively including students in a shared assessment for learning process, setting shared learning objectives, and jointly reviewing progress. Student 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 student engagement and participation at all stages of educational planning and review.

At the whole-school level, schools are encouraged to review their approaches to student engagement and participation so that all students, 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 resources below can be used to support student engagement.

My Thoughts about School (See page 30 Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools: Resource Pack for Teachers)

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

See worksheets in Belonging Plus+ Transition and Transfer Programme (NBSS)

<https://www.nbss.ie/interventions-and-projects/behaviour-for-learning/belonging-plus>

Engagement with external bodies and agencies

Support and guidance is available to teachers from external bodies and agencies such as the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO), the NCSE Support Service, 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 students with special educational needs at the individual, group or whole-school level. This is especially important for those students with more significant and enduring needs who benefit from a multi-disciplinary approach to the identification of need and the development of interventions.

The needs of many students 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 students 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.

Transitions

Transitions can be particularly challenging for all students and can pose even greater levels of challenge for students with special educational needs. Good planning and support for transition helps to ensure the successful transfer of students from primary to post-primary school and from post-primary school to further education settings. Many primary and post-primary schools already have excellent practices in place to support students at various transitional points. For example, a designated teacher from the post-primary school may visit the primary school to discuss issues and share information around transitioning to post-primary schools. In many instances, a member of the special education needs team and/or year head may contact parents of students with special educational needs prior to transitioning to post-primary school.

Many post-primary schools organise open days for their incoming students and their parents. Providing specific information, including details of the physical layout of schools, teacher roles, timetables, lockers, curriculum, school policies and procedures and extra-curricular activities can be particularly supportive for students with special educational needs. Specific induction activities during the first weeks of term facilitated by peer mentors, are particularly important for students with special educational needs. Organising ‘meet and greet’ sessions for parents during the first term of first-year provides parents with an important forum to share information and a basis on which to build relationships. Additionally, many schools organise information meetings at the start of the academic year to facilitate the sharing of relevant information regarding each student’s special educational needs with subject teachers.

Transition planning is also important to prepare students for further education settings. For students with more enduring needs, it is essential to engage in this planning process well in

advance of transfer. This will usually involve consultation with the student, their parents and relevant external professionals.

A number of resources are available to support schools in planning for effective transitions.

Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs to Make Successful Transitions

ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/02156-NCSE-2016-Changing-Schools-Post-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>

<http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/4-NCSE-2016-Life-After-School-final-web-27.01.16.pdf>

Education Passport

www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Early_Childhood_and_Post-primary_Education/Post-primary-Education/Assessment/Report_Card_Templates/transfer/

Transfer from Primary to Post-Primary School

<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-to-Post-Primary-School-Staff-Room-Notice.pdf>

Transition Booklet

http://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/Resources/Inclusion/Transition_Booklet.pdf

NBSS Transition and Transfer Programme

<https://www.nbss.ie/interventions-and-projects/behaviour-for-learning/belonging-plus>

Continuing professional development (CPD)

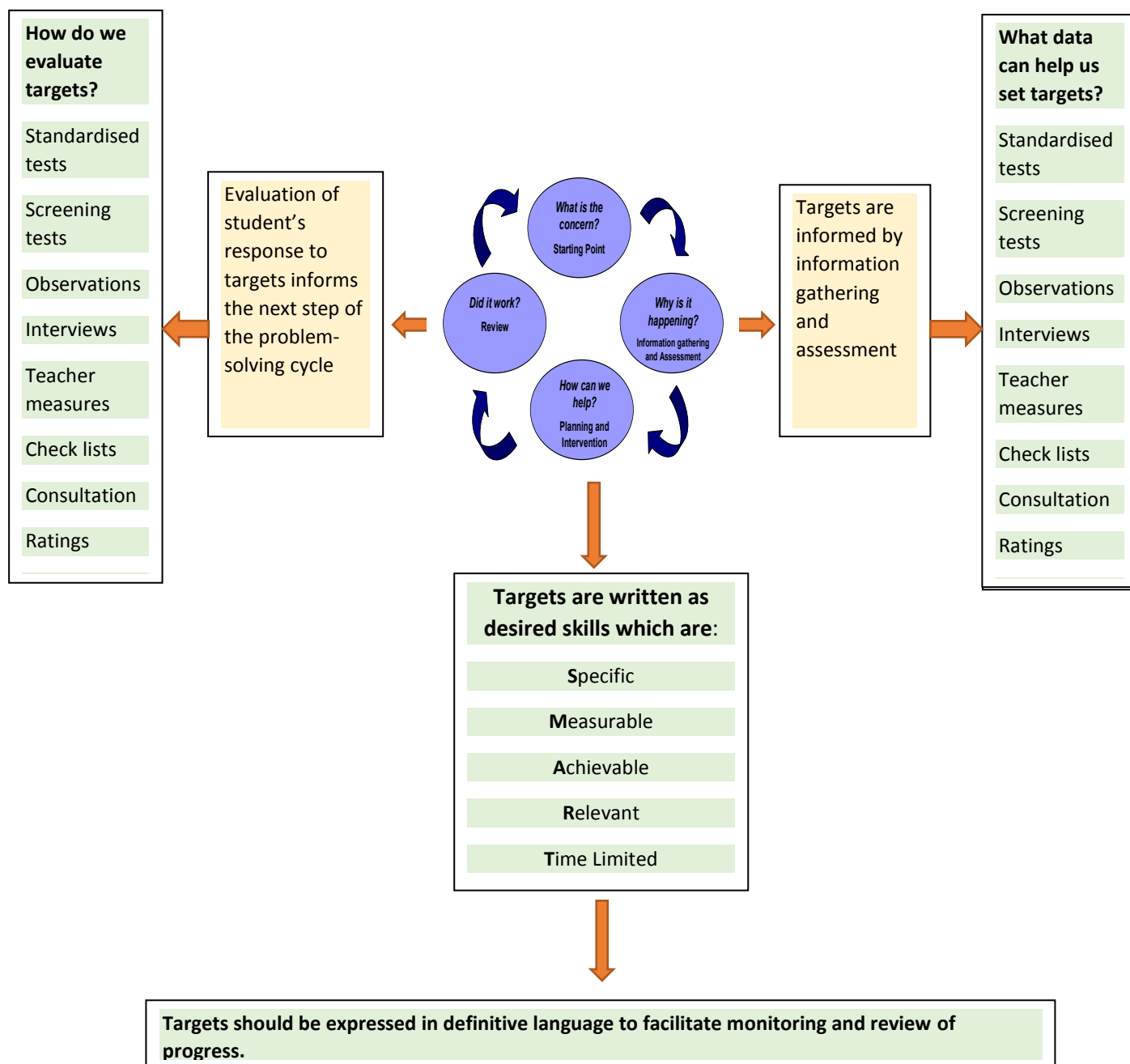
Research has consistently shown that the quality of teaching is the most critical factor in enhancing students' learning and educational experiences. The revised allocation model provides more stability in staffing levels. This can enhance capacity within schools to support students with special educational needs. Since all teachers have responsibility for teaching students 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 students.

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 6) 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), the Special Education Support Service (SESS) and, where available the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS). Support from NEPS is progressed through the regular school planning process with the assigned NEPS psychologist.

<p>PDST http://www.pdst.ie/sse/p</p> <p>JCT Support team for Level 2 Learning Programmes info@jct.ie</p>	<p>SESS http://www.sess.ie/support</p> <p>CPD Audit Tool http://www.sess.ie/cpd-audit-tools</p> <p>SESS leading on Inclusion http://www.sess.ie/leading-inclusive-learning-students-special-educational-needs-post-primary-schools-1</p>	<p>NBSS https://www.nbss.ie</p> <p>NEPS http://www.education.ie/en/</p>
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Appendix 1: Target-setting as part of the problem-solving framework



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

School: _____ **Roll No:** _____

School Year: _____ **Reviewed:** _____

Special Educational Needs Teaching: _____ **hours**

Teacher Name:	Hours	Brief description of role and duties

Whole-School/Support for All:			
Outline interventions delivered at whole-school level to support and promote positive student behaviour and learning for All			
Year Group	Description of Identified Need		Nature of Supports
Students with special educational needs who are in receipt of interventions through the Continuum of Support Framework			
School Support/for Some			
Student Name	Year group	Description of SEN	Nature of Support Literacy, numeracy, social, emotional, behavioural, life-skills
School Support Plus/for a Few			
Student Name	Year group	Description of SEN	Nature of Support Literacy, numeracy, social, emotional, behavioural, life-skills

Appendix 3: Case study from pilot project

School Context

This school is a community college, operating under the local Education and Training Board. It is based in a large town and caters for 344 students enrolled from a mixture of 20 urban and rural primary schools. It has 36 teachers and 2 SNAs on the staff.

Step 1:

Identification of students with special educational needs

Since 2013, assessment strategies in this school involved assessing students' literacy and numeracy skills on standardised tests, analysis of students' 6th class reports and teacher observations. On average 30% of students attained below STen 3 in numeracy and literacy. A number of first-year students with significant needs did not have professional reports. Participation in the pilot provided the school with greater scope to 'look beyond' professional assessment and to focus on actual learning needs as opposed to diagnosis. This enabled the school to address aspects that were not previously assessed, such as students' skill development in Mathematics.

Step 2:

Setting learning targets

Through participation in the pilot, the school became aware of the advantages of using the Continuum of Support and Student Support File as a means of recording students' learning targets and of tracking their progress in meeting these targets. The Continuum of Support enabled the school to bring a whole-school approach to the process of target-setting.

Step 3:

Planning teaching methods and approaches

Overall, the school found that participation in the pilot allowed it to respond in a more immediate way to the range of student needs. In an effort to build whole-staff capacity, the school developed and implemented its own approach to *Assessment for Learning* (AfL). As part of this, teachers agreed on ten assessment strategies and requested that all staff experiment with these. In their reflections at the end of the pilot, teachers reported that they saw evidence of this having a positive impact on teaching and learning.

The school also used some of its resources to engage in team-teaching. What was most beneficial about this approach was that it enabled all students in the class to participate, whereas in a more traditional mixed-ability English class, many of these students with special educational needs may have participated less.

Finally, in the teaching of Mathematics the school used some of its teaching resources to provide targeted intervention for a small group of students with particular difficulties in this area.

Step 4:**Organising early intervention and prevention programmes**

In order to support incoming first-year students, the school put a student support team in place. This team viewed transition to first-year as a process and was charged with overseeing the early intervention and transition programme for incoming first years. The team met weekly and sought to identify the learning needs of incoming students and to implement strategies, track and collect data (both hard and soft data) and evaluate the students' progress. In terms of devising learning priorities, the support team adopted a broad holistic approach and considered social, emotional and behavioural issues as well as learning needs.

Step 5:**Organising and deploying teaching resources**

In its approach to timetabling, the school prioritised its provision for students with special educational needs. This was done prior to allocating other teachers and classes and facilitated the development of a core team for special educational needs.

Participation in the pilot project highlighted the need for the school to build a core team of special education teachers. This has now become a priority for the school and the model provided more flexibility to do this.

Step 6:**Tracking, recording and reviewing progress**

Participation in the pilot project facilitated the school in looking at its system of planning, tracking and recording for students with special educational needs, especially students without professional assessments. As a result of their learning during the pilot, teachers worked on a new whole-school approach to planning, tracking and recording progress. During the pilot they found that the reassessment of students at the end of a unit of work or a specific intervention had enabled them to measure progress in a real way. They also found that the use of assessment data to inform learning plans made the process more meaningful for teachers, parents and students.

Appendix 4: Guidelines for Irish-medium⁵ post-primary schools to support the implementation of the revised allocation model.

The Context

Irish-medium education should provide for the needs of all students including those with special educational needs. Students 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 Irish-medium schools and in schools located in the Gaeltacht. These backgrounds should be recognised by schools and taken into account as supports are allocated. Schools should be mindful that, in the context of Irish-medium education, the development of student proficiency in both Irish and English literacy should be addressed in accordance with students' educational needs, as appropriate.

Where special educational needs in Irish are identified, schools are advised to provide supports in Irish so that students can access the entire curriculum (apart from English and foreign languages) through the medium of Irish. It is also advised that Irish-medium schools raise awareness among parents of the advantages of immersion education and of the importance of providing supports in the language of the school.

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

- Schools are reminded that, in the context of Irish-medium education, special educational needs in either or both languages should be identified and addressed.
- Schools should revise their assessment and special education policies to identify students' educational needs in Irish, English and Mathematics on the appropriate standardised tests. Results from these tests should be used by the school to identify needs and to guide the resources allocation process appropriately.
- Effective communication and engagement with parents are vitally important in moving towards a needs-based approach to the allocation of additional teaching resources. Accordingly, teachers providing support to students with special educational needs in Irish-medium schools should aim to be sufficiently fluent in Irish to be able to consult effectively with parents through the medium of Irish in relation to their child's needs and approaches to intervention, and to involve them in regular reviews of progress. The role of the special education teacher in a Gaeltacht context may also involve liaising with local primary schools and other agencies through the medium of Irish.
- Teachers in Irish-medium schools are advised to acquire the necessary proficiency in spoken and written Irish to enable them to assess students' needs, to set targets and to decide

⁵ The term *Irish-medium* is used in this appendix to denote both Gaelcholáistí and post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht.

on the most appropriate interventions and monitor and make a record of the progress of first-language speakers of Irish and learners with special educational needs through the medium of Irish; to provide in-class support through the medium of Irish and to enable them to seek and share information with the entire school staff through the medium of Irish.

- In developing their whole-school approaches to literacy, schools should consider both the social language and academic language needs of the student.
- Schools are advised to provide supports in Irish so that students can mediate the curriculum through Irish. It is considered good practice to provide support in Irish (the language of the school) and that special education teaching be delivered mostly through Irish.
- In the context of Irish-medium education, teachers could consider Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in the teaching of every subject: this would mean that Irish and the curricular subject could be taught simultaneously.
- All teachers in Irish-medium schools are encouraged, as required, to avail of tailored language education resource materials made available through *An Chomhairle um Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscoileanna (COGG)*.
- Irish-medium schools should communicate and collaborate at local level to identify their continuing professional development needs in 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 0014/2017, on Special Education Teaching Allocation, notes that in Irish-language schools the support provided for pupils by schools to assist with students' literacy development may be conducted in Irish or English, or a combination of both, as considered necessary by the school.

Examples of resources which may be useful in Irish-medium post-primary schools

Resource	Website
Inclusive Education Framework	http://ncse.ie/inclusive-education-framework
Resource Pack (Continuum of Support)	https://www.education.ie/ga/Scoileanna-Coláistí/Seirbhísí/An-tSeirbhís-Náisiúnta-Síceolaíochta-Oideachais-NEPS-/Acmhainni-Foilseachain.html
General Guidelines	http://www.sess.ie/search/node?keys=leagan&=Search
Graphic Organisers / General	http://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/Graphic%20Organiser%20Gaeilge%20Final.pdf
General	http://www.cogg.ie/eolaire-aiseanna-teagaisc/
General	http://www.jct.ie/leangaeilge/12lp/cpd_supports_core_workshops.php
Phonics	http://www.maradearfa.ie/ https://www.stmarys-belfast.ac.uk/aisaonad/Fonaic/Fonaic_na_Gaeilge.html
Literacy	http://www.breacadh.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=91&Itemid=99
Development of Literacy through games	http://www.breacadh.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=107&Itemid=118

Appendix 5: Looking at our school 2016 – A quality framework for post-primary schools

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

Domain: Learner Experiences

All students 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 students' 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 students

Appendix 6: Self-reflective questionnaire

Better Services, Better Outcomes for Students 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 Post-Primary Schools*:

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

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

- *Do we consider individual needs across a broad range, including academic, social, communication, emotional, and 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?

- *How well do we gather and use information from primary schools to ensure continuity in provision following transfer?*
- *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 students, parents, external professionals to assist with identification of needs?*

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

How can we improve?

How can we meet needs?

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

- *Are all teachers using a variety of teaching approaches 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 students?*

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

- *Do we use early-intervention programmes in our school?*
- *How do special education teachers support subject teachers with in-class supports, group and individual withdrawal?*
- *How do all staff work together to support students 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 students' priority learning needs?

- *How do we set targets and devise support plans for our students which identify needs and which can be monitored and recorded?*
- *How do we ensure that subject teachers have access to support plans for the purpose of differentiating their subject teaching to support students with special educational needs?*
- *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 students in monitoring progress?*
- *How do we communicate the progress our students 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 students 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 students with the greatest needs?

- *Could we quantify and organise our support for students 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 School Support and School Support Plus levels?*
- *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 students, monitoring progress and contributing to future plans for the students?

- *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 student having several different teachers)?*
 - *the particular needs of students?*
 - *Strategic pairing of subjects on the timetable (for example, pairing literacy, numeracy and practical subjects opposite more academic subjects) in order to provide students with mild/moderate disabilities with more opportunities to reinforce their learning in core subjects*

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 students with special educational needs?

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

- *How do we foster an inclusive approach to address the diversity of needs in our school?*
- *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 student engagement and participation in their learning and in the life of the school?*
- *How can we support student connectedness with their school, teachers and peers?*
- *Have we established procedures / protocols for liaising with support services?*
- *How can we establish a special educational needs team to help co-ordinate supports?*
- *How can we support the effective transition of students into our school and later to other education settings?*

What are our strengths?

What are our areas for improvement?

How can we improve?

Appendix 7: Parental involvement

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

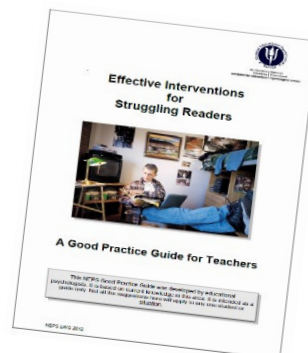
- How are parents consulted and informed about the nature of special education needs provision and policy in our school?
- How are parents consulted when special education supports (for example, Whole-school/Support for All, School Support/for Some and School Support Plus/for a Few) are being proposed 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?

Resource Documents

The following resources may be particularly helpful to post-primary schools

Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers:

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



Inclusive Education Framework:

ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/InclusiveEducationFramework_InteractiveVersion.pdf



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

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

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

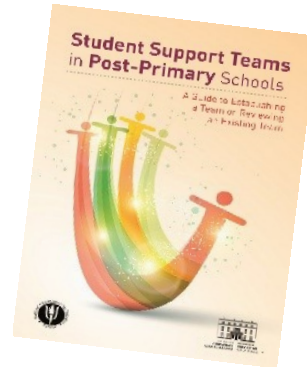
For a leaflet outlining how to support students in post-primary schools:

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



Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools

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



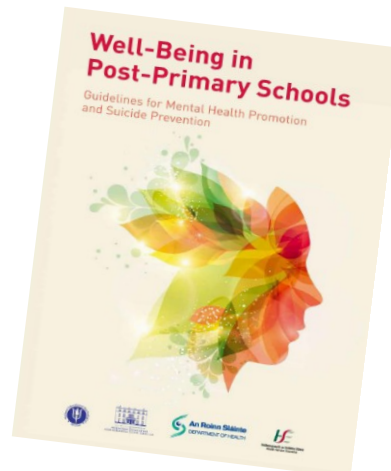
Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guide

www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/insp_inclusion_students_sp_ed_needs_pp_guide_lines_pdf



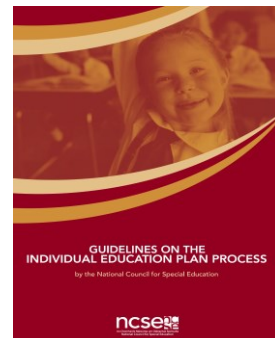
Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools

www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Well_Being_PP_Schools_Guidelines.pdf



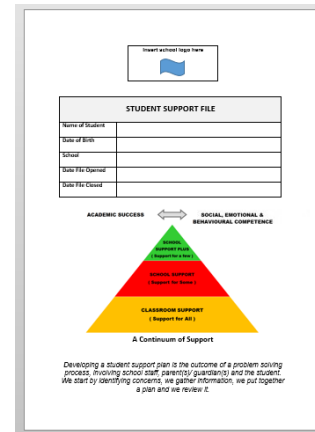
Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process

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



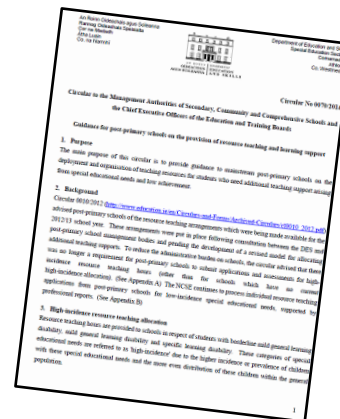
Student Support File

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



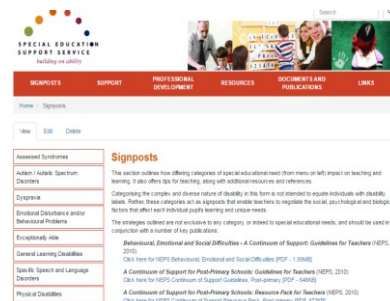
Circular 70/2014

www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Archived-Circulars/cl0070_2014.pdf



Signposts

www.sess.ie/documents-and-publications/government-agencies/special-education-support-service-signposts



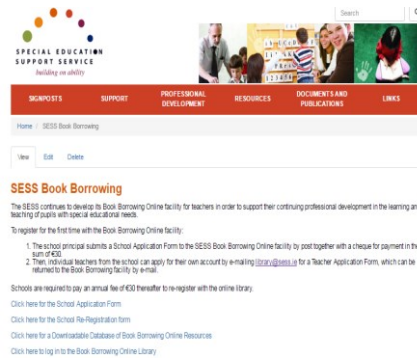
Metacognition in the classroom – webcast and resource

www.sess.ie/welcome-sess-elearning



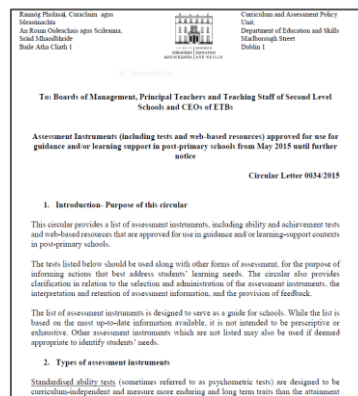
Book Borrowing Online Facility

www.sess.ie/sess-book-borrowing



Circular 0034/2015 Assessment Instruments (including tests and web-based resources) approved for guidance and / or learning support in post-primary schools from May 2015 until further notice

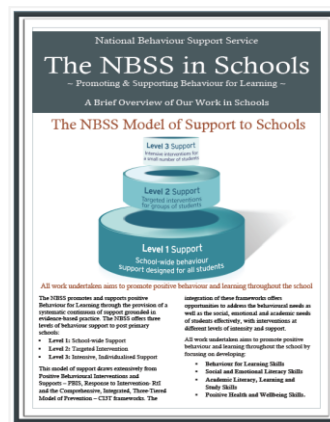
www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0034_2015.pdf



The following is an example of the range of information and resources available from the National Behaviour Support Service. Additional information and resources can be found at www.nbss.ie.

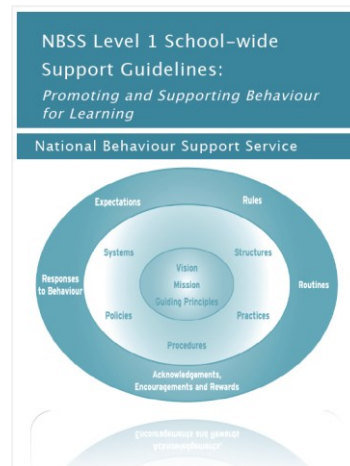
Our Work In Schools gives an overview of the work of the National Behaviour Support Service and the interventions, projects and initiatives schools implement in the areas of (a) Behaviour for Learning (b) Social & Emotional Literacy (c) Literacy, Language and Learning and (d) Wellbeing.

<https://www.nbss.ie/publications-categories/research-guidelines-articles>



NBSS Level 1 Guidelines looks at how to establish school-wide systems of support and develop a common approach to creating a safe, positive and effective learning environment for all learners.

<https://www.nbss.ie/model-of-support>



Learning Environment Checklist is designed to help teachers identify the areas within the school environment where behaviour may be causing concern. It covers a range of factors that may be influencing students' behaviour including whole school policies, physical environment, classroom organisation and individual teaching and learning approaches and strategies.

<http://www.nbss.ie/publications-categories/research-guidelines-articles?page=1>



Positive Behaviour Strategies handout contains practical strategies for dealing with frequent low-to-medium level disruption.

<https://www.nbss.ie/publications-categories/behaviour-for-learning-resources-publications>



NBSS Academic Literacy & Language Support provides a list of interventions and resources to develop key literacy, language and learning skills and strategies with class, group and individual students.

<https://www.nbss.ie/publications-categories/literacy-language-learning-resources-publications>

<https://www.nbss.ie/nbss-model-of-support/level-1-school-wide-support-for-all-students/literacy-learning-wellbeing>

NBSS Academic Literacy & Language Support

NBSS ACADEMIC LITERACY AND LANGUAGE SUPPORT

NBSS supports schools in developing effective school-wide, class, group and individual approaches to the teaching of key literacy, language and learning skills and strategies that can help students to become more purposeful, active readers, thinkers and learners.

Research points to the importance of recognising the links between behaviour and academic problems and coordinating systems for prevention and intervention in both areas. From NBSS work in post-primary schools it is clear that the strong connections between academic achievement and behaviour can mean that addressing challenges in one area can reduce difficulties arising in another.

NBSS LEVEL 1: SCHOOL-WIDE ACADEMIC LITERACY AND LANGUAGE SUPPORT

NBSS Level 1: School-wide academic literacy and language support aims to provide all students with research-evidenced practices, in reading, comprehension, vocabulary, writing and oral communication skills, as well as learning and study skills development. Embedding practices to acquire these skills across subject areas not only facilitates deep learning and understanding of subject content but also enables students to develop those skills and competencies necessary to achieve and succeed at second level and beyond.

Level 1: School-wide support is pro-active and preventative depending on the context of need. Based on our model on the Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports – PBIS, Response to Intervention – RtI and the Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-Tiered Model of Prevention – CIT frameworks, it is clear that there will typically be a minority of students (1-10%) for whom Level 1 support will not be sufficient and therefore will require targeted group interventions – NBSS Level 2. Additionally, our working experience and the international practice and literature demonstrates that within school communities there will be approximately 10% of the student population who will need intensive, individual interventions – NBSS Level 3. These interventions are tailored to students' specific needs and circumstances using procedures for planning, monitoring, evaluating, and reassessing the intervention.

NBSS LEVEL 2 AND 3: GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL ACADEMIC LITERACY AND LANGUAGE SUPPORT

We believe that an integrated system of supports can enhance students' success in both academics and behaviour. Poor academic skills in school can predict a range of behaviour problems. Students who have difficulty with reading may find challenging behaviour an effective means of escaping or avoiding reading or related activities. Given this interactive relationship, NBSS Level 2 support is about identifying, targeting, planning and monitoring short-term, focused interventions for small groups of students who could benefit from this work. This can involve building mastery of specific literacy and learning skills and strategies. Such an intervention might, for example address two or more of the five main components of reading – comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, phonics and phonemic awareness – or



National Behaviour Support Service Academic Literacy & Language Support