



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Special Education Teaching Support in Primary and Post Primary Schools

Quick Reference Guide for Parents/Guardians



Overview

Every child and young person should experience a sense of belonging and feel valued as a member of their school community. This is achieved through meaningful participation in all aspects of school life.

All schools provide additional support for children and young people with learning, communicating, understanding feelings and emotions, taking part in school activities, or interactions with other children or young people in the school.

All children and young people with special education teaching needs have the right to access education in a mainstream class,

The primary support for all children and young people in a mainstream class is the class or subject teacher including children and young people with special education teaching needs.

Where parents/guardians, children and young people, and teachers agree that extra support is needed, this may be provided by a special education teacher.

Special education teaching support is guided by eight key principles.



How is additional support from a special education teacher determined?

Any additional support requirement that may be agreed for your child is done on collaborative basis between the teachers, you and your child. Sometimes other professionals may also be involved.

The special education teaching level of assistance your child may require is based on the needs of the child or young person, and needs may change over time as children grow and develop. The Student Support Plan outlined below is the means to ensure that they receive the right support at the right time.

This might include extra support in the classroom, extra help from a special education teacher, small group teaching, or one to one teaching support from a special education teacher.

Schools use the *Continuum of Support* to guide them on how best to provide additional support to children or young people. This means children and young people can access the level of support they need.

The *Continuum of Support* is a framework used by schools to identify children and young people's strengths and needs, plan appropriate supports and monitor progress. The *Continuum of Support* helps to ensure flexible and timely allocation of supports, so that those with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest level of support.



What is a Student Support File?

The Student Support File is used to record information in relation to your child's strengths, interests, and needs. It is also used to record their progress and to identify any changes that might need to be made to the support being provided in school.

What is a Student Support Plan?

The Student Support Plan is a specific plan for your child which outlines their strengths, interests and needs, as well as the priority needs that have been agreed as the focus for additional support in school.

The Student Support Plan is developed in consultation with the relevant class teacher, special education teacher/s, parents/guardians. Sometimes other professionals may also be involved. Your child's views are central to this process.

Student Support Plans should be reviewed regularly, to ensure that targets and teaching supports continue to address the identified priority learning needs of your child.





Does my child need a diagnosis to access special education teaching support in a mainstream class?

Children or young people do not require an assessment report, or a diagnosis, to access additional support from a special education teacher in mainstream primary and post primary schools.

However, it is very helpful for parents/guardians to share any additional information with their child's school, including any professional report/s. A collaborative approach, involving the child or young person, teachers, parents/guardians and sometimes other professionals, will help identify strengths, needs and supports which may be required in the school environment.

What if I am not happy with the support being provided for my child or young person?

If you have concerns, you should first discuss how your child's needs are being met with their class teacher/subject teacher and/or special education teacher. You could also talk to the school principal.

Your local National Council for Special Education (NCSE) SENO (Special Educational Needs Organiser) is available to support you and the school in these matters. SENO contact details are available on the NCSE website (www.NCSE.ie)

Where you continue to have concerns and wish to follow the school's formal complaints procedure, a copy of this procedure will be available for parents/legal guardians on the school website and/or on request from the school.





Does each school get a Special Education Teaching allocation?

Every primary and post-primary school receives an allocation of special education teaching resources to support children and young people with special educational needs. These resources are allocated to schools based on an educational needs profile of each individual school.

The number of special education teachers in mainstream schools is at the highest level ever with almost 15,000 teachers allocated across primary and post-primary.

Where schools have a concern in relation to their level of special education teaching resources they should engage with their local NCSE SENO and following this may submit a review application. If the review identifies additional need the resources will be allocated to the school.

This means that each school is provided with the resources necessary to enrol children and young people with special education teaching needs into mainstream classes in line with the school's admission policy.

Guidelines to schools for supporting children and young people with Special Education need

For more detailed information the department has issued extensive guidelines to primary and post-primary schools to assist them in providing support to all children and young people in mainstream classes who have special education teaching needs.

The detailed guidelines can be accessed at the following links

Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Classes

Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Young People with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Classes

Additionally, each of the above are supported by Indicators of Effective Practice along with examples to help them. These can also be accessed via the above links.

