



Circular No. 0006/2011

Circular to Boards of Management and Principal Teachers of Primary, Post-Primary and Special Schools on revised arrangements for the allocation of Special Needs Assistant posts

1. Cap on Special Needs Assistant posts

In recent years, schools are aware that the Government has prioritised the provision of supports for students with special educational needs e.g. expenditure on the Special Needs Assistant scheme has increased by 922% in the period 2001 – 2009. In the context of the current financial situation, while continuing to prioritise special education, it has been necessary as part of the National Recovery Programme to place a cap on the number of whole time equivalent Special Needs Assistant posts in schools. This number is 10,575 whole time equivalent posts.

This number of posts represents a substantial and significant level of support to schools which have enrolled students with special educational and significant additional care needs.

2. Management of Special Needs Assistant allocation

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has been advised that it must manage the Special Needs Assistant scheme within the overall employment and budgetary framework and may not sanction any Special Needs Assistant posts in excess of the cap of 10,575 whole time equivalent posts. Schools will appreciate that revised arrangements for the scheme are now required to enable the NCSE operate the scheme within an overall cap.

Any further allocations will have to be managed within the cap on numbers and will, as indicated below, be the subject of a further communication to schools in the near future.

3. Revised Arrangements

A key feature of the amended scheme will be to provide for an annual allocation of Special Needs Assistant support to eligible schools. The Department of Education and Skills (DES) is now engaging with the NCSE in relation to the detailed arrangements to operate within the overall limit. The DES and the NCSE will also have discussions with the Education Partners in the near future in relation to the revised arrangements. The NCSE will advise schools of the revised arrangements in the near future.

4. Applications on hand

The NCSE will be considering all applications for Special Needs Assistant support on hand in the context of the move to an annualised allocation and the revised arrangements signalled above.

If you have any queries in relation to this circular, please contact Special Education Section on 090 648 3760/4093/3762/3758/4188/3747.

This circular can be accessed on the Department's website www.education.ie

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