A New Model to Allocate Additional Teaching Supports to Schools

A better and more equitable way?

Delivery for Students with Special Educational Needs

Summary

Introduction

In June 2014, the NCSE launched the report of a Working Group which prepared a proposal regarding a new model for the allocation of additional teaching resources to schools to support children with special education needs.

The rationale behind the development of a new approach to allocating additional teaching resources is that the current system is unsatisfactory. In its policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills, the NCSE argued that the current system of allocating additional teaching resources to schools was unfair on the following grounds:

- Additional teaching resources under the General Allocation Model (GAM) were allocated to schools based on the number of class teachers in a school, regardless of the needs of the pupils in the school; and
- A formal diagnosis of disability is required before resource teaching support is provided, which results in delays in providing support to pupils on long waiting lists for assessments.

Main essence of Proposals

There will no longer be a distinction between learning support and resource teachers. All additional special educational teaching supports will be allocated to schools based on their need for such support. Additional teachers will be referred to as support teachers.

There will be no reduction in the total number of resource / learning support teachers (over 11,000 for 2014-2015 school year).
Pupils will no longer have to be labelled as having a disability in order to receive additional support.

Pupils will receive support based on their need rather than on a category of disability. Children with similar disabilities may have different needs for support.

Approximately 1,500 teaching posts will be allocated to schools as a baseline to enable schools to provide for prevention and early intervention. The remainder (the majority) will be allocated to schools based on their educational profile.

Schools will decide how to allocate the resources they receive.

An Inclusion Support Service will support schools.

Step 1 Allocation provided to schools

A School Educational Profile Component

- Complex special educational needs (HSE, pre-school, NEPS, audiologists, CAMHS – descriptors)
- Standardised test results (NCSE to access results 2nd, 4th & 6th; small schools 3rd & 5th also; STen score 1-3, each with a different weighting, English/Irish & Mathematics; aggregated for 3 years
- Social context of school (survey as no data a primary – welfare, one parent, Travellers, EAL; gender

B Baseline Component

- Provided to every mainstream school (inclusion, prevention, early intervention)
  - Less than 50 pupils = 0.2 posts (598 schools)
  - 50-99 pupils = 0.3 posts (783 schools)
  - 100-199 pupils = 0.4 posts (805 schools)
  - 200+ pupils = 0.5 posts (966 schools)
  - Total posts = 1160
- 15% of available posts (primary and post-primary)
- Reviewed every two years initially

Step 2 Deployment / Utilisation by Schools

- Guidelines for schools
- NCSE Inclusion Support Service
- Responding to Exceptional circumstances
- Recording and reporting outcomes
School Educational Profile

A school's educational profile will be determined by weighting three elements:

1. **Students with complex educational needs**
   - Usually identified by HSE professionals at birth, at pre-school or at entry to school.
   - Protocols will be developed for transfer of information from pre-school to primary school.
   - Descriptors will be developed by NCSE, NEPS & HSE, which will be used instead of categories of disability to describe level of SEN.

2. **Standardised Tests**
   - Test results from English or Irish and Maths.
   - Low achievement is considered as STen 3 or below (16th percentile).
   - Schools have already been asked to indicate the number of pupils achieving at each STen score level.
   - NCSE proposing that standardised test scores be sent directly to NCSE.
   - Small schools with fewer than 15 pupils in each of the relevant class levels (2nd, 4th & 6th) will be asked to submit information for 3rd and 5th class also.
   - Data will be aggregated over 3 years to allow trends to be established.
   - Initial weighting will be assigned to a school based on the percentage of students who register a STen 3 score, with increased weighting for percentage of students registering STen 2 and a further increased weighting will be assigned for the percentage of students who register a STen 1 or who were exempted from the test.
   - Recommendations on guidance for schools, and CPD for teachers on administering and interpreting standardised test results.
   - Recommendation that consideration be given to using one standardised test.

3. **Social context of the school**
   - Gender and disadvantage will form part of the social context of the school.
   - Numbers of pupils with EAL (assessed using kit), Travellers.
   - Questionnaire will issue to schools to gather social context data – data sought will include number of families dependant on welfare, single parent families, parental involvement in education (mother’s education level to be included in future) as an interim measure.
   - Census-based data collection should become available in the future.

**Weighting**

In terms of weighting, the highest weighting will be assigned for pupils with complex needs. The second highest weighting will be assigned on the results of standardised tests. The third highest weighting will be assigned on the social context of the school.

The precise weightings have not yet been established.
Reviewing Allocations

It is proposed that the new model would remain in place initially for two years. As the model becomes embedded schools’ allocations could be reviewed every three years. Developing primary schools will be reviewed every year.

Where a school’ educational profile changes significantly within review periods the Inclusion Support Service will be in position to respond.

Deployment / Utilisation of Additional Teaching Resources

Guidelines will be developed for schools

NEPS will be available to support schools in identifying and supporting pupils requiring additional support

Inclusion Support Service (ISS)

It is proposed that all support services for SEN be combined into one unified support service under the management of the NCSE.

The ISS will provide advice and support to schools regarding SEN including CPD for teachers, building professional capacity.

The ISS will provide outreach teaching support where unanticipated exceptional circumstances arise.

Outcomes for pupils with SEN

It is proposed that schools record baseline information, goals set, and progress made for pupils with SEN – the level of detail graduated according to intensity of support required.

Outcomes should reflect achievement, attendance, independence, happiness (self-esteem, attitudes etc) and end of school outcomes. (Schools already collect this information, except end of school outcomes)

Annual reports on progress made and outcomes achieved and how resources were used to be submitted to NCSE (templates will be devised)

Implementation of Model

Once the framework for a new model has been agreed, in principle, data from schools will be collected and analysed on a small sample of schools to allow weightings to be devised.

Transitional arrangements will apply, as some schools are likely to gain support while others are likely to lose some support.