

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Rannog Oideachais Speisialta
Cor na Madadh
Átha Luain
Contae na hIarmhí



Department of Education and Skills
Special Education Section
Cornamaddy
Athlone
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Circular No 0013/2017

**Circular to the Management Authorities of all Mainstream Primary Schools
Special Education Teaching Allocation**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Circular is to advise schools of the revised allocation process for Special Education Teachers to mainstream primary schools from the 2017/18 school year.

This revised allocation process will replace the General Allocation Model and English as Additional Language Support (GAM/EAL) scheme, whereby a general allocation of resources had previously been allocated to primary schools annually.

It will also replace the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) allocation process which provided additional resource teaching supports to schools, to support pupils who had been assessed as having Low Incidence disabilities, in accordance with DES Circular 02/2005.

The new Special Education Teaching allocation will provide a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on that school's educational profile.

This single allocation is being made to allow schools to provide additional teaching support for all pupils who require such support in their schools.

Schools will deploy resources based on each pupil's individual learning needs.

The manner in which the profiled allocations have been developed for each school is set out in Sections 6 and 7 of this Circular.

The new allocation model will ensure that schools will have greater certainty as to the resources that will be available to them to provide additional teaching to support the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs, on an ongoing basis. This will allow schools to better plan and timetable for this provision. The earlier allocation process will also allow schools to plan in advance of the school year.

The new model will provide a greater level of autonomy for schools in how to manage and deploy additional teaching support within their school, based on the individual learning needs of pupils, as opposed to being based primarily on a diagnosis of disability.

In order to support schools in how they should identify and provide for the learning needs of pupils, this Circular is being accompanied by *Guidelines for Schools* on the organisation, deployment and use of special education teachers to address the need of pupils with special educational needs.

The *Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools* has been developed by the National Educational Psychological Services, the Inspectorate and Special Education Section.

2. Support for the Introduction of the New Allocation Model

Significant additional resources are being made available to provide extra Special Education Teaching posts for allocation to schools from September 2017, in order to support the introduction of this model.

These additional resources will assist schools to transition from the existing allocation system that has been in place in recent years, to the new profiled allocation model, with minimal disruption.

The additional provision which is being made to support the new model will ensure that no school will receive an allocation of special education teaching resources, arising from the introduction of the new allocation model, which is less than the combined allocation the school received under their GAM/EAL and NCSE allocations for the 2016/17 school year.

These resources will ensure that all schools can continue to meet the special educational and learning support needs of all children in their school.

Schools which are due to receive increased allocations from September 2017, under the revised model, which is based on their school profiles, will receive additional allocations from September 2017 and retain these allocations until the next re profiling takes place.

Schools which would have nominally been due to receive reduced allocations from September 2017, under the revised allocation process, based on their school profiles, will maintain their existing 2016/17 school year allocations and retain these allocations for the course of the model, until the next profiling takes place.

The additional resources being provided to support this model means that no school will lose special educational teaching resources, on the introduction of this model, while extra resources will be placed in schools where the profile indicates that needs are greatest.

Any future adjustments to the allocations for schools will take place on a graduated basis, which will take account of changes to school enrolments, and the pupil population, including the number of pupils in the complex needs category, since the initial allocations were developed.

3. Revision of Profiles

In recommending the introduction of a new model for allocating additional teaching supports to schools the NCSE Working Group Report (2014) recommended that the additional teaching supports would be left in place initially for a two year period.

The allocations which are being made will therefore initially remain in place for a minimum of two years, following which, revised profiled allocations will be due to be made to schools from September 2019.

4. Background

The current system for allocating additional teaching resources to schools, based on valid applications for additional teaching support for pupils with special educational needs, in mainstream primary schools, was originally implemented in 1999 (*Circular 08/99*).

This system allocated varying levels of resource teaching hours to schools to support individual pupils with assessed special educational needs. The scheme was reviewed and revised in 2002 and 2003 through *Circulars 08/02* and *24/03*. Under the terms of these circulars, pupils with assessed learning disabilities in ordinary classes in mainstream primary schools were allocated resource teaching support in accordance with the level of support applicable for that category of disability.

Special Education Circular 02/05 introduced a General Allocation Model for all mainstream primary schools. This provided a generalised system of allocation of supports, for pupils with learning support needs, and for pupils with certain categories of high incidence special educational needs, as defined by *Circular 02/05*. Schools who had enrolled pupils with Low Incidence special educational needs (as defined by *Circular 02/05*), continued to receive such allocations from the NCSE in addition to their GAM allocations.

From the 2012/13 school year onwards, the General Allocation Model was expanded to also include a general provision for English as an Additional Language (EAL) Support as set out in DES Circular 007/2012. Schools with high concentrations of pupils requiring EAL support also received additional teaching allocations to make provision for such concentrated needs and this provision will remain in place. General Allocation Model/EAL allocations were, since the 2012/13 school year, subsequently updated annually for schools each year as part of the staffing arrangements for primary schools for each school year.

The new allocation model will provide allocations based on the profiled needs of each school, which will replace the existing system of a GAM/EAL allocation for schools along with NCSE allocated Low Incidence allocations, where relevant.

This Circular therefore replaces DES Circulars SP Ed 02/05, 08/99, 24/03, and 08/02. It also replaces Circulars 30/2011 which made further adjustments to the scheme and DES Circular 07/2012, which introduced revised arrangements of the General Allocation Model as part of the Primary School Staffing arrangements for the 2012/13 school year, and subsequent annual Primary School Staffing Arrangement Circulars thereafter, the most recent of which was 07/ 2016.

5. National Council for Special Education Policy Advice

The National Council for Special Education has a statutory function, under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, to provide the Minister for Education and Skills with policy advice in relation to the education of children and others with disabilities or special educational needs.

The NCSE provided policy advice in 2013 entitled ‘Supporting Students with Special Education Needs in Schools’ http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Supporting_14_05_13_web.pdf This policy advice concluded that elements of the existing model for allocating Special Needs resource teaching supports were potentially inequitable.

In particular, the NCSE reported that:

- The existing allocation system was inequitable, as some children could experience delays in accessing support because of delays in accessing assessments which are required for the allocation of Resource Teaching hours.
- The General Allocation Model, which is used to allocate Learning Support teachers, is inequitable as it takes little account of the differing needs of different schools, as allocations are made on the basis of the number of mainstream teachers in each school.
- There is a real risk that children are being diagnosed as having a special educational need for resource allocation purposes rather than such a diagnosis being required for medical reasons.
- There is a spectrum of ability and disability within every category of special educational need. The current system allocates the same level of support for pupils within certain categories of special educational needs even though one pupil may have a greater need for support than another, with the same disability.

Following the publication of this policy advice, the NCSE established a Working Group to develop proposals for a new model based on the policy advice. In 2014, the Working Group published its Report: *Delivery for Students with Special; Educational Needs: A Proposed New Model for Allocating Teaching Resources for Students with Special Educational Needs (2014)* http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Allocating_resources_1_5_14_Web_accessible_version_FINAL.pdf

This report recommended that the current Special Needs Teacher allocation model should be replaced by a new model to allocate supports on the basis of the profiled educational needs of schools.

It proposed that the allocation of additional teaching supports to schools be, in future, based on a school's educational profile, comprised of two components:

- Baseline component provided to every mainstream school to support inclusion, assistance with learning difficulties and early intervention, and

- A school educational profile component, which takes into account:
 - The number of pupils with complex needs enrolled to the school.
 - The learning support needs of pupils as evidenced by standardised test results.
 - The social context of the school including disadvantage and gender.

The combination of a baseline allocation based on school enrolments and a profiled allocation will give a fairer allocation for each school which recognises that all schools need an allocation for special needs support, but which provides a graduated allocation which takes into account the level of need, whether future or predicted, and pupil mixture in each school.

The allocations, which are being provided for schools from September 2017, are based on the profiled allocations for each school, which are calculated as follows:

6. Baseline component provided to every mainstream primary school to support inclusion, assistance with learning difficulties, and early intervention

The Working Group recommended that a baseline allocation of teaching resources to all mainstream schools, allocated in line with overall enrolment numbers, should be a core component of the new model.

This baseline allocation will ensure that all schools have a minimum allocation of teaching resources to support inclusion, assistance with learning difficulties and early intervention. The baseline component will support schools in having whole school policies and practices in place to minimise the emergence of low achievement and learning difficulties. The baseline is provided in addition to the resources calculated under the other elements used in establishing the school's educational profile.

The baseline allocation will also ensure that schools can continue to enrol and support pupils with additional needs over the course of time that the profile remains in place and pending any review of the schools profile.

The Baseline allocation of each school profile is made up of 20% of the total number of Resource/Learning Support posts in the system allocated to schools for the 2016/17 school year, redistributed on an equal basis, proportionately, between all schools, based on each school's enrolment numbers for the 2015/16 school year, which is the most complete recent enrolment data available.

It should be noted that the baseline allocation under the new model cannot be compared to the general allocation received under the old system. This is an entirely new and different model, and not simply an adjustment of the old model. For a complete overview of their additional teaching allocation under the new model, schools must consider their baseline allocation, alongside the allocation they receive under the educational profile component, which gives them their total allocation.

The baseline also does not represent 20% of your individual school's allocation from last year, but 20% of the total Learning Support and Resource Teaching allocations, distributed equally between schools, according to school enrolment numbers.

7. School Educational Profile.

7.1 The number of pupils with complex needs enrolled to the school.

For the introduction of the new allocation model, from September 2017, the NCSE 'Low Incidence' allocations which had been made for each school during the preceding 2016/17 school year, have been used to establish the complex needs component of the new model for each school.

These allocations include the additional allocations for Resource Teaching support made to schools in 2015 and 2016 to support pupils with Down syndrome who were in the mild general learning difficulty range and not previously included in the Low Incidence allocations.

This means that on the introduction of the new allocation model and until allocations are reviewed, no school will receive an allocation, for the support of pupils with complex needs, which is less than

the allocation they had received to support pupils with Low Incidence special educational needs during the 2016/17 school year.

This also means that no allocation for pupils made by the NCSE will be removed from schools as long as that pupil remains in the school.

Whereas schools will have greater discretion as to how they can distribute resources under the new model, based on the individual needs of pupils, no reduction in allocations have been made to schools in respect of any pupils who were previously in receipt of a Low Incidence special needs allocation in that school.

A model for the identification of pupils with complex needs in future is being devised by the NCSE, in consultation with the Health Service Executive and National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS)

This model will take account of the decision making process and qualification criteria for the selection of children for access to HSE Children Disability Network Teams.

For the purposes of the introduction of the new allocation model from September 2017, the existing 2016/17 school year NCSE 'Low Incidence' allocations are being maintained to provide for the complex needs component of schools profiles.

For the next re-profiling of the model, the Complex Needs category will be the existing low incidence allocations for schools, less any leavers included in this category, plus additional allocations for any new complex needs category pupils, over the period of time since the first school profiles were developed, to the point of the next re-profiling of the model. In this context, the requirement for schools to advise school leavers to the NCSE will remain a feature of the revised arrangements.

7.2 Standardised Test Results

The NCSE working group report considered that standardised test data provides a broad and objective basis to establish differences between schools in levels of relative overall pupils educational achievement.

The report recommended that standardised test results should be used in building the educational profile of schools, as they link directly to the educational achievement of pupils in schools.

The use of standardised test scores will ensure that the school's educational profile includes pupils with low achievement in literacy and numeracy including those pupils whose special educational needs affect their learning achievement levels.

The use of standardised test data means that the school profile considers not just the number of pupils in the school, but also the learning needs of the pupils in that school, as evidenced by attainment levels in literacy and numeracy.

The Working Group recommended that for the purposes of devising a school's educational profile, standardised test result data for Mathematics and for English, and/or Irish, should be used to represent pupil attainment in literacy and numeracy.

In 2014 and 2015 all primary school pupils in 2nd, 4th and 6th class completed tests in English and Maths.¹

Schools have been profiled according to test results for pupils achieving at or below STen 4 in national standardised tests in English and Maths.

In developing the school's educational profile, the highest weighting has been assigned for the percentage of pupils who register a STen score of 1, or who were exempted from the test, with graduated weightings then being given for the percentage of pupils who register a STen score of 2, 3, and 4.

The number of pupils in the lower standardised test grades indicates the extent of learning needs in the school. The allocation which is being made to the school recognises this.

The learning needs which are indicated by lower standardised test score may arise for a number of reasons. For example a school may have large numbers of pupils who have special educational needs, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, or pupils who do not have English as a first language.

¹ Junior or Infant schools who do not have 2nd class pupils have therefore not completed 2nd class standardised tests. For such Junior or Infant schools, the 2nd class standardised test scores from pupils in their associated or feeder school have been used to apply a standardised text value for these schools.

The previous generalised allocation model, based primarily on school size, did not take account of the learning needs of pupils, or of the profile of pupils in the school. It was for this reason that the NCSE recommended that a profiled allocation be made for schools, which included consideration of standardised test scores.

The allocations which are being made to schools for the standardised test score component therefore reflects the actual level of learning needs in each school.

In calculating this element of schools' educational profile, in order to ensure that schools are not penalised for improving performance in the short term, an aggregate of primary school standardised test results over 2013/14 and 2014/15 has been used for the first phase of the introduction of the new allocation model.

For future re-profiling of the model, updated data will be used to create an aggregate of the school's learning support needs, which will ensure that an accurate picture of a school's profile over a period of time is developed and that school's are also not penalised for improvements or fluctuations in schools performance over a short time.

In order to further ensure that schools are not penalised for improving performance generally, no resources provided to schools under the current model will be removed from the school on the introduction of the new model.

The use of standardised test data means that the school profile considers the learning needs pupils are performing at a level represented in the bottom 16% of the pupil population, as evidenced by national attainment data.

In this context, schools with strong performance on standardised tests should have no concerns on the impact of this on their profiles. In calculating values for this component, no consideration is given to scores above Standard Ten scores 1 to 4. Effectively, values are only accorded to the 16% of pupils who would ordinarily fall within, or are on the margins of, the learning support needs category.

Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools

In many Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools, Irish may be the first language of pupils attending the school. Some such schools also provide additional teaching support for pupil literacy through Irish.

Accordingly, for Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools, the standardised test scores in both Irish and English have been used to calculate the element of the school profile relevant to pupil attainment in literacy.

In Irish language schools the support provided for pupils by schools to assist with pupils literacy development may be conducted in Irish or English, or a combination of both, as considered necessary by the school.

7.3 Social Context: Disadvantage

The NCSE Working Group noted that a school's social context can contribute strongly to the level of learning needs that pupils have in a school.

The Working Group noted that drawing on 'Growing Up in Ireland' data, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) analysed how the prevalence of special educational needs varies across social class and income groups. They found that the percentage of pupils reported by teachers to have special educational needs was significantly greater for those in schools serving disadvantaged areas.

On the basis of available research, the Working Group concluded that the use of a school's social context is valid in the development of a school's educational profile, as the socioeconomic status of pupils is linked to the incidence of certain types of special educational needs.

The profiled allocation for schools therefore contains an allocation to take account of social context. This has been calculated by conducting a social context survey of primary schools in 2014. Future reviews will take account of updated data and will be guided by the best available information sources at the time of the review.

Though recognising that all schools would not be able to have specific detail regarding all of the questions asked in relation to their pupil populations, schools were asked to provide their best possible estimates in relation to the questions in the survey, in order to ensure that as accurate as possible a social context allocation component of any revised allocation model could be developed for each school.

The data which schools were requested to return as part of the survey was non-personal, anonymised data. Schools were not asked to return data in relation to the social circumstances of individual pupils.

7.4 Social Context: Gender

The Working Group report noted that international evidence clearly shows that there is a higher incidence of special educational needs among boys. It states that ‘gender is an important factor in determining the educational profile of a school for the purpose of allocating additional resources to support pupils with special educational needs’.

Gender had previously been taken account of as a feature of the General Allocation Model. Under the GAM, differing allocation ratios applied for boys, girls, mixed, and disadvantaged schools as set out in DES Circular 02/05.

The new allocation model takes account of gender differentials by giving a small weighting for gender based on the number of boys attending each school. The weighting for each school will therefore take account of the gender profile i.e. number of boys attending.

7.5 English Additional Language Support (EAL)

The General Allocation Model for primary schools, since 2012/13, has contained an element of provision for all schools to be able to provide additional teaching support for literacy issues arising from English Additional Language (EAL) needs.

The new allocation model retains and reflects this provision and provides that all schools will have a basic allocation to assist pupils who have learning and literacy difficulties, including those arising from English Additional Language (EAL) needs.

The standardised test scores on which part of the profile is based will reflect where pupils have literacy problems. The social context survey for primary schools also took some account of EAL needs in schools.

The profiled allocation for schools therefore takes account of EAL needs in schools.

7.6 Additional Allocations for Schools with High Concentrations of Pupils that require Language Support (EAL)

Where schools can demonstrate that they have high concentrations of pupils requiring EAL they can continue to apply for **Additional Allocations for Schools with High Concentrations of Pupils that require Language Support (EAL)** in accordance with the procedures set out in the primary school staffing schedule for the 2017/18 school year.

8. Total Profiled Allocation

The total profiled allocation which is being made to each school is designed to ensure that all schools have a set level of special education teaching support in order to provide additional teaching support for all pupils in their school, including those who may enrol in future, who have identified needs.

Pupils under the new allocation model will be identified by schools for additional teaching support in accordance with the Continuum of Support Guidelines, and the Guidelines which accompany this Circular. Teachers and School Principals will use their professional judgement in applying the principles and practices set out in the Continuum of Support Guidelines: https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_special_needs_guidelines.pdf

The inclusion of a baseline allocation as part of the overall profiled allocation is also designed to ensure that schools can continue to enrol pupils who have additional learning needs.

Details of how the total profile allocation is applied for the total primary school sector is detailed in Appendix 1.

9. Enrolment of Pupils with Special Educational Needs

The significant additional resources which have been provided to assist the introduction of this new model have ensured that all schools, whose school profiles indicated significant additional needs for September 2017, will receive additional allocations.

Schools, who would have been due to receive reduced allocations, based on their school profiles, have had these losses protected to ensure that they receive allocations equivalent to their 2016/17 special educational needs allocations. These additional allocations are being provided on the basis that no child will be refused enrolment on the grounds that they do not have sufficient teaching resources to meet that child's needs.

In circumstances where schools refuse to enrol children, on the basis of their special educational teaching needs, and notwithstanding any other legislative provisions currently in place, or forthcoming, the Department of Education and Skills reserves the right to review the allocations of Special Educational Needs Teaching Support Allocations made to schools who do not enrol such pupils.

10. Medical and Professional Assessments

Medical and other professional assessments should, where available, continue to be used to help explain, and provide a better understanding of a child's needs, the nature of difficulties, and to inform relevant interventions. Such assessment, or diagnosis of a particular condition will no longer be necessary for pupils to access educational teaching resources in schools, nor will there be a requirement for schools to submit assessments annually in order to apply for additional teaching resources.

This will create a very significant administrative saving for schools who will no longer have to source assessments or make applications annually to the NCSE in order to ensure the provision of additional teaching supports in their school.

It will end delays in allocations. Pupils will no longer experience delays in receiving reports which could, in the past, deny a child access to necessary learning supports.

Schools will maintain their full school profiles, pending review of the profiles, regardless of whether some pupils with assessments of special educational needs either leave or enter the school over the period for which the profiled allocation remains in place.

It is expected that the number of leavers in each school, who had previously been in receipt of learning support or resource teaching support, will be broadly balanced by any new entrants that have enrolled over the same period.

School profiles will remain constant over this period recognising normal pupil movement over the life of the model.

Profiles will not be updated over the course of the initial two years of the model to take account of new enrolments or the newly diagnosed needs of pupils attending the school, other than as noted in Section 11 in relation to appeals.

Any differentials in the school profile will be accounted for at the next review of school profiles.

The school may allocate additional teaching support to pupils where it has identified learning needs using school based assessment, the NEPS Continuum of Support and the Guidelines provided to schools. Schools can also draw on professional reports where available.

Under the new model, a child should receive additional teaching support based on their identified learning needs, rather than primarily on diagnosis of disability

11. Appeal Process

The NCSE will be notifying schools of the allocations in March 2017 by letter and website publication. Details of an appeal process will be set out as part of this notification.

12. Identification of Pupils for Support

The Guidelines which accompany this circular set out the manner in which schools should identify pupils for additional teaching support in schools.

In summary, in identifying pupils for support, schools should take into account the following:

- Standardised tests can be used to screen and identify pupils' performance in reading and mathematics. Those pupils performing below the 10th percentile should be prioritised for support in literacy and numeracy.

- Pupils who were previously in receipt of supplementary teaching from a resource or learning support teacher and who continue to experience significant learning difficulties.
- Pupils who are identified as having significant needs through a process of ongoing assessment and intervention as set out in the Continuum of Support Process (DES, 2010). This will be evidenced through school-based assessment of attainment, and behavioural, social and emotional functioning and ongoing monitoring of learning outcomes. Schools should also take into account needs set out in professional reports, where available.
- Pupils with mild or transient educational needs including those associated with speech and language difficulties, social or emotional problems, or co-ordination or attention control difficulties. Pupils who have specific learning disabilities.
- Pupils with significant Special Educational Needs. For example, pupils with significant learning, behavioural, emotional, physical and sensory needs. These pupils need additional teaching support because they require highly individualised and differentiated learning programmes that are tailored to their needs.
- Schools should also carefully consider the needs of other pupils who may present with a range of learning whose interaction may present a significant barrier to the pupils' learning and ability to access the curriculum.
- Pupils who have additional literacy or language learning needs including those pupils who need additional English Additional language Support.

The intensity of additional support that is provided for pupils with low achievement and pupils with special educational needs should be based on their needs and should be provided differentially through the continuum of support process.

13. The Role of the Classroom Teacher

Section 22 (1) of the Education Act 1998 states the primacy of the teacher in the education and personal development of pupils in schools. The classroom teacher is responsible for educating all pupils in his/her

class, including any pupil with a special educational need. The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all pupils in his/her classroom, including pupils with special educational needs.

It is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to ensure that each pupil is taught in a stimulating and supportive classroom environment where all pupils feel equal and valued.

In line with Continuum of Support Guidelines, the class teacher may gather information through formal and informal means, with a view to informing interventions. The classroom teacher also has a central role in identifying and responding to pupils with additional needs including differentiating the curriculum as appropriate. These responses will be informed and assisted by collaboration with colleagues, parents/guardians and others such as the school's NEPS psychologist and the local Special Educational Needs Organiser.

The classroom teacher will also make specific accommodations for a pupil within the class as a result of concerns about a pupil's progress, application, communication, behaviour or interaction with peers and the development of a programme of differentiated instruction for that pupil.

14. Additional Teaching Support

Many children require additional teaching support in schools. In such circumstances, the classroom teacher will be supported by Special Educational Needs Teachers, who will have access to additional training in the area of special education, and who will work closely with the class teacher to provide additional teaching support for children with special educational needs.

The classroom teacher, in consultation with the Special Education Teacher as required, will consider ways in which the curriculum can be differentiated or adapted to suit the needs of individual pupils. This may also involve identifying the most appropriate teaching strategies and programmes to meet the child's needs, and deciding which additional teaching supports are required. Parents should normally be consulted as part of this process.

15. Type of Teaching provided

Additional Teaching support can be provided in a variety of ways. The special education teacher might work in the classroom with the class teacher or withdraw pupils in small groups and/or individually for a period of time (depending upon the nature of pupils needs) for intensive teaching of key skills.

The range of teaching supports should include team-teaching, small group teaching and, where necessary, individualised teaching to address specific learning needs.

Individualised learning needs can be addressed in a variety of ways and should not be solely equated with withdrawal from class for one-to-one or group tuition. Configurations of team-teaching have been shown to provide an appropriate model for engaging with individual needs in the collective setting of the classroom. As necessary, this can be combined with withdrawal for intensive teaching of specific skills, based on level of need.

The provision of support for small groups of pupils, or use of in class support teaching for a number of pupils, as opposed to primarily one to one teaching, also means that qualifying pupils will often be able to receive more support than they otherwise would have done.

16. Single Allocation

The new Special Educational Post is a combined post which allows schools to provide for all of their special education teaching needs from within this single allocation.

The distinction between what were previously Learning Support Posts, or Learning Support/Resource Teaching/EAL posts under GAM, and NCSE allocated Resource Teaching Posts will no longer apply from September 2017.

Schools will now have a combined, single special educational needs teaching allocation.

This will reduce the amount of inter school post sharing, or clustering. It will further reduce the administrative burden on schools and the amount of travelling time between schools.

As such, the stipulation contained in DES Circular 07/2012 (and subsequent annual staffing arrangement Circulars) that schools are not permitted to combine GAM/EAL and NCSE approved resource hours together into full-time posts, **will no longer apply**.

17. Rounding

For schools who are receiving an additional allocation under the new allocation process, allocations are rounded to units of 2.5 hours, in order to simplify allocations for schools.

Schools who are not receiving additional allocations will maintain their existing 2016/17 allocations.

18. Status of Posts

All full-time Special Education Teaching (S.E.T.) posts, both full-time in one school and base posts for S.E.T. clusters are permanent posts.

Part-time hours remaining in a school that are not clustered can only be filled in a temporary capacity.

19. Registration Requirements for Special Education Teaching Posts

As set out in Section 16 above, under the New Allocation Model, there will no longer be a distinction between Learning Support and Resourcing Teaching Posts. These provisions are being merged into a single Special Education Teacher post.

In recognition that under the previous allocation model differing qualification criteria existed, for the introduction of the new allocation model, and to ensure continuity of provision, fully registered teachers or teachers previously probated in a restricted setting may be appointed to the post of Special Education Teachers.

Schools should make all effort to ensure that where possible fully registered teachers or teachers previously probated in a restricted setting are appointed. Such teachers may hold Teaching

Council registration under Route 1 Primary (formerly Regulation 2 Primary) or Route 4 Other (formerly Regulation 3 Montessori & Other Categories).

It is important to ensure that pupils with the greatest needs are supported by teachers who have the relevant expertise, and who can provide continuity of support. Therefore, if it is not possible to fill the post of Special Education Teacher with a fully registered teacher, or a teacher previously probated in a restricted setting, teachers with outstanding conditions, may be appointed where they are deemed to be the most appropriately qualified. In these circumstances, the acquired professional development and expertise of teachers, including where teachers have attained recognised qualifications in special education, should be taken into account.

20. Filling of Posts

Special Education Teaching posts should be filled in accordance with the published staffing and redeployment arrangements which will be set out in the Primary School Staffing Schedule for the 2017/18 school year.

21. Deployment of Teachers within the School

In addition to the qualification requirements noted in Section 19 above, the acquired professional development and expertise of teachers, including where teachers have attained recognised qualifications in special education, should be taken into account by the principal when allocating teaching responsibilities, in order to ensure that pupils with the greatest needs are supported by teachers who have the relevant expertise, and who can provide continuity of support.

22. Utilisation of additional teaching resources for pupils with special educational needs

The effective inclusion of pupils with special educational needs requires a whole-school approach which enables schools to meet the diverse needs of their pupil population in an efficient and timely manner.

Resources to support pupils should be deployed in accordance with the Guidelines being provided to accompany this Circular.

Schools should ensure that the additional Special Educational Needs Teaching supports are used in their entirety to support pupils identified with special educational needs, learning support needs, and additional literacy needs such as English Additional Language Support.

The additional Teaching Resources which are being provided under this model cannot be used for mainstream class teaching, or to reduce the pupil teacher ratio in mainstream classes, or to provide additional subjects for pupils who do not have special educational needs.

In cases where there is misuse of Special Educational Needs Teaching resources and where these resources are being used for purposes other than intended, as set out in this Circular, the Department reserves the right to review the allocations of Special Educational Needs Teaching Supports which have been made to those schools.

23. Coordination Activities

The allocation includes provision for the conducting of planning and co-ordination activities required to ensure the most effective and optimal use of the special educational needs teaching hours provided to schools, for children. The effective use of resources will be dependent upon effective timetabling practices that ensures continuity and avoids undue fragmentation of provision.

The extent of co-ordination time required to be used by schools will vary depending on school size, the number of pupils requiring additional teaching support, and the number of teachers providing this support. Co-ordination time, should however, be kept to a minimum in order to ensure that the most teaching time that can be provided for pupils can be given to those pupils.

24. Educational Planning

Educational planning is an essential element of a whole-school approach to meeting pupils' needs. Educational plans should be differentiated in line with a pupils' needs. A pupils support plan should include clear, measurable learning targets, and specify the resources and interventions that will be used to address student needs in line with the Continuum of Support process. Individualised support plans for pupils should be developed through a collaborative process involving relevant teachers, parents/guardians, the pupils themselves and outside professionals, as necessary. The individualised planning process should

include regular reviews of learning targets as part of an ongoing cycle of assessment, target setting, intervention and review.

Guidelines for schools on educational planning and monitoring of outcomes and the manner in which they should conduct educational planning, through the Student Support File, are contained in the Guidelines for primary Schools: Supporting Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools.

25. Supports for Schools

Additional support and guidance will be available for school management and staff from Department agencies and services such as the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), and the DES Inspectorate.

If you have any queries with regards to this Circular please contact special_education@education.gov.ie

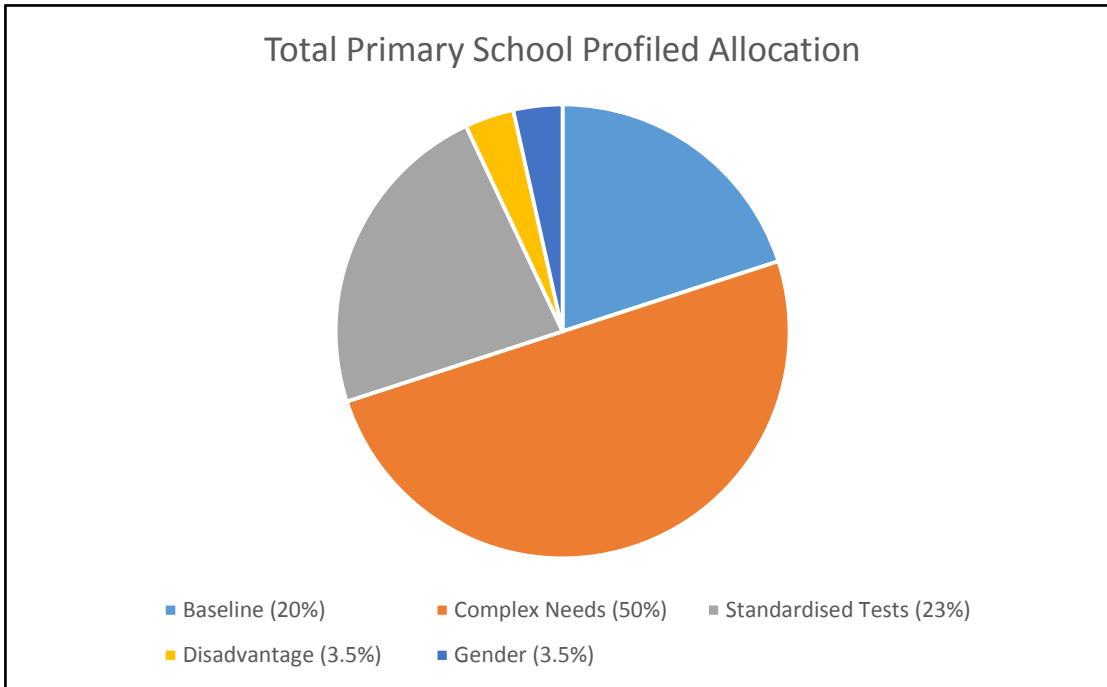
This circular can be accessed on the Department's website www.education.ie

Jim Mulkerrins
Principal Officer
Special Education Unit

7th March, 2017

Appendix 1: Total Profile Allocation

Though the individual allocations will vary for each particular school, based on the number of pupils in each school qualifying within each category for whom a profiled allocation is being made, the allocation of the total existing resources for redistribution, based on a profiled allocation model, for primary schools, will be as follows:



Baseline

The Baseline allocation of each school profile is made up of 20% of the total number of Resource/Learning Support posts allocated to schools for the 2016/17 school year, redistributed equally between all schools, based on each school's enrolment numbers for the 2015/16 school year, which is the most complete recent enrolment data available.

Complex Needs

Maintaining the existing 2016/17 Low Incidence allocations for primary schools, in order to create the Complex Needs component for the introduction of the new allocation model from September 2017, means that approximately 50% of the total number of Resource/Learning Support posts

allocated to primary schools for the 2016/17 school year are being used for the Complex Needs profile component.

Standardised Test Scores

The portion of the overall resources being provided for Standardised test results under the school profile equates to approximately 23% of the total allocation for primary schools.

Disadvantage

Approximately 3.5% of the total profiled allocation for primary schools is being allocated to provide some part of the allocation for disadvantage. This will vary between schools, depending on the social context of each school.

Gender

Approximately 3.5% of the total profiled allocation for primary schools will is being allocated to provide some part of the allocation for gender.

The actual allocation distribution will vary between schools, depending on the number of pupils within each category of the profile.