



Circular 0028/2024

**To: Boards of Management, Principals and Teaching Staff in Special Schools
and
The Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards**

**Appointment of Administrative Deputy Principals and
Staffing Arrangements in Special Schools to take effect from the
2024/2025 school year**

1. Introduction

The purpose of this circular is to inform all special school management and staff of the arrangements to apply for the application of the additional targeted supports for special schools announced in Budget 2024. The specific supports referenced are:

- the removal of the current 15 teacher threshold for the appointment of Administrative Deputy Principals in special schools, so that all special schools can benefit from this additional resource.
- an additional allocation of teaching posts targeted at special schools with post primary aged students.

2. Appointment of Administrative Deputy Principals 2024/2025

The Department recognises and will continue to support special schools in adapting their designation and admitting students with a wide range of special educational needs, in order to meet the needs of their communities.

From the 2024/2025 school year, the current 15 teacher threshold, as set out in Circular 32/2019, will no longer apply and all special schools¹ may appoint an Administrative Deputy Principal. This circular supersedes the provisions of Section 2 of Circular 32/2019.

These posts will be instrumental in assisting principals with leadership and management functions and to support learning and parental and community engagement (as referenced in Section 10, Chapter 4 of Department Circular 0044/2019). The Deputy Principal occupies a position of vital importance within the senior leadership team in the school.

¹ Consideration will be given to the staffing arrangements to apply to Hospital Schools and schools attached to CAMHS Units as part of the special school staffing review during 2024.

Teachers who are currently appointed on a permanent basis to the role of Deputy Principal (teaching) in special schools, will automatically become the Administrative Deputy Principal from 1 September, 2024 unless they confirm that they do not wish to take up this new role.

In such circumstances it is important to note the following:

- i) the current Deputy Principal (teaching) will be required to relinquish both the post and the allowance for the Deputy Principal role on a permanent basis
- ii) the school must notify the Department's Payroll Section immediately to prevent an overpayment occurring
- iii) the recruitment and appointment procedures set out in Circular 0044/2019 apply in terms of the relevant appointments to be made within the overall teaching allocation applicable to the school.

Where a staffing vacancy exists in a special school, the Administrative Deputy Principal posts should be filled by open competition in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 4 of Circular 0044/2019.

The provisions set out in this Section apply to the additional teacher allocation in 2024/2025 to support the appointment of Administrative Deputy Principals in those special schools now becoming eligible for Administrative Deputy Principal appointments.

3. Additional post-primary teaching posts in special schools 2024/2025

The additional allocations will take effect from 1 September, 2024.

This additionality is intended to facilitate special schools with post primary aged students² to deliver a greater range of national curriculum subjects at junior and senior cycle, providing access to programmes that are age and stage appropriate, and that build on individual strengths and promote progression and transition.

This development recognises

- a) the increasing number of post-primary aged students (aged 13 years and over) attending special schools
- b) as the introduction of the junior cycle and as senior cycle reform progresses, new and inclusively designed curricula are becoming available to students with special educational needs.

3.1 Curricular developments at post-primary level

Introduced between 2014 and 2021, the junior cycle offers accreditation at 3 levels and is designed to be accessible to all students. Levels 1 and 2 cater specifically for young people with general learning disabilities ranging from low mild, moderate to severe/profound, while level 3 caters for the majority of young people.

² currently, there are a small number of junior special schools to which this will not apply

Currently, some young people access learning across a number of levels, as schools work to deliver individually planned programmes that build on strengths and allow young people to experience and demonstrate learning at levels that are uniquely appropriate to them. For example, a young person who engages with the level 2 learning programme can also access some level 3 subjects, depending on their own strengths and interests.

The current redevelopment of senior cycle includes the development of senior cycle modules that will follow on from junior cycle level 1 and level 2 programmes. These modules will be delivered flexibly in a range of settings in order to promote age and stage appropriate learning that builds on individual strengths and promotes progression and transition.

Delivery of the junior cycle and the redeveloped senior cycle programmes will be enhanced by an allocation of additional teaching support for post-primary aged students in special schools.

It is also acknowledged that currently, special schools provide access to as broad a range of programmes as possible for their students including level 3 at junior cycle, QQI approved programmes, the leaving certificate and leaving certificate applied programmes.

3.2 Allocation of the additional posts as co-operation hours

The additional posts provided within Budget 2024 have been converted into a bank of post-primary teaching hours (co-operation hours) and will be allocated to schools on a pro-rata basis, in accordance with the number of students aged 13 and over in the school. The age profile of students has been sourced from the Primary Online Database (POD) as at 30 September, 2023 i.e. all students aged 13 on or before this date.

The Department recognises that there are a number of special schools who already benefit from and have access to post-primary co-operation hours and/or post-primary part-time specialist hours. In the interest of fairness and an equitable distribution of the overall allocation available, any pre-existing allocation will form part of the consideration to determine any future allocation to schools.

However, if the allocation of the additional hours referenced above determines that the number of post-primary aged students in these schools warrants an additional allocation, the existing hours available to the school will be increased accordingly.

There will be no reduction applied to existing allocations.

The allocation of the additional hours is based on the divisor applicable to post-primary teachers of 22 hours per week.

3.3 Notification of allocations

Notification to schools of the additional allocations will be recorded and included on a statement of allocations provided by the NCSE.

The confirmed allocation to all special schools will also be published on the NCSE website as soon as the allocation process is complete for the 2024/2025 school year.

3.4 Application of the additional allocation

Special schools should use any existing/additional post-primary hours available to support the learning needs of post-primary aged students in the school.

The school's Inspector will continue to provide advice and guidance in relation to the delivery of appropriate curriculum.

Support is also available from NCSE as set out in Section 3.5.1 below.

3.5. Role of the NCSE

3.5.1. Additional supports for schools

NCSE has developed a team supporting curriculum and education initiatives and service across the education sector including in special school settings. The team includes specialist leads with one specifically dedicated to special schools, the Special School Curriculum Lead, and a second, the Post Primary Curriculum Lead, operating at a cross sectoral level. The team will support curricular and educational developments in the sector with a view to providing special schools with additional and relevant Teacher Professional Learning opportunities. The curriculum and education specialist leads will be liaising with special schools comprehensively to identify their bespoke learning needs and to develop teacher capacity.

Schools seeking to engage with the NCSE in relation to additional support for special schools should initiate contact via the NCSE School Support Portal:

<https://ncse.ie/school-support-portal> (see option to request **Special School Curriculum Support**)

For additional relevant Teacher Professional Learning opportunities see:

<https://ncse.ie/tpl>

www.oide.ie and

further support on JCT for Levels 1 and 2

<https://www.jct.ie/l1lp/l1lp> and

<https://www.jct.ie/l2lp/l2lp>

3.5.2 General teaching staff arrangements for special schools.

The NCSE is responsible for determining the appropriate staffing levels in relation to the support of pupils with special educational needs in special schools, in accordance with the policies of the Department of Education. Special school staffing allocations will continue to be reviewed and updated each year by the NCSE.

Special schools are staffed on the basis of their actual student profiles and the disability category of each student. This is in recognition of the work of many special schools in adapting their designation and admitting students with a wide range of special educational needs, in order to meet the needs of their communities. The Department welcomes and supports this practice and special schools are encouraged to expand their admission policy, in order to provide special school

educational opportunities for students with the most complex needs. The Department and NCSE see the strongest growth for additional special school placements from students with autism and complex learning needs, moderate general learning disability and severe/profound general learning disability.

Special schools will continue to be staffed on the basis of each year's current school enrolments and disability category of each student. It is a matter for special schools to deploy their teaching staff in accordance with the needs of the student cohort and to ensure age appropriate placement.

3.5.3 Queries re calculation of the additional post-primary allocation

Where schools have a concern regarding the accuracy of the additional allocation, queries should be submitted to the NCSE at the following email:

SSPPallocations@ncse.ie

3.6 Role of the Education and Training Boards (ETBs)

The existing network of ETBs nationwide will support the delivery of the additional posts to special schools and will be recognised as the employer of the teachers recruited.

ETBs will also make available to special schools a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which will set out the contractual arrangements and obligations on both special schools and ETBs.

Each special school will be aligned with their local ETB.

This support model will allow for

- access to teacher supply in relevant curricular areas
- the potential for teachers and students to work across both special and mainstream schools/special classes facilitating the potential for building capacity and sharing of expertise across mainstream and special school settings
- the opportunity for special schools to cluster their hours in order to maximise delivery of specific programmes, courses or subjects. Facilitating cooperation, professional dialogue and the use of teaching resources between mainstream and special schools will be of significant benefit to the further development of inclusive practice.
- access to provision on a flexible basis and which is responsive to demographic change
- a reduction in any administrative overhead for individual schools
- an opportunity to focus on curricular areas like physical education which has been a challenge in the current staffing model.

In co-operation with the special school boards of management, ETBs will provide post primary curricular teaching support for post primary aged students in special schools. Once the NCSE has issued the statements of allocations referenced at 3.3 above, special school principals and boards of management should identify the

subject areas requiring additional teaching support and should liaise directly with the designated Human Resources Section in the ETB as outlined in Table 1, Appendix 1 below.

The designated ETB will form a panel for the advertised post/hours from which vacancies will be filled for the 2024/2025 academic session.

As the employer, all matters relating to the recruitment, assignment and payment of the teachers concerned will be managed by the designated ETB, subject to the placement arrangements agreed with each special school.

See Appendix 1 for further details on contact with ETBs.

3.7 Review

It is intended that the arrangements set out in this circular, applicable to the allocation of the additional post-primary teaching posts in special schools, will be reviewed after a period of 2 years i.e. at the end of the 2025/2026 school-year.

3.8 Circulation and Queries

Please ensure that the contents of this Circular are brought to the attention of all members of the board of management and all relevant staff in the school.

Queries relating to Section 2 of this Circular in terms of the provisions of Circular 0044/2019 and which refer to appointment procedures and seniority, should be directed to the Teacher/SNA Terms & Conditions Section of the Department at PORqueries@education.gov.ie

Queries in relation to Section 3 regarding the calculation of the additional post-primary allocation should be submitted to the NCSE at the email address included at 3.5.3 above (SSPPallocations@ncse.ie).

Any further queries can be addressed to special_education@education.gov.ie

Martin McLoughlin
Principal Officer
Special Education Section

22 April 2024

Appendix 1

Table 1. Contact Details for Designated Education and Training Boards

Designated ETB as per geographic county	Contact Details
Cavan and Monaghan ETB	Tel: 047 30888 Email: Paulinegrogan@cmetb.ie https://www.cmetb.ie/
Cork ETB	Tel: 021 4907100 Email: carolyn.casey@corketb.ie www.corketb.ie
City of Dublin ETB	Tel: 01 668 0614 Email: Bill.Austin@cdetb.ie www.cityofdublinetb.ie
Donegal ETB	Tel: 074 9161600 Email: eileendoherty@donegaletb.ie www.donegaletb.ie
Dublin and Dun Laoghaire	Tel: 01 4529600 Email: hrdept@ddletb.ie www.ddletb.ie
Galway and Roscommon ETB	Tel: 091 874500 Email: recruitment@gretb.ie https://gretb.ie
Kerry ETB	Tel: 066 7121488 Email: betty.corkey@kerryetb.ie www.kerryetb.ie
Kildare and Wicklow ETB	Tel: 045 988 000 Email: Jaynehogarty@kwebt.ie www.kildarewicklow.etb.ie
Kilkenny and Carlow ETB	Tel: 059 9138560 Christine McGrath Email: Cmcgrath@kcetb.ie Catherine Barron Email: Cbarron@kcetb.ie www.kilkennycarlow.etb.ie
Laois and Offaly ETB	Tel: 057 8621352 Email: hr@loetb.ie www.loetb.ie
Limerick and Clare ETB	HR Section Email: HR@LCETB.ie Tel: 061 442 100 www.lcetb.ie
Longford and Westmeath	Martina Hughes

	<p>Email: mhugges@lwetb.ie Tel: 0858722294 www.lwetb.ie</p>
Louth and Meath ETB	<p>Imelda Brehony Head of Human Resources LMETB Ph. (046)9010048 Mobile.0860672383 Email: ibrehony@lmetb.ie Head of recruitment: Mairead Talbot Email: MTalbot@lmetb.ie Tel: 0860758823 www.lmetb.ie</p>
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB	<p>Tel: 094 902 4188 Email: kieranjoyce@msletb.ie www.msletb.ie</p>
Tipperary	<p>Tel: 067 31250 Email: hr@tipperaryetb.ie www.tipperary.etb.ie</p>
Waterford and Wexford	<p>Tel: 053 91 23799 Email: hr@wwetb.ie www.wwetb.ie</p>