

Primary & Secondary School Supports and Provisions



Many children with disabilities or special needs are in ordinary classes in mainstream schools. They may get help from learning support and resource teachers and from special needs assistants (SNAs). These supports for children with special educational needs are available in primary schools and post-primary schools.

Education for Persons with Special Education Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004

2.1 Education Plans

The EPSEN Act 2004 provides for the provision of education plans for students with special educational needs (SEN). Under the Act, children with SEN will be educated "in an inclusive environment with children who do not have SEN", unless this should be inconsistent either with the best interest of the child, or with the effective provision for the other children.

2.2 Identification & Assessment

When a student is identified to a principal as not benefiting from the educational programme being provided in their school, the principal "shall take such measures as are practicable to meet the educational needs of the student concerned." Having taken such measures, if the student continues not to benefit, because of their SEN, the principal will arrange for the student to be assessed. The principal must consult the parents prior to making this arrangement.

For a full copy of the EPSEN Act visit

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2004/A3004.pdf>

NCSE – National Council for Special Education

The role of the NCSE is to allocate resources to schools for the next academic year taking into account new pupils enrolling with special educational needs and also pupils leaving who have been in receipt of resources. In respect of pupils in receipt of SNA support it should be noted that this support may reduce over time as their independent living skills improve.

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SENOS – Special Education Needs Organiser

SENO is a Special Education Needs Organiser who works for the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and is an important link between the school, the Council and parents. For example, the SENO deals with applications for additional support for pupils with SEN. **It is very important that this application includes all your child's needs e.g. catheterisation, accessibility adaptations and intellectual needs etc. This will allow provisions to be put in place prior to your child attending mainstream school.**

SNA'S – Special Needs Assistant

Special needs teaching assistants support students with special educational needs (SEN) in the classroom as directed by an SEN teacher in order to help pupils succeed with their learning. The work of a special needs teaching assistant can vary greatly depending on where they are working and the individual needs of the pupils. This could include:

- assisting with pupils' physical needs, including hygiene and feeding, as well as assisting with therapy sessions;
- helping with pupils' school work under the supervision of an SEN teacher;
- helping pupils increase their confidence, self-esteem and independence; helping pupils who have difficulty communicating with others, including those whose first language is not English.

To view guidelines from the NCSE for the implantation of a Special Needs Assistant and to view further information on the National Council for Special Education visit www.ncse.ie

IEP – Individualised Education Plan

IEP stands for *Individualised Education Plan* (alternatively called an "Individualised Education Plan," "Individual Education Programme," or some combination thereof). This is a legally binding document that spells out exactly what special education services your child will receive and why. It will include your child's classification, placement, services such as a one-on-one aide and therapies, academic and behavioural goals, a behaviour plan if needed, percentage of time in regular education, and progress reports from teachers and therapists. *For further information visit http://www.ncse.ie/publications/final_report.pdf*

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Learning Support & Resource Teachers

Learning support and resource teachers are appointed to provide support under the general allocation arrangements. Resource teachers provide individual support to pupils with low incidence disabilities. An effective learning-support service can play a central role in raising standards in literacy and numeracy in children with learning difficulties and in providing the opportunity for every pupil to reach a competent level in these areas.

Learning difficulties includes pupils with mild speech and language difficulties, mild social or emotional difficulties and mild co-ordination or attention control difficulties associated with identified conditions such as dyspraxia, attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and Hydrocephalus. Pupils with these conditions who have been assessed as being in the low incidence category get individual support.

Each school decides how the resources for support are used and how they are divided among the students who need such support. The additional teaching may be provided in the classroom or in small separate groups. Some pupils may need additional one-to-one teaching for a specified period. *For further information*

<http://www.citizensinformation.ie/categories/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools>

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology is technology used by individuals with disabilities in order to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible. Assistive technology can include mobility devices such as walkers and wheelchairs, as well as hardware, software, and peripherals that assist people with disabilities in accessing computers or other information technologies. For example, children with limited hand function may use a keyboard with large keys or a special mouse to operate a computer, people who are blind may use software that reads text on the screen in a computer-generated voice, children with low vision may use software that enlarges screen content, people who are deaf may use a TTY (text telephone), or people with speech impairments may use a device that speaks out loud as they enter text via a keyboard.

A tremendous variety of assistive technology is available today, providing the opportunity for nearly all people to access information technology (IT). However, an individual's having proper assistive technology is no guarantee of having access. IT accessibility is dependent on accessible design. IT products must be designed and created in ways that allow all users to access them, including those who use assistive technologies.

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Your Occupational Therapist will be able to assess your child in relation to their assistive technology requirements.

NEPS - National Educational Psychological Service

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) is a service of the Department of Education and Science. NEPS psychologists work with both primary and post-primary schools and they are concerned with learning, behaviour, social and emotional development. Each psychologist is assigned to a group of schools.

NEPS psychologists specialise in working with the school community. They work in partnership with teachers, parents and children in identifying educational needs. They offer a range of services aimed at meeting these needs, for example, supporting individual students (through consultation and assessment), special projects and research.

"NEPS mission is to support the personal, social and educational development of all children through the application of psychological theory and practice in education, having particular regard for children with special educational needs."

Children are normally referred to NEPS through the school principal. Parents should discuss any concerns regarding learning difficulties with school personnel in the first instance. Questions about the NEPS service and assessments should be made directly to school personnel.

If your child is meeting a psychologist, should you tell him or her first?

Take your child's age into account. It may be better to tell older children. Some children feel more comfortable knowing what to expect, while others become nervous by being told in advance.

Psychologists sometimes like to observe children in class (they do this discreetly, so that neither the particular child nor his / her friends know who is being observed). It is often better if the child is not expecting this. *For further information visit <http://www.education.ie>*

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Adaptations & Accessibility

The school must provide accessible facilities which enable each child to have access to an environment which is respectful, safe and accessible. Funding for adaptation's can be sourced from the Furniture and Equipment section of the Department of Education and Science, Portlaoise Road, Tullamore, Offaly (057) 932 4300.

Transport

Special transport arrangements, including escorts and safety harnesses are available for children with disabilities attending school.

Children who qualify for special transport are those who are enrolled in special schools or special classes in a primary school.

The School Transport service may not be available in all areas. Where the special transport cannot be provided, you may be eligible for a transport grant to help with the cost of making private transport arrangements.

The transport grant is paid:

- If the child has to be brought to a specific pick-up point to meet a special transport service
- If the child requires a supervised transport service and it is not possible to provide this service
- If there is no special transport service available for a child with special needs travelling home from a residential school at the weekend.

Harness and escort provision

Resources are also available for the provision of a harness for children travelling on special transport services. Applications may be made by the parent/guardian or school management.

An escort may be provided for children in special schools who have physical disabilities and to children with hearing/visual impairment. Applications may be made by the school management. *For further information on transport provisions visit*

<http://www.citizensinformation.ie/categories/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/school-transport-for-children-with-special-needs>

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Home Tuition

Home tuition or schooling is for children who cannot go to school because of a serious medical problem or a lack of a suitable place. Children with autistic spectrum disorders or with severe learning disabilities may also be given home tuition during July. For further information visit <http://www.education.ie>

July Education Programme

The July Education Programme is a funding arrangement for schools to provide further special needs education in the month of July. Special schools and mainstream primary schools with special classes catering for children with autism may choose to extend their education services through the month of July. There is also a July Programme for pupils with a severe/profound general learning disability. The funding also covers transport and escort services for the children.

If schools are not participating in the July Education Programme, home tuition is offered as an alternative for the pupils who would normally attend such schools. You can find information about the July programme on the Department of Education and Science website <http://www.education.ie>

Provisions for State Exams

Students in secondary schools in Ireland with special needs may have special arrangements made for them while sitting State examinations. (That is, Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate examinations). Candidates with disabilities (for example, visual impairments, motor and mobility impairments, etc.) can apply through their school for reasonable accommodation during examinations.

What sort of 'reasonable accommodation' is available?

Examples of reasonable accommodation include the following:

- the provision of enlarged and/or Braille versions of questions for visually impaired students
- you may use voice-activated computers, tape recorders or scribes (other people to do the writing)
- You may do your examination in a hospital or in any other stand-alone centre
- You may also get extra time to complete the examination. In the Leaving Cert, you may get 20 minutes extra in some subjects - Irish, English, History and Geography.

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- If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you may be exempted from the aural part of the examination

It's important to be aware that students with special needs may apply to have part of a State examination waived and to be marked out of 100% on the balance of the paper. The national marking schemes for the subjects concerned are organised in such a way to ensure that students with special needs have the same opportunity to score full marks regardless of the exempted parts of the paper.

Accommodation that can be approved by your school

Your school has the authority to make special provisions for students with special needs during State exams on the basis of what is best for you. Some of the special provisions your school can make include:

- Taking medicine, food or drinks into the examination centre where this is required for medical reasons.
- Use of a special desk or chair that is used in your classroom
- Use of low-vision aids that you normally use in the classroom
- Ensuring deaf and hard-of-hearing students are seated close to the examination superintendent
- Granting breaks or rest periods in each examination session warranted by your physical or medical condition. (Under this special provision, the time taken for rest or as a break can be compensated for at the end of each examination period to a maximum of 20 minutes).
- Taking your examinations in hospital if you have had an accident immediately prior to or during the examinations. You **must contact the school immediately** if this happens.

For further information visit <http://www.examinations.ie>

Special Classes and Special Schools

Where children's needs cannot be met by the allocation of extra resources within the mainstream school, then they may be placed in special classes or special schools. These have a maximum pupil-teacher ratio of 8:1 (in many cases the ratio is lower). Special needs assistant support is provided where required. Children may transfer from special schools to special classes attached to mainstream primary schools or to mainstream classes. Children need a review assessment before transferring. The reviews are necessary so that the resource teaching and/or special needs assistants can be provided. For further information visit <http://www.citizensinformation.ie/categories/education/the-irish-education-system/special-education>