



Information Note SE 0001/2023

To: Managerial Authorities, Principals and Teachers of Recognised Primary, Secondary Community and Comprehensive Schools and The Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards.

Report of Education Needs for the Purpose of the Assessment of Need Disability Act 2005

A chara,

The following is provided by way of update to Information Note 0002/2022 in relation to the Assessment of Need process as it applies in schools.

I wish to thank you for your ongoing work in meeting the needs of children with special or additional educational needs in your school. As you may be aware, the Department of Education and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) are committed to supporting you in this vitally important work. In that regard, State expenditure this year on special education will amount to more than €2.6 billion, equating with more than 27% of the Department's budget and provides for the employment of 19,000 teachers in special education positions and 20,000 SNAs.

I also wish to update you in relation to developments regarding the Assessment of Need (AON) process and schools' role in assisting the NCSE to complete the educational component of the AON process. The AON process is provided for under the Disability Act 2005 and is a process under the remit of the Health Service Executive (HSE). The NCSE is required to assist the HSE in this work but schools' engagement with the process will be through the NCSE. It is important to note that legal responsibility for the AON process lies with the HSE.

Providing information held in Student Support Plans to the NCSE

The Department of Education and NCSE have worked intensively to ensure the process put in place for the educational component of AON fulfils legal obligations and is one that is rooted in existing assessment practices in schools. What is being asked of schools, is to transfer information already held in Student Support Plans to the NCSE, which will complete the process by providing the relevant information to the HSE.

Student Support Plans are developed collaboratively following a problem-solving process in the school, involving school staff, parent(s)/ guardian(s) and the student. The information contained in the Student Support Plan; targets, strategies to be employed, outcomes of reviews, etc., is the same information that is required for the AON process. Schools are not required or expected to undertake additional assessments for the purposes of completing an AON form. Information provided by schools that participated in the trial suggests that, typically, the AON form is completed quickly where the Student Support Plan is to hand.



Guidance documents and resources developed following consultation

In finalising the AON process for schools, there has been extensive consultation with the education partners and with individual schools. The Department is very grateful to all those who contributed to this process. In particular, we are grateful to the 80 schools that assisted in trialing the process and in providing detailed feedback on the guidance documents and resources put in place to support the process.

Information provided by the HSE in relation to the expected annual number of AON applications which may be sent to the NCSE for onward engagement with schools, suggests that, in most instances, schools will be requested to assist the NCSE to complete a very small number of individual AON forms for their pupils. However, this will be closely monitored and reviewed by the Department.

To assist schools in undertaking this work, a comprehensive suite of supports is in place for schools. These include:

- A guidance document which provides step by step instructions for the completion of the AON form [AON Guidance Document](#)
- A short video which provides instructions for the completion of the AON form [AON Video](#)
- Dedicated email support from the NCSE – aon@ncse.ie
- Dedicated phone support from NCSE advisors – 01 603 3456
- An FAQ document which will be updated regularly [AON FAQs](#)

In circumstances where schools require additional support to that listed above, they can request a support visit from an NCSE advisor to assist in the completion of the AON form.

Ongoing monitoring and review of AON process

The Department is committed to monitoring how the AON process is working in schools and will formally review the process at the end of the current school year; this is with a view to ensuring that any additional guidance, support or resources are put in place at the earliest possible opportunity. The education stakeholders will be invited to participate in this process.

In the interim, the Department and NCSE will continue to work with the education stakeholders to ensure that schools are supported as outlined above to complete the educational component of the AON process as it arises.

Your co-operation with the NCSE, in providing information which you hold on individual students who have sought an AON, is appreciated.

Kind regards

Brendan Doody
Principal Officer
Special Education Section

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