



To: Management Authorities of recognised Primary Schools and the Chief Executive Officers of the Education and Training Boards

Special Education Teaching Allocation 2022/23

1. Summary of Circular

Key points to note in relation to Special Education Teacher (SET) Allocations for mainstream classes in 2022/23 school year are as follows:

- Special Education Teacher allocations are made to meet the teaching needs of students with special educational needs enrolled in mainstream classes in primary and post primary schools.
- The SET Allocation model was introduced in 2017 and updated in 2019. The purpose of the model is to allocate the total number of available SET posts on the basis of an education profile of each school. When school profiles are updated, SET posts are redistributed between schools in line with the updated profile and this may result in revised allocations for schools. In this regard, the Department is committed to a phased and graduated approach to making upward/downward adjustments to SET allocations as we progress towards the full implementation of the model.
- The SET allocation model replaced a diagnosis led approach for the allocation of additional teaching time to students with special educational needs and is a more transparent and equitable way of allocating teaching resources to schools.
- Budget 2022 provided an additional 620 new SET posts for allocation to primary and post primary schools in 2022/23. This will bring the total number of SETs in the system to 14,385.
- The 620 posts are being allocated as follows: 100 are being used to meet the needs of new and developing schools; 120 will be used to meet the expected outcome of Exceptional Needs Reviews carried out by the NCSE over the year; and the remaining 400 posts will be distributed proportionately across those schools showing a need for an increased allocation under the SET Allocation model.
- School profiles have been updated to take account of the latest available data including enrolments.
- As in 2019, schools will receive a changed SET allocation based on the updated Education Profile of each school. For 2022/23 school year, increases/decreases in allocations are being capped at 20% as in 2019. This means that most schools (66%) will receive an unchanged or an increased allocation. This approach is in line with the Department's commitment to a graduated approach.

- Allocations under the SET model are made in line with the principles of equity and fairness ensuring that schools with the greatest level of need receive the most resources.
- The allocations are effective from September 2022 and will remain in place for two years.
- This Circular sets out some detail on the updating of school profiles. (Section 6)
- Schools will be notified of the details of any change to their allocations. A school may appeal where they consider incorrect profile data was used, or was incorrectly calculated. (Section 9).
- Schools can also seek an increase in their allocation by requesting a review from the NCSE.
- Section 10 outlines the rounding process used in the re-profiling.
- Guidance is available to support schools in the deployment of their SET allocation.
- The NCSE will be notifying each school of its SET allocation in the coming days.

2. Purpose of this Circular and background

The purpose of this Circular is to advise schools that Special Education Teacher allocations will be updated with effect from September 2022. The Circular also provides details of the data used to update schools' profile allocations at this time.

The model for allocating special education teachers is designed to distribute teaching resources fairly to schools, taking into account the profiled needs of each school.

It replaced the previous model which was considered inequitable, encouraged unnecessary labelling of children with special educational needs, was considered a blunt response and required a formal diagnosis and application procedure as a pre-condition to access teaching resources.

Based on policy advice received from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the new allocation model was developed to address these inadequacies by creating a profile for each school which is needs-based and gives schools autonomy to decide how to deploy the resources they have.

In order to ensure the new model is responsive, it is reviewed on a regular basis to reflect changes in the enrolments and profiles of schools.

The Circular should be read in conjunction with the *Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*, which are available at:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/56c43-supporting-pupils-and-students-with-special-educational-needs-guidelines-for-schools/>

[https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/inline-files/Key Actions Supporting Students SEN PP Schools.pdf](https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/inline-files/Key%20Actions%20Supporting%20Students%20SEN%20PP%20Schools.pdf)

The SET model was introduced in 2017. The model was updated for the 2019/20 school year (DE Circular 0014/2019) and it was intended that the allocations would remain in place for two years with the next updating to happen for the 2021/22 school year.

However, in order to minimise disruption for schools during the Covid-19 period, the Minister for Education and the Minister of State for Special Education and Inclusion agreed to leave SET allocations unchanged for 2021/22 and committed to updating allocations for the 2022/23 school year.

This circular outlines the detail of the revised SET allocations, notice of which are now issuing to schools and will be effective from September 2022.

Full details of the SET allocation for 2022/23 will be issued to schools by the NCSE in the coming days.

3. Purpose of the Special Education Teacher Allocation Model and number of SET posts

The purpose of the SET allocation model is to distribute the total number of available teaching posts between schools using an education profile of each school which comprises a number of variables which require updating on regular basis to ensure the profile is current and reflects the needs of the school.

The allocations are designed to enable schools to provide additional targeted teaching support for those students with special educational needs enrolled in mainstream classes in accordance with their level of need. This is consistent with a key principle underlying Department policy on supporting students with SEN that students with the greatest level of need should receive the greatest level of support.

Under the model, it is intended that SET allocations are reviewed at least every two years initially based on updated school profiles. When the model is fully implemented, the total available number of SET posts will be fully distributed across schools thus ensuring that the available resources are allocated to all schools on the basis of identified need. However, the Department is committed to implementing the model on a phased and graduated basis so that schools have time to adapt to the new approach and transition from the General Allocation Model used previously.

To support the implementation of the model, significant additional resources have been made available to provide extra Special Education Teaching posts for schools in recent years.

Overall, the total number of special education teachers available for allocation to schools has increased by 40% since 2011, from 9,740 in 2011.

4. Budget 2022 Allocation

Budget 2022 provided an additional 620 SET posts bringing the total number of SET posts for distribution across primary and post primary schools to 14,385 for 2022/23. The 620 posts will be used as follows:

- a) 120 of the posts are being set aside to cater for exceptional reviews to be carried out by the NCSE over the year. A review will be carried out where a school demonstrates a significant change in their education profile which requires additional SET support.
- b) 100 SET posts are being utilised to address the unique needs of a small number of new and developing schools. These are schools which are developing rapidly and have enrolled a significant numbers of students with complex needs recently. In the absence of a full redistribution of all losses and gains under the allocation

model which would address their situation, a special allocation of posts is required to address their particular circumstances. These posts are being distributed in accordance with the model.

- c) The balance of 400 SET posts are being distributed across schools on the basis of the level of need identified under the SET model.

The SET allocations now being notified to schools are complete and incorporate b) and c) above. Any adjustment during the 2022/23 school year will only arise as a result of a review by the NCSE.

5. SET Allocations 2022/2023

SET allocations for 2022/23 are determined on the following basis:

- School profiles have been updated using the latest available data
- 13,514 SET posts have been distributed across schools on the basis of the updated profiles
- In line with the Department commitment to a phased and graduated approach to full distribution of gains and losses under the model, gains and losses are being capped at 20% in a similar way to 2019
- The 400 new posts are distributed on a proportionate basis across those schools where the model is showing the need for increased support
- 100 posts are distributed across the new and developing schools in line with the model

This approach meets previous commitments in respect of the implementation of the SET model and also addresses the situation of new and developing schools.

6. School Profiles

The allocation of special education teachers to mainstream schools is based on a school's educational profile, which comprises 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 needs of pupils as evidenced by standardised test results for literacy and numeracy.
 - The social context of the school including disadvantage and gender.

6.1 Baseline

20% of the total available SET posts are distributed across schools on the basis of their enrolments on 30 September 2021 as reported on POD which is the most complete recent enrolment data available.

6.2 School Education Profile.

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

A value is applied for each student counted in the complex need category in your school. Data has been received from the HSE Children Disability Network teams on the number of new entrants with complex needs to primary schools and this data has been incorporated into the model.

The HSE's procedures for determining access to Children Disability Network Teams are outlined in the National Policy on Access to Services for Children & Young People with Disability & Developmental Delay (HSE 2016). Access is based on the child's functioning capacity across a range of domains, as opposed to being based on formal a diagnosis of disability.

The new Complex Needs value for each school from September 2022 will be:

- **The current Complex Needs value for each school**

- **+ Plus the value for the number of students entering junior infants with Complex Needs (as identified by the HSE) 2021/22school year**
- **- Less low incidence resource allocation values for the number of students with low incidence disabilities who left school at June 2021**

Senior Primary schools

Senior primary schools do not have Junior Infant age enrolments. Therefore, as Senior School low incidence leavers are deducted, unless a counterbalancing allocation is applied, no new values would be allocated to Senior schools, for new enrolling pupils with complex needs.

Junior Infant enrolments from Junior/Infant feeder schools, which are associated with Senior Schools, subsequently enrol to the senior schools, at a later stage.

In order to reflect this future pupil movement, the new complex needs values being applied to the Junior school (s) associated with the Senior School, will also be applied to the Senior School for each year in which new complex needs Junior Infants are being counted.

This will represent an advance on the complex needs values for the Senior Schools, which will balance over time, as pupils move between schools.

Where a Junior School provides pupils to two associated Senior Schools, a value of 50% of the complex needs values in the Junior School will be applied to each Senior School.

Emerging Complex Needs

Consideration of data indicates that emerging needs over the course of a school year, for low incidence disabilities, has been broadly consistent with the overall proportion of low incidence allocations which had been made to schools.

The Special Education Teaching allocations for schools, including baseline and educational profile, is provided to meet the totality of special educational teaching need in the school, including for pupils with emerging needs or pupils transferring into schools during the course of the model.

The total special education allocations provided for schools anticipate that there will be some emerging needs over the course of the model. Schools are resourced to provide for such emerging needs, within the totality of the allocation.

Where exceptional circumstances arise, to the extent that a school profile changes in a manner beyond which could have been anticipated, a review process is available to consider this and to make adjustments to allocations for schools where necessary.

- **Standardised Test results**

Due to Covid-19, standardised tests did not take place in primary schools in 2020. For the purposes of the updated school profiles, an aggregate of the primary school standardised test results over 2018, 2019 and 2021 have been used to develop the standardised test value for each school. This approach provides the most accurate and up to date picture of the education profile of each school.

- **Social Context: Disadvantage**

The data which is being used to update the disadvantage component of the school profiles is the same data which has been used for the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Identification Model.

This data is the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Small Area data, as represented in the Haase Pratschke Index of Deprivation (HP Index).

The key data source for primary schools is the Primary Online Database (POD) and CSO data from the National Census of Population as represented in the Pobal HP Index for Small Areas, which is a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area.

Variables used in the compilation of the HP Index include those related to demographic growth, dependency ratios, education levels, single parent rate, overcrowding, social class, occupation and unemployment rates. This data is combined with pupil data, anonymised and aggregated to small area, to provide information on the relative level of concentrated disadvantage present in the pupil cohort of individual schools.

The use of the HP Index in the context of educational disadvantage is consistent with its use in the DEIS identification process and also its use across a range of Government Departments and agencies

- **Social Context: Gender**

The SET allocation model takes account of gender differentials by giving a small additional weighting for gender based on the number of boys attending each school. This has been factored into the profiles of each school as appropriate.

- **English Additional Language Support (EAL)**

The Special Education Teaching allocation model provides all schools with a baseline teaching allocation to assist pupils who have learning and literacy difficulties, including those arising from English Additional Language (EAL) needs.

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

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

Schools where a significant number of the total enrolment is made up of language support (EAL) pupils with less than B1 (Level3) proficiency can make an appeal to the Independent Primary Teachers Appeals Board for additional resources. Procedures for making an appeal are set out in the annual primary staffing circulars.

7. Next update of School Profiles

The allocations which are being made for schools effective from September 2022 will remain in place for two school years i.e. 2022/23 and 2023/24.

8. Appeal and Review Process

The NCSE will be notifying schools of the allocations by letter and website publication. Details of the review/ appeal process will be set out as part of this notification and will be published on the NCSE website www.ncse.ie.

The appeal will consider circumstances where schools consider that their school profile has been calculated incorrectly, using the data set out in this Circular. An appeal may be submitted for a review of the information used and of the calculation of the allocation.

Where exceptional circumstances arise in schools over the course of the model, to the extent that a school profile changes in a manner beyond which could have been anticipated, a further review process is available to consider this and to make adjustments to allocations for schools where necessary.

9. Rounding

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

For schools who are receiving a reduction to their allocation, the allocation will be rounded to the nearest 2.50 hours.

Schools who are not receiving adjusted allocations will maintain their existing allocations.

10. Filling of Posts

Special Education Teacher 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 2022/23 school year.

This circular can be accessed on the Department's website:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-education/?referrer=http://www.education.ie/>

Eddie Ward
Principal Officer
Special Education

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