



Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs Post-Primary Guidelines



AN tOIRN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS EOLAÍOCHTR | AND SKILLS

INSPECTORATE

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Designed by Paul Martin Communications Ltd.

Printed by Brunswick Press Ltd.

Published by the Stationery Office, Dublin.

To be purchased directly from

Government Publications Sales Office,

Sun Alliance House,

Molesworth Street, Dublin 2.

Or by mail order from

Government Publications, Postal Trade Section,

51 St. Stephen's Green,

Dublin 2.

Phone: (01) 6476834 **Fax:** (01) 6476843

€10.00

ISBN: 0-7557-7328-4

Contents

Foreword by the Chief Inspector	5
Acknowledgements	6
Introduction	7
Chapter 1	
Historical background, current provision, and legislative context	11
Principal themes	12
1.1 Introduction	13
1.2 Historical background	13
1.2.1 Establishment of special schools and classes	13
1.2.2 Report of the Special Education Review Committee (1993)	14
1.3 International movement towards inclusion	15
1.3.1 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special-Needs Education (1994)	15
1.3.2 Council of Europe, Political Declaration (2003) and Action Plan (2006)	15
1.3.3 United Nations International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)	16
1.4 Definition of special educational needs	16
1.5 Aims and principles of special education	17
1.6 Inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools	17
1.6.1 Resources for post-primary schools to support the inclusion of students with special educational needs	17
1.6.2 Deployment of staff resources in post-primary schools to support the inclusion of students with special educational needs	18
1.6.3 Resources for primary schools to support the inclusion of students with special educational needs	19
1.7 Special initiatives to support inclusion	19
1.7.1 Schemes for schools in areas of educational disadvantage	20
1.7.2 Education of students from the Traveller community	20
1.7.3 English-language support	21
1.8 Special services and accommodations	22
1.8.1 The Visiting Teacher Service	22
1.8.2 Grants for assistive technology	22
1.8.3 Special transport	22
1.8.4 Scheme of Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations (RACE)	23
1.8.5 Exemption from the study of Irish	23
1.9 Legislation related to the education of students with special educational needs	24
1.9.1 The Education Act (1998)	25
1.9.2 The Equal Status Act (2000) and Equality Act (2004)	25
1.9.3 The Education (Welfare) Act (2000)	26
1.9.4 The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003) and Freedom of Information Acts (1997 and 2003)	27
1.9.5 The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)	28
(a) Duties of boards of management	29
(b) Enrolment of children with special educational needs	30
(c) Content of education plans	30
(d) Implementation of education plans	30
(e) Role of the principal in relation to education plans and assessment	31
(f) Rights of parents	33
(g) National Council for Special Education	34

Chapter 2	
Whole-school planning and organisation	37
Principal themes	38
2.1 Introduction	39
2.2 The inclusive school	39
2.2.1 The benefits of inclusion	39
2.3 Planning for inclusion at the whole-school level	40
2.3.1 Drawing up inclusive whole-school policies and procedures for special educational needs	41
2.4 Whole-school policies and procedures for special educational needs in the school plan	43
2.4.1 School enrolment policy	44
2.4.2 Attendance and participation	45
2.4.3 Code of behaviour and discipline, and measures to prevent the bullying or harassment of students with special educational needs	45
2.4.4 Transfer of students to post-primary schools from primary schools	46
2.4.5 Transition from post-primary education to a post-school setting	48
2.4.6 Staged approach to intervention and support	48
2.4.7 Resource-teaching support for students with special educational needs	48
2.4.8 Learning support for students with low achievement	49
2.4.9 The involvement of parents	49
2.4.10 Accommodations in the physical environment	49
2.5 Whole-school approaches to organisation for inclusion	50
2.5.1 Class placement arrangements for students with special educational needs	50
(a) Placement in mainstream mixed-ability classes	50
(b) Placement in streamed or banded classes	51
(c) Placement in a designated special class or unit for students with special educational needs	52
2.5.2 Arrangements for the provision of additional teaching support to students with special educational needs	53
(a) In-class support: Co-operative teaching	53
(b) Setting the timetable	54
(c) Withdrawal of students for individual or small-group teaching	55
2.5.3 Establishing an appropriate model of organisation	55
2.5.4 Reference documents	56
2.6 Assessment	57
2.6.1 The purposes of assessment	58
2.6.2 Methods of assessment	59
(a) Formal methods of assessment	59
(b) Informal methods of assessment	59
(c) Diagnostic assessment	59
2.6.3 Developing a whole-school policy on assessment	59
2.6.4 Selection and use of appropriate test instruments	61
Chapter 3	
Partnership in special education: Roles and functions	63
Principal themes	64
3.1 Introduction	65
3.2 Role and functions of the board of management	65
3.2.1 Boards of management and school policies	65

3.2.2	Boards of management and parents	66
3.2.3	Boards of management and the National Council for Special Education	66
3.3	The special educational needs support team	67
3.4	The principal	67
3.4.1	The principal and the management of delegated functions	68
3.4.2	The principal and the enrolment and transfer of students with special educational needs	70
3.4.3	The principal and the assessment of and provision for students with special educational needs	70
3.4.4	The principal and the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream classes	70
3.4.5	The principal and the professional development of the staff	70
3.4.6	The principal and parents	71
3.5	Mainstream teachers	71
3.5.1	Differentiation in the mainstream class	72
3.6	The resource teacher	73
3.6.1	The resource teacher and the allocation and provision of resource-teacher hours	74
3.6.2	The resource teacher and teaching	74
3.6.3	The resource teacher and assessment	75
3.6.4	The resource teacher and the compiling and maintenance of records relating to students with special educational needs	75
3.6.5	The resource teacher and the special educational needs support team	76
3.7	The learning-support teacher	76
3.7.1	The learning-support teacher and the selection of students for learning-support	77
3.7.2	The learning-support teacher and the special educational needs support team	77
3.7.3	The learning-support teacher and the resource teacher	77
3.8	Year heads and class tutors	79
3.9	The guidance counsellor	79
3.10	The home-school-community liaison co-ordinator	80
3.11	Parents	81
3.11.1	Parents and transition to and transfer from post-primary school	81
3.11.2	Parents and the transmission of information	81
3.11.3	Parents and the individual education plan	82
3.11.4	Parents and home-school links	82
3.12	Students with special educational needs	82
3.13	The school community and the student body	82
3.14	Special needs assistants	83
3.15	Bodies outside the school	85
3.15.1	The Department of Education and Science	85
3.15.2	The National Council for Special Education	86
3.15.3	The National Educational Psychological Service	87
3.15.4	The Special Education Support Service	87
3.15.5	The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment	88
3.15.6	The National Educational Welfare Board	88
3.15.7	The Health Service Executive	89

Chapter 4	
Planning for individual students with special educational needs	91
Principal themes	92
4.1 Introduction	93
4.2 Individual planning	93
4.3 The benefits of individual planning	93
4.4 The individual education plan for a student with special educational needs	94
4.4.1 The individual education plan, step 1: Gathering information	96
4.4.2 The individual education plan, step 2: Compiling a statement of level of performance, including strengths, needs, and impact on learning	96
4.4.3 The individual education plan, step 3: Identifying priority learning needs and time limits for the attainment of targets	97
4.4.4 The individual education plan, step 4: Setting targets for each priority learning need	97
4.4.5 The individual education plan, step 5: Identifying the strategies and resources required	97
4.4.6 The individual education plan, step 6: Setting the date for review	98
4.5 Record-keeping	98
4.6 Implementing the individual education plan	99
Chapter 5	
Teaching and learning in the inclusive school	101
Principal themes	102
5.1 Introduction	103
5.2 Classroom climate	103
5.2.1 Support for learning	104
5.3 Teaching for inclusion	104
5.3.1 Co-operative teaching	106
5.3.2 Co-operative learning	108
(a) Peer-tutoring	108
(b) Class-wide peer-tutoring	109
(c) Other co-operative learning strategies	109
5.3.3 Active learning and discovery learning	110
5.3.4 Heterogeneous grouping	110
5.3.5 Direct instruction	111
5.3.6 Learning strategies	111
5.3.7 Graphic organisers	112
5.3.8 Students' involvement in identifying learning targets and in self-assessment	115
5.3.9 Learning styles	115
5.3.10 Multi-sensory instruction	117
5.3.11 Information and communications technology (ICT)	117
5.3.12 The transfer of learning	118
5.3.13 Choosing learning materials	119
Selected references	121
Appendices	125
Appendix A: List of circulars	126
Appendix B: Audit of provision for students with special educational needs	128
Appendix C: Individual student profile	130
Appendix D: Categories of special educational needs	132
Appendix E: Addresses and web sites	133

Foreword by the Chief Inspector



There have been significant developments in the education of students with special educational needs in post-primary schools in recent years. An important aspect of the policy of the Department of Education and Science in this area is to support the development of inclusive school environments for students with special educational needs. New legislation and significant increases in the number of teachers and special needs assistants dedicated to supporting students are indications of the Department's policy in this regard. This publication, *Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines*, is a further support that will assist schools in the provision of appropriate education for these students.

The *Guidelines* set out advice for school managements and teachers in relation to the education of students with special educational needs in post-primary schools. Specific guidance is given on planning at whole-school level and for the individual student. Suggestions are put forward in relation to organisational arrangements in the school and teaching approaches and methodologies that reflect best practice. Advice is provided in relation to the work of the mainstream teacher, the resource teacher for special educational needs and other teachers who through their specialist roles contribute to the inclusion of students with special educational needs in the school.

In the compilation of *Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines*, valuable support was received from experts in the universities and colleges of education. Very useful input was also made by the Special Education Support Service and the School Development Planning Initiative. In addition, the education partners, including the management organisations and the teacher unions, made constructive suggestions during the consultation phase and many of these are included in the guidelines.

I hope that *Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines* will be widely used by all who are involved in the provision of education to students with special educational needs in post-primary schools.

Eamon Stack
Chief Inspector

Acknowledgements

The first draft of *Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines* was drawn up in consultation with an expert committee. The Department of Education and Science is grateful to the members of the committee for their time and their dedication to this work.

The Department also acknowledges the submissions that were received subsequently from the education partners during two rounds of consultations. Views on the draft document were provided by a wide range of organisations and individuals, including school management organisations, parents, teacher unions, colleges, and services and agencies that provide support services to schools.

The Department wishes to thank the students and their parents, the teachers and special needs assistants for their permission to use their photographs in this document.

Finally, the help of the Special Education Support Service and the Church of Ireland College of Education, Dublin, in relation to the templates in Appendix B and Appendix C respectively is also gratefully acknowledged.

Introduction



Introduction

Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines is designed to assist schools in providing appropriate education for students with special educational needs.



Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines is designed to assist schools in providing appropriate education for students with special educational needs. The publication of the *Guidelines* is a manifestation of the advisory remit of the Inspectorate under the Education Act (1998): to support and advise schools and teachers on matters relating to the provision of education, to assist teachers in employing improved methods of teaching and conducting classes, to promote excellence in the management of teaching, in the use of support services by schools, and in the procedures for consultation and co-operation within and between schools.

The policy of the Department of Education and Science in relation to the education of children with special educational needs recognises the need for a continuum of provision for these students, ranging from full-time enrolment in ordinary classes in mainstream schools to full-time enrolment in special schools. Arising from the wishes of parents to have their children educated in an inclusive educational environment, there has been a notable increase in recent years in the enrolment of students with special educational needs in mainstream post-primary schools. In parallel, the allocation of additional teaching and care staff to schools to assist in the education of these students has also increased significantly. The *Guidelines* are designed to provide best-practice guidance in relation to the education of students with special educational needs within the present legislative framework. The publication of the *Guidelines* is also a response to requests from school management authorities and teachers for guidance and support in relation to the education and inclusion of these students.

Significant challenges in relation to the inclusion of students with special educational needs arise for schools, for example from the requirement to provide a subject-centred curriculum, the preparation of students for state examinations, and the "points race". Students meet many different teachers during the school day and school week, while teachers similarly may teach a wide range of class groups. It is recognised that in general, post-primary schools are responding purposefully to the challenges presented by the increased enrolment of students with special educational needs. The *Guidelines* build on existing good practice and put forward suggestions for how practice can be further developed in the future.

The *Guidelines* advocate a whole-school approach to policy development and implementation. Such an approach makes it possible for the management and teachers to work within a co-ordinated policy framework and to contribute effectively to the provision of appropriate education to students with special educational needs. Advice is provided in the *Guidelines* on the role of each staff member in the school and the means by which they can collaborate effectively with one another, with parents and with outside agencies in the provision of education for students with special educational needs. Effective approaches to staff deployment and teaching methods are discussed.

The *Guidelines* put forward suggestions about the means by which existing resources, including staff resources, can be organised and employed effectively within the school for the benefit of the students who are already enrolled. The *Guidelines* do not address administrative or technical matters, such as staff allocations, the provision of school accommodation, or procedures for the allocation to schools of additional resources on behalf of students with special educational needs. These are matters that are processed through other channels, such as the general staffing schedules and the resource allocation procedures operated by the National Council for Special Education and the administrative sections of the Department of Education and Science. Certain other issues, such as those relating to salary and training, are addressed through the relevant industrial relations machinery and through arrangements and negotiations between the Department and the relevant education partners, for example the teacher unions, school

management organisations, parents' associations, and the colleges that provide professional training for teachers.

The *Guidelines* are presented as information on best practice in relation to school planning and development. School managements and teachers are advised to examine the advice provided in the *Guidelines* and to adapt and use it in their own school policies and procedures. Since schools vary significantly in size, enrolment, and number of students with special educational needs, each school needs to develop an appropriate response to meeting the needs of its students within its own particular circumstances.

The publication of the *Guidelines* follows a long consultation period involving the education partners, including parents' associations, management associations, teachers' unions, universities, and colleges of education. Many suggestions received during the consultation period have been incorporated.

It is recognised that the field of special-needs education is a developing one and that adaptations and revisions to the *Guidelines* may be required in the future in order to take account of developments in research and practice in the area. Revisions may also be required to reflect advances at the national level arising, for example, from the work of the National Council for Special Education, the implementation of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004), changes in subject syllabuses, and the requirements for state examinations. Changes in these areas may significantly affect the organisation and management of post-primary schools, including arrangements for the education of students with special educational needs.

While in the compiling of the *Guidelines* the emphasis has been on the education and inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream post-primary schools, it is expected that some elements of the *Guidelines* will also be useful for the staff and management of special schools, especially those in which certificate programmes are offered to students.

Chapter 1

Historical background, current provision and legislative context



1. Historical background, current provision and legislative context

Principal themes

1. The inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools is a national and international development that is supported in national legislation and in statements and reports that have emanated from such international bodies as the United Nations and the Council of Europe.
2. The term "special educational needs" is defined in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 as, "a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition... "
3. The additional resources that are allocated to mainstream schools to facilitate the inclusion of students with special educational needs and other learning differences include
 - the provision of resource teachers and special needs assistants
 - special services and accommodations, such as the Visiting Teacher Service, grants for assistive technology, special transport, reasonable accommodations in state examinations, and exemption from the study of Irish
 - schemes for schools in areas of educational disadvantage, additional support for students from the Traveller community, and language support for students for whom English is an additional language.
4. The Education Act 1998, the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004 and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 provide a legislative framework for the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools.
5. The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 establishes a statutory framework for assessment and individual education plans for students with special educational needs.
6. The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act provides for the establishment of the National Council for Special Education. The NCSE employs a national network of special educational needs organisers (SENOs), who are the principal contact persons for parents, schools and local health authorities in relation to matters concerning the organising, co-ordination and provision of educational services to children with special educational needs.

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the provision of special education in schools is described. Current legislation governing the provision of special education is outlined, and particular reference is made to the implications for schools. The aims and principles of special education are discussed. To place recent developments in special education in context, and to sketch out the framework for present requirements and future developments, the chapter begins with a short outline of the historical background to the provision of special education in Ireland.

1.2 Historical background

1.2.1 Establishment of special schools and classes

Special schools were established as far back as the beginning of the nineteenth century, mainly for the purpose of providing education for children with sensory impairments. Over time, special schools were established to cater for the needs of children in other categories of disability. In the 1960s and 70s, following the publication of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Mental Handicap (1965), there was a significant expansion in the provision of education for children with special educational needs. Special schools were established in many places, initially for the purpose of providing education for children with mild or moderate general learning disability and subsequently for children in other categories of disability. These special schools were designated as special national schools and operated under the rules for national schools. In places where it was not considered desirable or feasible to establish a special school, special classes were set up. The majority of special classes were established in mainstream primary schools; a small number of special classes were also set up in post-primary schools.

Since their establishment, special schools and special classes have made a highly significant contribution to the education of children with special educational needs. Teachers in special schools have gained considerable experience and have often developed a high level of expertise in meeting the special educational needs of their students. One of the features of special schools is that, in accordance with the regulations of the Department of Education and Science, students may be enrolled from the age of four years and may remain on the roll to the end of the school year following their eighteenth birthday. This allows for a continuity of education as well as enabling resources to be concentrated in particular populations and geographical areas.

However, one outcome of the establishment of a network of special schools and special classes throughout the country was the emergence of a special education system that operated largely, at both the primary and the post-primary level, in isolation from the mainstream school system. This arose from a general acceptance that the requirements of children with special educational needs could be best met through placement in special schools and special classes. Mainstream primary and post-primary schools were not often seen at the time as practicable and appropriate settings for these children. An effect of the availability of a special education system that could successfully meet the needs of students with special educational needs was the inhibition of the process of including students with special educational needs in mainstream schools, particularly post-primary schools.

While special schools were often still seen in the early 1990s as providing the most appropriate placement for students with special educational needs, a heightened awareness of the necessity to create a more equitable society demanded a shift away from the segregated model of provision to one of access to and inclusion in mainstream schools.

1.2.2 Report of the Special Education Review Committee (1993)

The Special Education Review Committee (SERC) was established in 1991 by the Minister for Education to review existing educational provision for children with special needs. The committee was asked to make recommendations for the identification of children with special educational needs and for the future development of special education services in ordinary schools, special classes, special schools and other special arrangements in accordance with the needs of each child.

The committee presented its report to the Minister in 1993. Special education is described in the report as:

any educational provision which is designed to cater for students with special educational needs, and is additional to or different from the provision which is generally made in ordinary classes for pupils of the same age.

(Department of Education and Science, 1993a, p.18)

The SERC Report advocated a continuum of education provision for students with special educational needs, ranging from full-time placement in a special school to placement in an ordinary class in a mainstream school, with support. In relation to the integration of students with disabilities in mainstream classes, the committee reported that it favoured 'as much integration as is appropriate and feasible with as little segregation as is necessary' (Department of Education, 1993a, p. 22).

The committee proposed seven basic principles that would serve as guidelines for the development of special education provision:

1. All children, including those with special educational needs, have a right to an appropriate education.
2. The needs of the individual child should be the paramount consideration when decisions are made concerning the provision of special education for that child.
3. The parents of a child with special educational needs are entitled to and should be enabled to play an active part in the decision-making process; their wishes should be taken into consideration when recommendations on special education provision are being made.
4. A continuum of services should be provided for students with special educational needs, ranging from full-time education in ordinary classes, with additional support as may be necessary, to full-time education in special schools.
5. Except where individual circumstances make this impracticable, appropriate education for all students with special educational needs should be provided in ordinary schools.
6. Only in the most exceptional circumstances should it be necessary for a child to live away from home in order to avail of an appropriate education.
7. The state should provide adequate resources to ensure that students with special educational needs can have an education appropriate to those needs.

(Department of Education and Science, 1993a, pp. 19, 20)

Successive Governments have confirmed support for the principles that are proposed in the SERC Report. *Charting our Education Future: White Paper on Education (1995)* supported the concept of a continuum of provision for students with special educational needs and the provision of a system that would be sufficiently flexible to cater for the diversity of those needs as children progressed through the education system.

In recent times the fifth principle, which advocates that, where practicable, appropriate education for all students with special educational needs should be provided in ordinary schools, has been

particularly significant in promoting a growth in the enrolment of students with special educational needs in mainstream primary and post-primary schools.

1.3 International movement towards inclusion

The practice of including students with special educational needs in mainstream schools is now well established internationally. Three illustrations of the movement towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream education that has occurred in recent decades are set out below.

1.3.1 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special-Needs Education (1994)

The Salamanca Statement on the education of all disabled students, agreed at a UNESCO World Conference on Special-Needs Education held in Salamanca in June 1994, called for inclusion to be the norm (UNESCO, 1994). Ireland is one of ninety-two countries and twenty-five international organisations that subscribe to the Salamanca Statement.

The Salamanca Statement begins with a commitment to education for all. The necessity and urgency of providing education for all students, young people and adults within the regular education system is recognised. It is stated that students with special educational needs must have access to regular schools and adds that

Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. (UNESCO, 1994, section 2)

The fundamental principle of the inclusive school, as proposed in the Salamanca Statement, is that all students should learn together, where possible, and that ordinary schools must recognise and respond to the diverse needs of their students while also having a continuum of support and services to match those needs.

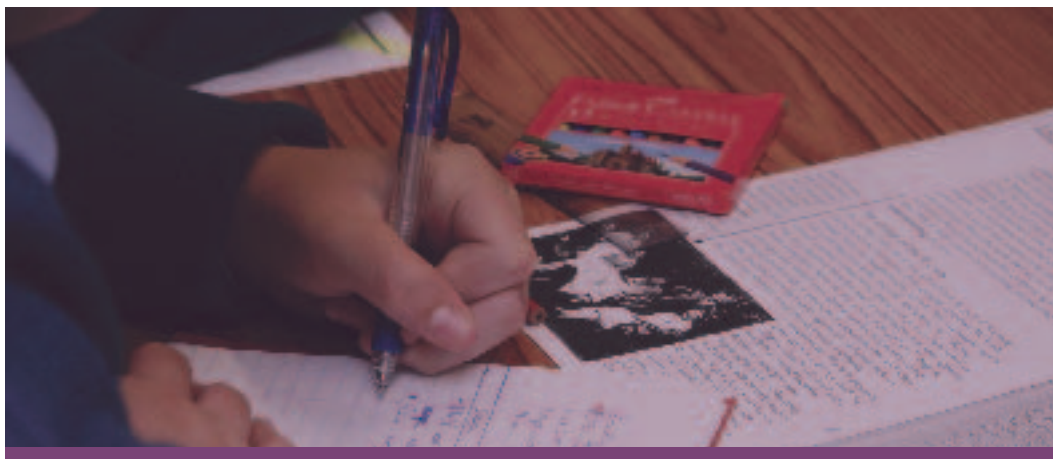
In addition, the Salamanca Conference adopted a new Framework for Action. The guiding principle of the Framework for Action is that ordinary schools should accommodate all students, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. The Framework states that all educational policies should stipulate that disabled students should attend the local school that would be attended if the child did not have a disability.

1.3.2 Council of Europe, Political Declaration (2003) and Action Plan (2006)

At the second European conference of ministers responsible for integration policies for people with disabilities in Malaga, Spain in May 2003, the ministers deliberated the common principles that should permeate future disability policy development and public service delivery. The ministers considered that “education is a basic instrument of social integration and efforts should be made to give the opportunity to children with disabilities to attend a mainstream school if it is in the interest of the child, to facilitate the transition from school or higher education to employment, and to develop the concept of life-long learning” (Council of Europe, 2003).

Building on the Malaga declaration, the Council of Europe Action Plan to promote the rights and full participation of people with disabilities in society 2006-2015, sets out objectives and specific actions for the member states. Among the objectives in the action plan is “to ensure that disabled people have the opportunity to seek a place in mainstream education by encouraging relevant authorities to develop educational provision to meet the needs of their disabled populations” (Councils of Europe, 2006, p.16). A specific action for each member state is “to ensure that people

with disabilities, including children, receive the support required, within the mainstream education system, to facilitate their effective education. In exceptional circumstances, where their professionally-assessed special education needs are not met within the mainstream education system, member states will ensure that effective alternative support measures are provided consistent with the goal of full inclusion. All special and mainstream provisions should encourage the transition to mainstream education and reflect the same goals and standards” (Council of Europe, 2006, p.16).



1.3.3 United Nations International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)

Under the heading “Education”, Article 24 of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (December 2006) places a strong obligation on governments to provide inclusive education for all learners. It is stated in Article 24 that with a view to realising the right of persons with disabilities to education without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, states shall ensure an inclusive, education system at all levels and lifelong learning. In realising this, states shall ensure that

- (a) Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education on the basis of disability;
- (b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality, free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
- (c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual’s requirements is provided;
- (d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
- (e) Effective individualised support measures are provided in environments that maximise academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

(United Nations, 2006)

1.4 Definition of special educational needs

There is extensive discussion of the term “special educational needs” in the literature on special education, and many definitions have been proposed both in Ireland and internationally. These definitions have developed for a number of different purposes, for example (a) educational

planning and provision at the system level, (b) the differentiation of individuals for research purposes, and (c) the identification of the special educational needs of an individual to enable educational intervention to be established. For the purpose of these *Guidelines*, the one that is used is the definition of special educational needs given in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004). In this act, the term “special educational needs” is defined as

a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition...
(Government of Ireland, 2004b, section 1)

1.5 Aims and principles of special education

The aims of education for students with special educational needs are set out by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment in the overview to the *NCCA (Draft) Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities*, which states that

the broad aims of education for students with special educational needs reflect those that are relevant to all students and include

- (a) enabling the student to live a full life and to realise his or her full potential as a unique individual through access to an appropriate broad and balanced curriculum;
- (b) enabling the student to function as independently as possible in society through the provision of such educational supports as are necessary to realise that potential;
- (c) enabling the student to continue learning in adult life.

(National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2002, p. 2)

.These *Guidelines* fully endorse the aims of education for students with special educational needs as set out in the NCCA draft guidelines. In addition, these *Guidelines* support the view that all students, if provided with suitable learning experiences and adequate levels of support, are capable of development and learning. Mindful of the fact that all students are entitled to a high-quality education in as inclusive an environment as possible, it is strongly advised that these *Guidelines* be read and implemented in conjunction with the NCCA guidelines.

1.6 Inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools

Following the announcement in November 1998 by the Minister for Education and Science of an automatic response to applications for additional support for students with special educational needs in mainstream schools, new systems were introduced for the allocation to schools of resource-teacher posts and special needs assistant posts. The allocation of these resources is made in either part-time hours or full-time posts and in accordance with each student’s assessed special educational needs. The teacher posts that result from the allocation to schools of additional teaching hours for students with special educational needs are referred to throughout this document as “resource-teacher” posts.

1.6.1 Resources for post-primary schools to support the inclusion of students with special educational needs

Resource-teacher hours are allocated to post-primary schools for the support of individual students who have been assessed as having special educational needs in accordance with the policy of the

Department of Education and Science. The level of resource-teacher hours allocated to a school depends on the number of students with special educational needs in the school and the level of their needs. The procedures for allocating teacher posts and special needs assistant posts are set out in the circulars that are issued from time to time by the Department of Education and Science and the National Council for Special Education. These circulars can be obtained on the Department of Education and Science web site (www.education.ie) and the web site of the National Council for Special Education (www.ncse.ie). A list of circulars to schools relating to special education that are current at the time of publication of these *Guidelines* is given in appendix A.

The National Council for Special Education, through its network of special educational needs organisers, has the responsibility for decision-making in relation to the allocation of resource-teacher and special needs assistant posts to schools. Application can be made by a school to the NCSE for additional resources in respect of a student with special educational needs. The NCSE may request a school to make specific provision for students in a category of special educational need (for example visual impairment, moderate general learning disability, or autism) within a particular geographical area. In such circumstances additional staffing is usually allocated to enable the school to establish a special class for students within the specific category of special educational needs.

1.6.2 Deployment of staff resources in post-primary schools to support the inclusion of students with special educational needs

The organisational complexity of post-primary schools contributes to the challenge of providing suitable education for students with special educational needs. The demands of timetabling for subjects, staff allocation and the need to provide individual education programmes and access to a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum for students with special educational needs all present a significant challenge for the school management and teachers. Many schools and teachers have responded positively by seeking in-career development opportunities and by studying the extensive literature in the area of special education. In addition, some post-primary schools - sometimes with support from the School Development Planning Initiative and the Special Education Support Service - are making notable progress in developing models of good practice in the education of students with special educational needs. Schools have formed special educational needs support teams and are actively engaging in the development of shared and co-operative practices among subject teachers, resource teachers and learning-support teachers in order to provide a more collaborative approach in effectively meeting the needs of students with special educational needs.

The model of organisation adopted in a particular school is determined to a significant degree by the number of students with special educational needs in the school and the level of resources available. These factors also determine to a great extent how resource teachers should carry out their role. The core task of resource teachers is teaching students, whether this is done one-to-one, in small groups, in special classes, or through co-operative teaching with colleagues.

Together with learning-support teachers, resource teachers may also be involved in drawing up and implementing whole-school policies and procedures in such areas as assessment, the transfer of students between primary and post-primary schools, the work of special needs assistants, and cross-curricular programme planning. Resource teachers and learning-support teachers can advance the implementation of inclusive education within the school through collaborative planning with mainstream teachers. Resource teachers and learning-support teachers can provide significant professional support for mainstream teachers through the dissemination of information on appropriate teaching methodologies and strategies for differentiated learning. (The roles of the

resource teacher and the learning-support teacher are discussed in more detail in chapter 3. School planning and organisation are discussed in chapter 2.)

1.6.3 Resources for primary schools to support the inclusion of students with special educational needs

The great majority of students with special educational needs who are entering post-primary school will have been identified as having special educational needs while they were enrolled in primary school, and access to additional supports and resources will have been provided. To provide some information for post-primary teachers and school managements, a short summary on the allocation of additional staff resources in primary schools for students with special educational needs is provided in this section.

A general allocation of learning-support and resource-teacher hours is provided for each mainstream primary school under the terms of a revised allocation system introduced in 2005. The general allocation scheme provides additional teaching support for students who are eligible for learning support and those with high-incidence special educational needs, that is, those who have a specific learning disability, a borderline mild general disability, or a mild general learning disability. An individualised allocation of resource-teacher hours is made in respect of students with low-incidence special educational needs. Circular SP ED 02/05 sets out the details of the general allocation scheme and contains useful suggestions for schools on the flexible deployment of the teaching resources provided under the scheme.

In Circular SP ED 02/05, a distinction is drawn between the allocation of additional teaching resources for learning support and special educational needs on the one hand and the employment of these resources. Flexible organisation of resources within the school is advocated in order to ensure that the special educational needs of the students are met. Reference is made to the formation of special education support teams, and guidance is provided on the development of a staged approach to assessment, identification, and programme planning. The whole-school approach advocated for primary schools in Circular SP ED 02/05, including flexibility in the deployment of learning-support and resource teachers, is reflected also in the advice provided for post-primary schools in these *Guidelines*.

Further details of the system for allocating resource-teacher posts and special needs assistant posts to primary schools are contained in circulars and letters to schools from the Department of Education and Science and the National Council for Special Education, for example Circulars 07/02, 08/02, 24/03, SP ED 01/05, and SP ED 02/05. These circulars are available on the Department of Education and Science web site (www.education.ie).

1.7 Special initiatives to support inclusion

A number of specific schemes and programmes are funded by the Department of Education and Science to facilitate the education and inclusion of students with social, cultural or language differences. These initiatives include schemes for tackling educational disadvantage and schemes that provide additional support for vulnerable groups, particularly children of the Traveller community and children for whom English is not their first language. Reference is made here to these initiatives in order to encourage schools to employ the resources allocated under the various schemes in an integrated manner. An integrated approach will ensure optimal benefit for the identified student populations of the different initiatives. Schools are advised to employ the additional staff members in a manner that best facilitates the inclusion of all students and, as far as possible, not to separate or segregate particular students or groups of students from their peers.

To this end, teachers who are involved in the provision of educational inclusion initiatives, especially those who are co-ordinating these initiatives, should liaise with the special educational needs support team of the school (see section 3.3 below) to discuss and make decisions on matters of mutual concern.

For reference purposes for teachers and school management, a short summary of these schemes is provided below. A more detailed description of the Department's social inclusion measures and the other schemes for facilitating inclusion is available on the web site of the Department of Education and Science (www.education.ie).

1.7.1 Schemes for schools in areas of educational disadvantage

At the post-primary level, the schemes that facilitate schools in addressing educational disadvantage include the Home-School-Community Liaison Scheme, the School Completion Programme, the School Books Grant Scheme, the Junior Certificate Schools Programme, the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme for post-primary schools, and related projects that facilitate access to third-level education.

DEIS (Delivering Equality of Educational Opportunity in Schools: An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion) was introduced in 2005. This plan addresses the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school to the end of post-primary education (age three to eighteen years). A primary motivating factor for the introduction of the plan is the fact that the rates of educational under-achievement and early school-leaving remain much higher for students from disadvantaged communities than for other children.

Under DEIS a number of existing schemes at the post-primary level will be integrated in a phased manner in a new school support programme. Approximately two hundred post-primary schools will be included in the school support programme. It is intended that the Home-School-Community Liaison Scheme and the School Completion Programme will be extended to all post-primary schools that are participating in the new school support programme. Measures will also be implemented to enhance attendance, educational progression, retention, and attainment. Enhanced provision for guidance counselling and support for students with low attainment in literacy and mathematics, aimed at supporting junior-cycle students, will be provided in schools with the highest concentration of disadvantage. Increased access to third-level education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds will be promoted, in co-operation with the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education.

The purpose of all these measures is to improve attendance, educational progression, retention and attainment in the schools involved.

1.7.2 Education of students from the Traveller community

The policy of the Department of Education and Science is that the culture and traditions of the Traveller community should be acknowledged and reflected throughout the education system and that Traveller children should receive their education in an inclusive manner in mainstream schools. To encourage the enrolment in post-primary schools of students from the Traveller community, additional staffing of 1.5 teacher-hours per week per child is provided. Arising from these allocations, additional part-time and full-time equivalent teachers are appointed. An enhanced capitation grant is paid to schools to help them to promote the participation of Traveller children and their families in the life of the school. At present forty-two visiting teachers for Travellers provide a nationwide service to both primary and post-primary children and their families. The visiting teacher for Travellers service can be contacted through the regional offices of the Department of Education and Science.

The *Guidelines on Traveller Education in Second-Level Schools* (Department of Education and Science, 2002) set out the policy framework for Traveller education and provide guidance to schools on the education of Traveller children. The *Survey of Traveller Education Provision in Irish Schools*, and *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Strategy*, both published by the Department of Education and Science in 2006, present findings and recommendations for Traveller education at both the post-primary and the primary level.



1.7.3 English-language support

The scheme for English-language support for students for whom English is an additional language and who require such support provides for an additional teacher allocation to a school on behalf of an individual student for up to two years. Under the scheme as it operates at the time of publication of these *Guidelines*, one teacher post is allocated to a school with an enrolment of fourteen students whose first language is not English and who require English-language support. Schools with twenty-eight or more such students are allocated two teacher posts. In exceptional circumstances the allocation of a third teacher post is considered. Schools with fewer than fourteen students eligible for English-language support are allocated additional teacher-hours in accordance with a sliding scale. A single grant is provided for resources. Details of the scheme are available from the Post-Primary Administration Section of the Department of Education and Science.

Integrate Ireland Language and Training in Trinity College, Dublin, has developed a range of instruments and materials for use by language-support teachers in primary and post-primary schools. These teaching resources and the appropriate approaches and methods for their implementation in the classroom are mediated through in-service seminars for schools. Further information is available on the IILT web site (www.iilt.ie).

The guidelines in *Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School* (NCCA, 2006) identify ways in which intercultural education can be integrated in the curriculum in post-primary schools. This publication has relevance also for the inclusion of Traveller children. Post-primary schools can obtain further information on the education of children of other nationalities in the *Information Booklet for Schools on Asylum-Seekers* (Department of Education and Science, 2000a), and *Intercultural Education in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools* (NCCA, 2005a).

1.8 Special services and accommodations

A number of special services and accommodations are available for students with special educational needs. These include the Visiting Teacher Service, the provision of grants to schools for the purchase of assistive technology, special transport, the scheme of reasonable accommodations in certificate examinations, and exemption from the study of Irish.

1.8.1 The Visiting Teacher Service

Information on the visiting teacher service for children with visual impairment and the visiting teacher service for children who are deaf or hard of hearing is available on the web site of the Department of Education and Science (www.education.ie) under the heading “Children with Special Needs / The Visiting Teacher Service.” The visiting teachers provide advice and assistance in relation to the education of children with a visual or hearing impairment at the pre-school, primary and post-primary school levels. Support is provided to the children themselves, their parents, and the schools. Assistance is made available also in the context of the transfer of a child from primary to post-primary school. The visiting teachers provide advice to schools on the inclusion of these children in learning programmes and in other school activities. Specific advice can be provided in relation to increasing the child’s access to education through the use of assistive technology. Visiting teachers also assist with the making of applications to the Department of Education and Science for grants for assistive technology.

The Visiting Teacher Service can be contacted through the regional offices of the Department of Education and Science.

1.8.2 Grants for assistive technology

The scheme for the provision of grants to schools towards the purchase of assistive technology for students with special educational needs is set out in Circular M14/05. The term “assistive technology” refers to any item of equipment that can be used to improve the functional capability of a student with special educational needs and that is of direct educational benefit to them. Under the scheme, grants are provided for the purchase of equipment for use by students who have been diagnosed as having serious physical or communicative disabilities of a degree that makes ordinary communication through speech or writing impossible for them. Examples of equipment that may be applied for are computers, laptops, tape recorders, and software. Useful information relating to matching technology to the learner can be obtained at the web site of the National Centre for Technology in Education (www.ncte.ie).

Applications for grants for special equipment are submitted to the special educational needs organiser (SENO) who has been assigned responsibility for the school. Relevant supporting documents, including reports of professional assessments, should be submitted to the SENO when the application is being made. In relation to applications on behalf of students with visual or hearing impairment, advice should be sought by the school from the Visiting Teacher Service. An application form for assistive technology can be downloaded from the web site of the National Council for Special Education (www.ncse.ie).

1.8.3 Special transport

Information in relation to school transport for students with special educational needs is available on the web site of the Department of Education and Science (www.education.ie) under the heading “School transport.” Applications for special transport are made through the special educational needs organiser who has been allocated responsibility for the school. Further information about the provision of special transport is available from the School Transport Section of the Department of Education and Science. An application form for special transport can be downloaded from the web site of the National Council for Special Education (www.ncse.ie).

1.8.4 Scheme of Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations (RACE)

Candidates with certain permanent or long-term conditions, including visual and hearing difficulties and specific learning difficulties, that they believe will significantly impair their performance in examinations may apply to the State Examinations Commission for a reasonable accommodation to be made to facilitate them in taking an examination. The reasonable accommodations are intended to remove, as far as possible, the effect of the disability on a candidate's performance and thus to enable candidates to demonstrate their level of attainment and to ensure that, while giving candidates every opportunity to demonstrate their level of attainment, the special arrangements will not give them an unfair advantage over other candidates in the same examination. For written examinations the range of reasonable accommodations include the following (at the time of publication of these *Guidelines*):

- Arrangements may be made to have question papers read to the candidate. The questions may be read as often as the candidate requires, but no elaboration or explanation may be given.
- Modified question papers may be supplied, substituting alternative questions for those that refer to visual material, such as diagrams, photographs, and maps.
- Braille translations of question papers may be provided, following any necessary modification.
- Question papers may be provided in larger type.
- Candidates may be permitted to record their answers on tape recorder, typewriter, or word-processor.
- In the case of technical drawing or technical graphics examinations, candidates may be allowed the use of such aids as drafting machines, drawing-boards, and smaller drawing sheets.
- Answers may be dictated to a person acting as a scribe rather than to a tape recorder. This arrangement may be approved where the candidate's speech would be extremely difficult to interpret on tape or where a tape recording would not meet the particular requirements of the examination, for example making calculations in such subjects as mathematics and accountancy.
- Ten minutes' extra time per scheduled hour of each question paper may be allowed where the candidate needs the help of a scribe or would otherwise be unable to make adequate use of the mechanical aids provided for recording the answers, or is visually impaired.

It is advisable that a student who has been granted a special accommodation for a certificate examination should be given adequate opportunity in school to become familiar with the use of this accommodation before availing of it in the examination.

Details of the scheme for reasonable accommodations are available on the web site of the State Examinations Commission (www.examinations.ie).

1.8.5 Exemption from the study of Irish

At the time of publication of these *Guidelines*, the eligibility grounds for exemption from the study of Irish are set out in Circular M10/94. This circular states that the programme in Irish in post-primary schools has the capacity to cater for a wide diversity of ability. Nevertheless, provision is made for certain students to be exempted from the study of Irish in limited special circumstances. Students in certain categories of disability are eligible for exemption. These students are those

- who function intellectually at average or above average level but have a Specific Learning

Disability of such a degree of severity that they fail to achieve expected levels of attainment in basic language skills in the mother tongue, or

- who have been assessed as having a general learning disability due to serious intellectual impairment (i.e. mental handicap) and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue.
- who have been assessed as having a general learning disability due to serious sensory impairment, and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue.
(Circular M10/94)

The evidence of the student's disability should be furnished by a qualified psychologist, supported in certain cases by a report from an appropriate medical specialist. In addition, a full report on the student should be furnished by the school. School managements are authorised to grant exemption under the rule in accordance with the prescribed procedures and criteria. Such exemptions are subject to regular monitoring by the Department. A copy of the exemption certificate should be sent by the school to the Post-Primary Administration Section, Department of Education and Science, Portlaoise Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly, within one week of the granting of the exemption.



1.9 Legislation related to the education of students with special educational needs

There is now a substantial body of legislation relating to the education of students with special educational needs. The impetus for this legislation arose from a desire on the part of the community and the Government to assert the rights of children with special educational needs to an education that is appropriate to their needs and to ensure statutory protection for their rights to such an education. The legislation includes the Education Act (1998), the Equal Status Act (2000) and Equality Act (2004), the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) and the Data Protection Acts (1988 and 2003). These acts provide a statutory basis for education policy and provision by the Department of Education and Science and its agencies in relation to the education of all children, including those with special educational needs. The legislation also provides the statutory framework for the development of

effective structures at the national and the local level to ensure equality of rights to and equity of provision for students with special educational needs.

Schools and teachers should take cognisance of the provisions of this legislation in relation to developing and implementing policies and practices for special educational needs at the whole-school level and the level of the individual student. It is unlikely, however, that legislation by itself will bring about good practice in schools. As well as the availability in schools of the necessary staffing and other resources, a general acceptance in the community within and outside schools of the right of students with special educational needs to participate to the fullest possible extent in education and a commitment by schools to making appropriate provision are critical for the provision of suitable education for these students.

Important provisions in relation to special education in the acts referred to above are noted below. This commentary is intended as a guide for schools and teachers and not as an interpretation of the acts. Boards of management and teachers are advised to refer to the text of the acts to gain a full knowledge of the provisions and to become fully aware of their responsibilities under the acts.

1.9.1 The Education Act (1998)

The Education Act (1998) gives statutory rights to parents in relation to their children's education and legally obliges schools to provide for a diversity of needs, values, and traditions. Under the act, schools are required to use their resources to identify and provide for the educational needs of students with disabilities or other special educational needs. Boards of management are required to use the resources provided to make provision and reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities or other special educational needs. Boards of management are also required to make arrangements for the preparation of a school plan and to ensure that the plan is regularly reviewed and updated. The act stipulates that

the school plan shall state the objectives of the school relating to equality of access to and participation in the school and the measures which the school proposes to take to achieve those objectives including equality of access to and participation in the school by students with disabilities or who have other special educational needs.

(Government of Ireland, 1998a, section 21, sub-section 2)

Boards of management should establish and maintain an admissions policy that provides for maximum access to the school, including access for students with special educational needs. Section 29 of the Education Act (1998) provides for an appeals process, by which parents, including the parents of a student with special educational needs, may appeal to the Secretary-General of the Department of Education and Science in relation to a decision by a school to permanently exclude, to suspend or to refuse to enrol a student.

1.9.2 The Equal Status Act (2000) and Equality Act (2004)

The Equal Status Act (2000) and Equality Act (2004) promote equality of opportunity, prohibit discrimination on nine specific grounds, prohibit harassment, including sexual harassment, require that reasonable accommodation be made for those with disabilities, and allow for "positive action." The discriminatory grounds set out in the act are gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership of the Traveller community. Discrimination has a specific meaning in the acts. Discrimination occurs if a person is treated less favourably than another person in a comparable situation. A number of different types of discrimination are covered, including direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, discrimination by imputation, and discrimination by association.

Discrimination on the ground of disability includes

a refusal or failure by the provider to do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability by providing special treatment or facilities, if without such special treatment or facilities it would be impossible or unduly difficult for the person to avail himself or herself of the service.

(Government of Ireland, 2000b, section 4, sub-section 1)

The Equal Status Act (2000) includes post-primary schools under the general heading of “educational establishments.” Section 7, sub-section 2, states that such establishments shall not discriminate in relation to

- the admission or the terms or conditions of admission of a person as a student to the establishment,
- the access of a student to any course, facility or benefit provided by the establishment,
- any other term or condition of participation in the establishment by a student, or
- the expulsion of a student from the establishment or any other sanction against the student.

This sub-section of the act does not apply to the extent that compliance with any of its provisions in relation to a student with a disability would, by virtue of the disability, make impossible or have a seriously detrimental effect on the provision by an educational establishment of its services to other students. A school does not discriminate in respect of differences in the treatment of students on grounds of disability in relation to providing or organising sports facilities or sports events, to the extent that the differences are reasonably necessary having regard to the nature of the facilities or events.

Under section 11 of the Equal Status Act, as amended by the Equality Act (2004), a person in authority in an educational establishment must not harass another person where an individual has applied for admission to that institution or is a student there. Harassment means any form of unwanted conduct, including conduct related to a person’s disability, that has the purpose or the effect of violating the person’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. The unwanted conduct may consist of acts, requests, spoken words, gestures, or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures, or other material.

In addition, a person who is responsible for any place that is an educational establishment (this could include a principal or a teacher) must not allow another person who has a right to be present in that place (which includes a student) to suffer harassment in that place. In the event of defending a complaint under the act to the Equality Tribunal, a responsible person needs to be able to show that they took reasonable steps to prevent the harassment taking place.

The acts oblige a school to make reasonable accommodation to meet the needs of a student with a disability and to enable the student to obtain access to services in the school. In addition, schools may take positive action, such as preferential treatment or the taking of measures that are genuinely intended to promote equality of opportunity for students with special educational needs.

Schools and the Equal Status Acts (second edition, 2005), published jointly by Department of Education and Science and the Equality Authority, provides essential advice for schools on compliance with the equal status legislation. This publication is available on the web site of the Equality Authority (www.equality.ie).

1.9.3 The Education (Welfare) Act (2000)

The Education (Welfare) Act (2000) does not make specific reference to special education.

However, the provisions of the act apply as much to students with special educational needs as to those without such needs. Section 19 stipulates that

the board of management of a recognised school shall not refuse to admit as a student in such a school a child . . . except where such refusal is in accordance with the policy of the recognised school concerned published under Section 15 (2) (d) of the Act of 1998.
(Government of Ireland, 2000b)

The Act of 1998 referred to is the Education Act (1998). Section 15, sub-section 2 (d), places a responsibility on the board of management to publish the policy of the school concerning admission to and the participation of students in the school, including students with special educational needs.

Under the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) the school leaving age is raised to sixteen years or the completion of three years in post-primary education, whichever is later. The general functions of the National Educational Welfare Board are set out in the act. One of the functions of the NEWB is “to ensure that each child attends a recognised school or otherwise receives a certain minimum education” (section 10, sub-section 1). Another is “to promote and foster, in recognised schools, an environment that encourages students to attend schools and participate fully in the life of the school” (section 10, sub-section 1(a)).

The statement of strategy, as stipulated by section 22 of the act, to foster an appreciation of learning and to encourage regular attendance at school on the part of students, should include strategies for facilitating the education of students with special educational needs.

1.9.4 The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003) and Freedom of Information Acts (1997 and 2003)

The Data Protection Act (1988) and the Data Protection (Amendment) Acts (1998) and (2003) are designed to protect the rights of individuals with regard to personal data, that is, data relating to them that is held in computer files or in manual files that are structured or searchable by reference to individuals. The law defines personal data as “data relating to a living individual who is or can be identified either from the data or from the data in conjunction with other information that is in, or is likely to come into, the possession of the data controller” (Data Protection (Amendment) Act, 2003, p. 7).

In relation to the management of information on individual students, schools should act in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Acts and any further guidance in relation to the acts provided by the Data Protection Commissioner or by the Department of Education and Science. In this regard, schools will find useful information and directions in the *Advisory Notice for Schools of Obligations under the Acts*, issued by the department in 2003, and *Data Protection Acts 1998 and 2003 - A Guide for Data Controllers*, published by the Data Protection Commissioner in 2004. The advisory note to schools was issued to ensure that school managers are aware of the requirements of data protection legislation. *A Guide for Data Controllers (2004)* is intended as an introductory guide for those persons and bodies that are “data controllers,” that is, those who control the contents and use of personal data. Some important points from these documents are reproduced below; however, schools are advised that the information provided here is introductory only and is not intended to be a definitive guide to the acts.

The Data Protection Acts allow “data subjects” (those whose personal data is retained in a file) to establish the existence of personal data relating to them, to have access to and be given copies of the data - with limited exceptions - and to have inaccurate data rectified or erased. The Data Protection (Amendment) Act (2003) brought manual records into the scope of the legislation and strengthened the rights of data subjects.

The eight rules of data protection are set out in *A Guide for Data Controllers (2004)*. The data controller must

- (1) obtain and process information fairly,
- (2) keep it only for one or more specified, explicit and lawful purposes,
- (3) use and disclose it only in ways compatible with these purposes,
- (4) keep it safe and secure,
- (5) keep it accurate, complete, and up to date,
- (6) ensure that it is adequate, relevant, and not excessive,
- (7) retain it for no longer than is necessary for the purpose or purposes, and
- (8) give a copy of their personal data to an individual on request.

A school that holds in a computer file sensitive personal information on any person, including students, staff members or parents, such as information regarding racial or national origin or membership of the Traveller community, religious or other beliefs, political opinions, or physical or mental health (other than data kept for the purposes of normal personnel administration), should register in accordance with the Data Protection Acts. It is likely, therefore, that some schools will need to arrange for registration. Schools that hold such sensitive information in manual form only are not required to register with the Office of the Data Commissioner. Queries in relation to registration should be referred to the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner.

At the time of writing these *Guidelines* the terms of the Freedom of Information Acts (1997 and 2003) do not apply to post-primary schools. However, schools should note that, as pointed out above, the Data Protection Acts confer certain rights on students and their parents in relation to access to information held in either manual or electronic formats.



1.9.5 The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)

The statutory framework for the education of children with special educational needs is set out in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004). The EPSEN Act's purpose includes the aim that children with special educational needs should be educated, wherever possible, in an inclusive environment and that those with special educational needs should have the same rights to appropriate education as children without special educational needs. The act also provides a statutory basis for the National Council for Special Education.

The purpose of the act is set out in the preamble, which is

to make further provision, having regard to the common good and in a manner that is informed by best international practice, for the education of people with special educational needs, to provide that the education of people with such needs shall, wherever possible, take place in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs, to provide that people with special educational needs shall have the same right to avail of, and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers who do not have such needs, to assist children with special educational needs to leave school with the skills necessary to participate, to the level of their capacity, in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives, to provide for the greater involvement of parents of children with special educational needs in the education of their children, for those purposes to establish a body to be known as the National Council for Special Education and to define its functions, to confer certain functions on health boards in relation to the education of people with special educational needs, to enable certain decisions made in relation to the education of people with such needs to be the subject of an appeal to an appeals board and to provide for related matters.

(Government of Ireland, 2004b)

The terms of the act apply to both post-primary and primary schools. The main provisions in relation to schools are set out below. These provisions include the duties of boards of management, the enrolment of children with special educational needs, the content of individual education plans, the implementation of individual education plans, the role of the principal in relation to individual education plans and assessment, the rights of parents, and the role of the National Council for Special Education.

It should be noted that at the time of publication of these *Guidelines* only some parts of the EPSEN Act 2004 have been put into effect by the Minister for Education and Science. Part of the act came into force on 14 July 2005 and a further five sections on 1 October 2005. At the time of writing these *Guidelines*, the sections of the act providing for an individual right to assessment, individual education plans, the designation of schools, appeals processes and co-operation between the education and health services have not yet been implemented.

(a) Duties of boards of management

Section 2 of the act provides that a child with special educational needs will be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs, unless this is inconsistent with the best interests of the child, as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out under the act, or with the effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated. Boards of management are required under section 14 to

- ensure that section 2 of the act is complied with as respects that school;
- ensure that the parents of students with special educational needs are informed of their child's needs and how those needs are being met and that they are consulted about, and invited to participate in, the making of all significant decisions regarding their child's education;
- co-operate to the greatest extent practicable with the NCSE and its employees;
- ensure that all relevant teachers and other relevant employees are aware of the special educational needs of students;
- ensure that teachers and other relevant employees of the school are aware of the importance of identifying students who have special educational needs, and
- inculcate in students of the school an awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities (Section 14).

(b) Enrolment of children with special educational needs

With regard to the provision of school placement for a child with special educational needs, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act stipulates that

- the NCSE may designate an appropriate school for a student with special educational needs and may direct a school to enrol such a student; in doing this it will have regard to the student's needs, the wishes of the parents, and the capacity of the school to meet the student's needs (section 10, sub-sections 1 and 2);
- the board of management of the school may, within four weeks of being informed of the NCSE's decision, appeal to the Appeals Board against the designation; the Appeals Board may allow or dismiss the appeal (section 10, sub-section 3);
- the burden of providing proof that the school does not have adequate resources to meet the needs of the student concerned lies with the board of management of the school (section 10, sub-section 5).

(c) Content of education plans

In relation to the content of education plans for children with special educational needs, section 9 of the act stipulates that the matters to be specified in an education plan shall include

- the nature and degree of the child's abilities, skills and talents;
- the nature and degree of the child's special educational needs and how those needs affect his/her educational development;
- the present level of educational performance of the student;
- the special educational needs of the student;
- the special education and related support services to be provided to the child to enable the child to benefit from education and to participate in the life of the school;
- where appropriate the special education and related services to be provided to the child to enable the child to effectively make the transition from pre-school education to primary school education;
- where appropriate the special education and related services to be provided to the child to enable the child to effectively make the transition from primary school education to post-primary school education, and
- the goals which the child is to achieve over a period not exceeding twelve months.

In the act the word "child" means a person of not more than eighteen years of age.

(d) Implementation of education plans

With regard to the implementation of education plans

- the school principal has the responsibility for implementing the education plan, and the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Health and Children have the responsibility for providing the necessary funding and support services for the education plan, in accordance with the resources available to them and in a manner consistent with the common good (section 9, sub-section 7; section 13, sub-sections 1-3);
- the education plan must be reviewed at regular intervals, and in any case not less than once a year, with a view to establishing whether the student has received the

services required as contained in the education plan, to ascertain whether the goals specified in the plan have been achieved, and to make any necessary amendments to the plan (section 11).

(e) Role of the principal in relation to education plans and assessment

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act prescribes a range of functions for principals in relation to the provision of education for students with special educational needs. A summary of the principal's duties and functions in relation to assessment and education as laid down in the act is provided below.

The following duties are specified for the principal in regard to education plans:

- Where the principal is of the opinion that a student is not benefiting from the education programme provided by the school to students who do not have special educational needs, or where the principal is so notified by the parents of a student, he/she is required to take measures that are practicable to meet the student's educational needs (section 3, sub-sections 1 and 2).
- Where an assessment carried out in accordance with sub-section 4 establishes that the student has special educational needs, the principal is required to have an education plan prepared for the student within one month, in consultation with the parents, the special educational needs organiser with responsibility for the school, and other persons, as the principal considers appropriate. When the education plan has been drawn up the principal should send a copy of the plan to the parents and to the special educational needs organiser (section 3, sub-sections 6, 9, and 10).
- Having regard to the nature and extent of a child's special educational needs as established by an assessment, or following a review of an education plan, if the principal is of the opinion that an education plan is unlikely to result in the child's needs being met they shall request the NCSE to prepare an education plan for the child (section 3, sub-section 11).
- If the NCSE refuses to accede to a request by the principal to prepare an education plan, the principal may appeal this decision (section 3, sub-section 13).
- The NCSE, if it concurs with the principal's conclusion, will direct the relevant SENO to cause an education plan to be prepared for the appropriate education of the child. In doing this the SENO may convene a team to advise on the plan. This team may include the following: parents, if they so wish; the student, where appropriate; the school principal or a teacher nominated by the principal; a NEPS or other psychologist; any other expert nominated by the SENO or by the parents (section 8).
- The principal or a teacher nominated by the principal should act as a member of a team that is convened by a special educational needs organiser for the purpose of drawing up an education plan for a child, if requested by the special educational needs organiser to act as a member of the team (section 8, sub-section 4).
- The principal has the responsibility for implementing the education plan, and the school should be provided with the necessary funds and support services (section 9, sub-section 7).
- In circumstances where a child with special educational needs is transferring to another school, the principals of the two schools should consult in relation to the contents of and any necessary amendments to the child's education plan (section 9, sub-section 8). Where it is proposed to amend the education plan, the parents of the

child should be informed by the principal of the school to which the child is to be transferred. If the parents request the principal to consult the special educational needs organiser, the principal should comply with this request (section 9, sub-sections 8 and 9).

- The principal has the responsibility for reviewing or causing to be reviewed at regular intervals, but in any case at intervals of not less than one year, the operation of the education plan and the achievement by the child of the goals specified in the education plan. Following the review the principal should make a report to the child's parents and to the relevant special educational needs organiser (section 11, sub-sections 1 and 2).
- If parents request a review of the education plan, on foot of a belief that their child is not achieving the goals set out in the plan, and a review of the plan has not been carried out during the previous six months, the principal may decide to accede to this request. If the principal decides not to accede to the request and if subsequently the parents appeal the principal's decision, the principal must comply with the directions of the appeals board following the determination of the appeal (section 11, sub-sections 4-9).
- If parents appeal against the school in respect of any statement in their child's education plan on the grounds that the statement or description is incorrect or inadequate or on the grounds that the discharge by the school of its duties in relation to the implementation of the education plan is incorrect or inadequate, the principal should comply with any direction given by the appeals board (section 12, sub-sections 1-4).

The following duties are specified for the principal in regard to assessment:

- If the measures taken by the school do not meet the student's needs and if the principal concludes that the student is not benefiting from the school's education programme and that the student's difficulty in doing so may arise from his/her special educational needs, he or she may, after consultation with the parents of the student, arrange for an assessment to be carried out. This assessment must be completed as soon as possible and in any case not later than three months after the principal has reached the opinion referred to above (section 3, sub-section 3).
- Assessments should be carried out with the assistance of persons possessing such expertise and qualifications as the health board or the NCSE consider appropriate. These persons may include one or more of the following: a psychologist, a medical practitioner, the principal or a teacher nominated by the principal, an appropriately qualified social worker and a suitably qualified therapist (section 5, sub-section 1).
- The principal, the NCSE or the health board, as appropriate, should facilitate the participation of the parents of the child concerned in the assessment process (section 5, sub-section 2).
- If the principal is of the opinion that the arrangement of an assessment is not practicable, he/she may request the NCSE or the health board to arrange for the assessment (section 3, sub-section 6).
- If the NCSE refuses to accede to a request by the principal to arrange for the assessment of a child, the principal may appeal this decision (section 3, sub-section 13).

- The principal must act in accordance with the directions and determinations of the appeals board in relation to assessment (section 6, sub-section 3).

The principal of a school may delegate the performance of any of the functions conferred on him/her by the act to other teachers in the school (section 18, sub-section 1).

(f) Rights of parents

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act confers on parents a series of rights in relation to the education of a child with special educational needs. These rights are summarised below.

(i) The right to make requests

The parents of a child may request

- the principal of a school to take such measures as are practicable to meet the educational needs of the child, if they are of the opinion that the child is not benefiting from the education being provided in the school (section 3, 1-2);
- the relevant health board, or in the case of a child who is a student the NCSE, to cause an assessment of the child to be carried out if they are of the opinion that their child may have special educational needs (section 4.3);
- the NCSE to designate a school that their child with special educational needs is to attend (section 10.1);
- a review of their child's educational plan if they are of the view that the goals are not being achieved and a review has not taken place within the previous six months (section 11.4).

(ii) The right to be consulted

The parents of a child with special educational needs have the right

- to be consulted by the principal in relation to the arrangement of an assessment (section 3, sub-section 3);
- to be consulted by the principal in relation to the preparation of an education plan (section 3, sub-section 9).

(iii) The right to participate

The parents of a child with special educational needs have the right

- to participate in an assessment of their child and to be facilitated as appropriate by the principal, the NCSE, and the health board (section 5, sub-section 2);
- to be involved in the preparation of an education plan for their child as a member of the team (section 3, sub-section 9; section 8, sub-section 4).

(iv) The right to withhold consent

The parents of a child with special educational needs have the right to withhold consent to an assessment of their child. However, the health board or the NCSE may apply to the Circuit Court for an order dispensing with the requirement for the parents' consent (section 5, sub-section 4).

(v) The right to information

The parents of a child with special educational needs have the right

- to be given notice by the principal of the completion of the education plan and to receive a copy of the plan (section 3, sub-section 10);

- to be informed of the findings of an assessment of their child (section 5, sub-section 7);
- to be informed of the identity of the person or persons to whom the findings of an assessment have been made available (section 5, sub-section 8);
- to receive a report from the principal on the outcome of a review of their child's education plan (section 11, sub-section 2).

(vi) The right to appeal

The parents of a child with special educational needs have the right to appeal

- if the NCSE refuses a request by a principal to prepare an education plan for their child (section 3, sub-section 13);
- if the NCSE or a health board refuses a request by parents to cause an assessment of their child to be carried out (section 4, sub-section 7);
- against an assessment on the grounds that it was not carried out in a manner that conforms to the required standards (section 6, sub-section 1);
- against a refusal by the NCSE to designate a school for their child (section 10, sub-section 6);
- against a refusal by a principal to accede to their request for a review of their child's education plan (section 11, sub-section 6);
- against the NCSE or the principal of a school in relation to any statement or description of their child's special educational needs as set out in an education plan, or the failure of the school or health board to implement any part of the plan (section 12, sub-section 1).

(g) National Council for Special Education

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was established ad interim by order of the Minister for Education and Science under the Education Act (1998) and was formally established on 1 October 2005 under the terms of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004). Section 20, sub-section 1, of the act lays down the following functions for the NCSE

- to disseminate to schools, parents and such other persons as the Council considers appropriate information relating to best practice, nationally and internationally, concerning the education of children with special educational needs;
- in consultation with schools, health boards and such other persons as the Council considers appropriate to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs;
- in consultation with schools and with such persons as the Council considers appropriate to plan for the integration of education for students with special educational needs with education for students generally;
- to make available to the parents of children with special educational needs information in relation to their entitlements and the entitlements of their children;
- to ensure that the progress of students with special educational needs is monitored and that it is reviewed at regular intervals;
- to assess and review the resources required in relation to educational provision for children with special educational needs;
- to ensure that a continuum of special educational provision is available as required in relation to each type of disability;

- to review generally the provision made for adults with disabilities to avail of higher education and adult and continuing education, rehabilitation and training and to publish reports on the results of such reviews (which reviews may include recommendations as to the manner in which such provision could be improved);
- to advise all educational institutions concerning best practice in respect of the education of adults who have disabilities;
- to advise the Minister in relation to any matter relating to the education of children and others with disabilities;
- to consult with such voluntary bodies (being bodies whose objects relate to the promotion of the interests of, or the provision of support services to, persons with disabilities) for the purposes of ensuring that their knowledge and expertise can inform the development of policy by the Council and the planning and provision of support services, and
- to conduct and commission research on matters relevant to the functions of the Council and, as it considers appropriate, to publish in such form and manner as the Council thinks fit the findings arising out of such research.



Other provisions in relation to the NCSE are set out in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004), including the membership of the council, the consultative forum, the implementation report (in relation to the act), and the role of the chief executive officer and the special educational needs organisers (sections 20-34). The establishment of the Special Education Appeals Board is also provided for in the act (sections 36 and 37), as well as the duties of health boards (section 39).

In addition to its general functions under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, when the act is fully implemented the NCSE will have a series of direct functions in relation to the assessment of students, the preparation of individual education plans, and the co-ordination of education and health services. The NCSE is completing an implementation report that is due for presentation to the Minister for Education and Science by 1 October 2006. The implementation report will identify the human and

financial resources needed to implement the various sections of the act and will propose dates by which those resources should be made available and the various sections of the act implemented.

The NCSE is the body charged with ensuring that the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act is given full effect. It is intended that the act will be fully implemented within five years of the formal establishment of the NCSE i.e. by 1 October 2010.

It should be noted that the term “health board” is sometimes used in legislation that is relevant to special education. Since the health boards were abolished in 2005 the term “Health Service Executive” can usually be substituted for “health board”.

Chapter 2

Whole-school planning and organisation



2. Whole-school planning and organisation

Principal themes

1. The goal of inclusion is not to erase or to ignore differences between individuals. Rather inclusion aims to enable all students to fully belong to the school community and to be educated within a framework in which differences between individuals are accommodated and celebrated.
2. To be inclusive, schools should examine, and, as appropriate, adapt, their culture or ethos, values, management, policies, procedures, organisation, curriculum content, approaches to learning and teaching and provision of programmes with a view to accommodating students with special educational needs, students with other learning differences, and students from different environments and cultures.
3. The practice of selecting certain students for enrolment and refusing others to ensure that only a certain cohort of students is enrolled (for example students who are more able academically) is unacceptable, and where such practices exist, they should be discontinued.
4. For students who are having difficulty adjusting to the post-primary school, including those who have poor attendance in the first term, early intervention strategies can be implemented with the objective of preventing more significant difficulties developing, including early drop-out of school.
5. Specific reference should be made in school policy statements and procedures to the promotion of access for, and participation by students with special educational needs in appropriate curricular and extracurricular opportunities.
6. The successful inclusion of students with special educational needs requires effective collaboration between mainstream teachers and teachers in specialist roles, such as the resource teacher, the guidance counsellor, the home-school-community liaison co-ordinator, and the learning-support teacher.
7. Schools are advised to organise the in-school placement and teaching arrangements for students with special educational needs in a manner that enables these students to be included with other students with varying abilities throughout the range of subjects to the greatest extent possible.
8. Resource teaching support should be provided to the students who have been identified formally by a psychologist, psychiatrist, speech and language therapist or other appropriate professional as having special educational needs and on whose behalf additional support has been allocated by the National Council for Special Education.
9. Students with special educational needs should be included in mainstream classes to the greatest extent possible. Such students should be withdrawn for individual or small-group teaching only when it is clearly in their interest or at times when it is not possible to provide appropriate education in the mainstream class for them or for the other students.
10. The in-school assessment of an individual student should always be undertaken for a particular purpose and should lead to some action. In-school assessment should be carried out as part of a cycle of information-gathering, planning, intervention and review, and not as a once-off event.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with planning and organisation at the whole-school level for the inclusion of students with special educational needs. The concept of inclusion and the implementation of models of organisation at the whole-school level to provide an inclusive educational environment for students with special educational needs are examined. Advice is also provided in relation to in-school assessment policy and practices.

2.2 The inclusive school

The goal of inclusion is to create a framework within which differences between individuals are accommodated and celebrated. Inclusion in education relates not only to students with special educational needs, but also to a welcome for and acceptance within the school of all students who have learning differences - for example those who are members of the Traveller community, those living in areas of social or economic deprivation, and those from other cultures, whose first language may not be English or Irish. Inclusion does not seek to erase or ignore differences between individuals: in its essence, inclusion implies the right to appropriate education.

Inclusion is viewed as a much broader concept than integration. In an integrated school or classroom, the burden of adaptation to what may be a largely unmodified situation is often placed on the student who learns differently. Inclusion, on the other hand, implies that the diverse needs and learning differences of all students are accommodated and that appropriate structures and arrangements are adopted to enable each student to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her attendance at school.

The enrolment in recent years of significant numbers of students with special educational needs in mainstream post-primary schools has led in many schools to the development of whole-school policies and practices to facilitate the inclusion of these students in the various aspects of school life. In these schools, the management, principal, teachers and other staff members are responding purposefully to the management, curricular and pastoral issues associated with the provision of education for students with special educational needs and are endeavouring to deepen their knowledge and understanding of special education.

2.2.1 The benefits of inclusion

For students with special educational needs, placement in mainstream education provides increased opportunities to improve communication skills and to interact with their peers. This can lead to the development of new friendships in their local communities. Students with special educational needs can also benefit socially from inclusion through a reduced sense of isolation and be subjected to less negative labelling. There is a highly favourable tendency for students with special educational needs to be more motivated and to work harder in the inclusive classroom. An inclusive setting can expand a student's personal interests and knowledge of the world, and prepare him/her for better post-school experiences and adulthood.

Inclusion can have a favourable impact on students without, as well as students with, special educational needs. An effective way to help students overcome the misconceptions they may have about people with special educational needs is to bring them all together in an inclusive school setting. In the inclusive school, all the students can learn to accept and value individual differences. Experience of inclusive education can help everyone in the school community to prepare for a future inclusive society.

When inclusive education is implemented appropriately, benefit can accrue to all students in the classroom. For example, all students can benefit from having two teachers in the classroom during co-operative teaching as well as having more opportunities to master activities through practising and helping others in co-operative learning activities. Teachers are more apt to break instruction into finer parts, repeat directions, coach students in the use of learning strategies and offer individualised support, when a student with special educational needs is in the classroom. Students with low-achievement, who are not classified as having special educational needs also benefit from these effective teaching strategies.

There are also advantages for parents. When students with special educational needs are integrated in local schools, their parents have more opportunity to participate in the school and in the community in which the school is situated. Some parents have reported positive changes in family life, with increased interactions with family, friends, and neighbours, increased self-esteem, and fewer behavioural problems.

2.3 Planning for inclusion at the whole-school level

The process of developing school policy and procedures on special educational needs is most effective when the process is undertaken in collaboration with the various partners within the school community - trustees, board of management, teachers, parents, and students - and, as appropriate, support agencies and services and the local community. The Department of Education and Science and its agencies have a central role in supporting the inclusive ethos of the school through setting the context for inclusion in national policy and in providing support to individual schools.

An inclusive school is characterised by a continuous process of development and self-evaluation with a view to eliminating barriers to the participation of all students in the catchment area. The school's mission statement and the policies and procedures set out in the school plan are pivotal in establishing a positive agenda for inclusion. Schools are advised, therefore, to examine and, as appropriate, revise their culture or ethos, values, mission statement, policies, procedures, management style, organisational arrangements, curriculum content, and approaches to learning and teaching with a view to establishing a school climate, curriculum and instructional approach that are fully inclusive.

It is acknowledged that the development and implementation of a coherent whole-school approach to the inclusion of students with special educational needs presents a significant challenge for post-primary schools. Certain contextual factors, such as the nature and structure of the syllabus, state examinations, the organisation of classes, timetabling, and the conflicting priorities arising can constrain the collaborative planning that is essential for successful teaching and learning. Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulties that may arise, it is critical that such challenges are addressed at whole-school level and that effective structures for planning, co-operation and consultation for inclusion are established.

Significant issues also arise for individual teachers in providing appropriate education for all the students in their classrooms. These issues include the management of time, preparation for teaching, the learning and application of new teaching techniques for differentiation and individualised learning, the maintenance of an adequate pace in order to cover long syllabi and the pressures and expectations that arise in the preparation of students for state examinations. Individual mainstream teachers should have available collaborative support from specialist resource teachers and learning-support teachers. All teachers require the support of school management to enable them to access the in-career development opportunities that are available.

It is also acknowledged that the process of policy development and change that is required for the effective inclusion of students with special educational needs can be complex and time-consuming. Assistance with aspects of school development and planning for special educational needs may be sought from the NEPS, SESS, NCSE, and from other agencies, such as the School Development Planning Initiative and the Second-Level Support Service. In addition, the availability for teachers of in-career development courses in special education is increasing.

To be effective, the in-school arrangements for the provision of education to students with special educational needs (for example, the placement of students in class groups and the allocation of classes to members of the teaching staff), should take account of the particular circumstances of the school. In addition, the following suggestions can be considered in the drawing up of whole-school policies and procedures:

- A clear and transparent link should exist between the resources (including part-time teaching hours) allocated to the school and the provision of additional teaching support to the students with special educational needs for whose support the resources were allocated.
- School policies and procedures in relation to placement and teaching arrangements for students with special educational needs should be drawn up in consultation with members of the teaching staff, including mainstream teachers.
- The participation in a meaningful way of students with special educational needs in mainstream classroom activities should be maximised through the placement of students in classes and the allocation of teachers.
- The withdrawal of students from mainstream class activities for individual or small-group teaching should be balanced against their need to participate in educational experiences with their peers.
- Mainstream teachers should be given access to information about the needs of students with special educational needs in the context of the placement of these students in their classes. Decisions in relation to the withdrawal of students with special educational needs should be made in consultation with the mainstream teacher and parents.
- All teachers should have access to the supports and training necessary for them to cater appropriately for the full diversity of students in their classes. In addition to formal CPD training courses, mainstream teachers can further their knowledge and expertise through consultation with and support from colleagues who have experience and expertise in the areas of resource teaching and learning support.

In drawing up school policies on special educational needs, schools should be cognisant of their statutory obligations and should implement the advice and guidance that is given in documents that are provided by the Department of Education and Science, the NCSE, and other agencies of the Department.

2.3.1 Drawing up inclusive whole-school policies and procedures for special educational needs

The school plan should set out the school's aims and objectives for all students and should be linked to the mission statement of the school. School policies and procedures for special educational needs should be informed by the vision and values in the school mission statement. If the school mission statement is not reflective of an inclusive ethos, the mission statement itself may require revision. Some policies and procedures in the school plan will contain references to the

inclusion of students with special educational needs (for example, enrolment, discipline, anti-bullying, health and safety, supervision, assessment), while others will relate specifically to provision for students with special educational needs (for example, the role of the special educational needs support team, individual education plans, inclusion in mainstream classes, provision of additional teaching support).

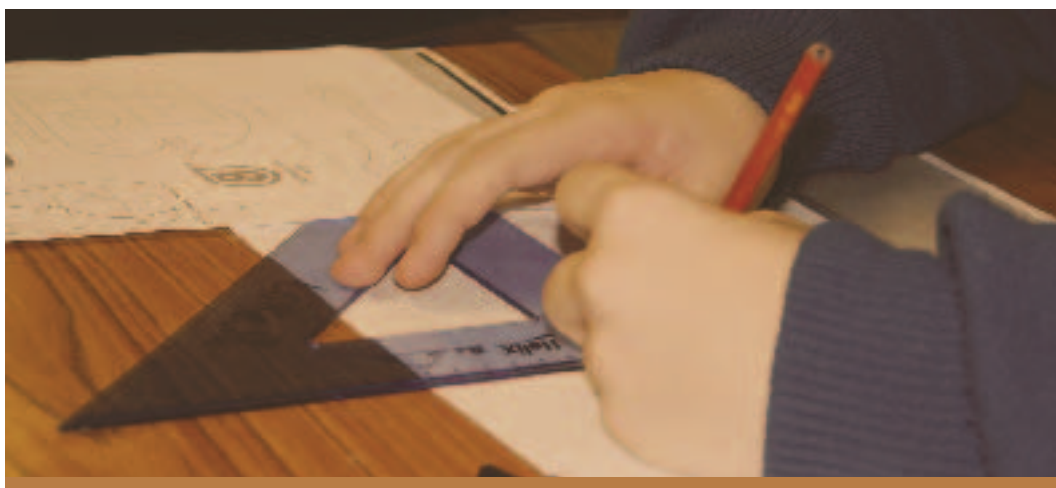
Drawing up school policies and procedures for special educational needs involves a number of stages. These include the following

- agreement that a formal policy or set of procedures in relation to a particular issue or area is required and, following the decision that a formal statement should be drawn up, the appointment of an individual or a group to draw up a draft policy
- examination by the planning group of relevant documents, including, as appropriate, legislation, research and best-practice guidelines and a review of the specific needs of the school and of any specific circumstances or incidents that contributed to the decision to develop the whole-school policy
- the preparation of a draft statement of policy or procedures by the planning group
- the circulation of the draft policy to partners within the school community for consultation and redrafting of the statement by the planning group in the light of responses received
- the presentation of the draft statement of policy or procedure to the board of management and acceptance of the policy by the board of management, possibly following further consultations
- implementation of the policy or procedures in the school
- monitoring at regular intervals that the policy is being implemented and identification of any issues arising
- formal review of the statement at a pre-determined time and revision as necessary.

In drawing up school policies and procedures related to special education, schools should take account of advice that is provided by the Department and agencies such as the School Development Planning Initiative.

As the first step in revising school policies and procedures for special educational needs, it is a useful exercise for the school management and staff (or a working group appointed by them) to carry out an audit of provision for special educational needs in the school. An audit may identify a need to revise existing school policies or to develop new structures. An audit of the provision for special educational needs is most effective when it is undertaken as part of a wider re-examination of the school's overall mission, ethos, values, and curriculum. The audit of provision for students with special educational needs will involve an evaluation of the school's arrangements for allocating teachers and strategies for teaching and learning. The capacity of staff members to cater for students with special educational needs will be examined and an assessment made of the need for in-career development for teachers. Policy and procedural matters relating to the inclusion of students with special educational needs that need to be addressed through school development planning can also be identified. The audit can include an examination of the composition of the student population, including the number of students with special educational needs and the range of special needs among them. Changes in the student population that have occurred or that are likely to occur in the immediate or near future can be identified. Decisions can then be made in relation to giving priority to specific aspects of provision for special educational needs.

The Department of Education and Science document *Looking at Our School: An Aid to Self-Evaluation in Second-Level Schools* (2003) is designed to assist schools in reviewing and evaluating the work of the school. Themes for the self-evaluation of provision for students with special educational needs are set out in section 5 of that publication. (A template audit of provision for students with special educational needs, derived from *Looking at Our School*, is presented in appendix B. This template is offered as a means of rating the various aspects of provision in the school.) If significant deficits are identified in any aspect of provision, a more detailed examination of the issues involved will be required as a starting point for appropriate planning and development.



2.4 Whole-school policies and procedures for special educational needs in the school plan

The following areas should be covered in the school plan in relation to the education of students with special educational needs

- the school enrolment policy, including the enrolment of students with special educational needs (see section 2.4.1 below)
- the school attendance policy and procedures for encouraging the attendance of students with special educational needs who may have poor attendance (see section 2.4.2 below)
- the promotion of a school ethos, values and climate and the acceptance of diversity (see section 2.4.3 below)
- the procedures for arranging the transfer of students from primary schools (see section 2.4.4 below)
- the arrangements for facilitating the transfer of students to post-school settings following their completion of post-primary education (see section 2.4.5 below)
- procedures leading to the implementation of a staged approach to identifying and responding to students who have low achievement or special educational needs (see section 2.4.6 below)
- the procedures and criteria for identifying students for resource-teaching support (see section 2.4.7 below)

- the procedures and criteria for selecting students for learning support (see section 2.4.8 below)
- the support structures for facilitating the involvement of parents and communication with parents (see sections 2.4.9 and 3.11 below)
- the arrangements for making accommodations in the physical environment of the school (see section 2.4.10 below)
- the models of organisation for providing special interventions, including additional teaching support for individual students with special educational needs (see section 2.5 below)
- the procedures for identifying students who may have special educational needs and their referral for psychological assessment (see sections 2.6 and 4.4.2 below)
- links with external support agencies and services (see section 3.15 below)
- assessment policy and procedures (see section 2.6 below)
- the development, implementation and review of individual education plans (see chapter 4)
- the provision of opportunities for students with special educational needs to gain access to learning in the school alongside students without special educational needs (see chapter 5)
- clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the various members of the teaching staff in relation to the education and inclusion of students with special educational needs (see chapter 3)
- the procedures by which students are enabled to select an appropriate programme for state examinations and to make suitable subject choices (see sections 1.8.4 and 1.8.5 above).

2.4.1 School enrolment policy

There is evidence that some post-primary schools continue to have restrictive enrolment policies that lead to the effectual exclusion of children with special educational needs and those with other learning differences. Policies and practices may also be in operation within a school that hinder the full participation of children with special educational needs, and there may be a failure to make reasonable accommodations for these students. Some parents of children with special educational needs have experienced difficulty in relation to the enrolment of their child in the school of their choice. In this regard, appeals have been taken successfully by parents under section 29 of the Education Act (1998).

Boards of management should note that discrimination by educational establishments on the ground of disability, including the admission or the terms or conditions of admission of a person as a student, is prohibited by the Equal Status Act (2000). Boards of management are also required under the Education Act (1998) to make reasonable provision and accommodation for students with a disability or other special educational needs. The Department of Education and Science considers that the practice of selecting certain students for enrolment and refusing others so as to ensure that only a certain cohort of students is enrolled - for example those who are more able academically - is unacceptable and that where such practices exist they should be discontinued. In such cases schools are strongly advised that their enrolment policies should be revised immediately in conformity with current statutory requirements and to provide for clear and inclusive enrolment practices and procedures. The importance of developing appropriate dispositions, attitudes and skills for inclusion among those working in the school and among the student body and the parent community is also emphasised.

It is also inappropriate for a school to include a clause in its admissions policy to the effect that the

enrolment of a student with special educational needs is dependent on the allocation of appropriate resources. It is good practice for a school to seek all relevant information on a student with special educational needs before their enrolment. This may be done as part of the admissions process. In this regard, parents may be requested to provide relevant reports from the child's previous school or reports by professionals who have assessed or who have provided support services for the child, for example psychologists, speech and language therapists, or occupational therapists. This information should not normally be used in any way, explicitly or implicitly, to determine whether or not the child is to be enrolled in the school. Access to such information can however enable the school to make suitable advance preparations for the admission of the student and, if necessary, to seek additional resources from the National Council for Special Education, the Department of Education and Science, or the Health Service Executive.

2.4.2 Attendance and participation

Schools are advised to establish a process for facilitating and for closely monitoring the attendance of students with special educational needs, particularly during the early days and months of their first year in school. The statement of the strategies and measures that the school proposes to adopt for the purpose of fostering an appreciation of learning among the students and encouraging regular attendance as required under the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) should include strategies for facilitating the education of students with special educational needs.

Poor attendance in the first term is an early indicator that a student may be having difficulty adjusting to post-primary school. For students who are having difficulty adjusting, early intervention strategies can be implemented with the objective of preventing more significant difficulties developing, including early school-leaving. The monitoring of attendance and linking with the educational welfare officer in this regard should be carried out by the principal or a named member of the staff. Schools' policies and procedures in this matter should reflect the guidelines that have been issued by the National Educational Welfare Board.

2.4.3 Code of behaviour and discipline, and measures to prevent the bullying or harassment of students with special educational needs

Students with special educational needs may be vulnerable to physical, psychological or emotional harassment. If these students are subjected to unfair treatment within the school by staff members or by students, the physical, psychological and educational effects can be very damaging for them. The failure by a school to take reasonable steps to prevent harassment, including the inclusion of preventive measures in school policies and procedures, may result in the school being held liable under the Equal Status Act (2000).

The promotion of a school ethos, values and climate that place a high value on respect, tolerance and the acceptance of diversity is central to the development of inclusive policies and practices in the school. Each member of the school community has the right to participate, both physically and psychologically, in a secure manner and in an atmosphere free from discrimination, prejudice, harassment, and bullying. A person in authority must not harass a student who has applied for admission or who avails of any service in the school. There is also an onus on responsible persons not to permit another person to suffer harassment in the school; instead they must ensure that reasonably practicable steps are taken to prevent the harassment of an individual in the school.

A broad range of guidance and advice is now available to school managements to aid in the review and redrafting of the school's code of behaviour and discipline and for establishing measures to prevent discrimination, harassment, and bullying. *School Matters: The Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second-Level School* (Department of Education and Science, 2006b) contains valuable guidance for schools on the issues. *Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in*

Schools (Department of Education, 1993b) is provided to assist schools in drawing up an anti-bullying policy and strategies to prevent bullying behaviour. The planning template that is available on the web site of the Department of Education and Science is based on these guidelines and also takes account of more recent legislative and regulatory changes.

The attention of school managements is also drawn to circulars and advice booklets that have been issued by the Department of Education and Science (www.education.ie) and the Equality Authority (www.equality.ie) in relation to drawing up a code of behaviour and discipline and anti-bullying measures. In addition, useful research, reports and advice have emanated from the universities, school trustees and patrons' bodies and the teachers' unions. At the time of publication of this document the National Educational Welfare Board had announced its intention to publish national guidelines for school codes of behaviour. It is intended that these guidelines will address how schools can deal progressively and inclusively with behavioural issues, thereby helping to facilitate participation in education for all students. (See also section 1.9.2.)



2.4.4 Transfer of students to post-primary schools from primary schools

Most post-primary schools have established procedures with "feeder" primary schools that are designed to facilitate the transfer of students from primary to post-primary education. These procedures include visits by teachers to the other schools to gather and transfer information, circulating school brochures to prospective students, and open days for students and parents.

With regard to the admission of new students to the school, including students with special educational needs, a written policy should be drawn up in relation to the transmission and receipt of information that is generally regarded as confidential, such as personal details, results of school assessments, individual education plans, and professional reports. When a policy on the transmission of confidential information is being drawn up and implemented, care should be taken that the personal and statutory rights of the students are protected. Schools are advised that the agreement of parents should be obtained before the transmission between schools of confidential information, for example the results of school assessment tests, end-of-year school examinations,

and individual education plans. Permission should be obtained from the student's parents and from the relevant professionals before psychological and other professional reports are passed on to others.

Some examples of information that should be regarded within the school as confidential are listed above. Confidential information is information that is personal or private to the individual student and is not available to the general public. There is an expectation that confidential information will be handled carefully within the school and that it will be shared only with those who have legitimate reasons for having the information. There is also an expectation that those who have access to confidential information will use the information only for the purposes and within the scope for which they have received the information. Finally, it is expected that those who have access to confidential information will make that information available to others in limited circumstances only: when there is good reason for passing on the information and when the approval of the interested persons has been granted in advance.

Because of the nature of the information that may be involved, schools are advised to act sensitively in relation to the transmission of information that may be personal or private and to operate in accordance with any guidance that is provided by the Department of Education and Science, the National Educational Psychological Service, the school management authorities, and such agencies as the National Council for Special Education and the National Educational Welfare Board.

Moving Up: The Experiences of First-Year Students in Post-Primary Education (NCCA, 2004a) is a report of a study of transfer to post-primary school that was carried out for the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. The report contains a series of recommendations for schools in relation to the admission and inclusion of new students. These recommendations are summarised below. The implementation of these recommendations is likely to be as valuable for students with special educational needs as for students without such special needs. In the planning for first-year students, consideration of the following curriculum and support structures is recommended

- pre-entry contact between the post-primary school, incoming students, and their parents or guardians
- a good information flow between the feeder primary school and the post-primary school, particularly in relation to students' achievement, learning strengths, and material covered at primary level
- an understanding by subject teachers of the teaching and learning approaches that characterise students' experiences in primary school in order to help them to make connections with and build on the learning that has taken place in primary school
- open days, parents' evenings, induction events, and the provision of class tutors and student mentors
- a positive school climate that encourages good relations among students and between students and teachers
- mixed-ability grouping in first year
- a clear and effective anti-bullying policy
- the availability for all students of a variety of subjects, including subjects with a practical emphasis

- a range of “taster” subjects offered as part of first year
- the careful monitoring of students’ progress to identify those who need extra support
- the provision to parents and guardians of accessible information on all aspects of first year.

2.4.5 Transition from post-primary education to a post-school setting

The transition of students with special educational needs from a post-primary school to a post-school setting requires careful planning. At the end of their time in post-primary education, some students with special educational needs may require placement in supported employment or other special services that are provided by voluntary or statutory organisations. The service provider in question may need to be informed of the student’s need for placement a considerable time before the placement date so that appropriate arrangements can be made. For such students, planning for transition may need to begin up to two years before the date on which the student is due to transfer from the school. The school staff can make a significant contribution to facilitating a student’s transition to their new setting by making relevant information and documents available to parents and, as appropriate, to the management of the new setting. Schools can also support the transition by facilitating and encouraging visits and transitional short placements by the student in their new setting.

2.4.6 Staged approach to intervention and support

Schools are advised to implement a staged approach to intervention and support for students with low achievement or special educational needs. A staged model is explained in a booklet published by the National Educational Psychological Service (2004), *Working Together to Make a Difference for Children*. At stage 1 - the whole-class stage - the student’s learning difficulties are noted, the parents are informed, and intervention is provided by mainstream teachers. At stage 2 - the school support stage - in addition to the support provided by mainstream teachers there is a more formal involvement by support teachers, such as the learning-support teacher or the guidance counsellor (or both). At stage 3 - consultation and assessment - referral for formal assessment by an educational psychologist or other professional is made, and an individual education plan is formulated in order to address the student’s needs.

The circumstances and criteria for referral to the NEPS for educational psychological assessment or to a HSE professional for assessment should be determined and stated in a school policy document. Advice on the implementation of a staged approach to intervention and support may be obtained from the NEPS psychologist who is assigned to the school.

2.4.7 Resource-teaching support for students with special educational needs

The students who typically are provided with additional teaching support by a resource teacher for special educational needs are those who have been formally assessed as having special educational needs by a psychologist, psychiatrist, speech and language therapist or other appropriate professional and on whose behalf an allocation of resource-teacher hours has been made to the school by the National Council for Special Education.

In the provision of resource-teaching support, students with special educational needs may be brought together in groups for instruction in specific aspects of the curriculum or so that common targets in their individual learning plans can be addressed. In this regard, students with low achievement in English or mathematics who are eligible for additional teaching support by the learning-support teacher may also be included in the group. Instruction may be given by the resource teacher or the learning-support teacher. The deployment of resource teachers and learning-support teachers in this way can maximise the effect of the additional teaching support for the students concerned. The guiding principle of such arrangements is that the appropriate

additional support is provided to the students for whom it is allocated by the department or the NCSE.

If there is significant concern in the school that a student who has not been identified as having special educational needs in fact has such needs, steps should be taken to have a formal assessment by a relevant professional carried out. The process of arranging such an assessment will involve information-gathering in the school and discussion with parents and the student and with the assigned NEPS psychologist for the school.

2.4.8 Learning support for students with low achievement

The organisation of intervention for students with low achievement should also be considered carefully in whole-school planning for inclusion. Effective intervention for students with low achievement includes identification procedures, assessment processes, support for teaching and learning, the continuous monitoring of progress and staff collaboration.

Students who are selected for learning support are generally those who have low levels of achievement in literacy or mathematics and who have not been allocated resource-teacher support by the NCSE. The school policy on learning support should set out the criteria for the selection of students with low achievement for supplementary teaching by the learning-support teacher and for discontinuing supplementary teaching for students who have made progress and for whom supplementary teaching is no longer required. In the selection of students for supplementary teaching, priority should be given to those who are performing at or below the tenth percentile on standardised tests of literacy and mathematics. If, following the examination of test results in literacy and mathematics, it is decided to offer supplementary teaching to a student, both the student and their parents should be informed and their approval obtained for this intervention.

The models of organisation for the provision of supplementary teaching by the learning-support teacher should be specified in the whole-school policy. (These models of organisation are discussed in sections 2.5.1-2.5.4.)

2.4.9 The involvement of parents

The role of parents and the means of communicating with, involving and supporting the parents should be specified in school policy in relation to parents. The policy statement should state the willingness of the school's management and staff to work in partnership with parents. Procedures should be developed through which parents feel welcome in the school and are informed at regular intervals of their children's progress. (See also section 3.11.)

2.4.10 Accommodations in the physical environment

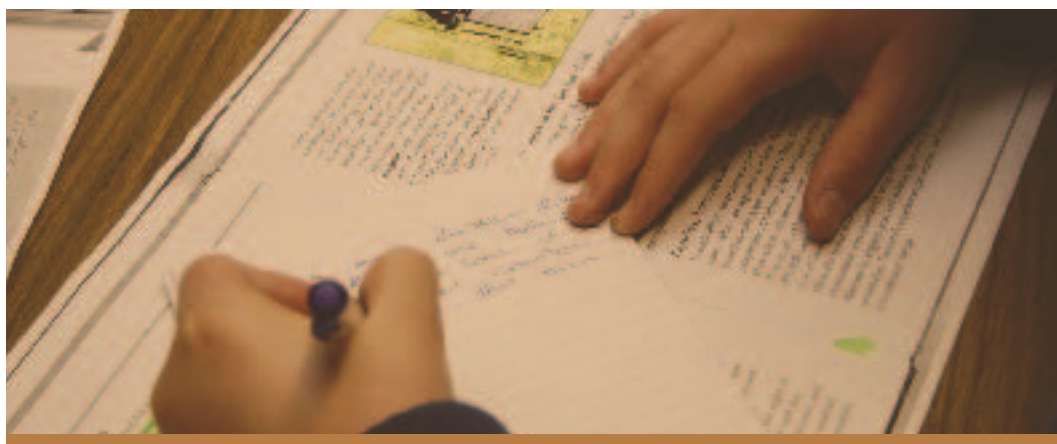
Arrangements for the inclusion of students with special educational needs must take account of the likely effect on the physical infrastructure of the school and the level of any changes to the building fabric that are required to facilitate the education and inclusion of these students. The integration and flexibility of new facilities are important considerations for the school management and for designers in providing for appropriate education for these students. For completely new school buildings an inclusive approach by the design team should result in barrier-free design. Adapting or extending existing buildings can present different challenges for designers to resolve. The provision of appropriate facilities for students with special educational needs will typically require the resolution of such issues as accessibility, way-finding, horizontal and vertical circulation, environmental comfort and safety, sanitary facilities, the suitability and selection of finishes including colour appropriateness, tactile surfaces, and safe internal and external recreation areas. In all cases statutory obligations with regard to planning and development, building regulations and health and safety regulations must be observed.

2.5 Whole-school approaches to organisation for inclusion

The organisation of education for students with special educational needs includes placement in an appropriate class grouping, the provision of suitable curricular options, and arrangements for the provision of additional teaching support by the resource teacher. Schools are advised to organise placement and teaching arrangements in a manner that enables students with special educational needs to be included with other students with varying abilities throughout the subject range to the greatest extent possible. The arrangements should be sufficiently flexible to allow for readjustment or modification, as required, in the interests of individual students.

Three class placement options and three alternative approaches to providing additional teaching support are discussed in sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.2 below. The three options for class placement are placement in a mainstream mixed-ability class, placement in a streamed or banded class, and placement in a designated special class or special unit. The three arrangements for the provision of additional teaching support within these placement options are in-class support: co-operative teaching, setting the timetable and the withdrawal of students for individual or small-group teaching.

The model of organisation adopted by the school for the provision of resource and learning-support teaching should serve the needs of the students. A review of the suitability of the placement and teaching arrangements for students with special educational needs should be carried out annually in accordance with good practice and with the relevant policies and procedures in the school plan.



2.5.1 Class placement arrangements for students with special educational needs

Three organisational arrangements for the placement of students with special educational needs in class groupings are considered below: mainstream mixed-ability classes, streamed or banded classes, and designated special classes. Some features of each of these options are discussed.

(a) Placement in mainstream mixed-ability classes

Under this arrangement the students are placed in mainstream mixed-ability class groups. In some schools, mixed-ability class groups are arranged for the first year only, or for certain subjects, or until the completion of the junior cycle. As the students progress through the school they are placed in class groups in accordance with the programme that they are taking for state examinations. In general, schools are advised to include all students in mainstream mixed-ability class groups to the greatest extent possible and in a manner that allows them to participate in a meaningful and beneficial way in classroom activities.

A positive feature of placing students with special educational needs in mixed-ability classes is the opportunity they get to learn alongside their typically developing peers. Teachers often state in reports of research into mixed-ability teaching that there are beneficial effects for both high-achieving students and low-achieving students from placement in mixed-ability classes. The benefits include not only academic progress but also social and personal development. Recent research by the ESRI shows an increase in the use of mixed-ability classes since the 1990s (NCCA, 2004b). The report notes that seventy per cent of the schools surveyed used mixed-ability classes in first year, sixteen per cent used banding, and fourteen per cent used streaming. The report concluded that mixed-ability grouping is desirable, as streaming leads to lower achievement among those in bottom streams and increased transition difficulties for those in higher streams because of academic pressure.

Successful learning for students in mixed-ability classes depends on such factors as teacher expertise and the conditions for learning, including the implementation of differentiated approaches for teaching and learning, appropriate class size, the availability within the classroom of sufficient space for group activities and suitable resources for learning.

(b) Placement in streamed or banded classes

A minority of post-primary schools still use streaming or banding for the organisation of the first-year class. In streamed or banded classes all students are placed in class groups in accordance with their assessed level of achievement or ability. Achievement scores are obtained through the administration of standardised or other tests, either before entry or following enrolment, or from reports from the primary school. As part of the streaming process a small class group is often formed in which students who have been assessed as having special educational needs or are considered to be in need of learning support are placed. This stream or band is most often regarded as the weakest class in a particular year group. The students in this class group are frequently offered a reduced curriculum and are instructed by a small team of teachers.

Advocates of streaming often suggest that the streaming of students in accordance with ability or attainment is not only organisationally attractive but also enables the teachers to concentrate on the priority learning needs of students with low achievement or those with special educational needs, particularly in the areas of literacy, mathematics, and personal and social development. It is argued that a streamed class group provides a suitable setting in which students with low achievement or with special educational needs can be given the individualised attention they need and the opportunity to make progress at their own rate.

However, recent research suggests that the outcomes for students in classes that are streamed in accordance with attainment or ability fall far below these expectations. The negative effects of streaming include the possibility that students may be segregated from their peers rather than included with them. Those in the low streams may make poor academic progress and may feel marginalised and isolated within the school community. The range of subjects available to students in the lower streams may be reduced, and this can have long-term implications for them, for example when a student has not studied Irish or a foreign language.

Moving Up (2004) - the report of a study carried out for the NCCA - found in relation to ability grouping as follows:

- Streaming is now practised in only a minority of post-primary schools and is less common than in the 1990s.
- Where streaming is used it tends to result in the labelling of students as either "smart" or "stupid."

- Many students in streamed groups say that their teachers move too quickly, or too slowly, when covering subject material in class.
- Students in the higher-stream classes take longer to settle in to post-primary school. Many experience difficulty in handling the increased pace of learning and volume of work in addition to the other transition challenges.
- Students in streamed schools, especially those in the lower streams, make less progress in reading and mathematics during first year.
- More schools now ensure that each first-year class group is made up of students with a wide range of abilities. This mixed-ability approach has been adopted by schools in the knowledge that students can develop over the course of the year and in the belief that mixed-ability grouping can help students to become more confident as learners.
(NCCA, 2004a, p. 6.)

If, despite the evidence to the contrary, a school continues to use streaming as the means of class organisation, it is most important that the class groupings for the students who are less able are well resourced. The range of programmes and experiences provided for the students should be suitable for their needs. The learning needs of each student must be addressed. Serious efforts should be made to ensure that these students are not marginalised within the school community and that they have significant opportunities for involvement in inclusive activities along with their peers in their year group and in the school generally. Given that the students in the low-stream class (or classes) may have special educational needs or low achievement in basic knowledge and skills (or both), the school management should ensure that experienced staff members are assigned to teach such students. These students may require careful management, motivation and teaching to enable them to make meaningful progress in school.

The school management should also consider the selection criteria used for streaming the students. In relation to the low streams, are these students placed there on the grounds of having a learning difficulty or delay or an emotional or behavioural difficulty? Teachers should consider the learning objectives that are set for the low-stream class (or classes) and how to cater for the wide range of abilities and interests that may be represented among these students. The use of standardised test results as the sole or main criterion for separating students into class groups either before or immediately following entry to the school displays a narrow view and is contrary to best practice, whereby a wide range of sources is used to determine a student's learning needs. (The use of standardised tests is considered further in section 2.6.3.)

(c) Placement in a designated special class or unit for students with special educational needs

This form of placement consists of a designated special class or unit for students who have been assessed as being within a particular category of special educational needs. Such special classes are recognised by the Department of Education and Science, and special arrangements are made for staffing and funding. Some post-primary schools have a special designation to cater for students within a particular category of special educational needs, for example a learning disability, a physical disability, or a sensory impairment. Most special classes in post-primary schools are for students with either mild or moderate general learning disability. In addition, special classes or units for students with autistic-spectrum disorders are now established in some post-primary schools. A resource teacher is usually timetabled to teach the students in the special class.

In relation to the provision of instruction to the students in the special class, schools are advised to adopt flexible organisational arrangements. School policy should be to create a situation where the students who are placed in a special class or unit are enabled, to the greatest extent possible, to be included in lessons in mainstream classes. They should be taught separately in the special class setting only when it is in their interests and at points in their timetable when they are unable to participate beneficially in lessons in mainstream classes.

It is also recognised that, because of the extent of their disabilities or special educational needs, some students who are enrolled in special classes or units will need to spend most or all of the school day in a separate designated classroom. Such students will generally receive focused individual or group instruction from the resource teacher while they are in the special class. In some schools in which special classes have been established, mainstream teachers are also timetabled for specific class periods to teach their specialist subject to the students in the special class. In doing so, the mainstream teacher may work in a team-teaching arrangement along with the resource teacher.

In some schools with a special class, arrangements are made for “reverse integration” opportunities, whereby students from a mainstream setting are enabled to take some classes with students with special educational needs in the special class setting. This arrangement also provides an opportunity for mainstream students to act as peer supports to students with special educational needs in the special setting.

2.5.2 Arrangements for the provision of additional teaching support to students with special educational needs

Three possible arrangements for the provision of additional teaching support to students with special educational needs are discussed below. These arrangements are the ones most commonly in use in post-primary schools. Some schools use a combination of approaches, as this permits greater flexibility in the deployment of teachers. School managements and principals are advised that whatever the model of organisation it is critical that a school's allocation of resource-teacher hours for special educational needs is employed for the purpose for which the hours were allocated. The three approaches considered below are in class support: co-operative teaching, setting the timetable, and the withdrawal of students for individual or small-group teaching.

(a) In-class support: Co-operative teaching

Decision-makers in schools are advised to strongly consider the possibility of making arrangements for the provision of supplementary teaching by resource teachers and learning-support teachers within the context of the mainstream class. In-class support can be implemented through co-operative teaching.

The term “co-operative teaching” is used here to denote any arrangement whereby two or more teachers work together in a collaborative manner with a class of students who have diverse learning needs. Within the classroom and in the context of the inclusion of students with special educational needs, the “teaching team” will typically be made up of the mainstream teacher and either the resource teacher or the learning-support teacher. The members of the teaching team share responsibility for the planning and provision of instruction to the class. The resource teacher and learning-support teacher usually pays particular attention to students with special educational needs or those with low achievement and endeavours to ensure that these students experience success in their learning programmes.

Successful co-operative teaching requires collaboration between resource teachers, learning-support teachers, and mainstream teachers. The programmes to be taught to the

students and the teaching and learning strategies to be used should be agreed in advance. Organisational arrangements within the classroom to facilitate the engagement of both teachers with the students also need to be agreed. The school management should provide leadership and support, particularly in relation to organising the timetables of teachers who are engaged in co-operative teaching. Co-operative teaching approaches can be particularly successful in helping to address the learning targets set for a student with special educational needs in their individual education plan and for reviewing progress at the end of a period of instruction. Co-operative teaching also provides useful opportunities for staff mentoring and support. (See also section 5.3.1.)



(b) Setting the timetable

In the “setting the timetable” model, all students, including those with special educational needs, are placed at first in mixed-ability classes. Class periods for core subjects (often Irish, English and mathematics) are arranged for the same periods on the timetable. Class groupings for these core subjects are formed according to the ability or attainment of the students.

Setting the timetable has the advantage that students with special educational needs and those with low achievement can receive intensive support in a small class grouping or through team-teaching without withdrawal from their class groups to obtain additional support, which can occur in other organisational models. However, for the model to operate effectively schools should ensure that the individual needs of students with special educational needs are monitored and reviewed regularly and the arrangements are sufficiently flexible to allow students to move between class groups, as appropriate. Where class periods for additional teaching in core subject areas are set against optional subjects, careful consideration should be given to the optional subjects that they are set against. The strengths and interests of the student and the long-term consequences for individual students of missing certain subjects need to be carefully explored in consultation with students’ parents.

In an alternative version of the “setting the timetable” model, students with special educational needs or those with low achievement are “timetabled” outside the main timetable for certain class periods in order to receive additional instruction in core areas of the curriculum. This usually happens at times that the mainstream students are attending lessons in an optional subject. Those with special educational needs attend the learning-

support teacher or the resource teacher for supplementary teaching at this time. (This arrangement is also in effect a form of withdrawal.) A shortcoming of this arrangement is a restriction in the subject options available for the students who are provided with additional teaching support, because they are timetabled to attend supplementary lessons in core subjects while their classmates are engaged in the learning of optional subjects.

(c) Withdrawal of students for individual or small-group teaching

Under this arrangement, students with special educational needs are withdrawn from mainstream classes for individualised or small-group teaching, often in the areas of literacy, mathematics, or social skills training. A positive feature of a withdrawal arrangement is that it provides for an individualised or small-group setting in which the specific needs of the student can be addressed. A negative effect is that the separation of a student from their classmates tends to emphasise for the student, his/her fellow-students and members of the staff the differences rather than the similarities between the student with special educational needs and their classmates and so may counter other measures that have been adopted to include the student fully in the school community. Withdrawal also means that the student misses the work being covered in the mainstream class for certain periods. It is often difficult for the school to find alternative opportunities for the student to make up for the classes they have missed.

It is important that an appropriate balance is maintained between the withdrawal of students for class periods for additional teaching support and students' opportunities for inclusion in educational experiences with their peers. The decision to withdraw a student from the mainstream class should not be taken lightly and should follow consideration of the likely benefits and possible drawbacks for the student concerned. The possibility of addressing the student's needs within the mainstream classroom setting should be fully explored before any withdrawal is decided on.

In schools where a withdrawal model is used for learning-support teaching or resource teaching there should be a written policy that specifies the circumstances (including classes and subjects) in which a student with special educational needs may be withdrawn from their mainstream class. The decision to withdraw a student for individual or small-group teaching should be taken with regard to the student's education plan, and specific learning targets should be set for the withdrawal lessons. The process should involve consultation between mainstream teachers, resource teachers and learning-support teachers, as appropriate, and parents. It is critical that mainstream teachers are aware of the areas of work that are covered in the withdrawal lessons, so that this work is supported in the classroom situation. Mainstream teachers can contribute to planning the subject matter of withdrawal lessons by advising the resource teacher or the learning-support teacher about the language, concepts and skills that are being addressed in the mainstream class programme and how the resource teacher or learning-support teacher might support the student's learning in this area.

Where it is proposed to withdraw a student for additional support, the student should be fully involved in planning the intervention, and his/her agreement and the agreement of his/her parents to the withdrawal programme should be obtained. Before the withdrawal programme begins, agreement should be reached on how long the withdrawal intervention will last, the dates for a review of the programme, and the criteria for the review.

2.5.3 Establishing an appropriate model of organisation

Schools vary in the number of students with special educational needs enrolled and in the range of special educational needs among the student population. Therefore, in drawing up school policies and procedures, school management will be mindful of the need to provide for the

individual needs of the students through the most effective employment of the available resources. In relation to the placement of students with special educational needs in class groups and in making arrangements for the provision of additional teaching support, schools are advised to adopt inclusive arrangements and, as far as possible, to avoid organisational practices that result in the segregation of students with special educational needs from their peers. The objective should be to provide access for students with special educational needs to a broad curriculum and to arrange for their participation in general school activities to the greatest meaningful extent. As a general rule, these students should spend as much time as possible in mainstream classes, and their withdrawal from the mainstream should be kept to a minimum.

Some post-primary schools are at an early stage of development in relation to providing education for students with special educational needs. Other schools have been enrolling significant numbers of such students for many years and have made significant strides in the inclusion of these students. School managements should be cognisant of the fact that it takes time to introduce fundamental change into any organisation, including a school. To assist in the process of change and development, schools should use the school development planning process so that the models of organisation necessary for the inclusion of students with special educational needs are agreed and implemented. Advice may also be sought from the NEPS psychologist in relation to making appropriate arrangements within the school for individual students with special educational needs and for planning at the whole-school level.

At an early stage in the development of school policies and procedures related to the education of students with special educational needs, there should be consultation with the parents of these students in relation to these policies. Parents should also be consulted in the context of the review of these policies.

When new models of organisation are being introduced it is important that staff members are provided with the necessary information and training to enable them to put the new arrangements into practice. The school management should facilitate access for teachers and other staff members to in-career development opportunities in special education. The following supports can be of assistance to teachers in adapting their teaching style, as appropriate, to addressing the needs of students with special educational needs

- encouragement for members of the staff to attend professional development courses related to the education and inclusion of children with special educational needs
- allocating time at staff meetings for discussing the professional development needs of staff members
- establishing strategies in the school for exchanging information, including, for example, the availability of a staff notice-board for matters of a general nature related to special educational needs (it would not be appropriate, of course, to display information of a sensitive or confidential nature relating to an individual student)
- providing a resource centre for the staff, with books, journals and other teaching and learning resources on special educational needs
- giving opportunities to staff members who have attended specialised training to pass on what they have learned to other members of the staff.

2.5.4 Reference documents

An extensive literature is available to schools and teachers on inclusive education for students with special educational needs. Some of these documents are listed in the “Selected references” section at the end of this book.

Useful information relating to planning at the level of the whole school and at the level of the individual student, as well as information on such curriculum initiatives as the Junior Certificate Schools Programme, Leaving Certificate (Applied) Programme, and Transition Year Programme, can be downloaded from the web site of the Department of Education and Science and from those of agencies and support services that are operating under the aegis of the Department of Education and Science or other Government departments, including

- the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)
- the National Council for Special Education (NSCE)
- the National Disability Authority (NDA)
- the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI)
- the Second-Level Support Service (SLSS)
- the Special Education Support Service (SESS).

The addresses of these organisations' web sites are provided in appendix E. The web sites usually provide links to other sites that also contain useful information. School management authorities and teachers' unions have also published helpful materials, particularly on the development of school policies and procedures related to the inclusion of students with special educational needs.

2.6 Assessment

In education the term "assessment" refers generally to the gathering and interpretation of information related to a student's learning abilities, learning attainments, learning strengths, and learning needs. The assessment that is carried out by a professional from outside the school such as a psychologist or speech and language therapist can be distinguished from the multiplicity of educational assessment processes carried out in schools. School assessment processes include weekly, monthly or end-of-term tests as well as the assessment procedures carried out for specific purposes by guidance counsellors, learning-support teachers, and resource teachers. These in-school assessment processes are very useful means for the measurement of students' progress and achievement, and provide valuable information for use in planning for teaching and learning. When the relevant sections of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) are in operation, school assessment may take place as a precursor to the formal assessment of a student under the act or as part of continuous monitoring within the IEP planning process.

The requirements for a formal assessment under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act are that such an assessment will

1. include an evaluation and statement of the nature and extent of the child's disability (including matters that affect the child generally as an individual) and an evaluation and statement of the services the child will need so as to be able to participate in and benefit from education and, generally, to develop his/her potential;
2. be carried out by persons considered suitable by the NCSE or HSE, which may include one or more of the following: a psychologist, a medical practitioner, the principal of the school the child is attending or a teacher of that school nominated by the principal, a social worker, or a therapist; and
3. conform to standards set by a body to be established by the Minister for Health and Children for the purpose of determining standards for these assessments.

The programme for implementing the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act will take into account the capacity of the system to carry out assessments as described in the act.

The paragraphs on assessment below deal with the processes that are implemented in schools to gather relevant information on the learning and progress of students.



2.6.1 The purposes of assessment

Assessment should always be carried out for a particular purpose and should lead to some action. The purpose of in-school assessment of students is normally to inform planning for appropriate teaching and learning or to evaluate progress. In post-primary schools, assessment is undertaken typically for one or more of the following reasons

- to monitor a student's progress
- to establish baseline data in relation to a student's attainments in specific subjects
- to guide the formulation of learning and teaching programmes
- to identify students for placement in class groups
- to select students for additional teaching support
- to assess a student's eligibility for additional support and services
- to inform consultations with the school's NEPS psychologist, and
- to assist in the identification of students who may need to be referred to an outside professional or agency for assessment or direct intervention.

If the information from in-school assessment of an individual student leads to the conclusion that the student may have special educational needs, the student's needs should be discussed with the NEPS psychologist and the student may be referred to an appropriate professional or agency.

2.6.2 Methods of assessment

Schools should ensure that the methods used for assessing students with special educational needs are appropriate and that they do not create barriers to inclusion. For example, difficulties with attention, literacy or motor dexterity may prevent a student from giving a true reflection of his/her knowledge and skills in a written and timed end-of-term test. The assessment methods should also be related to the programme that the student is following. Assessment methods that are used in schools include formal methods, informal methods, and diagnostic methods. These are considered below.

(a) Formal methods of assessment

Formal methods of assessment include standardised, criterion-referenced and certain diagnostic tests. State examinations, such as the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate examinations, and end-of-term school examinations are also formal methods of assessment.

The use of a standardised test enables a teacher to obtain a general indication of a student's achievement and to interpret the student's level of attainment by reference to the performance of other students in the same age range or class level. Standardised test scores are expressed in a number of forms, for example standard scores and percentile ranks. Criterion-referenced tests are usually linked to the curriculum, and the results show the teacher whether a student has mastered a specific learning objective. A diagnostic test is designed to provide specific information about a student's strengths and needs in some aspect of learning, for example word identification skills or an understanding of number concepts. In general, diagnostic tests are administered individually and may or may not provide norm-referenced information.

(b) Informal methods of assessment

Informal methods of assessment include classroom tests, informal observation by the teacher, evaluation of homework, and informal analysis of students' language and social development. Informal methods are useful for assessing aspects of a student's general behaviour, social interaction with others, and organisational skills. Informal methods are also useful in monitoring a student's progress and in diagnosing specific strengths, needs, and learning preferences. Informal assessment can provide valuable baseline information for planning and teaching. Informal assessment methods can be applied in the normal classroom setting, and the information gathered can lead directly to planning for teaching and learning.

(c) Diagnostic assessment

The in-school diagnostic assessment by teachers of students with special educational needs can be carried out through the use of either formal or informal methods of assessment. The objective of diagnostic assessment is to identify the student's learning strengths and needs. This assessment may be carried out in preparation for the development of an individual education plan for an individual student and may

- deal with such areas as literacy, mathematics, social development, and learning needs in other areas of the curriculum
- provide information on the student's knowledge, skills and learning style on which the development of the student's learning programme can be based
- provide a basis for discussion with the student and others in regard to the setting of learning goals and objectives in the individual educational plan.

2.6.3 Developing a whole-school policy on assessment

All teachers engage in assessment of their students as an integral part of teaching. Mainstream teachers use both formative and summative assessment techniques. Formative assessment is the

process that teachers carry out to measure students' knowledge and progress in order to inform instruction. In presenting a lesson, the teacher may use formative assessment techniques (for example questioning) to find out what the students already know in relation to the subject matter of the lesson as a basis for the teaching of new knowledge and skills. Formative assessment can therefore be implemented within the classroom during teaching and learning. The careful monitoring of students' performance on homework can provide useful formative information to teachers in relation to both the monitoring of students' progress and the success of the teaching strategies being used. Summative assessment is the assessment process that is normally carried out at the end of a period of instruction in order to find out if the students have achieved the learning goals that were set at the beginning of the period of instruction. Typical examples of summative assessment are the monthly tests or end-of-term examinations that are set for students in post-primary schools. State examinations are also examples of summative assessment.

In recent years the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has collaborated with selected post-primary schools in a project called Assessment for Learning (NCCA, 2004c; NCCA, 2005b). This initiative is concerned with the use of assessment by teachers as a tool for improving students' learning. The reports by the NCCA in 2004 and 2005 contain very encouraging findings in relation to the effect on both the teacher's practice in the classroom and students' engagement in learning. (The findings of the Assessment for Learning initiative are discussed in section 5.3.8.) It is recommended that teachers make themselves aware of the advice in the use of formative methods of assessment as a tool for teaching and learning that is provided by the NCCA through the Assessment for Learning initiative and that the strategies advised be implemented in the classroom.

School examinations should take account of the special learning needs of students with special educational needs, and test items should be matched to students' capacities. In relation to certificate examinations, a student with special educational needs may be entitled to reasonable accommodations. Teachers are advised to make themselves familiar with the procedures governing reasonable accommodations in certificate examinations (RACE). Where a student has been granted an accommodation for a certificate examination, sufficient opportunity should be provided for them to become familiar with the accommodations to be used.

In drawing up a whole school policy on assessment, the following matters should be considered

- the purposes of assessment, including the avoidance of an assessment system that could lead to the over-testing of any student or group of students
- the methods to be used in the school, including the selection of appropriate test instruments, for assessing the attainment and progress of students in the various areas of the curriculum
- the means of identifying students with significant learning needs who have not previously been formally assessed but who may need to be referred to an educational psychologist
- the recording in a positive and sensitive manner of the test results achieved by all students, including those with special educational needs
- the manner in which test results are communicated within and outside the school, for example within the school to teachers, to parents and to the students themselves and outside the school to professionals and to other schools in relation to transfer (Parents' consent and the agreement of the relevant psychologist should be received before psychological reports are transmitted to third parties outside the school. Parents' consent should be obtained before the transmission of in-school assessment and examination results.)

- the establishment of formal procedures in relation to receiving and storing information on individual students from primary schools and the transmission onwards from post-primary schools of assessment information to other settings when the student is leaving the school
- the filing and secure storage of all psychological reports and relevant test results, school reports, and other confidential information relating to students
- the establishment of formal procedures within the school regarding the right of access to and the use of psychological reports on individual students.



2.6.4 Selection and use of appropriate test instruments

Those who select, administer and interpret formal tests, including standardised tests, should have appropriate training and knowledge of the area. In selecting tests, teachers should take account of the quality and suitability of the test, including its reliability and validity. They should note that while the results of a standardised attainment test provide a useful indication of a student's level of achievement in relation to the performance of other students at the same age or class level, the use of criterion-referenced and diagnostic tests is often necessary for drawing up a comprehensive profile of a student's learning strengths and needs.

Relevant technical information on reliability and validity is normally available in the manuals of standardised tests. For a test to be reliable it is essential that it be administered in a formal manner and fully in accordance with the guidelines for administration provided in the manual. In relation to using standardised tests it is important for teachers to be cognisant of their limitations as well as their strengths. Firstly, standardised tests assess only a limited range of knowledge and skills. Secondly, they are subject to measurement error and consequently the scores should be treated as estimates. Thirdly, very few standardised tests have been standardised for an Irish population, so great care should be taken in interpreting test results. Finally, standardised tests are often unsuitable for use with students with special educational needs, because the language register

inherent in many tests makes them inaccessible to this population. Consequently, caution should be exercised in using and interpreting the results of these tests.

The terms on which post-primary schools with recognised guidance or learning-support teachers can avail of grants towards the purchase of tests are set out in Circular 0032/2006. A list of tests in common use in post-primary schools is also provided in this circular. The Department is planning to revise and update this list and to make available additional information about tests to support schools in their selection of appropriate assessment instruments.

Chapter 3

Partnership in special education: Roles and functions



3. Partnership in special education: Roles and functions

Principal themes

1. Policies and procedures in relation to access to and participation in the school by students with special educational needs should be set out in the school plan.
2. The role and responsibilities of the school management, teachers, special needs assistants, parents, students and others within and outside the school who contribute to the education of students with special educational needs should be clearly described in the school plan.
3. The principal has the overall responsibility for the development and implementation of inclusive school policies and procedures in relation to the education of students with special educational needs. The principal may delegate specific functions to other members of the staff.
4. Within the framework of a whole-school approach to inclusion, mainstream teachers have the principal responsibility for teaching all students, including students with special educational needs, within their class groups and for helping the students with special educational needs to achieve the goals that are set in their individual education plans.
5. Differentiation in teaching refers to the promotion by teachers of equal and appropriate access to the curriculum for all students, including those with special educational needs, and whereby teachers take into account the various learning differences of their students in relation to ability, aptitude, interests, experience, and previous knowledge and skills.
6. The core task of the resource teacher is the teaching of students, whether this is done one-to-one, in small groups, in special classes, or through co-operative teaching with colleagues. The resource teacher should also provide advice and support to other staff members and assist in the management and implementation of inclusive whole-school policies and procedures on behalf of students with special educational needs.
7. The primary role of the learning-support teacher is to provide additional teaching to students with low achievement who are not identified as requiring resource-teacher support. The learning-support teacher can facilitate the management, organisation and co-ordination of interventions for these students and may, as appropriate, provide advice and support to other staff members.
8. Schools should establish special educational needs support teams. The senior management and teachers with specialist functions related to special education should contribute to the education of students with special educational needs through the implementation of their specialist role and as members of the special educational needs support team.
9. The Department of Education and Science and state agencies provide resources and support services to schools to make possible the provision of appropriate education to all students, including those with special educational needs.

3.1 Introduction

The school plan should contain a policy document on special educational needs that sets out the role and responsibilities of all those who are involved in the education of these students. The special educational needs policy should also indicate the expected involvement and contribution of Government departments and state agencies, such as the Department of Education and Science, the Health Service Executive (HSE), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), and the Special Education Support Service (SESS).

In this chapter, guidance is provided for schools in relation to the various roles and responsibilities of the board of management, the principal, mainstream teachers, resource teachers, learning-support teachers, special educational needs support teams, year heads and class tutors, guidance counsellors, home-school-community liaison co-ordinators, parents, students with special educational needs, the general student body, and special needs assistants. This is followed by a consideration of the contribution of the Department of Education and Science and state agencies. The information and suggestions outlined below can be considered when the whole-school policy on special educational needs is being drawn up.

3.2 Role and functions of the board of management

The overall responsibility for the provision of education to all students, including students with special educational needs, lies with the board of management. Boards of management facilitate the inclusion of students with special educational needs through inclusive enrolment policies and by promoting inclusive whole-school policies and procedures. Boards of management and principals are charged with specific duties in legislation. Members of boards of management are advised to make themselves aware of the responsibilities of the board to make arrangements for inclusive education under the relevant education legislation.

3.2.1 Boards of management and school policies

The board of management has the responsibility for overseeing the development, implementation and review of school policies and services in relation to the inclusion of students with special educational needs. In this regard the board should

- make arrangements for the preparation of a school plan that lays down the objectives and the measures that will ensure equality of access to and participation in all aspects of the activities of the school by students with special educational needs to the greatest extent practicable
- arrange for the publication of the school policy on the education of students with special educational needs. This document should include the school's policy on the admission and participation of students with special educational needs and the arrangements for identifying these students and for providing for them in the school. Boards of management should note that enrolment and admissions policies that seek to exclude students with special educational needs are contrary to the policy of the Department of Education and Science and are prohibited in recent legislation. (See sections 1.9.2 and 2.4.1.)
- arrange for periodic reviews of the range of curriculum provision within the school to ensure that suitable programmes are on offer to all students, including those with special educational needs
- ensure that reasonable accommodations are made within the school for students with special educational needs

- contribute to the development of awareness among teachers, non-teaching staff members and students of the needs of students with special educational needs and of their particular responsibilities for the inclusion of these students in the school
- provide support for in-career development opportunities for teachers in special education
- arrange for the agreement of school policy on the storage, dissemination and transfer of confidential reports and other records relating to students with special educational needs and provide a secure facility for the storage of these documents
- ensure that the resources available, including additional resources provided by the Department of Education and Science (such as additional teachers and special needs assistants), learning resources and classroom accommodation are used to make appropriate provision for students with special educational needs.

The board should ensure that school staff and parents' representatives are consulted in relation to decisions, policies and procedures for the education and inclusion of students with special educational needs.

3.2.2 Boards of management and parents

It is the responsibility of the board of management to ensure that the rights of parents as prescribed in legislation, including the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004), and as informed by good practice are upheld in the school. Whole-school policies and practices should be established to ensure that the parents of students with special educational needs are

- informed about their child's educational needs and how those needs are being addressed in the school
- provided with opportunities to participate in decisions affecting their child's education
- given access to records kept by the school in relation to their child's special educational needs and educational progress.

3.2.3 Boards of management and the National Council for Special Education

The board of management, in co-operation with the school staff and in accordance with school policies and procedures, should co-operate to the greatest extent practicable with the National Council for Special Education and local special educational needs organisers in relation to the inclusive education of students with special educational needs and specifically with regard to the arrangements for

- the placement of individual students with special educational needs in the school
- the transfer of students with special educational needs to and from the school
- the assessment and diagnosis of students with special educational needs
- the development, implementation and review of individual education plans for students with special educational needs, as required under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)
- the establishment of special classes or units for groups of students within particular categories of special educational need.

3.3 The special educational needs support team

To facilitate the organisation and provision of education for students with special educational needs, schools are advised to form a special educational needs support team in a manner that matches the particular circumstances of the school. Steps have already been taken in some post-primary schools to organise such support teams. The purpose of the support team is to provide a suitable organisational structure to enable teachers in specialist roles related to inclusion to collaborate with one another and with mainstream teachers in an efficient and effective manner for the benefit of the students in their target groups. The members of the team should work collaboratively in the development, implementation and review of policies and procedures for identifying and meeting the special educational needs of individual students.

The principal should lead the establishment of the special educational needs support team. The core of the support team will normally consist of the principal or deputy principal (or both), the resource teacher, the learning-support teacher, and the guidance counsellor. The members of this core team will work closely with mainstream teachers and, as appropriate, with other specialist teachers, such as those involved in pastoral care roles, the school chaplain, the resource teacher for Travellers, the English-language support teacher, the home-school-community liaison co-ordinator, special needs assistants and other relevant staff members in providing inclusive education for students with special educational needs.

The membership and remit of the special educational needs support team should be stated in the school plan, and this should include a clarification of the role and responsibilities of each member of the core team. Meetings and consultation between members of the team will be necessary for the purpose of drawing up, monitoring the implementation of and reviewing whole-school policies and procedures related to special education. Team meetings may involve other teachers, by arrangement. It is advised that such meetings be arranged sufficiently far in advance to ensure the participation of the relevant teachers. Team meetings need to be carefully structured and managed so that the issues to be addressed are dealt with effectively within the time available.

Members of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the Visiting Teacher Service (VTS), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) and other relevant agencies may be consulted by the special educational needs support team as needed.

It should be noted that the in-school special educational needs support team discussed here should not be confused with the “team” referred to in section 8 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004), that is, a group of persons convened by the special educational needs organiser to provide advice to him or her in relation to preparing an individual education plan for a child with special educational needs at the direction of the NCSE.

3.4 The principal

Under current legislation the principal of the school has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the special educational needs of students are met. As a consequence, the principal has the general responsibility for establishing and promoting whole-school policies and procedures that are supportive of the learning of all students, including those with special educational needs. In order to discharge his/her responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner, the principal should

- work with the board of management, teachers and parents in the development, implementation and review of whole-school policies that promote the inclusion of students with special educational needs
- ensure that all such policies are described in the school plan
- continuously monitor the implementation of whole-school policies and provision for special educational needs
- consult and liaise, as required, with relevant external bodies and agencies, such as the Department of Education and Science, the National Educational Psychological Service, the National Council for Special Education, the Health Service Executive, and local agencies.

The principal may convene a special educational needs support team within the school to assist in providing an effective and holistic response to students' needs throughout the curriculum. Subject to his or her overall statutory responsibilities, the principal may delegate the performance of specific responsibilities to other staff members, including members of the special educational needs support team.



3.4.1 The principal and the management of delegated functions

To provide for the effective organisation and management of interventions for students with special educational needs, the principal may convene a special educational needs support team. This team is brought together in order to support the effective provision of education to students with special educational needs and to bring about clarity in the role of different teachers. (The composition and functions of the special educational needs support team is outlined in section 3.3 above.)

In practice, a member of the special educational needs team might be assigned the responsibility for co-ordinating provision for special educational needs within the school and might assume the responsibility for whole-school functions as devolved by the principal. Where possible, this teacher should be a trained resource teacher or learning-support teacher.

The teacher with the responsibility for co-ordinating provision for special educational needs should liaise closely with the principal and the special educational needs support team and may act as an

advocate within the school for the students with special educational needs. This teacher, by arrangement with the principal, may

- assume an overall responsibility for co-ordinating the school's provision for the inclusion of students with special educational needs
- take a leading role in making arrangements for the planning, implementation and review of individual education plans for students with special educational needs when the relevant provisions of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) are implemented
- assist in programme planning for individual students with special educational needs and, as appropriate, provide advice to teacher colleagues on curriculum, teaching and learning strategies, textbooks, and other teaching and learning resources
- liaise with others, within and outside the school, to ensure that appropriate curricular programmes are available for students with special educational needs and in this regard to research new programmes and options that may need to be added to the school's range of curricular provision
- in schools where such special programmes as the Junior Certificate Schools Programme, Leaving Certificate (Applied) and Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) courses are provided, consult and collaborate with the co-ordinators of these programmes in relation to students with special educational needs and provide advice to teacher colleagues, as appropriate
- facilitate the making of applications for reasonable accommodations in certificate examinations (RACE) for students with special educational needs and in-school arrangements for providing the appropriate accommodations for these students in school and state examinations
- liaise with support personnel and external professionals and agencies, including the co-ordination of applications to the Department of Education and Science, NCSE, NEPS, SESS, HSE and other education and health agencies, as appropriate, for resources and support services for students with special educational needs
- facilitate the arrangement of psychological or other assessment, as appropriate, of students who have special educational needs or students who are suspected of having special educational needs
- manage a tracking system for all students with special educational needs who are receiving additional special education support and maintain records of progress relating to these students
- liaise in the management, procurement and maintenance of specialised learning and teaching resources for students with special educational needs
- assist staff members in identifying and availing of career development opportunities in special education.

The principal may also delegate other functions, such as the management of an official school file on each student with special educational needs and the filing and storage of confidential reports. The student's official school file should contain all reports by outside professionals, such as psychologists and speech and language therapists, as well as the student's individual education plan and the principal documents relating to reviews and reformulations of the student's individual education plan. The procedures by which access to confidential information on a particular

student, including information held in their official school file, may be obtained by staff members, parents and outside agencies should be agreed. There should be a general expectation within the school that sensitive information will be handled sympathetically and confidentially.

Given the variation between schools in the enrolment of students with special educational needs, it may be desirable in some schools for aspects of the co-ordination role to be delegated to more than one teacher.

3.4.2 The principal and the enrolment and transfer of students with special educational needs

The principal should ensure that procedures exist for consultation with feeder primary and special schools with regard to the enrolment of new students with special educational needs. The principal should also arrange for the transfer of students with special educational needs to another suitable setting for education or training (or both) when their placement in the school is completed. (See sections 2.4.4 and 2.4.5.)

3.4.3 The principal and the assessment of and provision for students with special educational needs

The principal should oversee the adoption and implementation of suitable whole-school policies and practices in relation to the education of students with special educational needs, including

- the implementation of a staged approach to the identification and assessment of students with special educational needs, as outlined in the NEPS model of service (See section 3.15.3.)
- the preparation, implementation and review of individual education plans in consultation with parents, students, teachers, special educational needs organisers, and others, as appropriate.

3.4.4 The principal and the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream classes

The principal should ensure that mainstream teachers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the education of students with special educational needs. The principal should facilitate the creation within mainstream classes of an inclusive environment for such students by making available appropriate information to mainstream teachers. Mainstream teachers may also require advice and training opportunities to enable them to address the individual needs of these students, including contributing to the implementation of individual education plans. With regard to the placement of a student with special educational needs in a particular class group, the mainstream teacher should be consulted and be invited to contribute to the discussion on how best to meet the student's needs within the classroom, including contributing to the development, implementation and review of specific targets in the student's individual education plan when the relevant sections of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) are implemented.

3.4.5 The principal and the professional development of the staff

With the increased availability of training opportunities in universities and colleges of education and the expansion of the Special Education Support Service, the principal should facilitate the continuous professional development of all members of the staff in relation to the education of students with special educational needs. This should include ensuring that resource teachers and learning-support teachers are facilitated in taking advantage of professional development opportunities and creating structures whereby members of staff with expertise in special education can share their knowledge with other teachers.

3.4.6 The principal and parents

The principal should promote the involvement of the parents of students with special educational needs by ensuring that

- whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents in their children's education
- parents are invited to share information regarding their children's special educational needs and are consulted about how this information should be used in the best interests of their child
- the parents are involved in the preparation, implementation, progress and review of their children's individual education plans
- the parents are fully aware of the school's procedures governing access to their children's records.

3.5 Mainstream teachers

Mainstream teachers have a key role in bringing about the successful inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools. Unless there is a very good reason for withholding certain information, mainstream teachers should have access to all information that is likely to be relevant to teaching or supervising a student with special educational needs, including psychological reports and other confidential documents.

The mainstream teacher has the responsibility for ensuring that all students, including those with special educational needs, are provided with a learning programme and environment that enables them to gain access to the curriculum and to advance their learning. Mainstream teachers have a central role in identifying students who may be at risk and for drawing the attention of other staff members to such students. A teacher may become concerned about a student's general progress, application, communication, behaviour, or interaction with other students and as a result make accommodations for the student within the class. If the concerns are not alleviated following the implementation of these accommodations the teacher should consult other teachers, such as the resource teacher or the learning-support teacher. Ultimately, if the interventions in the school are not successful in dealing with the student's needs, support from outside the school may need to be sought, for example from the SESS, NEPS, HSE, or other agencies.

Mainstream teachers make a critical contribution through the creation of a supportive, caring environment in the school for students with special educational needs, through which these students are affirmed in their ability to learn and to participate generally in the life of the school. Teaching should be differentiated, as required, in order to meet individual needs and specifically to facilitate the achievement of targets that are set in individual education plans. In planning for differentiation, the mainstream teacher may collaborate with and seek advice and assistance from the resource teacher, the learning-support teacher and other members of the special educational needs support team, as appropriate. Mainstream teachers are advised to consider the needs of students with special educational needs when selecting textbooks, planning and teaching lessons, setting homework, and formulating weekly or end-of-term tests for their class groupings.

Mainstream teachers should make themselves aware of the special educational needs of students in their classes and contribute, as appropriate, to the setting of the learning targets in a student's individual education plan, as the relevant sections of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) are implemented. Within the classroom setting, mainstream

teachers can provide suitable learning activities to enable these students to attain their targets. The mainstream teacher can also contribute to the review of individual education plans by providing information on students' progress and by collaborating with the members of the special educational needs support team on request. The mainstream teacher can keep parents informed of their children's progress through regular parent-teacher meetings and school reports and by being available to meet parents from time to time, as required.

Mainstream teachers can contribute to school development planning for students with special educational needs through strategic planning at the subject department level within the school. Named teachers within each subject department can liaise with the learning-support and resource teachers to help identify and develop strategies for teaching their specialist subjects to students with special educational needs. Through this process, important subject matter, skills and vocabulary within the subject can be identified. Effective teaching and learning strategies for use by a mainstream teacher in teaching students with special educational needs can be distinguished, and access for students with special educational needs to specialist subjects can be facilitated.



3.5.1 Differentiation in the mainstream class

Differentiated instruction is a means by which teachers can establish in their classrooms an inclusive and supported learning environment for all students. The term "differentiation" refers to the ways that teachers take into account the differences among their students in relation to ability, aptitude, interests and experience. Differentiated instruction refers to the wide range of strategies, techniques, and approaches that are used to support student learning and help every student to achieve and to realise his or her potential.

Differentiation is a way to promote greater access to the curriculum for all students, including students with special educational needs. Differentiated instruction acknowledges that students learn at different rates and in different ways. Instruction can be differentiated, for example, in relation to the level of difficulty of the subject matter, the style of presentation of a lesson, the pace

of the lesson, the lesson structure, the style of questioning, the sequence of learning activities to be undertaken by the student, the degree of access to additional resources for an individual student, and the degree of access to additional teaching support for an individual student. Integral to understanding and applying differentiated instruction is the acceptance that every teacher can access and use a broad repertoire of strategies, techniques, and approaches and can know when and with whom these should be used.

With regard to differentiation for students with special educational needs, the following general approaches are suggested

- setting learning objectives for students with special educational needs at an appropriate level
- providing learning activities and resources that are suitably challenging and are also likely to result in success and progress
- modifying presentation and questioning techniques in order to maximise the involvement of students with special educational needs
- placing an emphasis on oral language development
- relating the topic under discussion to practical examples within the student's experience and providing opportunities for students to work and practise with concrete and structural materials
- individualised teaching and group teaching to facilitate the involvement of students with special educational needs in learning at an appropriate level
- providing extra tuition to students with special educational needs in relation to important basic skills in subject areas
- carrying out an error analysis of the student's work in order to pinpoint specific areas of difficulty that can be addressed in subsequent lessons
- setting up "buddy" learning systems in the class to involve more able students working with those with special educational needs, either in collaborative groups or in peer-tutoring arrangements.

Differentiated instruction is about personalised instruction and using a balanced range of strategies, techniques, and approaches so that each student's learning requirements are met and so that all students gain benefit from the education that is provided. Differentiated instruction is particularly important for students with special educational needs who require particular kinds of support to realise their full potential.

3.6 The resource teacher¹

A wide range of functions is suggested below for the resource teacher for special educational needs. Some of these functions, particularly those related to the co-ordination and implementation of whole-school policies and to communication and collaboration with outside bodies and professionals, may be performed by the teacher to whom responsibility has been assigned for the co-ordination of provision within the school for students with special educational needs. Alternatively, some duties may be devolved to the learning-support teacher or to another member of the school's special educational needs support team.

¹ The resource teacher for special educational needs is generally referred to in these *Guidelines* as the "resource teacher".

3.6.1 The resource teacher and the allocation and provision of resource-teacher hours

Resource-teacher hours are allocated to schools in keeping with the regulations and guidelines provided from time to time by the National Council for Special Education and the Department of Education and Science. Resource-teacher hours are allocated on behalf of individual students with special educational needs in accordance with each student's assessed special educational needs. Information for schools in relation to making application for additional resources for students with special educational needs is available on the web sites of the National Council for Special Education (www.ncse.ie) and the Department of Education and Science (www.education.ie).

Schools are advised that, as far as possible, resource-teacher hours should be combined to form full-time resource-teacher posts. There is an inefficient practice in some schools of distributing the resource-teacher hours allocated for named students among a large number of teachers, who usually have no qualification in the special educational needs area. The allocation of resource-teacher hours in this way allows the school management a level of flexibility in the allocation and timetabling of teachers. It may also appear to have some benefits through giving experience to teachers in working with students with special educational needs; and, over time, the teachers may become more familiar with teaching approaches and methods for these students. However, the deployment of members of the teaching staff in this way cannot normally be regarded as good practice in the use of the resource-teacher provision, as the effect of the resource-teacher allocations for these students may be dissipated and, as a consequence, their impact as a specific response and support for individual students with special educational needs is likely to be ineffective.

On the other hand, the appointment of a teacher to full-time resource teaching gives him/her the opportunity to obtain access to significant training and to develop expertise in the teaching of students with special educational needs, including those with complex needs. A full-time resource teacher can have regular contact during the week with students with special educational needs and can ensure continuity and progression for these students. A resource teacher with appropriate training and expertise can also act effectively in the co-ordination of special education functions within the school. Therefore, schools are advised to combine the hours allocated for resource teaching to form full-time posts to the greatest extent possible.

3.6.2 The resource teacher and teaching

The core task of the resource teacher is the teaching of students with special educational needs, whether this is done one-to-one, in small groups, in special classes, or through co-operative teaching with colleagues. The way in which the resource teacher implements the teaching role depends to a considerable extent on the model of organisation that has been adopted in the school. However, whatever the model of organisation it should be recognised that the resource teacher has an important teaching function in relation to students with special educational needs, and priority should be given to this aspect of the role. Resource teachers tend to implement their teaching role in the following ways

- by being involved in co-operative teaching with mainstream teachers in mainstream classes
- by withdrawing students for additional classes in literacy or mathematics (or both), as appropriate
- by providing specific support for students with special educational needs in other areas, such as the development of social skills and life skills
- in schools where a special class or unit has been established, by taking overall responsibility for the special class and, in addition, by spending a small amount of time teaching

mainstream classes at times when the students in the special class are being taught by other teachers.

It is strongly advised that where a resource teacher is timetabled to teach subjects to mainstream classes during the week the time involved should not be taken from the hours allocated to the school for resource teaching for students with special educational needs.

3.6.3 The resource teacher and assessment

Resource teachers should be competent in relation to the formal and informal assessment of students with special educational needs. Resource teachers can

- liaise with the guidance counsellor and other staff members in relation to the selection and implementation of tests and other means for assessing student's achievement and progress
- co-ordinate the gathering of information for individual education plans for students with special educational needs from assessment reports by outside professionals and in-school assessment
- be involved in the administration of standardised and diagnostic tests
- be involved in the review of individual students' progress following the implementation of the individual education plan
- provide useful advice and support to mainstream teachers, as required, in regard to the selection and implementation of appropriate means of assessment in subject areas for students with special educational needs
- advise on applications for reasonable accommodations in the certificate examinations
- advise on appropriate means of linking assessment and teaching, such as Assessment for Learning. (See section 2.6.4 and section 5.3.8.)

3.6.4 The resource teacher and the compiling and maintenance of records relating to students with special educational needs

In many instances functions will be delegated to a resource teacher relating to the compiling and maintenance of data on students with special educational needs. Such data may be received from outside or may be generated within the school. Data from outside will include psychological reports and reports from parents or from other schools. Data may be created in the school, for example in relation to assessment, student progress, individual education plans, state examinations, or planning for transfer inwards from the primary school and, at the completion of post-primary education, transfer onwards to a post-school setting. All teachers, including resource teachers, must treat data related to an individual student in a sensitive and confidential manner.

Schools are advised, in general, to adopt an open policy in relation to the sharing with parents of information about their child with special educational needs. In circumstances where a co-ordination function in relation to compiling and maintenance of data on students with special educational needs is delegated to a resource teacher, he/she should work with school management in ensuring that the statutory obligations of the school are met. Schools are obliged to act in accordance with the Data Protection Acts (1988 and 2003) in relation to the management and maintenance of data on individual students. Schools should note that parents have certain rights of access to information under this legislation including a right of access to personal data held on their child in the school, on request, taking into account certain limited exceptions and whether the students themselves could be considered to be able to seek the information. (See section 1.9.4.) When the relevant sections of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs

Act are in operation parents will have rights to information related to individual education plans. (See section 1.9.5.)

3.6.5 The resource teacher and the special educational needs support team

The resource teacher should be a member of the special educational needs support team and may be requested to co-ordinate the work of the members of the team. Functions that the resource teacher might be assigned as co-ordinator of the special educational needs support team are set out in section 3.4.1 above.

To carry out the functions described above, and to provide effective support to subject teachers, it is desirable that the resource teacher should be an experienced teacher, should have good communication and interpersonal skills, where possible should have received specialist training, and should have sufficient professional status within the school community to effectively discharge this wide-ranging role.



3.7 The learning-support teacher

Learning-support teacher posts are allocated to post-primary schools at present in accordance with the number of students enrolled. The role of the learning-support teacher is to provide additional teaching support to students with low achievement in literacy or mathematics and to those with mild or transient difficulties in such areas as language, motor co-ordination, behaviour, socialisation, and attention. It is not acceptable practice for learning-support hours to be used to reduce the size of all classes in the year group, or to give extra teaching hours, for example in English or mathematics, to all students in the year group: the learning-support hours should be used to provide specific intervention for the students with low achievement in English or mathematics.

In some schools where 0.5 of a full teacher post is allocated for learning support and where an allocation of part-time resource-teacher hours has been made, the allocations for the two functions have been combined to form a full teacher post. This can be regarded as a suitable arrangement of these additional staffing allocations as long as the teaching resources are used in the school for the benefit of the students for whom they were originally allocated. In relation to the provision of additional support to students with low achievement in literacy or mathematics,

the organisational arrangements set out in chapter 2 and the teaching approaches and strategies suggested in chapter 5 can be adapted for use by the learning-support teacher. In addition, some useful suggestions in relation to teaching strategies can also be found in the *Learning-Support Guidelines* published for primary schools by the Department of Education and Science in 2000 (available at www.education.ie).

3.7.1 The learning-support teacher and the selection of students for learning support

The learning-support teacher should contribute to the development and implementation of whole-school policies and procedures in relation to the selection of students for supplementary teaching by this teacher. Priority should be given to students with low achievement who are performing at or below the tenth percentile on standardised tests of literacy or mathematics.

3.7.2 The learning-support teacher and the special educational needs support team

The learning-support teacher should be a member of the special educational needs support team and should collaborate with others within and outside the school as a member of this team. With regard to organisation at the whole-school level, and in keeping with the learning-support teacher's role as a member of the special educational needs support team, the principal may devolve specific whole-school responsibilities on the learning-support teacher, such as those outlined in section 3.4.1.

3.7.3 The learning-support teacher and the resource teacher

For best practice, the resource teacher and the learning-support teacher should work closely together to support the meaningful participation of students with low achievement and those with special educational needs in mainstream learning activities and to provide additional support for them. The responsibilities of both the learning-support teacher and the resource teacher should be clarified in school policy documents, particularly in relation to co-ordination and instructional responsibilities. There are many areas, particularly in relation to the implementation of whole-school policies and procedures, where there is a potential overlap between the two roles. A sense of teamwork and clarity in relation to the various responsibilities will help in avoiding duplication and conflict of roles and contribute to the effective implementation of their functions by both teachers for the benefit of the students. Effective practice can be brought about through agreed approaches and a clarification of responsibilities in relation to such matters as

- whole-school policies on assessment, homework and planning for individual students
- the selection of students for whom additional teaching support is to be provided by the resource teacher and by the learning-support teacher
- organisational arrangements for the provision of additional support to students, including involvement in in-class support and co-operative teaching
- the selection and maintenance of teaching and learning resources
- the processing of applications for reasonable accommodations in certificate examinations
- contact with visiting professionals
- the implementation of a monitoring and tracking system in respect of students with low achievement and those with special educational needs throughout their enrolment in the school
- the storage of and access to reports and records on students with low achievement and those with special educational needs
- in-school consultation and professional support to mainstream colleagues.

Decisions in relation to devolving the responsibility for implementing and co-ordinating these functions should be made by the principal, in consultation with the learning-support and resource teachers. Such factors as previous experience, training, seniority, work load, and whether the teacher in question holds a post of responsibility, as well as the nature and complexity of the tasks involved, can be taken into consideration.

Some schools employ learning-support and resource teachers in a flexible way to maximise the provision of additional teaching support to students with special educational needs and those with low achievement in English or mathematics. In these schools, selected students with low achievement in these subjects and certain students who have been identified as having special educational needs are grouped together for lessons in specific aspects of English or mathematics. These lessons are given by either the learning-support teacher or the resource teacher. This can be considered good practice as long as the learning needs of all the students are addressed and the arrangement does not impact negatively on the provision of additional teaching support to other students with low achievement or students with special educational needs.



The learning support and resource teacher can collaborate with mainstream teachers in relation to the education of students with low achievement and students with special educational needs by

- advising on curriculum choices
- making information available on the particular learning needs, abilities and attainments of individual students
- advising on teaching strategies and resources, learning materials, and assistive and augmentative technology
- advising on the effective use of special needs assistants
- advising on strategies for the management of behaviour that arises from or is associated with the low achievement or the special educational needs of individual students

- advising on and supporting the development of appropriate modes of assessment and the evaluation of progress
- collaborating in relation to arrangements for reasonable accommodations in certificate examinations.

The school management should ensure that, as far as possible, teachers appointed to resource and learning-support posts are provided with access to appropriate training and have available to them the resources necessary for their work. Adequate time should be available to the learning-support teacher or resource teacher for discharging the broad range of responsibilities outlined in this chapter. The time required for non-student-contact activities (for example working with other staff members in developing and implementing whole-school policies and procedures, liaising with parents and outside professionals, and assisting with the transfer of students to and from the school) depends on such factors as the size of the school and the number of students with low achievement or special educational needs and the extent of their needs.

The school management should not require a resource teacher or a learning-support teacher to set aside their work schedule in order to provide cover for absent colleagues.

3.8 Year heads and class tutors

Year heads and class tutors can support the creation of an inclusive climate within the school and contribute significantly to the work of the special educational needs support team as required. Year heads and class tutors can facilitate the inclusion of an individual student with special educational needs by monitoring the student's progress within the year group. Year heads and class tutors of first-year classes can contribute to the collection of relevant information on new entrants with special educational needs. The information collected should be passed on to the principal or to a teacher nominated by the principal as the teacher responsible for this task.

3.9 The guidance counsellor

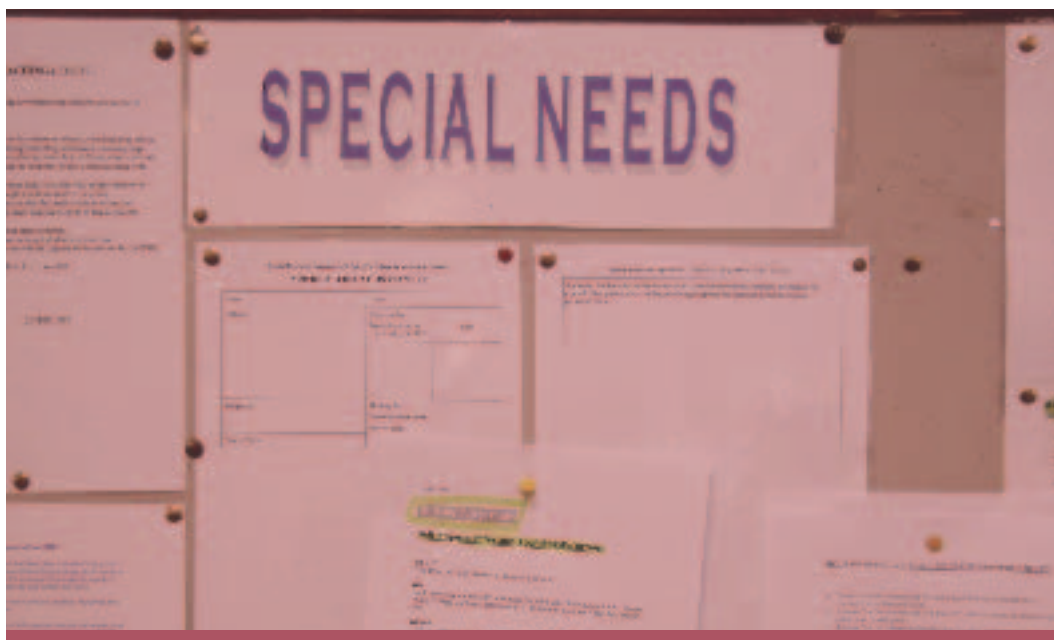
The guidance counsellor is usually a core member of the special educational needs support team and should assist the other members of this team in facilitating the provision of education for students with special educational needs and their inclusion in the school.

Individualised guidance and support for students with special educational needs - and involving their parents as required - should be part of the support structure that the school provides. The guidance counsellor should ensure that counselling and guidance for students with special educational needs, in accordance with their individual needs, are included in the school guidance plan. Subject to the overall responsibility of the board of management, the guidance counsellor has a special responsibility to ensure the compliance of the school with section 9 (c) of the Education Act (1998) in relation to the provision of access for students to appropriate guidance. (See the Department of Education publication *Guidelines for Second-Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9 (c) of the Education Act, 1998, Relating to Students' Access to Appropriate Guidance* (2005) and the National Centre for Guidance in Education publication *Planning the School Guidance Programme* (2004).)

The guidance counsellor has an important role to play in assisting students with special educational needs at the different stages of schooling and assisting them in making career decisions. Students with special educational needs may require special support and assistance at the formal transfer

points in their school career: from primary to post-primary education and from post-primary to further and higher education and training or to employment. These students may also require support and assistance at the various stages of their progress through post-primary school.

In facilitating the smooth transfer of students with special educational needs from the primary to the post-primary school, it is important that there is a well-functioning formal communication structure between the post-primary school and its feeder primary or special schools. The guidance counsellor can assist with arrangements for the successful transfer of students to the post-primary school and in gathering information about students, including those with special educational needs, before their transfer from the primary or special school. The guidance counsellor can also collaborate in assessment processes with other staff members, such as year heads, the resource teacher, and the learning-support teacher. The guidance counsellor can also assist in making other teachers aware of relevant information about students with special educational needs and can advise on how these students can be helped in school.



The confidentiality of sensitive information passed from primary or special schools to post-primary schools should be strictly observed. The information transmitted must not serve to disadvantage the student concerned. The rights of parents and the duties of schools in regard to the transmission of information, including confidential information, must be strictly observed at all times.

3.10 The home-school-community liaison co-ordinator

In schools where a home-school-community liaison co-ordinator has been appointed, the services of the co-ordinator can be employed in a manner that provides support to parents of students with special educational needs. The home-school-community liaison co-ordinator can help with the work of the special educational needs support team and collaborate with other members of the staff in relation to individual students and groups of students. For example, the co-ordinator may facilitate the establishment of a support group for parents whose children have special educational needs.

3.11 Parents

Article 42.1 of the Constitution of Ireland acknowledges that the family is the primary and natural educator of the child and recognises the right of parents to provide for the religious, moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children. Both the Education Act (1998) and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) affirm the central role of parents in the education of their children. Schools should endeavour to involve parents in their children's education, provide them with relevant information about the choices that are available, and support them in decision-making. Schools should provide parents with information about the enrolment policy and other policies relating to special educational needs. In deciding on a post-primary school for their child, parents should be given opportunities to visit the school to meet the personnel and to obtain information about facilities and provision.

3.11.1 Parents and transition to and transfer from post-primary school

Students transferring to post-primary school face a range of challenges, including becoming familiar with and adjusting to a new building and to working with their new teachers and becoming accustomed to the longer day, to membership of a class with students they have not met before, to a greater number of subjects, and often to an increase in the amount of homework. The quality of a child's experience in making the transition to post-primary education can be a determinant of how well they will settle in school and even of how long they will remain in formal education. Parents can provide valuable support to a child with special educational needs while the child is making the transition. The provision within the school of advice for the parents of first-year students can make a positive contribution to helping them provide positive support to their child. Schools can provide this support to parents by

- organising an open day for new students and their parents before the start of the school year
- issuing an information booklet for new students and their parents
- providing information to parents to assist them in helping their child choose subjects in first year
- informing parents about the range of extracurricular activities available for first-year students so that the parents can encourage their child to participate
- having an effective anti-bullying policy (including a "buddy" system) and, as appropriate, keeping parents informed of issues related to bullying that might affect their child.

Parents can also play a significant role in arranging for the transfer of their child to a post-school setting at the end of post-primary education. This is likely to be either another educational establishment or a training centre. The parents may consult relevant members of the school staff (particularly the guidance counsellor) and the SENO in relation to making application for admission to an appropriate setting. Schools can help parents through the IEP process and by making relevant information available to the new setting, as appropriate.

3.11.2 Parents and the transmission of information

The parents of a child with special educational needs can provide valuable information to the school in relation to their child's learning difficulties, learning differences, and learning preferences. Schools are advised to seek relevant professional reports on students with special educational needs from parents before the enrolment of such a student. This information enables the school to begin to plan for the inclusive education of the child. The provision by parents of access for the school staff to professional reports is critical to collaborative planning for a student with special educational needs, including the drawing up of an individual education plan for the student.

3.11.3 Parents and the individual education plan

The planning of successful learning experiences for students with special educational needs can be significantly enhanced by the contribution of parents. Parents can shed valuable light on their child's strengths, needs, learning differences, and learning styles, and they can play an active part in the development, implementation and review of their child's individual education plan. The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act bestows a number of specific rights on parents in relation to their involvement in individual education plans for their children. These rights are outlined in other sections of these *Guidelines*. Detailed guidelines for schools in relation to Individual Education Plans are provided by the NCSE.

3.11.4 Parents and home-school links

Schools are advised to provide parents with regular reports on the progress of their child. A home-school notebook for weekly or daily home-school communication is used successfully in some schools. Face to face communication is facilitated through the regular parent-teacher meetings that are held once or twice per year. Schools are advised to be open to arranging additional meetings as necessary or at the request of parents. Special arrangements may need to be made with the parents in relation to the homework that each individual student with special educational needs is expected to undertake.

Parents help the school by keeping the teachers informed of the progress, or the difficulties, they observe in their child's learning as they progress through the various stages of post-primary school. Parents also assist their child by showing an interest in their school work and by arranging an appropriate place at home for them in which to do homework. By familiarising themselves with the approaches taken in school, parents provide more effective support for their children at home and can assist them in the practice and reinforcement of new skills.

3.12 Students with special educational needs

Students with special educational needs should be involved, as appropriate, in the development, implementation and review of their individual education plans. These students should be given an opportunity to contribute to the information-gathering process, the setting of targets for learning and to the monitoring of their own progress. The participation of students in this way is an acknowledgement of their own role in the teaching and learning process and is likely to contribute to their commitment and motivation and to more successful learning outcomes. It is also likely to have a positive effect on the relationship between the student and the teacher.

Helpful advice on involving students with dyslexia in planning their own learning and in taking an active part in addressing their own special educational needs is provided in a Department of Education and Science publication on CD and DVD, *Understanding Dyslexia: A Guide for Schools* (2004). Many of the ideas that are presented on these disks can also be used or adapted for use with students with other special educational needs. The CD and DVD, with an accompanying video, *Understanding Dyslexia*, have been distributed to all schools in Ireland, primary and post-primary.

3.13 The school community and the student body

Relations within the school community, including relations between the students themselves, are a significant factor in the successful inclusion of students with special educational needs in the school. The student body can be helped to understand diversity and difference. A wealth of good

practice has already been developed in schools in such areas as student leadership systems, including mentoring, that are of particular relevance to the inclusion of students with special educational needs. The role of the student council is potentially important in enabling students to have a forum in which they can contribute to the development of inclusive school policies and practices. The general body of students can play a positive role in facilitating inclusion by participating in extracurricular and co-curricular activities with the students and through involvement in mentoring and “buddy” schemes with these students. As well as the obvious benefits for the students with special educational needs, involvement in these activities also provides significant opportunities for social and personal development for the students without special educational needs.

3.14 Special needs assistants

Special needs assistants (SNAs) are allocated to post-primary schools to provide care assistance to named students who have special educational needs. Special needs assistant posts are allocated currently following application to the SENO and in accordance with Circulars PPT 01/05 and SNA 12/05. Special needs assistants are recruited specifically to assist schools in providing the necessary non-teaching services to students with assessed educational needs. The allocation of posts to the school is reviewed each year. Special needs assistants may be appointed for the care of students with assessed special educational needs who have, for example, a significant medical need for assistance or a significant impairment of physical or sensory function, or on behalf of students whose behaviour is such that they are a danger to themselves or to other students.

Special needs assistants make a valuable contribution to the capacity of a school to provide inclusive education for students with special educational needs. Clear directions and support should be given to special needs assistants in relation to the duties they are expected to carry out. They should work closely with the teachers in providing assistance to students with special educational needs, for example in the areas of personal care, supporting mobility, or supervising work or recreation activities. When a special needs assistant is engaged in assisting a student or group of students in relation to a particular learning task, this should always take place in accordance with the directions of the teacher who has assigned the task.

Special needs assistants normally carry out their work in the school premises. However, on occasions when students with special needs are required to attend a venue outside the school, a special needs assistant (or assistants) may be assigned to provide assistance to the students in the other setting and to accompany them while they are travelling to and from the school.

Special needs assistants are expected to treat all matters relating to school business and their work in the school as strictly confidential.

The duties of special needs assistants are assigned by the principal, acting on behalf of the board of management or the VEC. Their work is supervised either by the principal or by another teacher, as determined by the principal. The duties of special needs assistants are set out in Circular SNA 12/05 and include tasks of a non-teaching nature such as

1. preparation and tidying up of classrooms
2. assisting school children to board and alight from school buses. Where necessary travel as escort during school hours on school buses may be required
3. special assistance as necessary for children with particular difficulties e.g. helping special needs pupils with typing or writing or computers or other use of equipment

4. assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene and being mindful of health and safety needs of the pupil
5. assisting on out-of-school visits, walks, examinations and similar activities
6. assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils during assembly, recreation and dispersal from the classroom for one reason or another
7. accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom for one reason or another
8. general assistance to the class teachers, under the direction of the principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature (Special needs assistants may not act as either substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class or group of children.)
9. participation with school development planning, where appropriate, and co-operation with any such changes with policies and practices arising from the school development process.
10. engagement with parents of special needs pupils in both formal and informal structures as required and directed by school management
11. other duties appropriate to the grade as may be determined by the needs of the pupils and the school from time to time. Special needs assistants may be re-assigned to other work appropriate to the grade when special needs pupils are absent or when particular urgent work demands arise.



Before a special needs assistant is employed in the classroom, consultation should take place with mainstream teachers about the needs of the student (or students) for whose support the special-needs assistant is being employed and the duties they are expected to perform in the classroom. Where a special needs assistant is assigned to the full-time assistance of a specific student, duties should be modified to accommodate the particular needs of the student. However, the allocation of a special needs assistant to assist a student should be balanced against the student's need to

develop independence and to gain access to education in school alongside and in the same way as the other students. Care should be taken, therefore, to ensure that the deployment of a special needs assistant does not serve to segregate the student with special educational needs from their classmates or to make them more dependent on assistance from others. For details of the contract of employment for special needs assistants in post-primary schools, including conditions of service and duties that may be assigned, see Circular SNA 12/05.

3.15 Bodies outside the school

3.15.1 The Department of Education and Science

The mission statement of the Department of Education and Science is

to provide for high-quality education which will enable individuals to achieve their full potential and to participate fully as members of society and to contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development.

(Department of Education and Science 2005-2007, 2005c, p.7.)

The statutory basis for education for every person in the state, including the education of persons with a disability or other special educational needs, is set out in the Education Act (1998). The Minister for Education and Science is charged with a number of functions under section 7 of the act. These include

to ensure, subject to the provisions of this Act, that there is made available to each person resident in the State, including each person who has a disability or who has other special educational needs, support services and a level and quality of education appropriate to meeting the needs and abilities of that person.

(Government of Ireland, 1998a.)

The functions of the Minister also include the provision of funding as the Minister considers appropriate and in accordance with the act and the monitoring and assessment of the quality, economy, efficiency and effectiveness of educational provision.

Section 6 of the act states that every person concerned in the implementation of the act must have regard to thirteen specific objects. These include giving practical effect to the constitutional rights of all children as they relate to education, providing an appropriate education, promoting equality of access to and participation in education, acknowledging the rights of parents to send their children to the school of the parents' choice, promoting best practice in teaching methods in accordance with the diverse needs of students, and enhancing the accountability of the education system.

The Department of Education and Science has the overall responsibility for providing for education within the state, including the education of students with special educational needs. The Department works with other government departments, state agencies, voluntary agencies, patron bodies, colleges, schools, teachers and other professionals in the provision of education to all students, including those with special educational needs. The policy of the Department is to secure the maximum possible level of inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream primary and post-primary schools while ensuring that specialist facilities continue to be made available for those whose needs warrant their placement in a special class attached to a mainstream school or in a special school.

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science has the responsibility for evaluating the organisation and operation of schools and centres for education and the quality and

effectiveness of the education provided in these settings. The evaluation function of the Inspectorate is carried out, for example, by means of whole-school evaluations, subject inspections, and thematic evaluations. The quality of teaching and learning for students with special educational needs is examined in these evaluations. The Inspectorate also has a responsibility for providing support and advice to recognised schools, centres for education and teachers on matters relating to the provision of education.

Information on the role and functions of the various sections of the Department is available from the web site of the Department (www.education.ie).



3.15.2 The National Council for Special Education

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was established in December 2003 with a remit to co-ordinate the provision of education and related support services for students with special educational needs. The statutory functions of the NCSE are set out in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004). The NCSE has a network of approximately eighty special educational needs organisers (SENOs) throughout the country. These are the principal contact persons for parents, schools and local health authorities on all issues concerning the organisation, co-ordination and provision of educational services for children with special educational needs. The role of the NCSE and the responsibilities of SENOs are described in circulars issued to schools from time to time by the NCSE and by administrative sections of the Department of Education and Science.

SENOs act as a single point of contact within a particular geographical area for schools and for the parents of students with special educational needs. Since 1 January 2005 the NCSE has taken on responsibility for arranging for the provision of a range of educational services at the local and the national level for students with special educational needs. In arranging for the allocation of additional resources to schools, the NCSE acts within policy guidelines set down by the Department

of Education and Science. SENOs make decisions on applications and co-ordinate the allocation to schools of additional resources to facilitate the education and inclusion of students with special educational needs. These additional resources include resource teachers, special needs assistants, assistive technology, and special transport. The SENOs also liaise with schools in relation to identifying an appropriate setting for an individual child with special educational needs and to establishing special classes for students in particular categories of special educational need.

The functions of the National Council for Special Education, as set out in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004), are outlined in section 1.9.5 above. The web site of the National Council for Special Education (www.ncse.ie) gives contact details for SENOs and details of the application process for resources and relevant application forms. See also Circular PPT 01/05, which provides details of the role of the NCSE and the responsibilities of SENOs in the allocation of additional teaching hours and special needs assistants in respect of students with special educational needs in post-primary schools.

3.15.3 The National Educational Psychological Service

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides a range of services to post-primary schools. The NEPS educational psychologists play a supportive role in promoting and facilitating the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools. The NEPS educational psychologists work in partnership with teachers, parents, and students and provide support in relation to learning, behaviour and social and emotional development. They also help schools in other areas of concern, including responding to critical incidents.

The nature of work undertaken in each school is agreed annually between the principal and the assigned educational psychologist. Best practice suggests that the principal should nominate a teacher who will liaise with the educational psychologist regarding the needs of the school. Ideally this teacher will be part of the special educational needs support team with which the educational psychologist will also work. The educational psychologist may work with individual teachers, groups of teachers, school support teams, the whole staff and school management. The educational psychologist can be requested to become involved in consultation with and provision of advice to teachers and parents, whole-school in-service training and policy development, as well as individual psychological assessment and counselling.

An important element of the educational psychologist's role in the school is direct work with students and with parents. The educational psychologist may also liaise with other professionals outside the school on behalf of a student. Schools may also request help from their educational psychologist in developing effective interventions for individual students with special educational needs. Such support may be offered at different levels, depending on the level of need of the student and in accordance with a staged approach to assessment and intervention. The information leaflet NEPS Model of Service outlines this approach. Further information can be obtained from the web site of the Department of Education and Science (www.education.ie).

3.15.4 The Special Education Support Service

The Special Education Support Service (SESS) was established in September 2003. The aim of the SESS is the enhancement of teaching and learning, with particular reference to the education of students with special educational needs in mainstream and special schools. The SESS endeavours to help teachers and schools in a flexible way to meet their educational and professional development needs. Face-to-face and e-learning courses are provided, and full-time and part-time support personnel are available to provide training courses and advice to teachers and schools.

The SESS co-ordinates, develops and provides a range of professional development initiatives and support structures for members of the staff of mainstream primary, post-primary and special

schools in relation to the education of children with special educational needs as follows: direct support for individual teachers, support to groups of teachers or whole-school staffs, expert support on particular aspects of special needs, and access to appropriate training on request. The SESS also helps schools to identify their own needs and provides continuing support.

The SESS works co-operatively with the colleges of education, the education departments of universities and other agencies to maximise the effects of professional development and support throughout the spectrum. The SESS also seeks to maximise opportunities for beneficial North-South co-operation. Additional information is available on the SESS web site (www.sess.ie).

3.15.5 The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is the statutory body with the responsibility for advising the Minister for Education and Science on curriculum and assessment for early-childhood education and for primary and post-primary schools. To fulfil its remit in advising on the curriculum and syllabus requirements of students with a disability or other special educational needs under the Education Act (1998) the NCCA has developed a suite of materials, *Draft Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities* (2002). The draft guidelines show how the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and the post-primary junior cycle curriculum can be differentiated to meet the learning needs of students with severe or profound, moderate or mild general learning disabilities. The draft guidelines are the result of collaborative work with the partners in education, including parents, teachers, boards of management, colleges of education, psychologists, and the Department of Education and Science.

Following the launch of the draft guidelines in 2002 the NCCA began a consultation process that informed the redrafting of the guidelines. All the existing draft guidelines were rewritten, and further material was developed for eight additional subject areas in the junior cycle. *Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities* is due to be published by the NCCA and disseminated to schools in 2006.



3.15.6 The National Educational Welfare Board

The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was established under the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) and has a leading role in implementing the provisions of the act. The main function of the NEWB is ensuring that each child attends a recognised school or otherwise receives a certain minimum education. The NEWB also has a responsibility for research and an advisory role in

relation to the formulation and implementation of Government policies and objectives concerning the education of children. A list of the functions of the NEWB is set out in section 10 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000). These are

- a. to promote and foster in society, and in particular in families, an appreciation of the benefits to be derived from education, in particular as respects the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, cultural and moral development of children, and of the social and economic advantages that flow therefrom,
- b. to promote and foster, in recognised schools, an environment that encourages children to attend school and participate fully in the life of the school,
- c. to conduct and commission research into the reasons for non-attendance on the part of students and into strategies and programmes designed to prevent it,
- d. to disseminate to recognised schools the findings of research conducted or commissioned pursuant to *paragraph (c)*, and to advise such schools on matters relating to the prevention of non-attendance, and the good conduct of students generally,
- e. to assist recognised schools in so far as is practicable to meet their obligations under this Act,
- f. to advise and assist children and the parents of children who exhibit problems relating to attendance at, and behaviour in, school,
- g. to support, monitor, and assess the effectiveness of, strategies and programmes aimed at preventing non-attendance in recognised schools,
- h. to cooperate with such persons as the Board considers appropriate, and to coordinate the activities of the Board with the activities of those persons in so far as they relate to preventing non-attendance in recognised schools,
- i. to carry out reviews of training and guidance given to teachers relating to matters of school attendance and the conduct of students, and to advise the Minister in relation thereto,
- j. to advise the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment as respects those aspects of the school curriculum that, in the opinion of the Board, are likely to have an effect on attendance levels at, or the extent of student participation in, school, and
- k. to advise the Minister on any matter to which this Act relates.

As part of its remit, the NEWB collects information from schools in relation to attendance. Education welfare officers are employed locally throughout the country and work in close co-operation with parents, school managements, teachers and relevant agencies in promoting regular school attendance and preventing absenteeism and early school-leaving.

3.15.7 The Health Service Executive

The Health Service Executive (HSE) is a statutory agency with responsibility for the provision of health and personal social services. Under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) responsibilities are devolved on the health boards (now HSE) for providing services, including assessment services, to children up to the age of eighteen. Section 5 specifies that an assessment will be carried out with the assistance of persons possessing such expertise and qualifications as the health board and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) consider appropriate. These may include one or more of the following: a psychologist, a medical practitioner, the principal of the school the child is attending or another teacher nominated by the principal, an appropriately qualified social worker, and a therapist who is suitably qualified to

provide support services in respect of the special educational needs of the child. The Disability Act (2005) sets out a framework within which the HSE and the NCSE should collaborate with schools, parents and the students themselves in the provision of assessments and related services.

Pending the establishment and implementation of structures and procedures for the provision of services by the HSE under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) and the Disability Act (2005), principals are advised to continue to operate the existing arrangements. If information is required about the referral of a student for assessment or an application for services, principals may seek advice from the special educational needs organiser (SENO) for their school or the assigned NEPS psychologist.

Chapter 4

Planning for individual students with special educational needs



4. Planning for individual students with special needs

Principal themes

1. The individual education plan process is an effective means of providing appropriate education to a student with special educational needs.
2. The purpose of an individual education plan is to guide the provision of services, to encourage effective teaching and learning, and to promote access to a full curriculum.
3. When the relevant sections of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) are in operation, statutory requirements will be placed on schools and on principals of schools in relation to education plans for individual students with special educational needs.
4. The *Guidelines on the Individual Education Planning Process* (2006) from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) provide an opportunity for schools to become familiar with the IEP process in anticipation of the statutory requirement for individual education plans.
5. The provision of appropriate intervention to enable a student with special educational needs to achieve the goals in their individual education plan involves the collaborative support of all teachers who are working with the student.
6. Collaboration among teachers within the school and collaboration between the school, the parents and agencies and professionals outside the school is a fundamental feature of the individual planning process.
7. Schools are advised to follow any guidelines and procedures on the development, implementation and review of individual education plans that are provided by the NCSE, NEPS, NCCA or other agencies of the Department of Education and Science.

4.1 Introduction

The individual education plan (IEP) is an effective process through which a student's special educational needs can be addressed and by which an appropriate education can be provided for him/her. The IEP process involves gathering relevant information in order to identify the student's learning needs and strengths and the setting of targets for learning. This is followed by the implementation of appropriate interventions during a period of instruction. At the end of the period of instruction, the student's progress is reviewed. Collaboration between teachers within the school and collaboration between the school, parents, and agencies and professionals outside the school is a fundamental feature of the individual planning process.

4.2 Individual planning

In any group of students, there are differences between individuals and each individual has a set of needs. To cater for these differences and needs, schools provide a range of programmes and subject choices as well as a variety of support services. Each student with special educational needs has a set of needs in common with his/her peer group. These needs arise from characteristics that he/she shares with the peer group. These needs are catered for within the normal organisation and teaching that is provided in the school.

In addition to these common needs, students with special educational needs have exceptional needs that arise from characteristics that make them different as a group from their peers and correspond to the criteria of special educational needs². While the term special educational needs covers a wide range of differences, students with special educational needs share certain characteristics that restrict their capacity to participate in and benefit from education. Whole-school planning is essential in order to provide an inclusive setting for these students within the school, through which their special educational needs can be addressed and their access to the curriculum promoted.

Finally, as well as sharing common needs with their peer group and certain exceptional needs with other students with special educational needs, each student with special educational needs has individual needs that are unique to himself/herself. Individual planning for these students is necessary in order to address their unique, individual needs, to ensure their access to the curriculum and to provide the opportunity for each student to reach his/her full potential.

4.3 The benefits of individual planning

Individual planning is a vital element of whole-school policy for inclusion. The objective of individual planning is to bring about effective teaching, learning, and improved outcomes for students with special educational needs. The individual planning process provides a framework for the teaching of a differentiated curriculum. The individual planning process can

- co-ordinate the efforts of the staff members and others who will have different knowledge, skills, and experiences with the student

² In the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004), the term special educational needs means, in relation to a person, a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition.

- contribute to a shared understanding of the student's strengths, interests, and needs
- facilitate the identification of priorities for programming and planning across a variety of curriculum areas and home and school settings and create a sense of purpose for all
- encourage discussion, interpretation and comparison of all assessment information from a variety of sources such as the psychological report, teacher evaluations, in-class tests, and information from other professionals as well as the consideration of any recommendations for support
- involve parents in the process and encourage their participation and commitment
- involve students in the process to ensure the plan is realistic and attainable
- motivate students and give them direction and a clear idea of what is expected of them
- clarify expectations of school staff and outside professionals
- ensure continuity of programming when a student transfers to another setting outside the school
- encourage participants to support each other in implementing the education plan.



4.4 The individual education plan for a student with special educational needs

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) creates a statutory requirement for education plans for individual students with special educational needs. When the relevant sections of the act are in operation, specific responsibilities will be placed on schools and principals of schools in relation to education plans for these students. The education plan for an

individual student as required by the act will provide for a process of consultation and collaboration between teachers, students, parents, and professionals from outside the school. In a mainstream school the education plan for an individual student will also indicate how the student is to be provided with inclusive education to the greatest extent practicable. Therefore, while the main emphasis of the education plan will be on the student's special educational needs, reference will also be made to the student's participation in ordinary education programmes in the school. To address the need for guidance on the issue, the National Council for Special Education has provided *Guidelines on the Individual Education Planning Process* (2006). In referring to the education plan for an individual student with special educational needs, the NCSE *Guidelines* use the internationally accepted term "individual education plan." This term, and the abbreviation "IEP," are used also in this document.

Six steps are identified in the NCSE *Guidelines* in relation to drawing up, implementing and reviewing an IEP, as provided for in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004). These steps are:

- Step 1 Gathering information
- Step 2 Statement of level of performance including strengths, needs and impact on learning
- Step 3 Identification of priority learning needs and time frame for attainment of targets
- Step 4 Setting targets for each priority learning need
- Step 5 Identification of the strategies and resources required
- Step 6 Setting date for review of IEP

The NCSE *Guidelines* provide the opportunity for schools to become familiar with the individual planning process in anticipation of the statutory requirement for IEPs. The statutory requirement will apply when the relevant sections of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) are in operation. It is recommended that schools regard the NCSE *Guidelines* as an essential resource and that the advice provided be incorporated in planning at the whole-school level and at the level of the individual student. Schools should also include in their planning any further guidance on IEPs provided in the future by the NCSE, NEPS, NCCA, or other sections and agencies of the Department of Education and Science.

Schools are reminded that the advice provided in this document, *Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines*, has also been compiled before the coming into force of the sections of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) relating to IEPs and the issuing by the NCSE of statutory guidelines for schools on the IEP process. This document should be read and, where relevant, implemented in conjunction with the NCSE *Guidelines*. When statutory guidelines on IEPs are issued they will take priority over these and other advance advisory documents.

Under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) the principal of the school has the responsibility for ensuring the preparation and implementation of an IEP for each student with special educational needs. The principal is also expected to facilitate the involvement of the students' parents in the development of the plan and to ensure that a copy of the plan is given to the parents and to the relevant SENO. The resource teacher, learning-support teacher, mainstream teachers, students, parents and relevant outside professionals are expected to collaborate in the preparation of an IEP.

The purpose of an IEP is to guide the provision of services, to encourage effective teaching and learning, and to promote access to a full curriculum. Section 9 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) stipulates that the matters to be specified in an education plan for an individual student should include

- the nature and degree of the child's abilities, skills, and talents;
- the nature and degree of the child's special educational needs and how those needs affect their educational development;
- the present level of educational performance of the child;
- the special educational needs of the child;
- the special education and related support services to be provided to enable the child to benefit from education and to participate in the life of the school;
- where appropriate, the special education and related services to be provided to enable the child to effectively make the transition from pre-school education to primary school education;
- where appropriate, the special education and related services to be provided to enable the child to effectively make the transition from primary school education to post-primary school education;
- the goals the child is to achieve over a period not exceeding twelve months.

In the act, the word "child" means a person of not more than eighteen years of age. In the context of post-primary education, the word "student" can be substituted for "child".

The NCSE *Guidelines* provide guidance for the various partners involved in the IEP process, including schools. Some further suggestions are provided in the remainder of this chapter in relation to the involvement of schools in the IEP process. These comments are intended to be additional to and supportive of the guidance provided in the NCSE *Guidelines*.

4.4.1 The individual education plan, step 1: Gathering information

It is possible to gather relevant information on an individual student's learning and progress from a wide range of sources: through formal assessment, through observation in school, and from the reports of professionals from outside the school, such as psychologists, speech and language therapists, and occupational therapists. Useful information can also be obtained in reports from previous educational settings, through interviews with the student, and from parents. The active participation of the students and of their parents in the information-gathering process is important for the collection of accurate information. Particularly relevant is information that leads to the identification of the nature and degree of the student's abilities, skills, and talents, the nature and degree of their special educational needs, and how those needs affect their educational development.

4.4.2 The individual education plan, step 2: Compiling a statement of level of performance, including strengths, needs, and impact on learning

In order to compile a statement of level of performance, the reports by professionals from outside the school, the results of in-school assessment and all other relevant information available should be analysed carefully. These data should be drawn together and analysed with a view to making a statement of the student's present level of educational performance and to agreeing on his/her priority learning needs.

With a view to setting out the relevant information about a student in an accessible form, it is suggested that an individual student profile be completed. This is a statement at a point in time of a student's educational attainments and attributes and a description of his/her special educational needs and learning strengths. The individual student profile may include information related to the student's educational history, general ability, talents, interests, and hobbies, level of performance in specific areas of the curriculum, special educational needs, learning strengths, learning style, interests and any other matters relevant to the student's learning.

An individual student profile can be drawn up in respect of a student who has already been identified as having special educational needs or in respect of a student who is considered at risk of having special educational needs. An individual student profile on a student who is suspected of having special educational needs is a useful source for discussion with parents and others and provides a basis for decision-making in relation to the possible referral of the student to an appropriate professional for assessment.

An example of a template that can be used in drawing up an individual student profile is provided in appendix C. Teachers are advised to use this template or to adapt it for use in their own schools. Parts of the template may need to be expanded to provide space for recording all the relevant information.

4.4.3 The individual education plan, step 3: Identifying priority learning needs and time limits for the attainment of targets

The completion of an individual student profile is helpful for the process of identifying priority learning needs and time limits for the attainment of targets. When Part 1 of the individual student profile is completed the basic information that is needed for setting out the student's priority learning needs and his/her learning strengths/learning style is available. Part 2 of the individual student profile can be used to record the student's priority learning needs and to summarise his/her learning strengths and interests. This information provides the basis for the specification of the student's learning targets that are to be achieved over a period of not more than one year.

4.4.4 The individual education plan, step 4: Setting targets for each priority learning need

Following the identification of a student's priority learning needs, learning strengths, learning style, and interests, the learning targets or goals to be achieved over a period of not more than twelve months should be agreed. Depending on the student's age and stage of educational development, it may be necessary to include in his/her IEP a plan for transition to a post-school setting. Preparation for transition can be carried out in collaboration with parents and the educational institution, training centre or place of employment to which the student is due to transfer. (Transfer from a post-primary school is discussed further in section 2.4.5.)

4.4.5 The individual education plan, step 5: Identifying the strategies and resources required

The IEP should include a description of the special education and related support services that are required. The learning strategies that the student will use to address his/her targets should be specified also. In deciding on learning strategies, the student's learning strengths and interests as well as his/her priority needs should be considered.

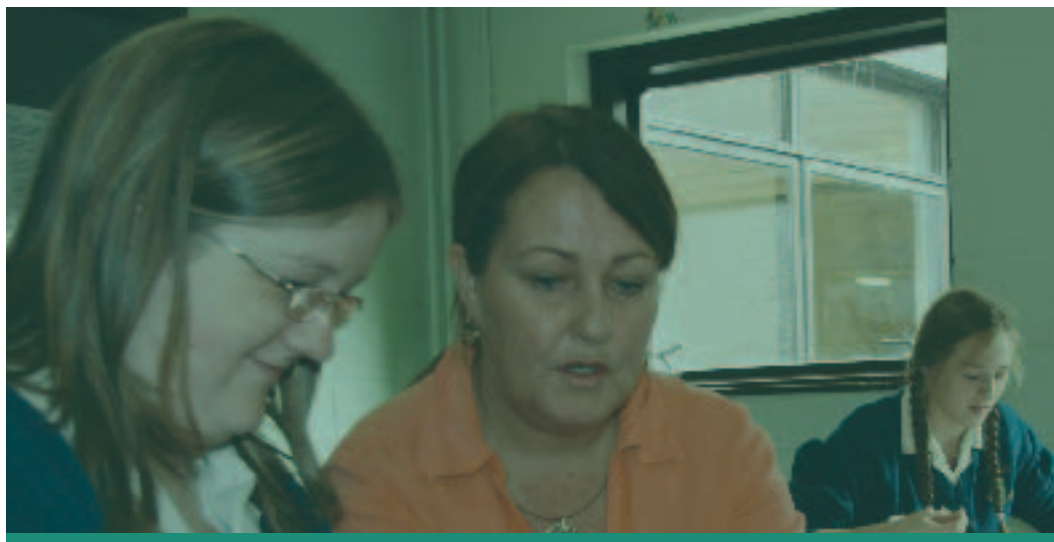
The identification of the strategies and resources that are required involves collaboration and co-operation between the resource teacher, mainstream teachers and teachers who have specific responsibility for areas such as learning support, guidance and counselling, pastoral care and curriculum. The teacher with responsibility for the coordination of the IEP should communicate and collaborate with others both within and outside the school to facilitate provision of the

strategies and resources that are specified. (Links between the school and the HSE for the purpose of obtaining access to support services are discussed in section 3.15.8.)

4.4.6 The individual education plan, step 6: Setting the date for review

A formal review of the IEP should take place not less than once per year. The formal review should ascertain whether the goals set out in the plan have been achieved, establish whether the student has received the services specified in the IEP, and make any necessary amendments to the plan. The formal review should involve teachers, the student's parents and any professionals from outside the school who are providing support services to the student. As well as evaluating the student's progress and the success of the interventions, the IEP review process provides a starting point for the reformulation of learning targets for the student, to be addressed during the next period of instruction. The principal should report the outcome of the review to the child's parents and to the relevant SENO.

In addition to the end-of year formal review, the progress of each student with special educational needs towards the achievement of the targets in his/her IEP should be reviewed from time to time during the course of the year. In accordance with the outcome of such interim reviews, adjustments can be made, as appropriate, to the student's learning programme by mainstream teachers and by the resource teacher. School staff should not continue to try to implement a strategy that does not work, just because it is specified in the plan. The education plan is a working document and it is quite acceptable to make changes as and when required as long as all concerned are kept informed. The outcome of interim reviews should be reported to parents and, when appropriate, to professionals from outside the school who are providing support services to the student. The suggestions in section 2.6 above and section 5.3.8 below are particularly relevant with regard to interim and end-of-year reviews.



4.5 Record-keeping

Over the period during which an IEP is being implemented it is important for resource teachers and mainstream teachers to maintain accurate records of an individual student's learning activities and progress. Such records should relate not only to progress towards the targets in the IEP but also to significant progress or difficulty in other aspects of learning or an area of the curriculum. Progress records are an essential resource for reviewing the IEP at the end of the period of

instruction and for use as a baseline for the reformulation of the learning targets to be addressed during the next period of instruction. Progress records are an important source for reporting progress to parents and others who are involved with the student.

It is good practice for the resource teacher to agree with mainstream teachers the format of the records that are to be maintained. Progress records should not demand a lot of paperwork. Performance scores, the dates on which IEP targets were achieved and portfolios of work completed by the student should be retained. The records should be written in an accurate, positive and sensitive manner. Involvement by students in monitoring their own progress should be encouraged.

The principal elements of progress records can be summarised and retained in the school in order to track the progress of individual students with special educational needs over the course of their attendance in the school.

4.6 Implementing the individual education plan

When an IEP has been written and agreed, the student should be provided with the supports and resources that are specified in the plan. A process should be put in motion within the school to ensure access for the student to all that has been identified as necessary for him/her to advance appropriately toward his or her goals, to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum, and participate in other school activities. An important element in this process is for all teachers who are working with the student to become cognisant of the student's learning targets, learning needs and learning style so that the student can be enabled to participate in a meaningful way in classroom activities.

As already noted, effective intervention for students with special educational needs depends on close co-operation and collaboration between the relevant members of the staff: mainstream teachers, resource teacher, learning-support teacher, year head, guidance counsellor, and others. Even though a number of staff members may be involved in teaching a student, it is helpful to have a named teacher in charge of coordinating and monitoring the support the student receives. This named person will monitor the plan and maintain an overview of the student's progress. Having a named person in charge can help to ensure that the plan is implemented appropriately.

Mainstream teachers have responsibility for all students in their classes, including those with special educational needs. For a student with special educational needs a mainstream teacher can contribute to the planning, implementation and review of the learning targets in the IEP. To give effective support within the classroom to a student with special educational needs, mainstream teachers are advised to plan carefully for teaching and learning in the subject area being presented. This process includes specifying the resources required for teaching and learning and setting time limits for the achievement of learning goals and objectives in the subject area. Mainstream teachers can differentiate their teaching and, as appropriate, organise individualised learning activities for these students so as to enable them to attain the targets specified in their IEPs. As the achievement of targets may require a co-ordinated, cross-curricular approach, a mainstream teacher should be aware of the expected contribution of other teachers and of parents and outside professionals. Finally, a mainstream teacher can contribute to the review procedures that are used to monitor the student's progress over the period of the IEP.

In a similar manner, the resource teacher should draw up teaching plans that deal directly with the targets in students' IEP and that complement the work they are undertaking in mainstream classrooms.

The following general guidelines are suggested for planning by mainstream and resource teachers and as appropriate other specialist teachers:

- Planning for teaching should be linked to the targets in the students' IEPs.
- When teaching plans are being drawn up, due regard should be paid to the setting (for example classroom, laboratory, or resource room) and the framework (for example individual work, small group, or class group) in which the teaching and learning will take place.
- Short-term objectives for teaching and learning should be stated in clear, unambiguous language.
- Short-term teaching plans should be based on these objectives, showing the content to be covered, the teaching methods to be used, and the resources that are needed.
- An individual record should be kept of each student's progress towards the goals in his/her IEP.
- Short-term learning objectives and the teaching strategies should be kept under review, particularly in the light of the student's engagement with the learning activities and their progress towards the goals in their IEPs.

Chapter 5 includes information on teaching and learning by which teachers can differentiate or individualise instruction for students with special educational needs. Further advice for mainstream teachers and resource teachers in relation to making appropriate interventions for students with special educational needs is provided in sections 2.5, 3.5, 3.6, and 3.7. See also the *NCCA Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities* (in press) for further accounts of differentiation in teaching and learning.

Chapter 5

Teaching and learning in the inclusive school



5. Teaching and learning in the inclusive school

Principal themes

1. Students with special educational needs should, in accordance with their abilities and special educational needs, be provided with opportunities to participate in a meaningful way in the full range of activities in the classroom.
2. Students with special educational needs tend to learn best in a teaching and learning environment that is characterised by structure and organisation.
3. Strategies that incorporate clear objectives for teaching and learning and that engage students and motivate them to work purposefully towards a learning goal are more likely to bring about a successful learning outcome.
4. Successful learning by students with special educational needs is promoted when the learning tasks are presented at an appropriate level, adequate time is allowed for completing the task, students are permitted to present their work in alternative ways, and opportunities are provided for the application and generalisation of new knowledge and skills in a variety of situations.
5. Attention by teachers to the social and emotional aspects of learning helps not only the personal development of students with special educational needs but also their opportunities for cognitive learning.
6. The *NCCA Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities* provide detailed guidance for teachers in relation to curriculum differentiation in the various subject areas.
7. To maximise their opportunities for learning, students with special educational needs should have access to education for a full school day and for a full school year.



5.1 Introduction

The success of a school in providing inclusive education for students with special educational needs depends to a significant extent on the whole-school organisational arrangements in place and on the effectiveness of the various strategies for teaching and learning that teachers implement in their classrooms. An appropriate classroom environment for these students is characterised by structure and organisation, has suitable furniture arrangements, suitable learning materials, and curriculum-related displays, and allows easy access to students' work.

Students with special educational needs may have as wide a range of personal characteristics, behaviour, interests and learning aptitudes as any other group of students. Instruction for them needs to be planned, managed and evaluated strategically and continuously. These students should be provided with opportunities to participate in a meaningful way in activities in the classroom and in the school generally. To motivate students with special educational needs and engage them in learning it is important that learning activities are organised and presented in a manner that enables the students to engage constructively in them. If the learning tasks are not appropriate, the students are likely to become frustrated and to disengage from the learning process.

To make the most of their opportunities for learning, students with special educational needs should have access to education for a full school day, that is, 28 hours of instruction per school week with typically 6 hours of instruction per school day, and for a full school year, that is, 167 days per school year. (See Circular M29/95.) The school management should ensure that the appropriate structures exist in the school for encouraging and facilitating the attendance of students with special educational needs. The management should investigate the reasons or circumstances (for example medical conditions or illness) that give rise to a student not being able to attend school for the full school day or the full school year, so that support and accommodations can be provided to maximise the student's attendance, participation, and learning.

It is recognised that in order to provide an education of the highest quality to the full cohort of students, including students with special educational needs, teachers should access continuing professional development opportunities that are appropriate to their own career stages and that enable them to address the needs of their students.

5.2 Classroom climate

Students who have experienced significant learning difficulties over a period of several years may have low motivation and reduced confidence as learners and have feelings of frustration and disappointment. Sometimes such feelings are expressed in anger and challenging behaviour. Students are more likely to engage in learning when their learning tasks are within their reach and when they feel that their efforts, as well as the outcome of their efforts, are valued. The self-esteem and motivation of students is enhanced when they are challenged to succeed and supported in their efforts to do so, and when their successes are highlighted.

A positive learning and social climate can be brought about in the classroom for all students when

- the teacher has a clear strategy for classroom management
- the teacher demands high standards of behaviour and encourages all students to meet those standards

- the school rules, and the rationale for the rules, are reiterated from time to time
- the basic classroom rules are agreed and adhered to
- the students feel safe and secure
- the students are treated respectfully and are afforded equal opportunities to engage in the learning process
- the students are given degrees of responsibility and are held accountable for their behaviour
- the students regularly experience success and affirmation.

5.2.1 Support for learning

In addition to the points mentioned above, students with special educational needs tend to learn best when they are provided with opportunities to

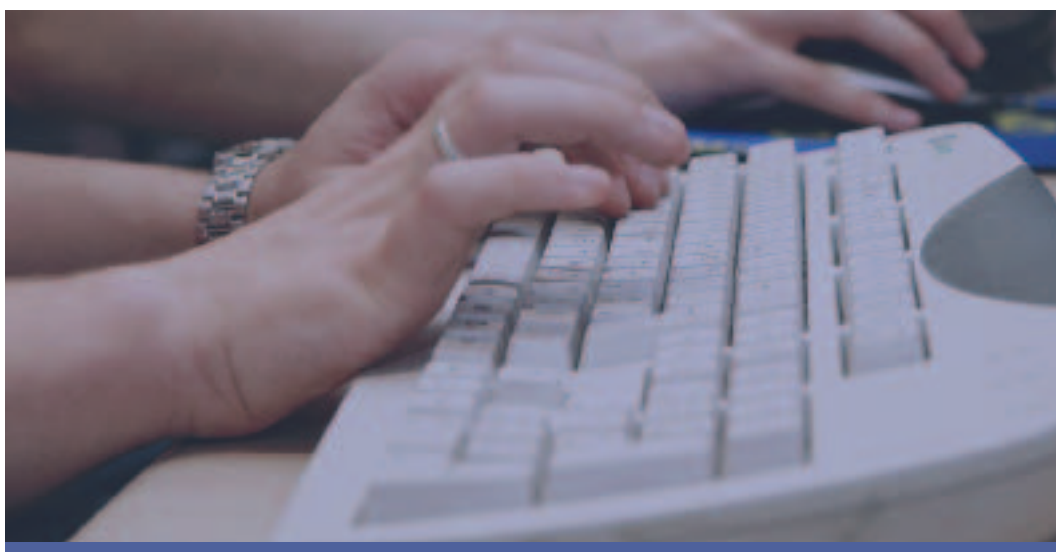
- use concrete, structured and practical learning materials, including
 - low-technology and high-technology support tools, such as highlighters, line-trackers, magnifying glass, writing frames, calculators, dictating machines, laptop computers, content-free software
 - subject-relevant audiovisual learning support, for example videotapes, DVDs, CDs, computer applications
 - visual supports, for example wall displays, charts, maps, graphs
 - relevant concrete materials, for example artefacts, geometrical shapes
- use materials at an appropriate readability level or utilise reading software to gain access to texts or to audio versions of texts
- have access to clear and uncluttered text in worksheets, on boards, and on wall displays
- learn new vocabulary and the specific language and terminology of subjects
- have sufficient time for learning and completing assignments
- successfully complete tasks; this may require a reduction in the complexity or the volume of the task set for the class
- present work in alternative ways, for example giving a verbal rather than a written presentation
- learn, practise and role-play personal and social skills in different situations
- develop the communication skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- generalise and apply newly acquired skills in new situations and in other areas of the curriculum.

5.3 Teaching for inclusion

Some strategies and approaches that are effective in the teaching and learning of students with special educational needs are listed in this section. These strategies can also be used effectively with students who do not have special educational needs. These strategies can be implemented within the standard curriculum framework.

The effective, inclusive teaching of students with special educational needs is enhanced when

- a variety of teaching strategies and approaches is used
- the learning objectives are outlined at the beginning of the lesson, reference is made to them during the lesson, and a review with the students of what has been learned takes place at the end of the lesson
- formative assessment strategies for identifying the students' learning progress are used with a view to helping inform teaching approaches
- the content of the lesson is matched to the needs of the students and to their levels of ability
- visual, auditory, tactile and kinaesthetic channels of learning are used
- the teaching and learning materials, including concrete materials, are appropriate for the students' chronological ages, interests, and aptitudes
- any deviation from a lesson plan when an unexpected learning opportunity arises does not result in the loss of the original objective of the lesson
- appropriate time is allowed for the practice, reinforcement and application in practical situations of new knowledge and skills
- students are affirmed for knowledge and skills learned
- opportunities are taken throughout the curriculum to enable these students to develop their language and communication skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)
- opportunities are taken throughout the curriculum to enable these students to develop their personal skills and their social interaction skills
- these students are encouraged to explore links with other areas of the curriculum
- homework is designed to consolidate or extend learning, to promote independent learning, to monitor individual students' and class progress, and to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning.



The NCCA publication *Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities* (in press) provides comprehensive guidelines in relation to curriculum differentiation in the various subject areas. The NCCA *Guidelines* contain exemplars for planning and presenting lessons. Helpful guidance materials can also be obtained on the web sites of such agencies as the NCTE, SESS, SDPI, SLSS, and Scoilnet. Some useful web sites are listed in appendix E. A series of strategies for use in the inclusive classroom is presented in the remainder of this chapter.

5.3.1 Co-operative teaching

Co-operative teaching occurs when two or more teachers provide instruction to a group of students with diverse learning needs. A number of terms - including "co-operative teaching", "co-teaching", "collaborative teaching", and "team teaching" - are used in the literature to describe the arrangements and strategies that together are referred to here under the heading "co-operative teaching".

Teachers need support from, and to be able to co-operate with, a range of general and special-education colleagues in the school and professionals outside the school. In many schools two or more teachers plan and work together in presenting lessons to a group of students who have diverse learning needs. A significant value of co-operative teaching approaches is that additional teaching support can be provided to students with special educational needs without withdrawing them from the mainstream class groupings. The mainstream teacher is supported by a colleague in providing the curriculum to a range of students, including those with special educational needs. Collaboration among teachers is facilitated and the inclusion of students with learning differences is promoted.

The basic principles of co-operative teaching include the following:

- The intervention involves providing instruction to a heterogeneous group of students, with and without special educational needs.
- The mainstream teacher and the learning support or resource teacher work together with the class.
- Teaching interventions occur in the same classroom during the same class period.
- Joint planning by the teachers takes place (for example grouping the students and choosing the teaching methods, curriculum formats, learning strategies, study skills, and evaluation methods).
- Both teachers and students benefit from their shared involvement in the teaching and learning process.

For co-operative teaching to be successful it is essential that there is

- a commitment by the whole school to inclusion
- managerial, administrative and collegial support, especially from teacher colleagues
- mutual trust and respect between the teachers
- a willingness among the teachers to work in a compatible and adaptable manner
- equal partnership between the teachers, so that their skills are used in a complementary manner
- a shared sense of teamwork and achievement

- a strategy for identifying and agreeing the students' needs
- a co-operative teaching plan devised by the two teachers
- clarity of roles, responsibilities, rules, routines, and work load
- sufficient time for preparation and planning
- confidentiality and discretion
- regular reviews of all aspects of the co-operative teaching plan.

Co-operative teaching can bring about benefits for the school, such as

- effective opportunities and support for the inclusion of all students in mainstream classes
- the promotion of collaboration between teachers
- a means of promoting models of good practice in teaching and learning
- the availability of additional support for a full-class group while at the same time the progress of individual students can be facilitated and monitored
- the promotion of positive relations between students and teachers
- the modelling of positive behaviour in classrooms
- opportunities for teachers to differentiate programmes of work and to encourage teaching and organisational initiatives within the school.

Co-operative teaching can bring about benefits for students, such as

- enhancement of learning for the students through two adults being in the classroom
- the grouping of "target" students to enable them to work together on appropriate learning assignments and to make greater progress
- facilitating access to the curriculum for students with learning differences, including those with special educational needs, without the stigma of withdrawal
- providing for differentiated learning experiences for all students, including those with different learning styles and abilities
- allowing for a wide variety of skills and modes of working within a class group.

Co-operative teaching can bring about benefits for teachers, such as

- reducing isolation
- providing opportunities for shared decisions between mainstream and resource teachers
- allowing for the learning-support teacher and resource teacher to work with and to support larger numbers of students
- collaborative planning, sharing and mutual support in the classroom
- finding the process a rewarding experience
- sharing the work load and the materials to be produced
- behavioural problems among students reduced and more easily defused
- providing opportunities for teachers to share "good practice" ideas.

5.3.2 Co-operative learning

Co-operative learning involves students participating in small-group learning activities that promote positive interaction. In the co-operative learning model, students share knowledge with other students through a variety of structures. The main features of co-operative learning include positive interdependence, equal opportunities for success, face-to-face interactions, individual accountability, the development of interpersonal skills through involvement in structured co-operative activities, group heterogeneity, and team-building (group-processing) skills.

Students might work in informal, temporary co-operative learning groups for a short time, even for part of a class period, to complete a specific task. Alternatively, they might establish more formal co-operative learning groups in which they work together for several sessions to complete a specific task. A third possibility is co-operative base groups, whereby students work in long-term groups for a term or more with the responsibility to support, encourage and assist each member to make progress. Group membership may be based on a variety of conditions, including random selection, friendships, similar interests, or similar ability.

The benefits of co-operative learning include the promotion of academic achievement, improved behaviour and attendance, and increased liking of school. In addition, co-operative learning promotes students' motivation, encourages group processes, fosters social and academic interaction among students, and rewards successful group participation. Since in co-operative learning activities the success of one student is dependent on the success of another these techniques can foster a climate of friendship, caring and sharing in a classroom setting. Strategies such as peer-tutoring, active learning, discovery learning and are often a feature of co-operative learning.



(a) Peer-tutoring

Peer-tutoring is a variant of co-operative learning. It is the process whereby a student, with guidance from a teacher, helps one or more other students to learn a skill or concept. Peer-

tutoring, like co-operative learning, is effective in cognitive and affective areas of students' learning and development. Students who help each other, especially within a system of flexible and well-considered student grouping, benefit from learning together. Many benefits for both partners have been shown in peer-tutoring schemes, for example learning academic skills, developing appropriate social skills, and enhancing peer relations. Moreover, there are no indications that the more able student is disadvantaged in terms of missing new challenges or opportunities. Peer-tutoring has been shown to work for all students and especially for those with special educational needs. It is even possible with the student with special educational needs in the position of the "tutor."

(b) Class-wide peer-tutoring

Class-wide peer-tutoring is a way for all students to get one-to-one help and enough time to practise and learn. For class-wide peer-tutoring, every student in the class is paired with another.

The use of class-wide peer-tutoring can benefit students by providing

- individual support and attention
- more opportunities to talk about what they are learning and to practise what they are learning, to read aloud, and to write
- more opportunities to ask questions
- immediate and positive correction
- a model for the reinforcement of positive behaviour and the development of social skills
- consistent help and encouragement in completing assignments.

For class-wide peer-tutoring to be successful it is essential that there be

- an explanation and demonstration of peer-tutoring (two teachers might model the roles of tutor and learner)
- class time given to practising tutoring, with observation by the teacher and feedback
- practice in moving quickly and quietly from normal seating to tutoring pairs
- an understanding of good tutor and learner behaviour (practising this behaviour will avoid many problems later)
- a procedure for positive error correction
- a procedure for monitoring progress
- a matching of materials and tasks to students' abilities
- an opportunity for all students to be the tutor, even in subjects in which they have problems (all students will learn from tutoring other students and will gain more confidence in their abilities in that area).

(c) Other co-operative learning strategies

Other strategies referred to in the literature as offering a variation of co-operative learning include deep learning, guided learning, independent learning, task-based learning, and meaningful learning.

5.3.3 Active learning and discovery learning

In active learning the students engage actively in the learning process. Learning behaviour in active learning is often contrasted with the “passivity” that can occur in a lecture-style presentation. Students who actively engage with the material of the lesson are more likely to recall information later and be able to use that information in different situations. Active learning often involves co-operative learning, whereby partners or group members work together to solve problems. This ensures that students really understand the concepts being covered. Active learning also involves matching instruction to the student’s interests, understanding, and developmental level. In active learning the students may write, reflect, discuss, debate, solve problems or engage in hands-on and authentic activities, and they may do it individually or together. As long as it is something other than watching and listening, it can be classed as active learning.

Discovery learning can be described as students acquiring an understanding of concepts and principles through their own activity and personal discovery. Examples of discovery learning include collecting and analysing data during a geography lesson, a science activity in which a student investigates a hypothesis, problem-solving in mathematics, and predicting the outcome of a story in a language class.

5.3.4 Heterogeneous grouping

Heterogeneous grouping and a more differentiated approach to education are necessary and effective in dealing with the diversity of students in a classroom. Students with special educational needs benefit from being provided with opportunities to learn in groups. Effective group learning draws on the diverse strengths, interests, experience, knowledge, views, and individuality of each group member.

Group learning has the potential to develop students’ language and communication skills and social and interpersonal skills within a secure and predictable learning environment. The teacher adopts the role of manager and systematically structures group activities so that all students participate in a meaningful and beneficial manner in the assigned task. Each member of the group should have a clear understanding of the purpose of the learning task in question and of their role and responsibilities in the group activity. The frequent use of group learning opportunities helps students to become familiar with and gain the greatest benefit from the process.

The following points should be considered when group activities are being planned

- careful planning that includes the choice of a suitable group learning project, deciding on learning objectives and the criteria for success, and agreeing the activities in which the students are to engage
- deciding on the teaching methods - the use of circle time, co-operative learning, pair work, or peer-tutoring - and ensuring that the students are familiar with and observe the “rules” associated with the activity
- the monitoring of group activities by the teacher, who provides suggestions and encouragement as necessary
- the active promotion of discussion and social interaction during group activity
- the direct teaching of co-operative behaviour, for example listening, turn-taking, sharing, and assisting and affirming other group members
- the formation of groups so that each member can participate in a meaningful and beneficial manner - typically five to seven students per group

- the selection of group members according to compatibility
- taking care with the physical arrangement of the classroom: the members of the group should be in close proximity to one another, and each group should have enough space to carry out the assigned tasks.

5.3.5 Direct instruction

Students with special educational needs, including those with general learning disabilities, benefit from explicit and direct teaching. This enables them to make the best use of the opportunities for learning. Direct instruction is especially effective for teaching basic knowledge and skills throughout the curriculum. For a direct instruction lesson, the learning task, including the knowledge and skills to be learned, are analysed in advance by the teacher. The elements of the task are then sequenced to facilitate mastery by the student of the objectives of the lesson. Because the learning process is broken down into manageable, sequential steps, students' success is facilitated.

A direct instruction lesson may have the following sequence of steps:

- A relevant learning target is chosen for the lesson.
- The learning task is analysed and a sequence of skills or knowledge to be learned is identified.
- The teacher models the correct responses, skills, or behaviour for the students.
- The students demonstrate that they understand what is expected.
- Guided practice related to the learning task is provided, during which the students are given supportive and corrective feedback.
- Independent practice follows, and the students use the skill in a variety of situations until mastery is achieved.

5.3.6 Learning strategies

As a means of facilitating the inclusion of students with special educational needs, several models of teaching and learning that focus on the implementation by students of learning strategies have been developed in recent decades. Learning strategies help students to learn and to solve problems independently. In order to bring about student success in using learning strategies, it is important that the strategy is modelled by the teacher and that the student is provided with guided practice in the use of the strategy in question.

Students with special educational needs may have difficulty with the metacognitive aspects of learning. Metacognition is "thinking about thinking." This refers to the process by which learners monitor their own thought processes and decide whether they are learning effectively. Difficulty with the metacognitive aspects of learning implies that the learner needs to be shown how to learn, for example through identifying connections and relationships between different elements of the learning task. From the teacher's viewpoint, this approach places the emphasis on the learning process and the means by which learning takes place.

Related to this approach is the view that the learning process should also be consistent and conducive to a student's learning preferences. Therefore, students' learning styles need to be considered together with the need to develop metacognitive awareness. These two aspects can be reciprocal, and together they deal not with the symptoms of the learning difficulty but with the fundamental principles of the learning process. Recognition of the cognitive and metacognitive

processes involved in the learning process is fundamental to the selection of appropriate strategies for addressing a student's learning difficulty.

Students need to learn strategies that they can implement while learning. Teachers can demonstrate and model appropriate learning strategies for their students. For example, metacognitive strategies for facilitating reading comprehension might include the following

- teacher-modelling, in which the teacher demonstrates the application of a reading strategy such as self-questioning or summarising, explaining both the procedure for implementing the strategy and the purpose and utility of the strategy
- think-alouds, in which students verbalise their processing as they read a text
- reciprocal teaching, in which the teacher and student (or students) take turns at (a) asking questions during reading, (b) summarising the text at appropriate points, (c) clarifying what has been read, noting any inconsistencies, and (d) predicting the next part of the text
- semantic mapping, in which the student uses a teacher-made graphic representation or map as a guide to the organisation of the material in the text and how the ideas of the content are related; later the students learn to mind-map the content of the text while they read.

Examples of other learning strategies that can be taught to students include

- the provision of check-lists and schedules for students, to be used as they are completing learning activities in school or at home
- direct teaching of organisational components to enable the students to operate more independently at school, for example a timetable or school and classroom routines and rules
- teaching students to use the "KWL" procedure (What do I **k**now about this already? What do I **w**ant to find out? What did I **l**earn?)
- enabling students to create and use mnemonics.

5.3.7 Graphic organisers

Many topics can be studied and revised more easily and more meaningfully by making a graphic organiser. Graphic organisers are visual frameworks that can help a student to make connections between concepts. Graphic organisers include such techniques as mind maps™, web diagrams, spidergrams, concept maps, and brain frames. They can help a student to organise, visualise, summarise and remember ideas and information. Some forms of graphic organisers are used before learning and help to remind students of what they already know about a subject. Others are designed to be used during learning to act as cues to what to look for in the structure of the resources or the information. Still other graphic organisers are used during review and revision activities and help to remind students of the number and variety of the components they should be remembering.

The effective use of graphic organisers can help students to structure and organise their ideas. The purpose is to give the student a better way to store information on one page. Various combinations of words, pictures, icons, symbols, sounds or colours may be used. Graphic organisers can be made by hand or by using special computer programs.

Graphic organisers can

- give an overview of a large subject or area
- summarise the whole and show the details at the same time
- gather and hold large amounts of data
- encourage problem-solving by showing new creative pathways
- encourage efficiency
- be enjoyable to look at, read, study, and remember
- attract and hold the eye or brain.

Graphic organisers can be used to

- brainstorm ideas
- find the main ideas
- plan an answer or essay for homework, in class, or in an examination
- work through problems
- take notes in class
- take notes from a textbook
- revise for tests and examinations.



The following diagram is an example of a concept map of the Reformation - a Junior Certificate history topic.

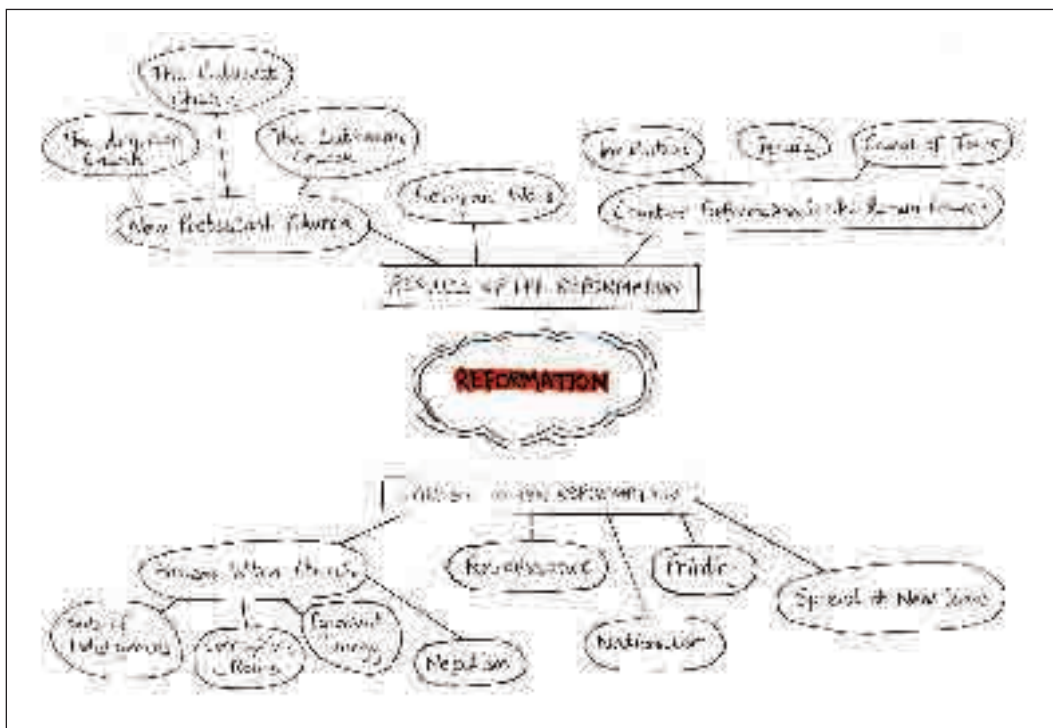


Fig. 1: Graphic organisers

The second diagram is an example of a concept map of certain parts of the human body and their functions - a Junior Certificate science topic.

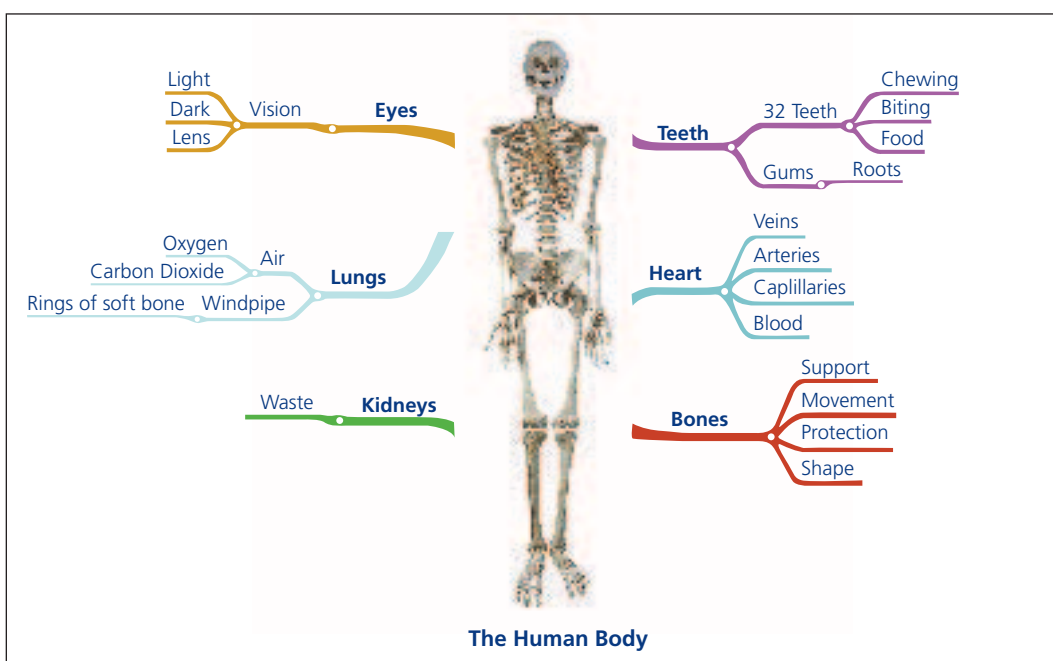


Fig. 2: Graphic organisers

5.3.8 Students' involvement in identifying learning targets and in self-assessment

Students' involvement in identifying learning targets and in self-assessment can contribute significantly to successful learning as well as to enhancing the student-teacher relationship.

Students are motivated to improve when they are involved in the construction of the goals for learning. As they reach these goals they experience satisfaction because they recognise that progress has been made. Teachers and students should review results regularly and measure together the evidence of progress. The students' progress, strengths and needs can be noted so that barriers to achievement of the learning goals can be addressed.

The following four-step framework can be used by teachers to involve students in identifying learning targets and in self-assessment:

- Step 1: The teacher and student together establish clear and appropriate goals and targets for teaching and learning.
- Step 2: Students are shown how to evaluate and monitor their own progress.
- Step 3: Students begin to evaluate their own progress and to record the results; the evaluation criteria and methods for recording results are discussed with the teacher.
- Step 4: Students complete their own records of progress and discuss these periodically with the teacher.

Students' involvement in identifying learning targets and in self-assessment can be promoted through the use of the strategies of the NCCA Assessment for Learning initiative. Assessment for Learning is concerned with the use of assessment by teachers as a means of improving students' learning. Three essential features of Assessment for Learning are sharing the learning intention, sharing the criteria for success, and giving learner feedback.

Teachers who were involved in phase 1 of Assessment for Learning (NCCA, 2004c) reported that there was greater involvement by students in the teaching and learning cycle, that involvement in Assessment for Learning was a positive support for their teaching, that there was a positive effect on the student-teacher relationship in the classroom, and that they had been encouraged to reflect on and to make changes to their practice. Teachers reported that they were concentrating more on the manner in which material was presented to students and on different possibilities for engagement with the content.

The report on phase 2 of Assessment for Learning (NCCA, 2005b) concluded that teachers were encouraged to adjust their teaching in the light of their observations of the work of their students, to introduce greater degrees of differentiated teaching, and to develop strategies that promote self-assessment in students. They reported that students' motivation was heightened and that self-assessment was promoted. (Further information on Assessment for Learning is available on the NCCA web site, www.ncca.ie. See also section 2.6.3 above.)

5.3.9 Learning styles

All students, including those with special educational needs, have preferred ways of learning. When learning preferences are acknowledged and accommodated, students are likely to demonstrate increased motivation for learning and higher levels of achievement.

An understanding of how a student learns best and under what conditions can lead to greater flexibility by teachers in their selection of teaching strategies and methods. A more positive and productive way of conceptualising students with special educational needs is to view them not as

learning-disabled but rather as having a different learning ability and learning preferences. In this conceptualisation, awareness and early recognition, appropriate intervention and lifelong support and accommodation can assist students in their learning and can prevent some learning difficulties from arising.

The notion of learning styles and research in the area are based on three concepts: (1) people prefer to learn in different ways and under different circumstances; (2) these preferences can be identified; and (3) the manner of instruction affects students' learning.

Learning styles pertain to ways in which humans interact with new and difficult information, including the ways they select, take in, make sense of, recall and use input from all that is available to them, both internally and externally. Learning styles are forms of characteristic cognitive, affective and physiological behaviour that can serve as an indication of how a student perceives, interacts with and responds to the learning environment. Learning style refers, for example, to whether the student

- responds better to oral or written instructions
- can work on tasks that require a high level of hand-eye co-ordination
- works better individually or as a member of a pair or group
- can complete tasks independently or requires support and encouragement
- seeks help when help is required
- has a good short-term or long-term memory
- can attend to a task until it is completed
- is an impulsive or a reflective learner
- learns better when allowed to move around
- is a global or an analytical learner
- has difficulty processing abstract information
- works well in competitive situations
- prefers to show knowledge pictorially or orally
- requires quiet for learning.

Teachers can often identify a student's learning preferences by careful observation of the choices they make and the behaviour they exhibit. Following the identification of a student's learning style, instruction can be adapted to match his/her learning preferences. The teacher's own beliefs, teaching style and willingness to encourage students to take responsibility for their learning are also fundamental to the success of learning styles instruction, just as they are critical to any successful instruction.

It is good classroom practice for the teacher to

- take account of the range of learning preferences that students in the class will inevitably exhibit
- recognise that one's own learning style is likely to be reflected in one's approach to teaching

- acknowledge the dangers of allowing one particular approach to teaching to exclude others
- help students to identify their own learning preferences with a view to their being able to develop their strengths still further but also extend the range of their learning repertoire by attending to those aspects that hold them back or cause frustration.

5.3.10 Multi-sensory instruction

Multi-sensory teaching links listening, speaking, reading and writing through the simultaneous and alternating use of visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and tactile sensory modalities. Teachers should ensure that their students are seeing, saying, hearing and manipulating materials during learning time. Multi-sensory methods facilitate the connection of oral language with visual language symbols and can involve the use of touch and movement to facilitate conceptual learning in all academic areas. Multi-sensory instruction reinforces learning by helping the student to gain access to the information, process the information, and retrieve information already learned.

5.3.11 Information and communications technology (ICT)

Information and communications technology (ICT) can play a valuable role in facilitating many of the learning and teaching strategies described here. It can be used to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and the development of specific skills. It is most effective in facilitating students' learning when it is closely linked to existing learning and teaching programmes.

Information and communications technology can be a valuable tool in helping students with special educational needs. It can be used to develop skills and reinforce learning in a meaningful and non-threatening manner. It can also be used as a personal support tool to enable students to achieve greater independence and allow for greater participation in a mainstream environment. However, it is important that information and communications technology not be seen as a panacea: it is one of many teaching tools and should be used when it can help students in a meaningful and purposeful way.

Information and communications technology can further contribute to the learning and teaching process in such areas as

- diagnostic assessment
- record-keeping
- individual and class group plans
- progress reports
- students' motivation
- access to learning
- the presentation of students' work
- differentiation
- the development of social skills
- the promotion of inclusion.

Further information on the use of information and communications technology in teaching and learning is available from the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) at www.ncte.ie. Advice is also provided in the NCCA *Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities: Introduction* on ways to incorporate ICT in teaching and learning, the use of

peripherals, school planning, and classroom planning. Specific information and advice on the use of laptops to support students with literary difficulties in post-primary schools is available in the book and accompanying DVD, *Engaging Learners: Mobile Technology, Literary and Inclusion* (National Council for Technology in Education, 2006).

5.3.12 The transfer of learning

The transfer of learning is the ability of a student to use, in new situations, knowledge and skills that have been learned in another situation. A frequent issue for students with special educational needs is the inability to transfer learned strategies and skills to the mainstream classroom.

The following instructional hierarchy can be used to facilitate the transfer of learned skills and strategies.

Stage 1: Acquisition

Acquisition is the first stage of learning. The student is shown how to use a skill for the first time and learns how to perform it competently. There is a lot of structure and a lot of teacher-student interaction. The teacher explains and models; the student tries to complete the task and may make errors. As the student makes errors, the teacher is present to correct and encourage persistence and learning. The main target is to develop accuracy and automaticity in the completion of the task.

Stage 2: Fluency

When accuracy is acquired, developing fluency becomes the target of the next stage. There should be frequent practice and repetition, with no loss of accuracy. The student works more independently, although the teacher remains available for support. There is still a need for external support, motivation and feedback.

Stage 3: Maintenance

This stage aims to ensure the maintenance of accuracy and fluency over time. There is no new teaching, but there is consistent reinforcement. The student self-monitors progress and is motivated by their own feelings of success. There is frequent review and repetition.

Stage 4: Generalisation

The student is guided in using the acquired skill in different and novel situations, including discrimination and differentiation. Accuracy and fluency are maintained, although there may be some loss in the initial attempts to apply the skill in new situations. The teacher monitors from a distance and provides support only when necessary.

Stage 5: Adaptation

In the final stage the student is set problems that require applying the acquired skill in novel ways, with new materials and in new settings. The identification by the student of appropriate characteristics of a task is encouraged. This final stage requires accuracy and fluency and a wider application of the skill together with self-extension.

The process of facilitating the transfer of learning by students with special educational needs is enhanced when

- teachers analyse the learning programmes and syllabi to identify the specific skills or strategies that the students need to learn
- the purpose and utility of the learning strategy are explained to the students before training so that they are aware of the purpose, value and application of the strategy and when the transfer and application of the learning strategy is established as a specific instructional objective

- resource teachers and learning-support teachers consult, confer with and communicate with the mainstream teacher (or teachers) in relation to the learning objectives that are set for the students
- work to reinforce the learning objective is set by the learning-support or resource teacher and is completed in the mainstream classroom
- mainstream texts, materials and subject matter are used in learning-support teaching or resource teaching during the generalisation stage
- learning-support and resource teachers work co-operatively with the mainstream teacher in the mainstream classroom, or the mainstream teacher observes or works co-operatively with the learning-support or resource teacher in the learning-support or resource teacher's classroom
- metacognitive training is provided for the purpose of promoting the student's self-management skill (this process is also referred to as self-monitoring, self-regularisation or self-integration and may involve pre-learning, peri-learning and post-learning strategies, for example verbalising, thinking aloud, reciprocal teaching)
- all who are involved with the student - including teachers and parents - are consistent in using the same cues and prompts, rewards and styles of correction as used at the acquisition stage
- the teachers are aware that when teaching or training is being implemented at the fluency stage, all errors that are not relevant to the strategy should be ignored
- the use of the skill or strategy is modelled in a manner that is accessible for the student, and the processes leading to generalisation are implemented effectively
- opportunities are provided for immediate and frequent use of the skill or strategy within a familiar setting
- the teachers are aware that automaticity in the use of the learning strategy is the goal and that it is not enough for the student to merely remember the strategy; therefore the student needs to receive appropriate teaching or training that enables them to reach the required level of automaticity.

5.3.13 Choosing learning materials

Teachers should ensure that the learning materials, including textbooks and worksheets, are suitable for students with special educational needs. Modifications may need to be made to the materials that are generally used in the class to take account of the learning needs of students with special educational needs. To provide an example of what teachers might look out for, the following extract is reproduced from the NCCA *Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disability: Art, Craft and Design* (in press).

It is important that worksheets and textbooks are used carefully with students who have a mild general learning disability. The reading material required so that students can engage with textbooks is often beyond the reading competency of students with mild general learning disabilities. Some mainstream textbooks should be seen as a complement to other means of instruction rather than the only source. Making sure that worksheets and textbooks are age-appropriate is also extremely important.

- Is there too much text in the worksheet/textbook? This could inhibit the ability of poor readers to engage with the tasks and concepts.
- Is there a lot of "clutter" on the page? "Busy" pages containing too much unimportant information or illustration often distract students.

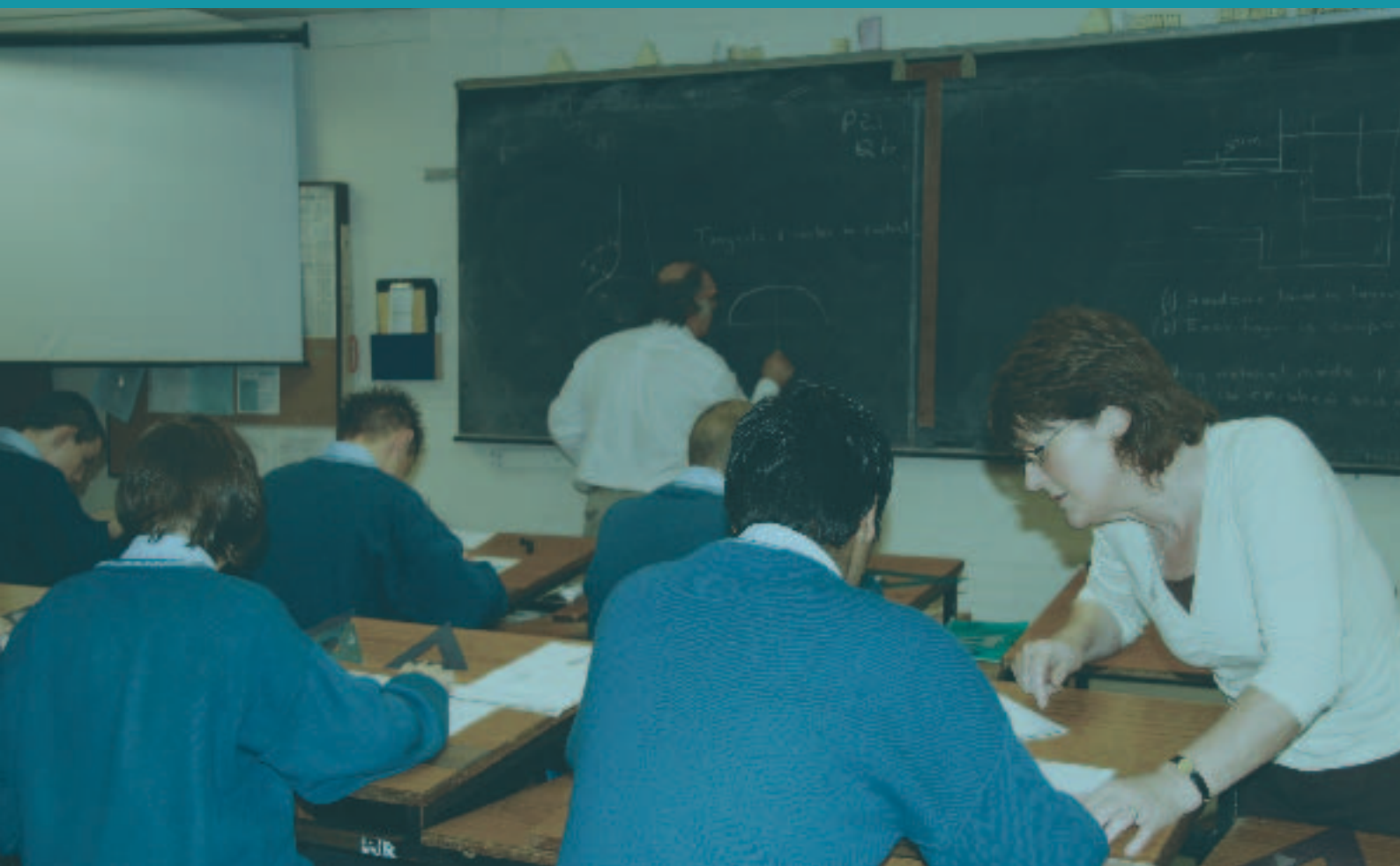
- Are the spaces given for the answer large enough for students who may have poor motor control or write their numbers/words very large?
- Are worksheets that are intended for homework clear in their instructions so that parents know what the student is supposed to be doing?
- Do worksheets/textbooks offer a variety of task types (for example, practical tasks, open-ended investigations, puzzles, games, project-based work and word problems)?
- Do they present material in different ways for different purposes and learning styles (for example, pictorially, diagrammatically and using minimal language as appropriate)?
- Is the print size appropriate to the development stage of the student?
- Do they offer opportunities for collaborative or group work (for example, active investigation and talk-about sections, integration opportunities that focus on other areas of the curriculum)?
- Do they reflect the interests and environment of the student?
- Do they consider the social aspects of these subjects, for example, measuring for a purpose, life skills?

Making sure that worksheets and textbooks are age-appropriate is extremely important, since students are usually very aware that a particular book/worksheet is being used by a younger brother/sister or by a more junior class within the school and this can seriously impact on their self-esteem.

Many variables in the text, the environment and the reader can contribute to the ease or otherwise of reading comprehension. These variables include the subject matter, the organisation of the material, the syntax, the length of the words, the length of the sentences, the word frequency, the typeface and type size, the line-spacing, the column size, the physical environment, the angle at which the book is held, and the reader's ability and motivation to read as well as past experience.

The application by a teacher of a readability formula to classroom textbook can help the teacher to match the text to the literacy skills of the students. Readability formulas are attempts to devise objective methods of estimating or predicting the difficulty level of reading materials. These formulas tend to rely on easily measured factors, such as word length and sentence length. Examples of readability formulas are the Mugford Readability Chart, the SMOG Readability Formula, and the FOG Readability Index. In addition, there is a facility in some word-processor applications for providing the readability statistics of documents.

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Appendices



Appendix A

List of circulars

Some circulars issued to post-primary schools by the Department of Education and Science that relate to special education are listed below. These circulars can be downloaded from the web site of the Department of Education and Science (www.education.ie).

References to information on special transport for children with special educational needs, on the visiting teacher service for children with sensory impairments and on the provision of reasonable accommodations in certificate examinations are also provided below.

(1) Circulars issued to post-primary schools

Circular 0135/2006

Payment of allowance to recognised Post-Primary Teachers who hold a Graduate/Higher Diploma in Special Education Needs.

Circular 0094/2006

New arrangements for the vetting of teaching and non-teaching staff.

Circular 0062/2006

Child protection guidelines and procedures for post-primary schools.

Circular 0059/2006

Seniority of special needs assistants.

Circular 0035/2006

Combined postgraduate diploma programme of training for learning-support and special educational needs teachers in primary schools, special schools, post-primary schools, and other educational services, 2006/2007.

Circular 0032/2006

Grants towards the purchase cost of test materials for guidance and/or learning support in post-primary schools.

Circular 0027/2006

Masters in special educational needs (MSEN), 2006/2007: primary and post-primary in-career course.

Circular 0016/06

School books grant scheme for needy pupils.

Circular M 14/05

Revised scheme of grants towards the purchase of equipment for pupils with a disability. (An application form for assistive technology can be downloaded from the web site of the National Council for Special Education, www.ncse.ie.)

Circular PPT 12/05

Guidance provision in second-level schools.

Circular SNA 12/05

Contract of employment for special needs assistants employed in second-level schools.

Circular PPT 01/05

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

Circular PPT 06/04

Appointment of teachers to cater for students with special educational needs.

Circular M 37/03

Re Guidelines for Second-Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9 (c) of the Education Act, 1998, Relating to Students' Access to Appropriate Guidance.

Circular M 29/95

Time in school.

Circular M 10/94

Revision of rule 46 of the "Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools" in relation to exemption from Irish.

Special transport

Information in relation to school transport for students with special educational needs is available on the web site of the Department of Education and Science (www.education.ie), under the heading "School transport." An application form for special transport can be downloaded from the web site of the National Council for Special Education (www.ncse.ie).

Visiting teacher service

Information in relation to the visiting teacher service for children with visual impairment and the visiting teacher service for children who are deaf or hard of hearing is available on the web site of the Department of Education and Science (www.education.ie), under the heading "Children with special needs / The visiting teacher service."

Reasonable accommodations in certificate examinations

Information in relation to the provision of reasonable accommodations in certificate examinations for students with special educational needs is available on the web site of the State Examinations Commission (www.examinations.ie), under the heading "Candidates - Reasonable accommodations."

(2) Some circulars issued to primary schools

Elements of these circulars may be of interest to managements and teachers in post-primary schools, particularly in relation to in-school arrangements for the deployment of teachers and special needs assistants.

Circular SP ED 02/05

Organisation of teaching resources for pupils who need additional support in mainstream primary schools.

Circular SP ED 24/03

Allocation of resources for pupils with special educational needs in national schools.

Appendix B

Audit of provision for students with special educational needs

Audit of Provision for Students with Special Educational Needs

School: _____

Date: _____

To complete this audit, progress in relation to each statement can be recorded by ticking the box that best describes the current stage of development in the school. This audit should be completed as a group exercise by the members of the in-school special educational needs support team.

Quality of School Planning

	a. Under consideration	b. Being developed	c. Established	d. Regularly being reviewed and improved
1. The school's mission statement reflects an inclusive ethos.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The school's admissions policy facilitates the admission and participation of students with special educational needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The school engages actively with relevant primary school personnel regarding provision for students with special educational needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The school adopts a whole-school and systematic approach to identifying, providing for and reviewing the educational requirements of students with special educational needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The school actively promotes parental involvement and facilitates contact between parents and teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The school liaises with relevant external agencies regarding provision for students with special educational needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The school plan includes references to realistic and practical provision for students with special educational needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The school's discipline policy / code of behaviour is suitably flexible to take account of individual differences.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. The school's homework policy includes reference to students with special educational needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. The school's assessment policy includes reference to students with special educational needs including reasonable accommodations for certificate examinations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Quality of Professional Development

11. All staff are encouraged and facilitated to participate in appropriate professional development in special education.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. All staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding students with special educational needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. A named teacher has been designated as the teacher with responsibility for co-ordinating and liaising with colleagues and other relevant professionals in relation to students with special educational needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Quality of Curriculum Provision

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 14. The students with special educational needs have access to certificate and school-based programmes which are appropriate to their needs and interests. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. The students with special educational needs have access to a range of subjects at varying levels appropriate to their needs and interests. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. Curriculum documents and materials related to provision for students with special educational needs are readily available to staff. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. Co-curricular and extracurricular activities that support and enhance learning are open and accessible to students with special educational needs. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Quality of Learning and Teaching

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 18. There is a direct link between the school plan and the learning and teaching programmes provided for students with special educational needs. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. Assessment outcomes are appropriately shared and used to inform learning and teaching. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. The school collaboratively creates, implements and reviews educational plans for students with special educational needs. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. The school offers an appropriate, safe and stimulating environment for all students creating a sense of belonging and security. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. All students are challenged and motivated by teaching and learning activities that are appropriate by level and pace. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. All teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and methodologies that take account of the range of student abilities, needs and interests. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24. Modes of assessment and feedback (including homework) are differentiated by teachers in relation to their students' ability. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25. There are procedures to monitor the actual achievement of students with special educational needs to ensure it is in keeping with their ability and in accordance with their individual plan. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Notes: Observations/reflections on any aspect of the above can be recorded here.

Appendix C

Individual student profile

Part 1

Name: _____ Date of birth: _____ Class: _____

Address: _____

Year head: _____ Class tutor: _____

Primary school

Principal: _____ Sixth-class teacher: _____

Resource teacher or learning-support teacher: _____

Relevant information transferring: _____

Record of assessments

Name of test	Date administered	Chronological age	Administrator	Results or outcome
1.				
2.				

(Add additional rows as required.)

Interview with parents

Names of parents: _____ Phone: _____ Date of interview: _____

Developmental and educational history: _____

Interview with pupil

Date of interview: _____

Interests, hobbies, and talents: _____

Language and communication: Present level of educational performance

Strengths: _____

Needs: _____

Literacy: Present level of educational performance (to include analysis of formal and informal testing and observation)

Strengths: _____

Needs: _____

Numeracy and mathematics: Present level of educational performance (to include analysis of formal and informal testing and observation)

Strengths: _____

Needs: _____

Motor co-ordination: Present level of educational performance

Strengths:

Needs:

Learning style: Present level of educational performance

Strengths:

Needs:

Personal and social development: Present level of educational performance

Strengths:

Needs:

Other areas of the curriculum: Present level of educational performance

(Further headings can be added for recording information related to other aspects of the curriculum)

Strengths:

Needs:

Part 2

Priority learning needs

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Learning strengths, learning style, and interests

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Appendix D

Categories of special educational needs

The various categories of special educational needs that are eligible at the time of publication of the Guidelines for an allocation of additional resources by the National Council for Special Education and the Department of Education and Science are listed below. The definitions of these categories, the criteria for the allocation of additional resources and the procedures for application are set by the Department of Education and Science and the National Council for Special Education. The additional resources that may be allocated include resource teaching support, special needs assistant support, assistive technology and special transport. Details in relation to application procedures and criteria for eligibility for resources are available in circulars that are published from time to time by the National Council for Special Education and the Department of Education and Science.

1. Physical disability
2. Hearing impairment
3. Visual impairment
4. Emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems
5. Severe motional disturbance and/or behaviour problems
6. Mild general learning disability
7. Borderline general learning disability
8. Specific learning disability
9. Moderate general learning disability
10. Severe or profound general learning disability
11. Autism/autistic spectrum disorder
12. Pupils with special educational needs arising from an assessed syndrome
13. Specific speech and language disorder
14. Multiple disabilities

Appendix E

Addresses and Websites

Central Applications Office (CAO)	Tower House, Eglinton Street, Galway. Tel: (091) 509 800	www.cao.ie
Department of Education and Science	Special Education Section, Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Tel: (0902) 74621 / (01) 873 4700	www.education.ie
Equality Authority	2 Clonmel Street, Dublin 2. Tel: (01) 417 3333; Locall 1890 245 545	www.equality.ie
Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC)	East Point Plaza, East Point Business Park, Dublin 3. Tel: (01) 865 9500	www.fetac.ie
Health Service Executive (HSE)	Head Office, Oak House, Millennium Park, Naas, Co. Kildare. Tel: (045) 880400 Head Office, Parkgate St. Business Centre, Dublin 8. Tel: (01) 635 2500 HSE infoline Callsave 1850 24 1850	www.hse.ie
Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT)	126 Pembroke Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4. Tel: (01) 667 7232 / (01) 667 7295	www.iilt.ie
Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP)	Curriculum Development Unit, CDVEC. Sundrive Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12. Tel: (01) 453 5487	www.jcsp.slss.ie
Leaving Certificate (Applied) Programme (LCA)	Curriculum Development Centre, St. Patrick's Comprehensive School, Shannon, Co. Clare. Tel: (061) 361 993	www.lca.slss.ie
Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)	Navan Education Centre, Athlumney, Navan, Co. Meath. Tel: (046) 907 8382	www.lcvp.slss.ie
National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)	1st floor, 42/43 Prussia Street, Dublin 7. Tel: (01) 869 0715	www.ncge.ie
National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE)	Dublin City University, Glasnevin, Dublin 9. Tel: (01) 700 8200	www.ncte.ie
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	24 Merrion Square, Dublin 2. Tel: (01) 661 7177	www.ncca.ie
National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	1-2 Mill Street, Trim, Co. Meath. Tel: (046) 948 6400	www.ncse.ie

National Disability Authority (NDA)	25 Clyde Road, Dublin 4. Tel: (01) 608 0400	www.nda.ie
National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)	24/27 North Frederick Street, Dublin 1. Tel: (01) 889 2700	www.education.ie
National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)	16-22 Green Street, Dublin 7. Tel: (01) 873 8600	www.newb.ie
School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI)	Marino Institute of Education, Griffith Avenue, Dublin 9. Tel: (01) 805 7729	www.sdpi.ie
Scoilnet		www.scoilnet.ie
Second-Level Support Service (SLSS)	Blackrock Education Centre, Kill Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. Tel: (01) 236 5021	www.slss.ie
Special Education Support Service (SESS)	Cork Education Support Centre, The Rectory, Western Road, Co. Cork. Tel: (021) 425 4241 Callsave: 1850-200884	www.sess.ie
State Examinations Commission	Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Tel: (090) 644 2700	www.examinations.ie