



Circular SP ED 09/04

Circular to Boards of Management and Principal Teachers of National Schools

Allocation of Resources for Pupils with Special Educational Needs in National Schools

Purpose

The purpose of this circular is to advise schools as to current progress regarding:

- a) the development of revised arrangements for the allocation of special education resources (SER); and
- b) the processing of SER applications.

Allocation System

In Circular 24/03, the Department stated its intention to engage in discussions with representative interests with a view to developing a weighted system of teacher allocations for special needs teaching. The allocation of an additional 350 teaching posts for special needs and a new system for the allocation of resources for special needs in primary schools have now been approved.

The new system will involve a general weighted allocation for all primary schools to cater for pupils with higher incidence special educational needs, (borderline mild and mild general learning disability and specific learning disability) and those with learning support needs (i.e. functioning at or below the 10th percentile on a standardised test of reading and/or mathematics) – please refer to Appendix 1 attached. It will also allow for individual allocations in respect of pupils with lower incidence special educational needs.

The weighted allocation will be made as follows:

- in the most disadvantaged schools (as per the Urban dimension of Giving Children an Even Break), a teacher of pupils with special educational needs will be allocated for every 80 pupils to cater for the subset of pupils with higher incidence special needs;

- in all boys schools, the ratio will be one teacher for every 140 pupils;
- in mixed schools, (or all girls schools with an enrolment of greater than 30% boys), one for every 150 pupils; and
- in all girls schools (including schools with mixed junior classes but with 30% or less boys overall), one for every 200 pupils.
- In addition, all schools will be able to apply for separate specific allocations in respect of pupils with lower incidence disabilities.

It is intended that the details of the new model will be set out in a comprehensive circular to issue to schools for the commencement of the new school year.

Applications for Resource Teacher Support

Applications for resource teacher support that were received between 15th February and 31st August 2003 for which a response is outstanding have now been considered. These applications have been reviewed by a dedicated team of members of the Department's Inspectorate and of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). The applications have been further considered in the context of the outcome of surveys of SER provision conducted over the past year and of the data submitted by schools as part of a nationwide census of such provision. It is intended that applicant schools will be notified of the outcome in their case in the coming week.

Applications received after 31st August 2003 are also being considered by NEPS. In those cases, it is intended that the applicant schools will be notified of the outcome as soon as possible in advance of the commencement of the next school year.

Filling of Posts and Panel Arrangements

The redeployment panels for the 2004/2005 school year issued in May. In order to ensure that the transition to the weighted system occurs with the minimum disruption, the Department has decided not to place additional teachers on redeployment panels during the current school year as a result of the implementation of the new weighted model.

The Department now proposes to devise clusters in respect of allocations to be made under the weighted model. Sanction for the filling of posts will be considered in the context of these clusters and the weighted arrangements. The Department will communicate with schools in this regard before the commencement of the coming school year. The communication to schools in the coming week will indicate the resources that schools may put in place immediately.

Applications for Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Support

Schools which have applied for SNA support will be advised of the outcome of their applications as soon as possible in advance of the next school year.

Account is being taken of existing levels of SNA allocation in schools. In cases where a reduction in the level of SNA support is proposed, there will be provision for schools to appeal, having regard to the care needs of the pupils concerned. Details of the appeals mechanism will be set out in the comprehensive circular referred to above.

SNAs due to leave schools

Schools are required to furnish immediately full details to SNA Payroll Section of SNAs whose contracts are due to terminate because the pupils they are supporting will be leaving the school at the end of the school year.

Closing Date for SER Applications

Applications for SER support for pupils in the low incidence categories for the commencement of the 2004/2005 school year should be submitted to Special Education Section **by 30th June, 2004**. Applications must be accompanied by the relevant professional reports – please refer to Appendix 2 attached for clarification on the report(s) required. (**Applications relating only to the disabilities listed in Appendix 2 should be submitted as the weighted allocation will enable support to be provided to pupils in other categories of disability.**) The parental consent form attached as Appendix 4 to Circular SP. ED. 24/03 may be used, where appropriate, and retained in the school.

Finally, the Department recognises the difficulties some schools have been experiencing while awaiting the outcome of applications for SER and the introduction of the weighted model. The process has been complex and time-consuming and we are endeavouring to have all aspects completed as quickly as possible. We wish to acknowledge the co-operation and support of schools in this regard.

Liam Hughes
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Special Education Section

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Appendix 1

Category of Special Educational Need	Incidence	Hours of Special Education Teaching (SET) Support Applicable per pupil
Physical Disability	Low	3
Hearing Impairment	Low	4
Visual Impairment	Low	3.5
Emotional Disturbance	Low	3.5
Severe Emotional Disturbance	Low	5
Borderline Mild General Learning Disability	High	Access to SET support – weighted model
Mild General Learning Disability	High	Access to SET support – weighted model
Moderate General Learning Disability	Low	3.5
Severe/Profound General Learning Disability	Low	5
Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders	Low	5
Specific Learning Disability	High	Access to SET support – weighted model
Assessed Syndrome	Low	3 to 5, depending on level of general learning disability (see note in Appendix 2)
Specific Speech and Language Disorder	Low	4
Multiple Disabilities	Low	5 (see note in Appendix 2)

Appendix 2

**Professional reports that are required
in respect of each category of disability**

- **Physical disability** – report from medical doctor or occupational therapist (psychological report may also be required)
- **Hearing impairment** – report from audiologist and verification of such reports from relevant visiting teacher (psychological report may also be required)
- **Visual impairment** – report from ophthalmic consultant and verification of such reports from relevant visiting teacher (psychological report may also be required)
- **Specific speech and language disorder** – psychological report **plus** speech and language therapist's report
- **Autistic spectrum disorder** – psychiatric report and psychological report
- **Moderate, severe or profound general learning disabilities** –psychological report
- **Emotional disturbance/severe emotional disturbance/behavioural problems** – report from psychiatrist or clinical psychologist and evidence that the child is receiving treatment
- **Multiple disabilities** – the name of each disability must be specified on application form SER 1. Children are eligible for additional resources under this heading if the appropriate professional reports confirm the existence of two or more distinct disabilities from the above list.
- **Assessed syndromes** – children with such syndromes will be eligible for additional educational resources if the psychological and/or other specialist report confirms the existence of one of the low incidence disabilities listed above