



Supports for Children with Special Educational Needs in Schools

An Information Session for Parents/Guardians

Parentline
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Today's Session

We'd like to tell you about

- 1) who we are and what we do
- 2) what educational supports are available for your children
- 3) how supports are made available and which children are eligible for them

... and we'll try to answer your questions



Who We Are – What We Do

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is an independent body set up in 2003 to

- allocate and plan for additional supports to schools
- provide information to parents, schools and others
- carry out research and advise the Minister
- <http://ncse.ie/>



NCSE Special Educational Needs Organisers

- SENOs are based in local offices around the country and each has a case load of schools
- SENOs provide information to parents
- SENOs allocate additional **care and education** supports to schools
- SENOs also work with schools (e.g. to establish special classes)



Starting School

- For most parents the local school is the first choice
- Where possible children with special needs should be educated with their peers - *inclusion* is supported by legislation and policy
- But there are other options for those who need them:
 - A **special class** in a local school
 - A **special school**



The Class Teacher in the Local School

- The **class teacher** is responsible for the progress of *all children in the class*
 - *including* those with special educational needs
- Teachers adapt lessons and materials to suit the variety of learning needs in the class
- This is called '*differentiating the curriculum*'



Learning Support

All primary schools have *learning support* teacher hours

- for those with milder learning needs –no diagnosis needed
- schools identify pupils who would benefit
- learning support teachers complement the work of the class teacher and can work with teachers / parents on a learning plan
- schools decide how to use their learning support hours



Resource Teaching

All schools can also apply for *additional resource teaching hours*

- for children with a '*low incidence*' need diagnosis
- these are less common but higher level needs defined by the Department
- e.g. autism, sensory impairments, certain learning disabilities
- resource teachers complement the work of the class teacher and can work with other teachers / parents to develop a learning plan for a child



How Schools Get Resource Teacher Hours

With parents' permission **schools** apply to SENOS

- applications must include professional reports and diagnoses
- SENOs review applications and allocate hours
- the number of hours is linked to the type of need as **set** by the Department
- schools decide how the hours will be used (*e.g. small groups, individual sessions or working with the teacher in the classroom*)
- <http://ncse.ie/for-schools>



New Model for Additional Teaching Supports

NCSE proposal being piloted by DES in 28 mainstream primary schools

- Learning support and resource teacher roles will merge
- DES will allocate additional supports to schools
- No need for diagnosis – schools will support children in line with their identified learning needs
- Supports will be in place when children enrol

New model **does not** apply to provision of SNA support



Special Needs Assistants

All schools can apply for SNA support for children with *additional and significant **care*** needs

- SNAs provide care support and assist children with activities like clothing, feeding or mobility
- SNAs are not teachers
- SNAs aim is to support the child's independence
- the need for SNA support may diminish as the child's potential for independence grows



How Do Schools Get SNAs

With parents' permission **schools** apply to SENOs for *access to an SNA*

- specifically for children with care needs as a result of
 - a significant medical need
 - a significant physical or sensory impairment
 - an emotional or severe emotional behavioural disorder
- schools must send a professional report on the child's care needs
- SENOs decide on the overall SNA allocation to a school
- schools decide how best to use their SNAs



Other Practical Supports

Schools can apply for school transport and assistive technology for certain pupils

- transport is funded where a child is going to the nearest school or class that is or can be resourced to meet the child's needs
- grants are available for children who need assistive technology specifically to access the curriculum (e.g. braille machines)
- schools apply to SENOs – SENOS make recommendations
- Department makes the final decision on these applications



Special Classes in Mainstream Schools

Some mainstream schools also have **special classes**

- for children with more complex needs outlined in a professional report
- special classes are smaller and include SNAs
- a flexible placement that may change as a child develops
- there are about 630 special classes in primary schools
- SENOS can establish special classes where needed



Special Schools

Special schools are an option mainly for children with more severe and or complex needs

- special schools have smaller classes
- they have SNAs in line with the care needs in the school
- there are about 120 special schools in the country



Other Key People in Your Child's Education

- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Psychologist
- Visiting Teacher Service (for hearing and visually impaired)
- HSE professionals e.g. clinical psychologists, occupational therapists, language therapists
- SENOs liaise with all these services



Choosing A School

- You may wish to talk to others, parents, teachers ...
- Visiting schools is important
- Apply **in writing** and apply in good time
- Provide the school with relevant reports early
- If a school refuses to enrol your child, you can appeal
- All schools can apply for additional supports for incoming children



Thank You

Happy to answer any questions.....

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For further information:

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