

Supporting Ukrainian students with special educational needs (SEN) – guidance for schools

The focus for Ukrainian students, including students with special educational needs (SEN), has been on supporting them to be placed early in a school setting and giving them the opportunity to settle in. This has been with the intention of helping them to adapt and adjust to their new environment, new home and new school. This has included the provision of access to practical supports and assistance to settle in and make friends. Children arriving from Ukraine to Ireland at this time are beneficiaries under the Temporary Protection Directive. This directive assures their right to education in the public education system, along with other rights, for a temporary period, on the same basis as EU citizens. The Ministers have acknowledged the tremendous work which schools have done in this context since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February.

For Ukrainian children with SEN enrolling in schools in Ireland, the Department of Education wants to continue to ensure that their placement is in the most inclusive environment that best supports their wellbeing, inclusion and participation in their education. For some of these children, however, the information needed to inform decisions on the most appropriate placement will not be readily available.

Similar to children already in the Irish education system, it is envisaged that the majority of Ukrainian children with SEN will continue to enrol in mainstream class settings and access existing supports in the school.

The purpose of this guidance note is to set out the basis upon which additional special education teacher (SET) and special needs assistant (SNA) resources, where required, will be allocated. The provisions contained within this guidance will be kept under review.

Summary of key messages:

1. Schools where 10 or more Ukrainian pupils are enrolled will be able to apply for additional SET resources (15 or more Ukrainian pupils for SNA resources) based on a sliding scale to a maximum of 25 teaching hours per week and a maximum of 3 SNAs on a temporary basis.

2. For schools where fewer than 10 Ukrainian pupils (or 15 in the case of SNA supports) are enrolled, it is envisaged that the pupils can be supported by class teachers and within schools' existing allocation of SET hours and SNA supports.
3. The exceptional review process remains available to schools in the normal manner through the NCSE to deal with any concerns regarding the supports available for children with SEN.
4. Where Ukrainian children's needs are such that they may struggle to attend a mainstream school, even where additional support has been provided:
 - a. The local SENO will engage with Ukrainian parents to assist them in finding a suitable placement for their child(ren).
 - b. Where professional reports are available, the NCSE will arrange for their translation.
 - c. If a professional report is not available but the parents advise that their child was in a specialist placement in Ukraine:
 - i. If a special class or special school placement is available, the school principal may accept this information and proceed to enrol the child.
 - ii. If a special class or special school placement is not available, the child should be supported in a mainstream school setting through the SET model, SNA support if required and, if available, EAL support. The mainstream school principal should inform the local SENO and NEPS psychologist or NEPS office of this situation.
5. Where a school principal prioritises a child from Ukraine for NEPS involvement, NEPS psychologists will respond and support the school and child from within the school's allocation of time.

Supports for children from Ukraine with SEN in mainstream classes in primary and post-primary schools

While this cohort of students can be adequately supported within mainstream classes with existing special education teacher (SET) and special needs assistant (SNA) resources, the Department proposes providing additional SET and SNA supports to schools that have a larger number of Ukrainian students enrolled, in line with the current approximate general allocation of these supports.

1. Special Education Teachers (SETs)

Where schools have enrolled a small number of Ukrainian students (i.e. fewer than 10), it is envisaged that these students can be supported by their class teachers, and from within the schools' existing allocation of SET hours.

If at any stage a school that has enrolled fewer than 10 Ukrainian students considers that it requires additional SET hours, it can contact the NCSE to seek additional resources under the normal exceptional review process.

It is acknowledged that schools that enrol a significant number of children from Ukraine may require additional supports and it is proposed to front load an allocation of additional SET resources to those schools. These resources will be provided to schools who have enrolled 10 or more children from Ukraine.

An allocation of additional temporary SET hours for schools to support the special educational needs of students from Ukraine who have been enrolled will be sanctioned at the beginning of the 2022/2023 school year as follows:

No. of Ukrainian students enrolled	Additional No. of SET hours per week
10	5
11-20	7.5
21-30	10
31-40	12.5
41-50	15
51-60	17.5
>60	25

These allocations will be approved by the Department who will advise the NCSE of the number of children from Ukraine enrolled in schools. This will allow the NCSE to inform schools shortly of their additional temporary SET allocation.

2. SNA supports

Some children from Ukraine will have significant care needs that may require support from an SNA.

While it is envisaged that these students can be supported by most schools from within the schools' existing SNA allocation, the Department is aware that some schools that enrol a significant number of children from Ukraine may require additional SNA supports.

To support these schools from the commencement of the school year it is proposed to provide additional temporary SNA support as outlined in the following table. Schools will be informed directly by the NCSE shortly where this is the case.

No. of Ukrainian students enrolled	Additional No. SNAs allocated
15-29	0.5
30-35	1
36-45	1.5
46-54	2
55-64	2.5
≥65	3

This temporary allocation will be reviewed ahead of each school term based on the enrolment thresholds above.

If at any stage a school that has enrolled less than 15 Ukrainian students considers that it requires additional SNA supports based on the care needs of those students, it can contact the NCSE to seek additional SNA resources under the normal exceptional review process.

The above does not replace the existing exceptional review process which remains available to schools. Queries from schools in relation to these temporary SET and SNA allocations can be directed to special_education@education.gov.ie

Children from Ukraine who may need a special school/special class placement

Some children from Ukraine with more significant special educational/additional needs may struggle to attend a mainstream school, even when additional support has been provided. Where the NCSE is made aware of a child with significant special educational/additional needs the local special educational needs organiser (SENO) will provide initial support for the parent(s) to assist with decision making around placement. This will ensure that all parents have the capacity to advocate for their child and understand the Irish education system in order to make evidence-informed decisions. This engagement will involve the SENO seeking to obtain copies of any professional reports available, a history of the child's education to date and a description of the child's needs.

Where professional reports are available

Where professional reports are available these should be provided by the parent(s) to the school. The NCSE will organise for the translation of these reports which, coming from the Ukrainian system, may not contain reference to the eligibility criteria used in Ireland. In such cases the SENO will work with the school and parents so that the child's needs can be supported on a temporary basis in a special class or special school setting if such a setting is available. Such placements where available will be subject to review, and can be supported where schools are satisfied to enrol the child on the basis outlined above.

If a suitable special class or special school placement is *not available*, the child should be placed in a mainstream setting temporarily supported through the SET model, SNA support if required and if available, EAL support. The child may be placed on a waiting list for a special class or special school placement. The mainstream school principal should inform the local NEPS psychologist or local NEPS office and the local SENO of this situation.

Where professional reports are not available

In certain circumstances the professional reports may not be available for children whose parents state that their school placement was in a specialist setting in Ukraine. In this instance, where a special class or special school placement is

available, the school principal may accept this information and proceed to enrol the child. This specialist placement will be viewed as temporary, subject to review of the child's needs during the school year, and the school should advise the parents accordingly. The school principal should inform the local NEPS psychologist or NEPS office and the local SENO of this situation.

A special class or special school placement is deemed to be available where the class or school is not full and there are no children on a waiting list.

If a special class or special school placement is not available, the child should be supported in a mainstream school on a temporary basis through the SET model, SNA support if required and if available EAL support. The mainstream school principal should inform the local NEPS psychologist or NEPS office and the local SENO of this situation.

Where the appropriateness of a placement for a child from Ukraine with SEN in a mainstream setting is queried, the school should continue to support the child through the SET model, SNA support if required and EAL support if available. The school should monitor the child's response to interventions and supports and record this on the Student Support File. Schools can bring concerns to the attention of the local SENO, the local NEPS psychologist or local NEPS office. Where a school principal prioritises a child from Ukraine for NEPS involvement, NEPS psychologists will respond and support the school and child from within the school's allocation of time. In some instances the NEPS psychologist will be able to provide a professional recommendation regarding the placement of the child in a specialist setting. In other cases, where a diagnosis is required from a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) (for example in relation to autism, a referral will need to be made to HSE children's services.

Special Education Section

Department of Education

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