



Circular letter M08/99

## **CIRCULAR TO BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT AND PRINCIPAL TEACHERS OF NATIONAL SCHOOLS**

### **Applications for the services of a full or part-time resource teacher to assist a school in providing education to meet the needs and abilities of children with disabilities**

#### **1. Introduction**

The post of Resource Teacher is an additional post allocated to assist a school or cluster of schools in providing an education which meets the needs and abilities of children assessed as having disabilities. Under the direction of the relevant Principal, the role of the Resource Teacher is to provide additional teaching support for these children who have been fully integrated into mainstream schools and who need such support. In addition, s/he should advise and liaise with other teachers, parents and relevant professionals in the children's interest.

This is a whole school effort and not the responsibility of the resource teacher alone because these children are fully integrated into a mainstream school and will spend most of his/her time with the mainstream teacher.

#### **2. The role of a Resource Teacher**

A Resource Teacher assists schools in providing support for children with special educational needs arising from disability by:

- (a) Assessing and recording child needs and progress;
- (b) Setting specific, time-related targets for each child and agreeing these with the class teacher and principal;
- (c) Direct teaching of the children, either in a separate room or within the mainstream class;
- (d) Team-teaching – so long as the children concerned are deriving benefit from it;
- (e) Advising class teachers in regard to adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, suitable textbooks, use of Information Technology and suitable software and a range of other related matters;
- (f) Meeting and advising parents, when necessary, accompanied by the class teacher, as necessary;
- (g) Short meetings with other relevant professionals, in the children's interest – e.g. psychologists, speech and language therapists, visiting teachers, special school or special class teachers.

### **3. How are Resource Teacher posts allocated?**

Resource teachers are allocated where there is a number of children with special educational needs arising from a disability who are fully integrated into mainstream national schools where there are no other adequate supports teaching resources available to the children. Child eligibility and degree of need are established following consideration of reports on assessments carried out by relevant professionals.

Each child is given a weighting which is determined by the nature and degree of disability and the current pupil-teacher-ratio for that particular disability. For example a child with a mild general learning disability would count as 1/11<sup>th</sup> of a teacher post. A child who is profoundly deaf would count as 1/6<sup>th</sup> of a teacher post. The current pupil teacher ratios for each disability are listed in Appendix 1.

Schools should read Appendix II when actively considering applying for a resource teacher appointment.

Resource teacher posts may be sanctioned on a full-time basis – either in a single school or in a cluster of schools – provided there are sufficient children with special educational needs arising from a disability to warrant a full-time post. Alternatively, part-time hours may be sanctioned to provide support teaching for individual children where there are insufficient children with special educational needs to warrant the allocation of a full-time post or of a second full-time post.

### **4. How should an application be made for a resource teacher post either on a full-time or part-time basis?**

Following consultation with the Principal, Staff and Parents and, where appropriate, Chairpersons of other schools, the Chairperson of the Board of Management of a school with a pupil or children with special educational needs arising from a disability should write to the School's Inspector stating that the school is seeking the sanction of a resource teacher post either on a full or part-time basis and giving details of the children concerned and requesting that the Inspector visit the school to evaluate the case for such a post.

Applications for a Resource Teacher post may be sought on a shared basis between a number of schools.

### **5. Information required by Inspector**

The school must have the following information available to the Inspector when s/he calls:

- Name and Date of Birth of each child;
- Class in which the child is currently placed and level of attainment;
- Psychological reports and, where appropriate, other specialist reports e.g. audiological, speech and language therapy reports, etc;
- Confirmation that the school has received parental agreement regarding acceptance of support from a resource teacher in respect of each child;
- Confirmation that suitable accommodation is available or will be made available in the event of an appointment.

The Inspectorate will review the recommendations contained in the reports drawn up by the relevant professionals as well as current provision available in the school and in the local

area when considering applications. Applications in regard to children can only be considered when the relevant professional reports are made available.

## **6. Notification to schools**

The Inspector will evaluate the information made available and subsequently notify schools if s/he intends to forward the application to a relevant senior Inspector for further consideration. This should not be seen as an indication that the applications have been approved. Alternatively, the Inspector will notify the school concerned that the details of the children presented for consideration are such that the sanction of a resource teacher service on either a full or part-time basis cannot be supported.

School Authorities may appeal such a decision to the Special Education Section of this Department.

**The Department will notify schools in the event that a full or part-time resource teacher service has been sanctioned.** Schools should allow a minimum of two months' processing time after the Inspector has advised the school that the application has been forwarded to the relevant Senior Inspector. Schools, which have not heard from the Department within this time, should contact the Special Education Section at the address below.

Enquiries about this circular should be made to:

Special Education Section 1  
Department of Education and Science  
Cornamaddy  
Athlone  
Co Westmeath

Telephone No. (0902) 74621 or (01) 873 4700  
Fax No. (0902) 76939

L Kilroy  
Principal Officer

April, 1999

## Appendix 1

Disability	SERC recommended pupil-teacher-ratio	Current pupil-teacher-ratio
Visual impairment	8:1	8:1
Hearing impairment	7:1	7:1
Mild General Learning Disability*	11:1	13:1
Moderate General Learning Disability*	8:1	9:1
Severe/Profound General Learning Disability*	6:1	6:1
Emotional Disturbance	8:1	9:1
Severe Emotional Disturbance	6:1	6:1
Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders	6:1	6:1
Physical Disability	10:1	12:1
Multiple Disabilities	6:1	6:1
Specific Learning Disability	11:1	11:1
Specific Speech and Language Disorder	7:1	7:1

- ***The Department of Education and Science uses the term “general learning disability” rather than “mental handicap”***
- ***The Department of Education and Science is working towards bringing all pupil teacher ratios in line with the recommendations of the Special Education Review Committee.***

## Appendix II

### Glossary of terms

Does the child concerned have special educational needs arising from one of the following disabilities?	Definition
Physical Disability	<p>Such children have permanent or protracted disabilities arising from conditions such as congenital deformities, spina bifida, dyspraxia, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, brittle bones or severe accidental injury. Because of the impairment of their physical function, they require special additional intervention and support if they are to have available to them a level and quality of education appropriate to their needs and abilities.</p> <p>Many require the use of a wheelchair, a mobility or seating aid or other technological support.</p> <p>They may suffer from a lack of muscular control and co-ordination and may have difficulties in communication, particularly in oral articulation e.g. as in the case of severe dyspraxia.</p>
Hearing Impairment	<p>Such children have a hearing disability which is so serious as to impair significantly their capacity to hear and understand human speech, thus preventing them from participating fully in classroom interaction and from benefiting adequately from school instruction. The vast majority of them have been prescribed hearing aids and are availing of the services of a Visiting Teacher.</p> <p><b><i>This category is not intended to include children with mild hearing loss.</i></b></p>
Visual Impairment	<p>Such children have a visual disability which is so serious as to impair significantly their capacity to see, thus interfering with their capacity to perceive visually presented materials such as pictures, diagrams and the written word. Some will have been diagnosed as suffering from conditions such as congenital blindness, cataracts, albinism and retinitis pigmentosa. Most require the use of low-vision aids and are availing of the services of a Visiting Teacher.</p> <p><b><i>This category is not intended to include those children whose visual difficulties are satisfactorily corrected by the wearing of spectacles and/or contact lenses.</i></b></p>
Emotional Disturbance and/or Behavioural Problems	<p>Such children <b>are</b> being treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist for conditions such as neurosis, childhood psychosis, hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and conduct disorders.</p> <p><b><i>This category is not intended to include children whose conduct or behavioural difficulties are being adequately dealt with in accordance with agreed procedures on discipline.</i></b></p>

Mild General Learning Disability	Such children have been assessed by a psychologist as having a mild general learning disability.
Moderate General Learning Disability	Such children have been assessed by a psychologist as having a moderate general learning disability.
Severe or Profound General Learning Disability	Such children have been assessed by a psychologist as having a severe or profound general learning disability. In addition, such children may have physical disabilities.
Borderline Mild General Learning Disability	<p>Such children have been assessed by a psychologist as having a borderline mild general learning disability. A psychologist may recommend such children for additional teaching support or special class placement on account of a special learning problem such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mild emotional disturbance associated with persistent failure in the ordinary class (disruptive behaviour on its own, however, would not constitute grounds for special class placement or additional teaching support);</li> <li>• Immature social behaviour;</li> <li>• Poor level of language development in relation to overall intellectual level.</li> </ul> <p>A recommendation to place such a child in a special class or to allocate additional teaching resources to support a school in catering for his/her needs should take into account the extent to which the child is making progress in his/her present learning environment and the other existing support available to the child in his/her school.</p>
Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders	A psychiatrist or psychologist will have assessed and classified such children as having autism or autistic spectrum disorder according to DSM–IV or ICD–10 criteria.
Specific Learning Disability	<p>Such children have been assessed by a psychologist as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Being of average intelligence or higher; and</li> <li>2. Having a degree of learning disability specific to basic skills in reading, writing or mathematics which places them at or below the 2<sup>nd</sup> percentile on suitable, standardised, norm-referenced tests.</li> </ol> <p><b><i>Children who do not meet these criteria and, who in the opinion of the psychologist, have a specific learning disability are more properly the responsibility of the remedial teacher and/or the class teacher.</i></b></p>

<p>Children with special educational needs arising from an assessed syndrome</p>	<p>The level of additional support to be provided for children who present with a particular syndrome e.g. Down Syndrome, William's Syndrome and Tourette's Syndrome will be determined following consideration of psychological or other specialist reports which details the nature and degree of the child's special educational needs.</p>
<p>Specific Speech and Language <u>Disorder</u></p>	<p>Such children should meet <b>each</b> of the following criteria:</p> <p>Assessment by a psychologist on a standardised test of intelligence which places non-verbal or performance ability within the average range or above;</p> <p>Assessment on a standardised test of language development by a speech therapist which places performance in one or more of the main areas of speech and language development at two standard deviations or more below the mean, or at a generally equivalent level;</p> <p>The child's difficulties are not attributable to hearing impairment; where the child is affected to some degree by hearing impairment, the hearing threshold for the speech-related frequencies should be 40Db;</p> <p>Emotional and behavioural disorders or a physical disability are not considered to be primary causes.</p> <p>Children with speech and language <u>delays</u> and <u>difficulties</u> are not to be considered under this category.</p>

