

What reassurance can parents/guardians be given that the new model for allocating special education teaching support will work?

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education & Skills (DES) reviewed the new allocation model in different types of schools in which it was piloted and it was found to meet the needs of students with special educational needs. Schools were able to use the *Continuum of Support* framework to provide supports based on need.

The DES and NCSE have provided guidelines to help schools to identify and support students with special educational needs.

Further information available at:

<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/Guidelines-for-Post-Primary-Schools-Supporting-Students-with-Special-Educational-Needs-in-Mainstream-Schools.pdf>

Have special education teaching supports been maintained at existing levels?

On the introduction of the new model in September 2017 no school lost special education teaching supports, while over 1,300 schools got an increased allocation. The DES funded 900 additional teaching posts to provide for this increase. The new model is designed to be a better and fairer way to give schools additional teaching supports to help students with special educational needs.

Further information for parents/guardians is available in *A New Model for Allocating Special Education Teachers to Mainstream Schools: A better and more equitable way* (Insert link here).



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Department of
Education and Skills



A New Model for Allocating Special Education Teaching Support to Mainstream Post Primary Schools



Quick Reference Guide for
Parents/Guardians

What is the new model for allocating special education teaching support to mainstream schools?

The new model gives extra teaching supports to schools to meet the needs of students with special educational needs based on:

School size

And

Each school's profile in three areas:

- the number of students with complex special educational needs
- the results of standardised tests
- the social context of the school, taking account of disadvantage and gender

Further information available at:

https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0014_2017.pdf

Why has there been a change in how special education teaching supports are allocated to schools?

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE, 2013) found that the old model was not fair for all families and that some students had to wait before they could get extra help in school. They recommended a new, fairer, way to provide supports directly to schools in line with need rather than the nature of an individual's disability.

How can my son/daughter access additional teaching supports?

The school will allocate supports based on your son/daughter's identified needs using a wide range of information. This includes learning, social, emotional and behavioural needs. Teachers will talk to you, as well as other professionals if necessary, when deciding on the level of support your child needs. Schools will use the *Continuum of Support* framework so that students with the highest level of need get the highest level of support.

Further information available at:

<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/supporting-students-with-special-educational-needs-key-actions-for-post-primary-schools.pdf>

How will schools decide how much support my son/daughter needs?

The level of support will vary from student to student depending on their individual needs. **A student does not need a diagnosis to get extra help at school.** Students with the same diagnosis may have different needs and require different types of support. This can be provided in different ways, such as extra support in the classroom, extra help from a special education teacher, small group teaching, or one-to-one support teaching.

My son/daughter has a diagnosis of disability – what support will s/he receive now?

Now, your son/daughter will receive support based on the level of his/her special educational needs in school. There are many different ways students can be supported and the school will talk with you, and with other professionals if needed, on how best to provide this support.

How will my son/daughter get professional support or an assessment where this is needed?

Schools continue to have access to the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) for consultation, assessment and support. They also get training and advice from the NCSE Support Service. There is no change in the way that parents/guardians can access professional support or assessment from the Health Service Executive (HSE).

Will teachers have to develop educational plans and how will we be involved?

Yes, it is recommended that teachers develop educational plans for students who need additional support. Schools use the Student Support Plan to record individual strengths and needs, to plan interventions and to monitor progress. Teachers, parents/guardians and students themselves should all be involved in **drawing up** the Student Support Plan and **reviewing progress** after a period of time.

What if I don't agree with the level of support being provided for my son/daughter?

You should first discuss how your son/daughter's needs are being met with his/her teachers and/or special education teacher. You could also talk to the school principal. Schools use the Student Support Plan to plan interventions and to monitor progress. This provides the best way to identify the nature and level of support needed.

If you continue to have concerns you could raise these with the school's Board of Management.

If the school does not receive extra resources for my son/daughter will they be able to enrol?

Yes, all schools have been given special education teaching supports based on their profile. This means that all schools already have resources in place to provide additional teaching support for all students who need it in the school, including new students.