



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools

Supporting Young People with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Classes



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These guidelines have been prepared by the Inspectorate, NEPS and NCSE to guide mainstream schools in supporting young people with special educational needs.



Key Messages

- Special education teaching resources are allocated for the sole purpose of providing additional teaching support to young people with special educational needs.
- Special education teaching support is underpinned by eight key principles which support the inclusion and wellbeing of all young people with special educational needs.
- Roles and responsibilities in relation to special education provision are clearly defined and communicated in schools.
- The Continuum of Support is the framework which guides the provision of support for young people with special educational needs.
- The allocation of special education teaching supports is recorded and monitored at each level of the Continuum of Support.
- The problem-solving process is the mechanism by which special educational needs are identified, supported and reviewed.
- The provision of special education teaching support is a collaborative and holistic process, involving parents/guardians, young people, teachers and other professionals, where appropriate.
- The views and wishes of young people are central to planning and decision-making in relation to special education provision.
- The deployment of special education teaching supports is recorded and monitored by the school, and overseen by the board and school management.

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines to schools on:

- The principles underpinning the special education teaching model.
- The organisation and the process for the deployment of special education teaching resources.
- The roles and responsibilities of school management and staff.
- The problem-solving process for identification of need, planning, intervention and review of response to intervention.

The Department of Education aims to facilitate every individual through learning to achieve their full potential and to ensure that the education system upholds the rights of every individual to receive an education appropriate to their needs.

In line with inclusive principles, schools are advised to include young people meaningfully in mainstream mixed-ability class groupings. This helps ensure high expectations, and enables young people with special educational needs to learn alongside their peers. Mixed-ability teaching has beneficial effects for all young people, and helps promote social and personal development.

These guidelines detail how mainstream post-primary schools utilise their special education teaching resources to support the meaningful inclusion of all young people in their learning and in the life of the school community. These guidelines are provided in the context of Circular 003/2024, and update the associated *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools* provided to support the introduction of the revised allocation process for special education teaching in mainstream post-primary schools in 2017.

The special education teaching allocation provided to schools is an additional resource, which is ring-fenced for the sole purpose of providing additional support to young people whom the school has identified, through the problem-solving process, as having special educational needs, which are recorded in the School Provision Plan for Young People with Special Educational Needs (Appendix 1).



The School Provision Plan for Young People with Special Educational Needs is the mechanism by which schools record the special educational needs of young people receiving additional teaching support (Appendix 1). The Schedule of Deployment of Special Education Teachers to Support Young People with special educational needs provides a record of the school's use of their special education teaching allocation (Appendix 2).

The importance of providing well-timed, appropriate and targeted support to young people with special educational needs is crucial to their development and their long-term life prospects. Therefore, it is critical that all schools deploy the additional special education teaching resources effectively to meet the needs of those identified in the School Provision Plan for Young People with Special Educational Needs (Appendix 1), underpinned by the Continuum of Support framework. The inappropriate deployment of special education teaching hours allocated to a school for purposes other than intended deprives young people with special educational needs of direct access to these resources. This can impact negatively on the learning outcomes of the most vulnerable young people in our education system.

Effective provision for young people with special educational needs is situated within an inclusive whole-school framework. This is underpinned by effective teaching and learning for all, and meaningful collaboration and engagement between teachers, parents/guardians, young people, and other professionals, where appropriate.



The inappropriate deployment of special education teaching hours allocated to a school for purposes other than intended deprives young people with special educational needs of direct access to these resources.

Terminology

An inclusive education system is one that recognises and celebrates diversity, and this includes neurodiversity. Neurodiversity means that not all young people experience the world in the same way. It emphasises the importance of respecting, valuing and celebrating such differences.

These guidelines are intended to support schools in responding to diversity. This includes respecting the views and preferences of young people and families in relation to terminology and language used when identifying strengths, needs and supports. While these guidelines recognise the importance of a neuroaffirmative approach to the use of language and provision of supports, it is important to note that the language used in these guidelines reflects terminology that is established and currently used in education. This language is consistent with current legislation including the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004) and with recent Department of Education guidelines, including the *Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools*. It is acknowledged that language changes and these guidelines will be updated accordingly.

Section 1

Principles Underpinning the Special Education Teaching Model

These guidelines are underpinned by eight principles which guide the implementation of the special education teaching model in schools.

These principles provide the basis for schools to guide the implementation and ongoing development of their systems, structures, practices and policies to support the inclusion of all young people, including those with special educational needs.

The principles were drawn from a comprehensive range of sources, including current Department of Education frameworks, guidelines and guidance related to educational provision, curriculum and wellbeing for post-primary schools.



Figure 1 Principles Underpinning the Special Education Teaching Model



Inclusive Education System

An education system which embraces diversity is responsive to, and values, difference. It is one that identifies and removes barriers to access, participation and achievement.



Inclusive School Culture

Inclusion is the responsibility of the whole-school community with a shared understanding of the need for all to experience belonging and connectedness, and a sense of being valued members of that community. An inclusive school culture ensures that, to the greatest extent possible, learners can be present, participate, achieve and be supported in mainstream education settings.



Collaboration

A collaborative approach involves the whole-school community, including young people, teachers and parents/guardians working together to proactively support young people with special educational needs.



Wellbeing

The wellbeing of all young people is central to education provision. Belonging and connectedness to the school community is fostered and reflected in whole-school policy, planning and practice.



Engagement and Participation

The views of young people are considered in all matters that affect them. School policies and practices support young people's purposeful participation in their learning, and in the life of the school community.



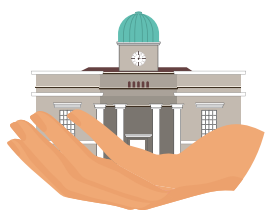
Young Person Centred and Needs Based

Schools use the Continuum of Support framework, and the problem-solving process, to identify and respond to young people's special educational needs, and to monitor their response to intervention. Special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to more significant, and from transient to enduring. It is recognised that needs may change over time.



Evidence-Informed Practice and Outcomes

Interventions and supports provided to individual young people are evidence informed and based on identified learning* strengths and needs gathered from a range of sources. Outcomes are identified and monitored based on the young person's response to targeted interventions.



Governance and Accountability

The special education teaching allocation is a ring-fenced resource for the sole purpose of providing additional and targeted supports to young people with special educational needs. **Schools are accountable in complying with the relevant legislation and departmental circular(s) in the correct deployment of special education teaching resources.**

*The term learning needs is used in a holistic manner throughout the guidelines incorporating young peoples' skills development across areas including literacy, numeracy, language and communication, sensory, physical, social and emotional development.

An inclusive education system identifies and removes barriers to access, participation and achievement for all young people in educational settings.



Principles Underpinning the Special Education Teaching Model

An Inclusive Education System

- The Department of Education aims to facilitate every individual to achieve their full potential and to ensure that the education system upholds the rights of every individual to receive an education.
- An inclusive education system respects diversity is responsive to, and values, difference.
- An inclusive education system identifies and removes barriers to access, participation and achievement for all young people in educational settings, and in particular for those with special educational needs, and those who may be at risk of marginalisation or exclusion.

An inclusive school culture enables all young people, including those with special educational needs, to experience a sense of being valued members of the school community, and to experience belonging, connectedness and success in their learning.



Inclusive School Culture

- Inclusion is the responsibility of the whole-school community and involves a shared understanding and commitment to uphold principles of respect for diversity. This is demonstrated throughout the school in all aspects of school life.
- All schools have a responsibility to be inclusive in their policies and practices. An inclusive school culture enables all young people, including those with special educational needs, to experience a sense of being valued members of the school community, and to experience belonging, connectedness and success in their learning.
- A key goal of the education system is that to the greatest extent possible, young people with special educational needs access and participate in their learning in mainstream educational settings.

Collaboration involves the whole school community, including young people, teachers and parents/guardians, working to effectively and proactively support young people's learning and wellbeing.



The right of the young person to express their views in all matters affecting them, is central to the collaborative process. Young people should be provided with the age-appropriate opportunities and assistance to realise this right.

Collaboration

- Collaboration involves the whole school community, including young people, teachers and parents/guardians, working to effectively and proactively support young people's learning and wellbeing.
- The right of the young person to express their views in all matters affecting them is central to the collaborative process. Young people should be provided with the age-appropriate opportunities and assistance to realise this right.
- The principal leads the collaborative process in conjunction with the school's core special education teaching team.
- The collaborative process involves planning, reflection, and review of existing policies and practices, including preventative and proactive approaches to support the purposeful inclusion of young people with special educational needs in their learning and in the life of the school community.
- Collaboration involves ongoing review of school policies and practices on inclusion and provision for children with special educational needs, with specific reference to:
 - identification of young people's learning strengths and needs
 - identification of priority learning needs that form the basis of targets
 - monitoring and review of the type and level of supports provided
 - identification and monitoring of response to intervention and outcomes for young people with special educational needs
- Collaboration within the school community is of vital importance to ensure consistency of approaches and a shared understanding of a young person's special educational needs. This may involve, as appropriate, collaboration with external agencies, particularly for those with the greatest level of need.
- **Collaboration with parents/guardians is a critical factor in enhancing outcomes for young people with special educational needs.** This is recognised by schools, and is evident in the many good practices and initiatives used to promote parent/guardian involvement. **Parental engagement is enhanced when parent/guardian are consulted in relation to their child's strengths and needs, on the supports and strategies developed to support their child, and when they are involved in regular reviews of progress.**

The wellbeing and best interests of young people are a central focus of educational provision.



Wellbeing

- Young people's wellbeing is developed and enhanced through their learning experiences, which include challenges and successes, achieved through the provision of planned learning activities.
- The wellbeing and best interests of young people are a central focus of educational provision.
- The voice and participation of young people are respected and valued to ensure their right to express their views and preferences in all matters affecting them.
- Belonging and connectedness to the school community is fostered and reflected in effective:
 - school culture and environment
 - curriculum (teaching and learning)
 - policy and planning
 - relationships and partnerships
- An inclusive whole-school culture with positive and affirming leadership is central to the wellbeing of the whole school community, including staff.
- Wellbeing is promoted through the development of positive relationships between young people and adults in the school community. The experience of positive and supportive relationships includes at least one key adult in the school context, who has knowledge and understanding of the young person's strengths, needs and interests..

Meaningful participation, and purposeful engagement in their education, is essential for young people to experience success in learning.



Engagement and Participation

- Meaningful participation, and purposeful engagement in their education, is essential for young people to experience success in learning.
- The views of young people are central to all matters that affect them. School policies and practices reflect the views of all young people, including those with special educational needs.
- Young people are empowered and motivated when they are involved in decision making about their education.
- Young people are involved in identifying their own strengths and needs, in setting learning targets, and in monitoring their progress and response to intervention.
- Young people with special educational needs experience a sense of belonging, meaningful engagement and active participation in all aspects of school life.

Young people with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest level of support.



Young Person Centred and Needs Based

- Special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to more significant, and from transient to enduring.
- Young people require different levels of support depending on their identified educational needs. These may include learning, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, and language and communication development.
- Young people with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest level of support.
- The Continuum of Support framework and problem-solving process are used by schools to identify and respond to young people's needs and to monitor their response to intervention.
- Using the Continuum of Support framework helps to ensure that interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support.

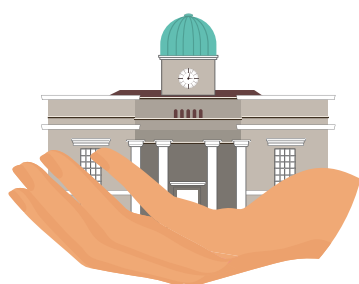
Supports provided to young people are evidence informed and targeted, based on their identified strengths and needs.



Evidence-Informed Practice and Outcomes

- Supports provided to young people are evidence informed and targeted, based on their identified strengths and needs.
- Information gathered from a variety of sources, including formal and informal school-based assessment, is used to identify strengths and needs, to prioritise need(s), to inform learning targets and to review response to intervention.
- Monitoring young people's response to intervention is an evidence-informed approach to review progress and identify emerging needs.
- Interventions chosen for the development of skills across all areas of development are informed by the young person's strengths, interests, age and stage of development.
- Interventions are tailored to the young person's context in the school setting, with opportunities for generalisation of skills across other settings, for example, in the wider school community and at home.
- Teachers engage in Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) to build capacity and to develop their own competencies in the identification, implementation and monitoring of evidence-informed approaches.

The special education teaching allocation is an additional resource provided to schools, and is ring-fenced for the sole purpose of providing additional supports to young people with special educational needs.



Governance and Accountability

- The special education teaching allocation is an additional resource provided to schools, and is ring-fenced for the sole purpose of providing additional supports to young people with special educational needs.
- As with all other State-funded resources provided to a school, the board of management, together with the school principal, have the responsibility, and are accountable, for ensuring that these resources are utilised for their intended purpose of providing additional support to young people with special educational needs, as recorded in the School Provision Plan for Young People with Special Educational Needs (Appendix 1).
- It is the legal obligation of the Board to manage the school for the benefit of the young people and their parents/guardians and to provide an appropriate education for each young person at the school for which that board has responsibility.
- Providing well-timed and appropriate support to young people with identified needs is crucial to their educational development and their long-term life prospects.
- Schools are accountable in complying with the relevant legislation¹ and Department circular(s) in the correct deployment of special education teaching resources.
- It is very important that boards of management are fully aware of the significance of good communications with parents/guardians and members of the school community.

1 Education Act 1998.

Section 2

The Organisation of Special Education Provision: Planning the Deployment of Special Education Teaching Supports

The key premise of the special education teaching allocation is that resources are deployed to address young people's special education needs. **Importantly, those with the greatest level of need should have access to the greatest level of support.** Young people may have a range of identified needs in areas such as literacy, numeracy, language and communication, social interaction, emotional regulation, sensory and physical development.

There are high levels of enrolments of young people in some schools who require support in learning English as an Additional Language (EAL). There are separate resource allocation processes, external to the special education teaching model, which schools can use to apply for additional teaching supports for these young people. Schools use the Continuum of Support framework to identify needs and to plan, implement and review intervention for all young people. This is consistent with a unified and co-ordinated approach to planning.

Further details on this process are outlined in the relevant Staffing Circulars gov.ie

In addition, the Department of Education has temporary supports in place which are made available to schools to support the transition of Ukrainian and International Protection Children into our school system.



Importantly, those with the greatest level of need should have access to the greatest level of support.

Curriculum

All young people should have access to a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum. In post-primary schools, a wide range of subjects and programmes at Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle should be offered. It is essential that young people with special educational needs have access to a curriculum which is most appropriate to their needs. This includes access to programmes such as Level 1 Learning Programme (L1LP) and Level 2 Learning Programme (L2LP) at Junior and Senior Cycle, and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Programme at Senior Cycle.

Curriculum planning for young people with special educational needs may also be supported and informed by guidelines, for example, the *Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities*.

Timetabling

The overall school timetable should be designed carefully to make appropriate provision for young people with special educational needs. The following is advised:

- **Individual student timetables should reflect the principle of young person-centred and needs based, whereby those with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest level of support.**
- Key information provided by the core special education teaching team informs the timetabling process for young people with special educational needs.
- The core special education teaching team should be allocated timetables that are primarily dedicated to the provision of additional teaching supports for young people with special educational needs.
- A dedicated core special education teaching team is necessary to facilitate high quality special education provision, as well as a greater level of stability and continuity of support for young people with special educational needs.
- The number of subject teachers providing additional teaching supports across the school, should be kept to a minimum, where they are not members of the core special education teaching team.
- Provision should be made for the special education teachers to support young people in their subject lessons through a model of team teaching² and joint teacher planning.

2 Team teaching is the term used to incorporate a variety of models of co-teaching.

- Where necessary, provision should be made for the withdrawal of young people for focused individual and/or targeted small-group interventions.
- Targeted small-group interventions, using evidence-informed approaches, are provided for young people with similar needs.
- The impact of withdrawal on young people's access to the curriculum with their year groups should be taken into consideration and regularly reviewed.
- Timetables should be flexible to cater for the specific needs of young people.
- Timetabling facilitates support for all young people with identified special educational needs.
- Continuity of support to address the special educational needs of young people in the Senior Cycle should be provided.

Figure 2 on page 18 sets out actions to support schools in the deployment of special education teaching supports.



Under no circumstances should an exemption from the study of Irish be used as a prerequisite to accessing additional special education teaching support.



Key actions in the provision of special education teaching support		
1	Identify young people with special educational needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing information on young people's needs, using school-based information, and any information from parents/guardians, and external professionals, where appropriate. Engage in additional screening and information gathering as required, using informal and formal assessment approaches. These may include teacher observations, information on social and emotional development, standardised tests, and/or criterion-referenced tests/checklists. Identify all young people with special educational needs in the school.
2	Initiate Problem-Solving Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate the collaborative problem-solving process to clarify concerns in consultation with the young person, relevant teachers, and parents/guardians.
3	Record level of Continuum of Support at which special education teaching support allocated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once needs are identified, and the level of support required is established, record at which level of the Continuum of Support special education teaching supports are allocated. Special education teaching support is allocated at levels of School Support-Some and School Support Plus-Few. Special education teaching supports are allocated based on identified needs. Open a Student Support File for all young people receiving special education teaching support. Special education teaching hours are recorded on the School Provision Plan for Young People with Special Educational Needs (Appendix 1).
4	Organise and deploy special education teaching resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-reference the needs of young people at School Support-Some and School Support Plus-Few levels, and consider common needs that can be met by grouping, to ensure effective and efficient teaching and learning approaches. Deploy special education teachers to teach groups/individuals and agree duration, frequency and location of the additional support provision. Ensure that the young people with the greatest level of need receive the greatest level of support, ideally from special education teachers with the most relevant expertise.

Key actions in the provision of special education teaching support		
5	Develop Student Support Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop/update and agree a Student Support Plan for young people with special educational needs at the levels of School Support-Some and School Support Plus-Few. Identify priority learning needs. Following identification of priority learning needs, set SMART targets for each young person aligned with their special educational needs, in the Student Support Plan.
6	Identify appropriate evidence-informed intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the level and type of intervention required to meet targets for young people with special educational needs. Consider teaching and learning approaches best suited to promoting meaningful participation and engagement, such as mixed-ability grouping, team teaching, and/or small group/individual teaching support. Update the Student Support Plan to reflect monitoring and recording of response to intervention.
7	Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following an agreed period of time, a collaborative review of the young person's response to intervention takes place. Based on the outcome of this review, a decision is made whether to continue with, or amend targets. Based on the young person's response to intervention, a collaborative decision is made whether to continue to allocate support at the identified level of the Continuum of Support.

Figure 2 Guide to the allocation of special educational teaching resources



The School Provision Plan for Young People Identified with Special Educational Needs and Schedule of Deployment of Special Education Teachers (Appendices 1 and 2) should be used by schools to record the planning and deployment of support at each level of the Continuum of Support.

Section 3

Special Education Provision: Roles and Responsibilities

The following section outlines roles and responsibilities of school staff as part of a whole-school collaborative approach to ensure that high standards are in place, and that all young people with special educational needs are fully supported within an inclusive school environment.

The process of organisation of special education teaching supports is led by the school principal, in collaboration with the special education teaching team, and other relevant staff. It is important that roles and responsibilities are clearly established and agreed.

This section of the Guidelines provides information on roles and responsibilities of the:

- Board of Management
- School Principal
- Subject Teacher
- Special Education Teaching Team
- Special Education Teacher



Role of the Board of Management

The overall responsibility for the provision of education to all young people, including young people with special educational needs, lies with the board of management. Boards of Management and principals are charged with specific duties in legislation. Members of boards of management are advised to make themselves aware of the responsibilities of the board to make arrangements for inclusive education under the relevant education legislation³.

In the case of special education teaching resources, the board of management recognises that this is an additional resource which is ring-fenced for the sole purpose of supporting young people with special educational needs. Where special education teaching resources are used to support young people with special educational needs in subject classes, including through team teaching, advance preparation takes place to facilitate meaningful participation. **The board must ensure that special education teaching resources are used for their intended purpose only to support young people with special educational needs in their school.**

School Policies

The board of management has the responsibility for overseeing the development, implementation and review of school policies and services in relation to the inclusion of young people with special educational needs. In this regard the board should:

- Ensure that all young people have access to a high quality education as well as high standards of teaching, learning and assessment in the school.
- Make arrangements for the preparation of a School Improvement Plan that contains a summary of the areas for improvement identified as part of the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process, including the objectives and the measures that will ensure equity of access to, and participation in, all aspects of the activities of the school, by young people with special educational needs, to the greatest extent practicable.
- Arrange for the publication of the school policy on the education of young people with special educational needs. This document should include the school's policy on the admission and participation of young people with special educational needs, the arrangements for identifying these young people, and for their educational provision in the school.
- Arrange for periodic reviews of the range of curriculum provision within the school to ensure that suitable programmes are on offer to all young people, including those with special educational needs.
- Ensure that reasonable accommodations are made within the school for young people with special educational needs, as appropriate.
- Contribute to the development of awareness and knowledge among teachers, non-teaching staff members and young people, of the needs of young people with special educational needs, and of their particular responsibilities for the inclusion of these young people in the school community.

³ Education Act 1998.

Governance and Accountability

The board of management has a statutory governance duty to ensure that appropriate systems and procedures are in place to ensure school resources, including grants, staffing and other resources, are managed appropriately and correctly, and in a manner that provides for appropriate accountability to the relevant parties.

In the case of special education teaching resources, the board of management should ensure that the allocation provided, which is an **additional** teaching resource, is ring-fenced and used for the sole purpose of supporting young people with special educational needs. Where special education teaching resources are used to support young people with special educational needs in subject classes, including through team teaching, advance preparation takes place to facilitate meaningful participation.

As with all other state-funded resources provided to a school, the board of management and school principal, have the responsibility for ensuring that these resources are utilised for their intended purpose only. This is stipulated within Section 15 of the Education Act 1998, and the Department Circular 0064/2024⁴.



The Student Support File, which includes the Student Support Plan, is the process through which the school accounts for its decisions on the use and allocation of its special education teaching supports. The deployment of special education teaching supports is recorded in the Schedule of Deployment of Special Education Teachers (Appendix 2) to assist in tracking the use of special education teaching hours across the Continuum of Support.

The board of management must ensure that it receives annual confirmation from the principal on the use of the special education teaching resources (see Appendix 2) for the mandatory data required to be noted and maintained by the board to provide this assurance.

School Self-Evaluation Process

The board oversees the school's engagement in school self-evaluation (SSE). Schools are familiar with the six-stage evaluation process – *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016–2020* (DES, 2016)⁵, and with *Looking at Our School (LAOS) – A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools* (DES, 2022)⁶. When applied to a school's provision for young people with special educational needs, the SSE process, and the domains and statements of practice detailed in LAOS, enable teachers and school leaders to:

- Review their practices.
- Identify what they are doing well.
- Recognise aspects of the school's work that could be further developed to improve inclusive learning experiences and outcomes for young people.

⁴ Education Act, 1998, Section 15 (irishstatutebook.ie).

⁵ gov.ie – School Self-Evaluation Guidelines (www.gov.ie).

⁶ gov.ie – Looking at our School 2022 (www.gov.ie).

Role of the School Principal

The principal and other school leaders have the responsibility for establishing, promoting and implementing inclusive whole-school policies and procedures, which are supportive of the learning of all young people, including those with special educational needs.

The school principal has a primary role in modelling, promoting and building whole-school staff capacity to maintain effective inclusive practice throughout the school. The principal ensures that the board of management is kept fully informed on the deployment of special education teaching resources.

The principal oversees how the resources, including human resources, and special education teaching hours, which are provided to the school to support young people with special educational needs, are used **to ensure that the young people with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest levels of support**. The principal may delegate specific functions to other members of the staff.

The principal:

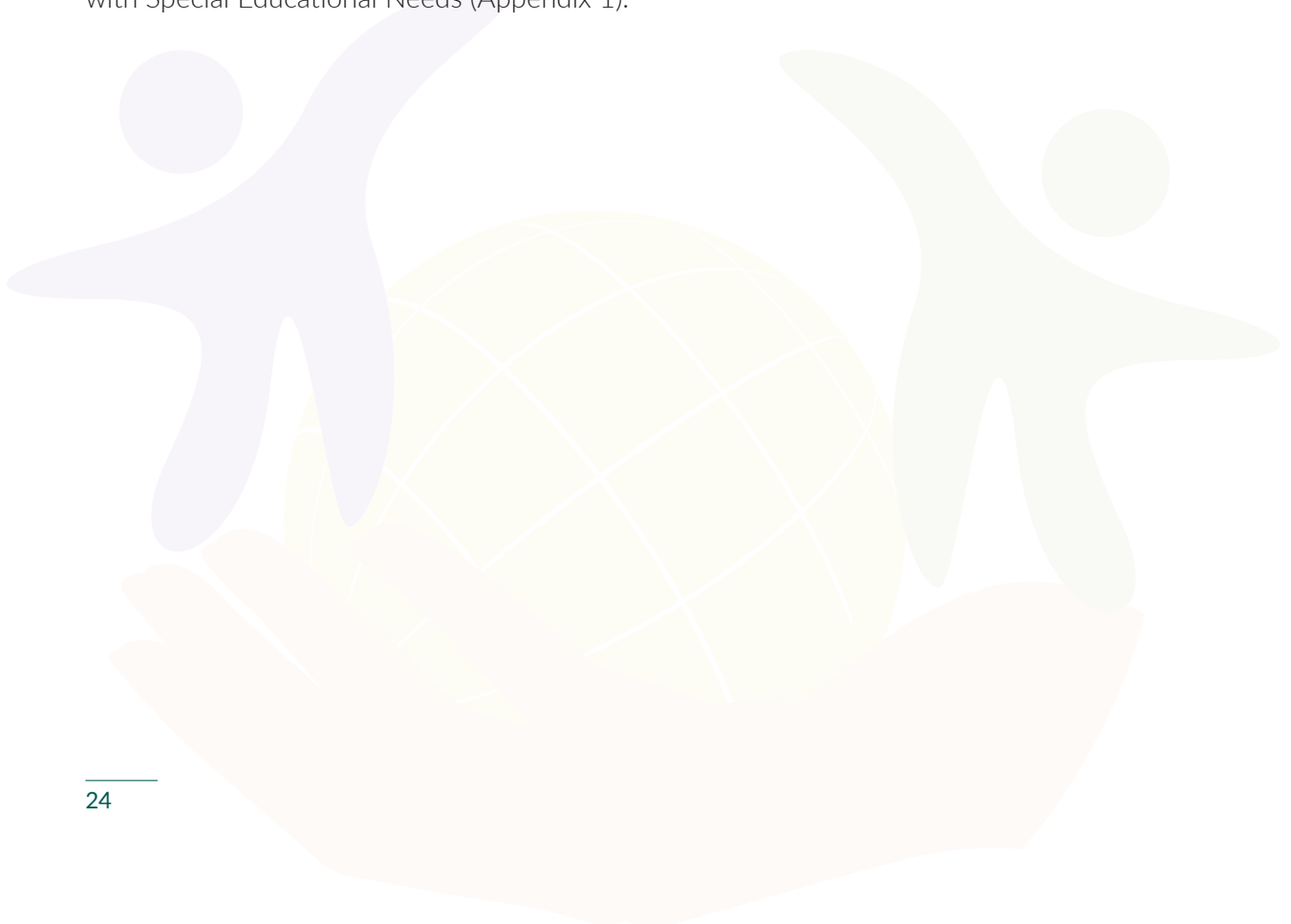
- Ensures the development and implementation of inclusive whole-school policies and procedures relating to the inclusion of young people with special educational needs, and monitors and reviews their implementation.
- Oversees a whole-school approach to assessment and screening to identify strengths, needs and interests to guide the allocation of appropriate teaching and learning supports.
- Ensures effective engagement with feeder primary schools to support the transition of young people with special educational needs.
- Deploys teachers who have the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding to special education teaching roles.
- Establishes a core special education teaching team.
- Collaborates with the core special education teaching team to delegate roles and responsibilities for the effective allocation of resources and timetabling, based on identified needs across the Continuum of Support.
- Ensures that systems are in place for effective sharing of relevant information on young people's needs with all subject and special education teachers.
- Facilitates teacher professional learning⁷ for all teachers in relation to whole-school inclusive and teaching and learning practices and the education of young people with special educational needs.
- Encourages and facilitates special education teachers to undertake the Post-Graduate Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Special Education Teachers⁸ that is available through a number of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

7 Oide Support Service for Teachers & School Leaders; Teacher Professional Learning National Council for Special Education – Working to deliver a better special education service (ncse.ie).

8 gov.ie – Post-Graduate Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Special Education Teachers (www.gov.ie).

- Ensures that all school staff, including subject teachers and special education teachers, guidance counsellors and special needs assistants (SNAs), are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area.
- Ensures that teachers with relevant experience and expertise in the area of special educational needs provide additional targeted supports to young people with special educational needs.
- Ensures that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents/guardians, young people and external professionals/agencies in provision for young people with special educational needs.
- Ensures that the School Provision Plan for Young People with Special Educational Needs (Appendix 1) is updated.
- Ensures that a Student Support File has been initiated for all young people identified at School Support-Some and School Support Plus-Few, on the School Provision Plan for Young People with Special Educational Needs.
- Ensures that a Student Support Plan is developed and contained within the School Support File for all young people identified at School Support-Some and School Support Plus-Few, on the School Provision Plan for Young People Identified with Special Educational Needs.

In the implementation of the special education teaching model, the principal establishes a core special education teaching team to assist in providing an effective and holistic response to young people's needs. **The principal can allow time for the core team to identify, plan, review, monitor and co-ordinate provision for young people with special educational needs.** This time should be used appropriately to ensure that there is minimal impact on the provision of targeted and high-quality special education teaching support for young people with special educational needs who have been identified on the School Provision Plan for Young People with Special Educational Needs (Appendix 1).



Role of the Subject Teacher

Subject teachers make a critical contribution to the creation of a supportive and caring environment in the school for young people with special educational needs, through which these young people are affirmed in their learning and participation in the life of the school.

Within the framework of a whole-school approach to inclusion, **subject teachers have primary responsibility for teaching, learning, and assessment, for all young people within their class groups, including those with special educational needs.**

The subject teacher:

- Provides an inclusive learning environment that facilitates the wellbeing of all young people through their meaningful participation in learning in the mainstream classroom.
- Develops positive relationships with all young people in their class groups, including those with special educational needs.
- Demonstrates flexibility in approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, to enhance the learning experiences and learning outcomes for all.
- Identifies and communicates concerns where needs emerge at the level of Subject-Classroom Support-All with parents/guardians, the young person, and other relevant staff.
- Communicates and collaborates with the special education teaching team, as necessary, including seeking advice and/or assistance to facilitate inclusive practice in their classroom.
- Accesses all information in a Student Support File and/or Student Support Plan that is relevant and necessary to plan effectively for teaching and learning at mainstream subject level.
- Ensures that all young people are provided with a learning programme and environment that enables them to access, participate and experience success in a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Adapts teaching approaches, as required, to meet individual needs and specifically, to facilitate the achievement of targets that are set in Student Support Plans, as appropriate to the subject area.
- Contributes, as appropriate, to reviews of Student Support Plans, by providing information on a young person's progress in the subject classroom context, and by collaborating with the members of the special education teaching team as required.
- Informs parents/guardians of their child's progress through regular parent/guardian-teacher meetings and school reports, and by being available to meet parents/guardians from time to time, as required.
- Contributes to school development planning for young people with special educational needs through strategic planning at the subject department level within the school.



Role of the Core Special Education Teaching Team

The principal has overall responsibility for the school's provision for young people with special educational needs. **The principal establishes a core team of teachers and may delegate responsibility for the organisation, planning and provision of special education teaching to this team, or to a teacher/s to co-ordinate this team.** The principal has oversight of the work of the special education teaching team including the identification, preparation, planning, provision and timetabling of additional supports for young people with special educational needs.

Members of the special education teaching team have the necessary experience, interest, and access to professional development to support the diverse needs of young people with special educational needs. Those young people with the greatest level of need have access to additional support from members of the special education teaching team with the relevant experience and expertise.

Responsibility for various aspects of provision is distributed amongst the team to avoid any one teacher becoming overwhelmed with the task of organising, or co-ordinating, all aspects of provision.

The special education teaching team:

- Contributes to the development of an inclusive school culture, demonstrated through ethos, values and inclusive school policies and practices.
- Promotes inclusive, whole-school preventative and proactive teaching and learning approaches.
- Contributes to the ongoing development of inclusive school structures and systems in the organisation of provision for young people with special educational needs, including informing timetabling of additional supports.
- Liaises closely with the principal on the development, implementation and monitoring of whole-school approaches to the education of young people with special educational needs.
- Develops whole-school procedures for the selection of young people for additional special education teaching support using the Continuum of Support and the problem-solving process.
- Uses the School Provision Plan for Young People with Special Educational Needs (Appendix 1) to record relevant information relating to young people receiving additional support at the levels of School Support-Some and School Support Plus-Few, in order to track provision and progression across the Continuum of Support.
- Co-ordinates information gathering, screening and testing.
- Contributes to transition planning for young people with special educational needs.
- Ensures that all young people identified with special educational needs, who receive additional teaching support, have their needs documented in a Student Support File.
- Ensures that a Student Support Plan is developed and included in the Student Support File.



- Distributes responsibility within the team for the development, implementation and review of Student Support Plans.
- Supports the communication of information regarding the young person's special educational needs to relevant staff.
- Establishes procedures and protocols for liaising with other agencies, including the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the Inspectorate and other allied health professionals.
- Collaborates and co-ordinates provision across school support structures including Guidance Counsellors and is represented on the Student Support team.



Each special education teacher in the team is responsible for the development, implementation and review of Student Support Plans for the young people with whom they are involved in providing direct additional special education teaching support.

Where more than one teacher is involved in providing the additional teaching support, one special education teacher takes the lead in the planning process, and in the co-ordination of supports for that young person.

Role of the Special Education Teacher

The special education teacher provides additional teaching support to young people attending mainstream classes who have been identified as having special educational needs. Special education teachers should have up-to-date knowledge of a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources appropriate to meet a variety of special educational needs. Special education teaching provision includes early intervention, team teaching, and small group and/or individual support, where appropriate.

The special education teacher:

- Leads the identification and provision of support for young people with special educational needs in the school context using the Continuum of Support problem-solving process.
- Develops Student Support Files and Student Support Plans as agreed by the team, for the young people with special educational needs to whom they are directly providing additional teaching support, at the levels of School Support-Some and School Support Plus-Few. Collaborates, liaises and communicates with parents/guardians, the young person, other relevant teachers and staff, the special education teaching team, the Student Support Team, the school principal and relevant others, as part of the problem-solving process.
- Engages and collaborates with external agencies and services outside of the school as appropriate and necessary.
- Uses evidence-informed teaching and learning approaches to support the special educational needs of young people, and monitors response to intervention.
- Plans, as best practice suggests, for the effective implementation of specific,

measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) targets that have been agreed following the process of liaison, communication and collaboration described above.

- Plans to support transitions for young people with special educational needs.
- Provides support across a variety of settings including in-class, small group and/or individual support.
- Shares relevant information with subject teachers regarding the special educational needs of young people to support their meaningful engagement and participation in lessons.
- Advises subject teachers when requested.
- Engages in TPL to upskill and develop the knowledge, competencies and skills required for high quality provision of support for young people with special educational needs.
- Reflects on individual professional practice, including teaching and learning approaches, to enhance provision.

Section 4

The Process for Identifying and Responding to Needs across the Continuum of Support

This section of the guidelines outlines:

- The Continuum of Support
- Whole School Support-All
- The Problem-Solving Process
- The Student Support File
- Subject-Classroom Support-All
- School Support-Some
- School Support Plus-Few

The Continuum of Support

The Department of Education follows international best practice in ensuring that all young people with special educational needs are provided with an education appropriate to their needs.

The Continuum of Support is a framework to guide the identification of young people's strengths and needs, and for monitoring response to intervention. This framework recognises that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to more significant, and from transient to enduring. It recognises that young people require different levels of support depending on their identified educational needs, and that needs may change over time. Using this framework helps to ensure that interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support, and that they are informed by careful monitoring and review of response to intervention. Using this framework helps to ensure flexible and timely allocation of supports, so that those young people with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest level of support.

The Continuum of Support includes three levels, for assessment, planning, intervention and review. These are illustrated in Fig 3.



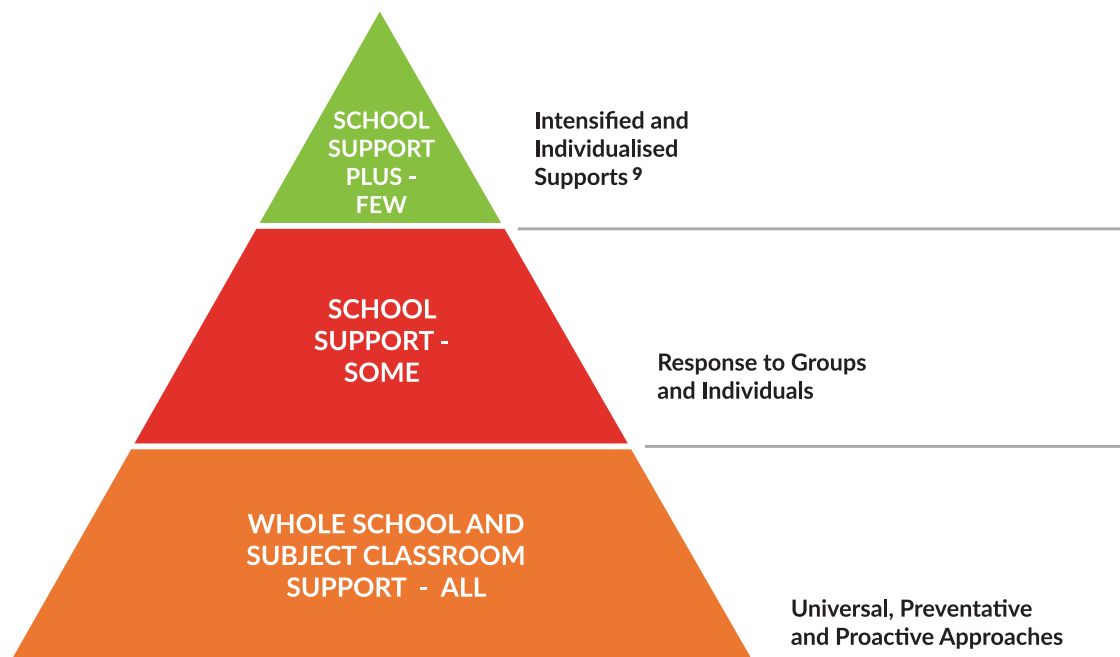


Figure 3 The Continuum of Support

A brief description of each level of the Continuum of Support is followed by a more comprehensive outline of support in this section.

Whole School and Subject Classroom Support-All involves **support for all** young people in the school. This includes universal, preventative and proactive teaching and learning approaches at whole school and subject classroom level for the engagement and participation of all young people.

Subject Classroom Support-All is for those young people with emerging needs in the subject classroom context. It is the first response, led by the subject teacher, when concerns emerge in relation to a young person's learning, wellbeing and/or social-emotional development. These are young people who have not yet been identified as requiring support at the level of School Support-Some or School Support Plus-Few. **The provision of Subject Classroom Support-All is the responsibility of the subject teacher.**

School Support-Some involves the provision of additional targeted teaching and learning supports in response to the special educational needs of small groups and/or individuals. **This level of support involves the allocation of one or more special education teachers.**

School Support Plus-Few involves the provision of highly individualised, intensive and targeted additional teaching and learning supports for young people, whose special educational needs are enduring, and significantly impact on their learning and participation in the school environment. **This level of support involves the allocation of one or more special education teachers.**

⁹ Individualised support does not equate with one-to-one teaching support. Instead, individualised support means that support for the young person is individualised or tailored to their particular strengths and needs.

Whole School Support-All

Whole-School Support-All involves a whole-school approach to responding to the needs of all young people, including those with special educational needs, using universal, preventative and proactive approaches.

The experience of all young people at school contributes directly to their physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing and resilience. Learning and participation take place in a culture focused on collective wellbeing of the school community.

A whole-school focus on the development of wellbeing is the foundation upon which the Continuum of Support is applied and implemented across all aspects of teaching, learning and school life. Belonging and connectedness to the school community is fostered and reflected in school policy, planning and practice.

Student Support Teams

Best practice indicates that schools adopt a whole-school, multi-component, preventative approach to wellbeing promotion that includes both universal and targeted interventions. A Student Support Team is a central element of the student support system in a school. It is the overarching team concerned with the progressing of actions for the welfare and wellbeing of all young people. Schools may choose to introduce, develop or review their Student Support Team structures as part of their wellbeing promotion process in school. Student Support Teams represent a way in which the resources of the school can be organised to benefit all young people, and in particular for those with special educational needs. Information on establishing Student Support Teams or reviewing current school approaches may be accessed [HERE](#).

Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice¹⁰ sets out the ambition and vision that the promotion of wellbeing is at the core of the ethos of every school.

Wellbeing is experienced at a personal level but is associated with, and connected to, a broad range of risk and protective factors that exist at the individual, relational, community, cultural and societal levels. Protective factors have been found to promote positive outcomes for young people including those with special educational needs. **Within the school context, implementing a preventative wellbeing-promotion process with a focus on strengthening school-based protective factors, and minimising school-based risk factors, is essential.** For young people with special educational needs, it is important to consider some of the risk and protective factors that are known to impact on wellbeing at school, and to plan for support in these areas at each level of the Continuum of Support.



¹⁰ gov.ie – Wellbeing in education (www.gov.ie).

The four key areas of wellbeing promotion illustrate how wellbeing may be nurtured and promoted using multi-component and preventative whole-school approaches. These are illustrated in Figure 4, and include:

- School culture and environment
- Curriculum (teaching and learning)
- Policy and planning
- Relationships and partnerships



Figure 4 Four Key Areas of Wellbeing Promotion (DES, 2018)

Statements of Effective Practice is a key reference tool to guide schools in each of the four key areas of wellbeing promotion. It describes practices at the whole school preventative level (Whole School Support–All) as well as at the more targeted and individual intervention levels (School Support–Some and School Support Plus–Few).

Supporting young people with transitions has been identified as key to fostering wellbeing. This is particularly important for those young people with special educational needs. Section 5, of these guidelines includes further information on supporting transitions. Student Support Teams play a key role in supporting wellbeing.

The description of whole-school supports in this section provides examples of key preventative and proactive approaches. They illustrate how the four key areas of wellbeing promotion may guide policy, planning and practice at this whole-school level of the Continuum of Support for the benefit of all young people. For those with identified or emerging special educational needs the problem-solving process is initiated, and this process is outlined in the following section.



The Problem-Solving Process

The problem-solving process provides an approach to identifying, supporting, monitoring and reviewing special educational needs, where a concern is identified in relation to a young person.

The problem-solving process is applied across the Continuum of Support to ensure that interventions and supports are aligned to the identified strengths and needs of the young person, are commensurate with the level of need, and are reviewed regularly. The problem-solving process is a four step cyclical process of identification, assessment, intervention and review.

The process poses four questions as illustrated in Figure 5:

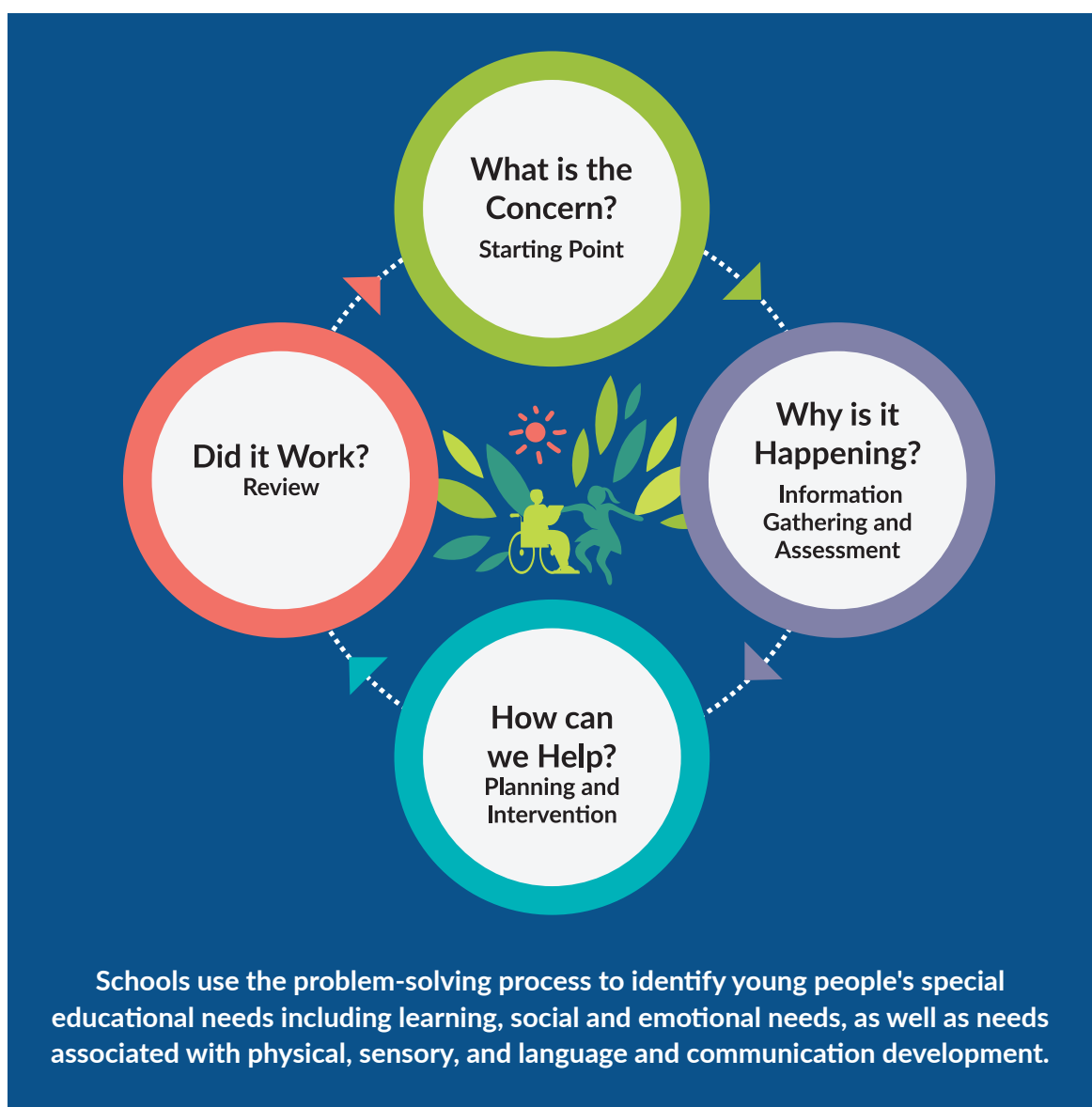


Figure 5 The Problem Solving Process (DES, 2017; 2010; 2007)



Schools use the problem-solving process to identify a young person's special educational needs including learning, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication development.

The problem-solving process emphasises the necessity of looking at young people's strengths and needs in the context of their current participation and engagement in all aspects of school life, within and outside the classroom. Resources for identification of need at each level of the Continuum of Support are included in [A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools: Resource Pack for Teachers](#)¹¹.

Where there is a concern in relation to a young person, the first step is to develop an understanding of the young person's learning strengths and needs. Some young people may have special educational needs identified prior to the transfer to post-primary school. It is important for schools to gather relevant information as part of the transition planning process to ensure continuity and progression of support. Subject teachers should liaise with the Student Support Team and/or the special education teaching team where concerns arise.

For other young people, needs may emerge over time as they engage with their post-primary education. These needs may be transient and may relate, for example, to difficulties with the transition from primary, including new structures and demands at post-primary, or they may be more enduring and long term.

Identifying needs

Teachers in post-primary schools use a range of assessment and intervention approaches to identify and meet a young person's educational needs. Teachers and young people engage in ongoing assessment activities as part of normal classroom practice that can be either formative or summative in nature. Schools use a range of assessment methods for formative and/or summative purposes which emphasise the interlinked and complementary nature of the assessment process.

While standardised assessments play a role in summative assessment, results of any one standardised test should not be used in isolation, nor used as baseline data for predicting a young person's future achievements, nor for solely informing decisions regarding the provision of interventions or targets in Student Support Plans.

Information from ability tests, attainment tests, teacher observations, the Education Passport¹², the Student Support File¹³, parent/guardian reports, as well as the views of the young person, are all key aspects of the assessment process. This evidence-informed approach facilitates the identification of the young person's strengths, interests, values, motivation and learning needs, and helps to inform the actions and interventions that best address those needs.

Assessment in a classroom setting is mainly carried out by the subject teachers who have primary responsibility for teaching the young person. Where necessary, subject teachers may consult with special education teachers for advice with this process. Further individualised assessment may be conducted by special education teachers, as part of the problem-solving process.

The Continuum of Support framework supports teachers to gather information, to plan and review the young person's progress through the problem-solving process. This process of identification of need is a dynamic and cyclical process, which views the young person's response to intervention as central to understanding their level of need. The following section outlines how the problem-solving process may be implemented at each level of the Continuum of Support.

¹¹ gov.ie – A Continuum of Support for Post Primary Schools: Resource Pack for Teachers

¹² Education Passport | NCCA.

¹³ gov.ie – National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) resources and publications (www.gov.ie).

Student Support File

The Student Support File provides a process for recording and collating all information in relation to the young person, in order to plan interventions aligned to their identified strengths, interests and needs, and to facilitate the documentation of the young person's response to intervention. It tracks a young person's pathway through the Continuum of Support and guides which evidence-informed interventions are most appropriate.

The Student Support File holds all the information regarding the additional support provided to the young person. This includes:

- Log of actions.
- Copy of Student Passport/Transfer Review Form from the primary school.
- Relevant information gathered to develop understanding of strengths, interests and needs.
- Information on attendance.
- Student Support Plans that are developed and monitored over time.
- Interventions, accommodations and other supports.
- Records of consultations.
- Details of reviews and response to intervention.
- Copies of professional reports and/or correspondence relevant to supporting the young person at school.
- Records of relevant communications with parents/guardians and young people.

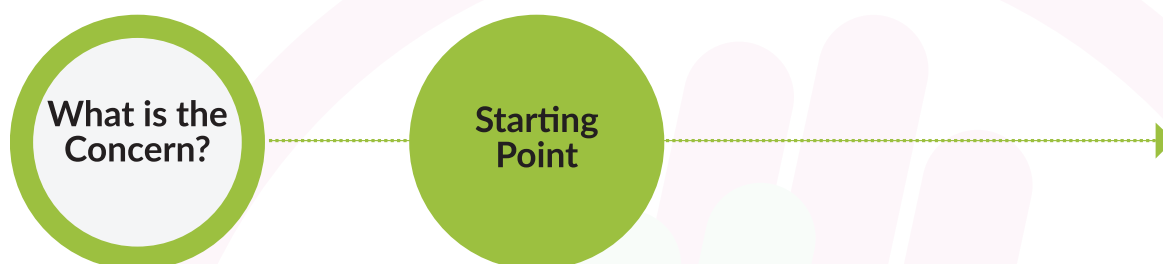
Student Support Plan

The Student Support Plan is an individualised learning plan which documents the young person's strengths, interests and needs, as well as the priority learning needs that have been agreed as the basis for targets and interventions. Some young people may present with many needs and their priority learning needs should be identified and recorded. These inform the targets and interventions required to remove identified barriers to learning and participation across the curriculum, and in the life of the school community. The Student Support Plan is developed by the special education teaching team, in collaboration with the relevant subject teachers, special education teachers, parents/guardians, and relevant professionals, where appropriate. **The views of the young person are central to this process.** Student Support Plans should be reviewed regularly to ensure that targets continue to address the identified priority learning needs of the young person.

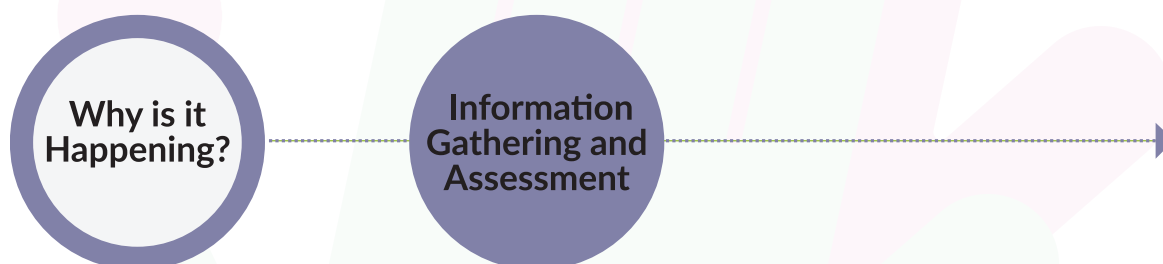


Subject Classroom Support-All

The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the teaching, learning, and assessment¹⁵ of progress and participation of all young people in their classrooms. Subject Classroom Support-All is the first response, led by the subject teacher, when concerns emerge in relation to a young person's learning, wellbeing and/or social-emotional development. This is the point where initial adaptations in pace, delivery and content may be made as part of good teaching practice to ensure that all young people can participate in their learning. The four steps of the problem-solving process may be used to guide action where concerns emerge.



Where the subject teacher has concerns in relation to a young person's learning and participation in their classrooms, concerns should be recorded and monitored as part of the regular subject planning for teaching, learning and assessment.



Where there are concerns, the subject teacher explores potential reasons for the difficulties the young person is experiencing. Figure 6 provides a summary of sources of information that may be useful in identifying the potential contributing factors to the challenges experienced. Factors may emerge which relate to language, the learning environment, social factors, in addition to teaching and learning, all of which may be contributing to need.



¹⁴ Focus on Learning NCCA.

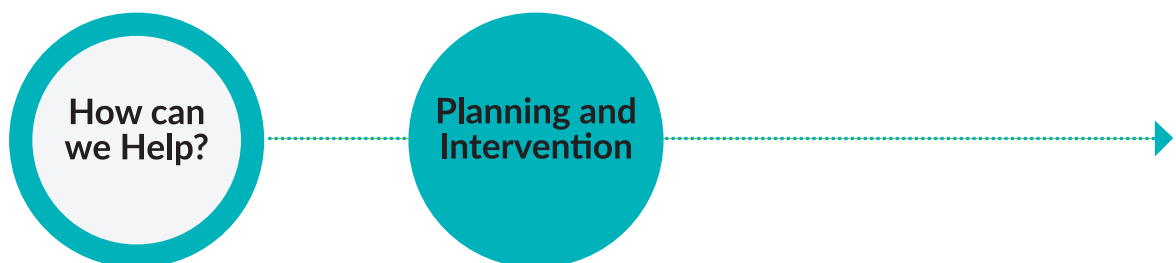
Subject Classroom Support-All

- Learning Environment Checklist.
- Intake screening.
- Information from primary schools, including Student Passport/ Post primary Transfer Review.
- Standardised achievement, ability and aptitude tests (Circular 0001/2023)
- Teacher assessment, including observation and curriculum-based assessment.
- Special education teaching team and/or Student Support Team consultation.
- Student consultation.
- Parental/guardian consultation.

Figure 6 Summary of sources of information

To begin with, the subject teacher may wish to consult with the young person to explore in a collaborative way how any potential barriers to participation and engagement in their learning may be addressed. This may also require the subject teacher to reflect on the learning environment in their classroom, and how this facilitates learning for all young people. The Learning Environment Checklist in the *Continuum of Support for Post Primary Schools: Resource Pack for Teachers* is a useful resource for this process.

The next step may include consultation with the young person's parents/guardians and/or with other subject teachers to explore if these concerns are specific to a subject area, or if needs persist across curricular areas. It may also be useful to consult with the Student Support Team or year head, or special education teaching team, to identify if any relevant information was recorded from previous schools attended, or from intake screening that may help to explain difficulties.



Where the young person's needs are identified as mild or transient, it may be considered appropriate and sufficient to provide support at the level of Subject Classroom Support-All, whereby subject teachers are aware of needs and implement strategies for support in the classroom and subject lesson context. Provision of support and identification of strengths and needs at this level may be informed by whole school policies, practices and procedures for all young people.

Modifications or adaptations to teaching and learning approaches form part of the subject teacher's normal subject lesson planning. Interventions will tend to be local and specific and would normally reflect the good practice already evident in schools. For example, a young person who is having difficulty settling in may be supported by the class tutor and perhaps be allocated a peer-buddy.

The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the meaningful participation and engagement of all young people in their classrooms. The subject teacher may seek advice and guidance from the special education teacher where concerns arise in relation to individual young people.



Based on the subject teacher's ongoing formal and informal assessment of progress, a collaborative decision may be made to continue teaching support at the level of Subject Classroom Support-All. This collaborative decision-making process involves consultation and agreement with parent/guardians, other subject teachers, the Special Education Teaching team and/or the Student Support Team, as well as with the young person.

Where the young person continues to experience difficulties that impact on participation and engagement in their learning, **School Support-Some** is considered, and the collaborative problem-solving cycle continues.



School Support-Some

While the majority of young people will have their needs met at the level of Subject Classroom Support-All, some young people may require more targeted teaching and support.

School Support-Some involves a more targeted problem-solving process, building on information gathered and interventions carried out under Subject Classroom Support-All. This is necessary where the young person's needs are more persistent and enduring, and where they have not made sufficient progress in response to intervention at the Subject Classroom Support-All level.

While subject teachers have primary responsibility for the assessment, teaching and learning of young people in their classrooms, a collaborative approach involving the special education teaching team is necessary at this level of the Continuum of Support. This collaborative approach is necessary to ensure that the young people are purposefully and meaningfully included in their learning across the curriculum. Consistency in approaches to supporting the young person requires collaboration and communication between the subject teachers, the special education teaching team, parents/guardians and the young person.

School Support-Some typically involves targeted intervention for small groups of young people with similar needs. Decisions regarding the level and type of intervention will be needs-based, and may be delivered through in-class support (e.g. team teaching), and/or small group, or individualised targeted intervention.

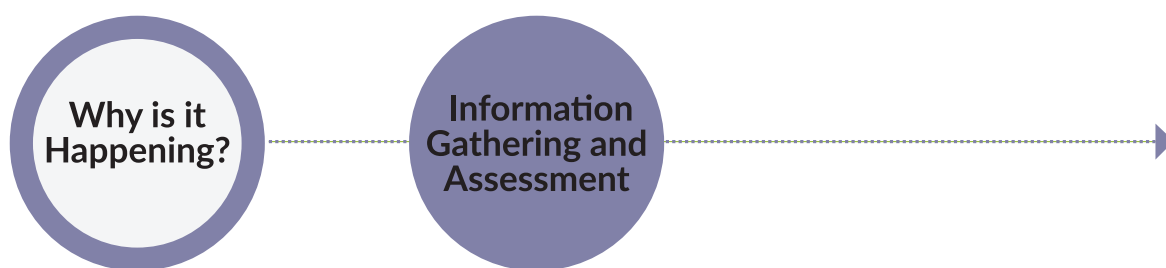
This level of support involves the allocation of one or more special education teachers. The number of special education teachers providing additional teaching support to a young person is kept to a minimum, to ensure a consistent and co-ordinated approach to the type and level of targeted intervention provided.

Where it is agreed that a young person's needs warrant more targeted intervention and support at the level of School Support-Some, this is recorded in the Student Support File.

The four step problem-solving process guides identification, planning and review of support at this level of the Continuum of Support.



Some young people may have known and documented needs identified prior to the transfer to post-primary school. Others may have needs identified at post-primary level through whole-school screening and monitoring systems. It is important for schools to gather relevant information as part of the transition planning process to ensure continuity and progression of support. Subject teachers may wish to liaise with the special education teaching team and where appropriate, with the Student Support Team, where concerns arise. The first step in the problem-solving process involves clarifying concerns with the young person's parents/guardians to reach a shared understanding of the young person's strengths, interests and needs.



Once the concerns are clarified, it is important to understand why this is happening. The Student Support Team may also be involved as part of the collaborative process, where appropriate. **Information gathering for the purpose of identification of needs at School Support-Some** is a collaborative process involving subject teachers, the special education teaching team, parents/guardians and the young person.

The identification of individual strengths and needs at this level may be informed by the processes of formal and informal assessment outlined below in Figure 7.

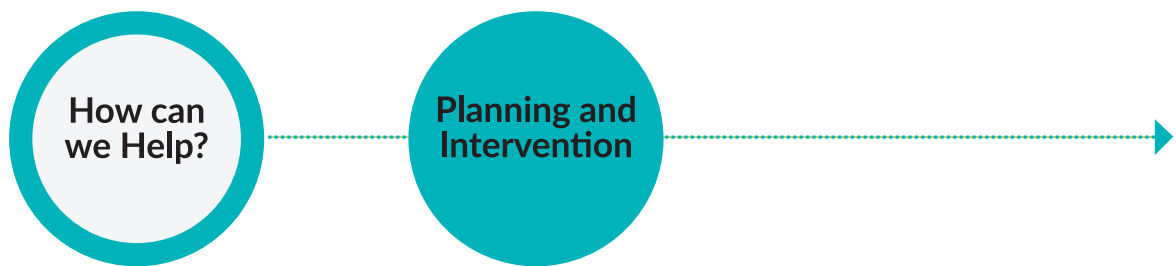
School Support-Some
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Environment Checklist Here. • Information from primary schools, including Student Passport/ Post-Primary Transfer Review. • Teacher assessment, including observation and curriculum-based assessment. Circular 0001/2023. • Student Support Team involvement. • Formal and/or informal holistic assessment of individual strengths and needs • Student consultation. • Parental/guardian consultation. • Observation and screening measures for learning (including, for example, literacy, numeracy, language and communication, social interaction and emotional regulation).

Figure 7 Information Gathering School Support-Some

The special education teacher may administer some individualised formal and/or informal assessment of need in areas including literacy, numeracy, language and communication, social interaction and emotional regulation, as appropriate to the concerns identified.

Once needs have been identified and recorded, and priority areas for intervention are agreed, the next stage of the problem-solving process involves planning for intervention.





Decisions regarding the level and type of intervention at this stage of the Continuum of Support are needs based. Interventions may be delivered through in-class support, e.g. team teaching, and/or small groups of young people with similar needs, and/or individualised, targeted intervention.

Intervention at School Support-Some level should be based on addressing specific needs identified through the information gathering and assessment process outlined above. Where there are a wide range of needs identified, it may be necessary to prioritise areas of learning, skills development and/or social-emotional development to be targeted. **Interventions to address identified needs should be considered in the context of the young person's strengths and interests.** Consistency in approaches to supporting young people requires collaboration and communication between subject teachers and the special education teaching team, parents/guardians and the young person. Depending on the identified needs of the young person, the Student Support Team may also be involved. Consultation with external agencies may also be considered appropriate at this stage.

Student Support Plans at this level should include targets that are aligned to the identified priority needs of the young person. Targets should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound (SMART).

Response to intervention in targeted areas of need is monitored and reviewed regularly, and should be recorded in the Student Support Plan. **It is important that one special education teacher who is involved in providing teaching and learning support for the young person is responsible for the overall development, monitoring and collaborative review of the plan.** Examples of Support Plans at the level of School Support-Some are available in the Indicators of Effective Practice accompanying these guidelines.



The fourth step in the problem-solving process involves monitoring and review of targeted areas for intervention. This is an important process that takes place at regular intervals to measure progress and inform future planning. Ongoing monitoring of response to intervention helps teachers to evaluate progress in attaining agreed learning targets and to determine whether intervention strategies are effective. Where targets are not met, they may need to be broken down into smaller incremental steps. Teaching and learning approaches may need to be adapted and/or the targets may need to change. In this way, **support plans should demonstrate a clear progression in targets over time and include modifications to teaching approaches.**

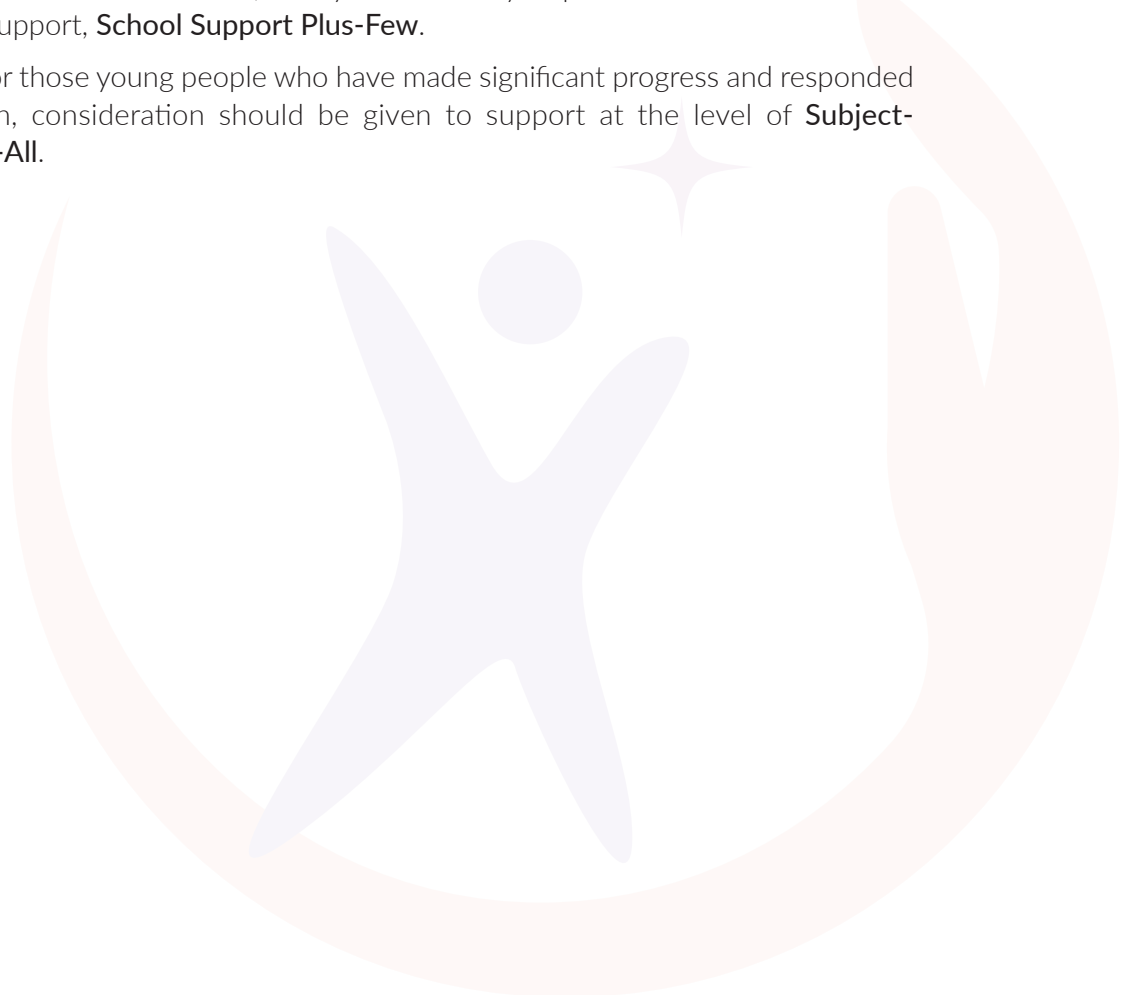
The review of progress in relation to areas for intervention targeted is usually organised by the special education teacher and involves other relevant teachers, the young person, and their parents/guardians.

Following the review process, targets should be modified or new targets should be set and recorded.

The problem-solving cycle continues as concerns are clarified and information is gathered to inform further targets. It may be agreed, following collaborative review of response to intervention, that support may continue to be provided at the level of **School Support-Some**.

Information on a young person's response to intervention in targeted areas of need should be recorded in the Student Support Plan. If, following an agreed period of intervention and review, there is agreement that the young person has not responded to evidence-informed intervention as expected, or requires a higher level of support due to changing demands in the environment and/ or the curriculum, it may be necessary to proceed to the next level of the Continuum of Support, **School Support Plus-Few**.

Equally important for those young people who have made significant progress and responded well to intervention, consideration should be given to support at the level of **Subject-Classroom Support-All**.

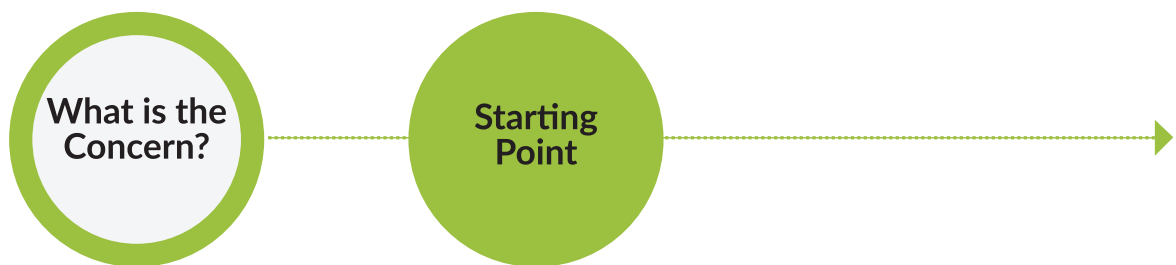


School Support Plus-Few

Young people whose special educational needs are addressed at the level of School Support Plus-Few are those with the **greatest level of need**. This may include young people whose needs have been identified as significant and enduring, and/or those who have not responded to intervention as expected at the level of School Support-Some.

Young people with the **greatest level of need require access to individualised evidence-informed interventions**. This may include adapted environments and teaching approaches which promote independence, engagement, social-emotional development, personal care and success in learning. The focus should be on quality educational and skills-based interventions to maximise opportunities for participation and engagement in learning and in the life of the school and community. The young person's strengths and interests should be a key consideration when developing interventions.

The problem-solving process informs identification, planning and review of priority learning needs at the level of School Support Plus-Few.

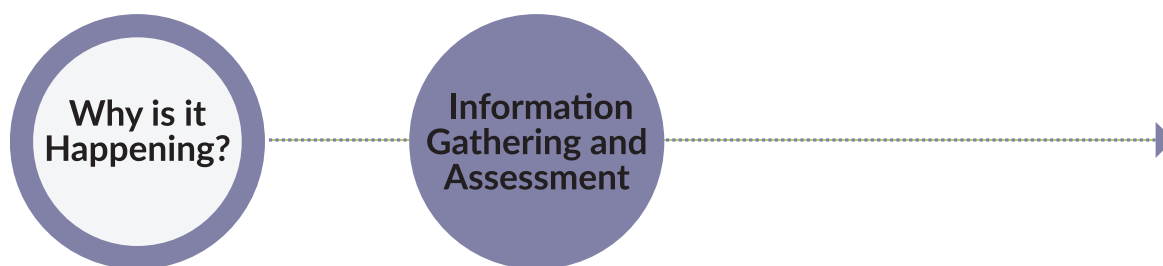


Where it is agreed that intervention at the level of School Support Plus-Few is required, the young person may present with special educational needs across multiple domains¹⁵ or areas of development.

It is important that the concerns at this level are clearly identified and agreed across all areas of development to provide a comprehensive, individualised and targeted programme of learning, aligned to the special educational needs of the young person.



¹⁵ gov.ie – Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools – Supporting Children and Young People (www.gov.ie).



Information-gathering to identify strengths and needs at the level of School Support Plus-Few is a comprehensive, collaborative and holistic process, involving subject teachers, parents/guardians, special education teachers, and the young person. It involves individualised and targeted assessment of strengths and needs across key areas of development.

It is important that a holistic process to identify needs is implemented at this level, in order to recognise the inter-related nature of each of these areas of need in the participation and engagement of the young person in their education, and in all aspects of school life.

It is important to identify any external agencies that may be involved in supporting a young person with more significant and long-term needs, and to request information that may be relevant to supporting the young person in the school context. As part of this information-gathering process, the co-ordinating special education teacher may, with parental/guardian consent, request the involvement of appropriate external professionals, which may include amongst others, Visiting Teachers, National Educational Psychological Service, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Clinical Psychologist and/or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Information gathering to identify strengths and needs involves use of a broad range of formal and informal assessment approaches.

School Support Plus-Few

Individualised, comprehensive, holistic, and targeted assessment of strengths and identified needs across key areas of development including:

- Literacy skills
- Numeracy skills
- Social skills and emotional regulation
- Executive functioning/self-skills (including organisation, planning and problem solving)
- Interests, motivators and hobbies
- Communication and language
- Motor co-ordination and sensory needs
- Independence, daily living skills and self-care

Key areas for consideration when gathering information are outlined in Figure 8.

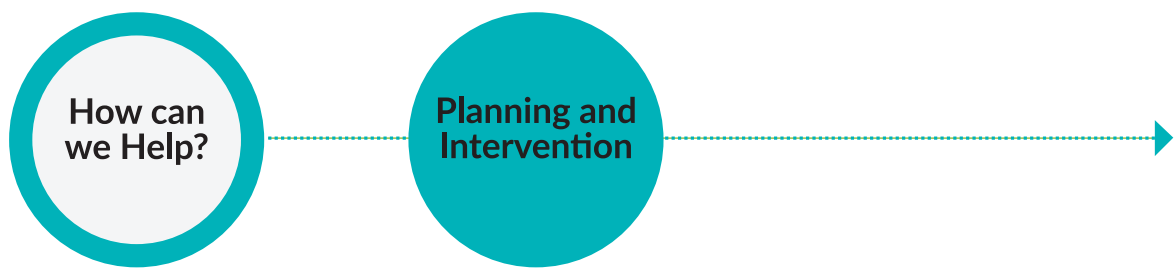


Figure 8 Information Gathering School Support Plus-Few

Student Support Plans at the level of School Support Plus-Few are highly individualised to reflect the needs of the young person across key areas of support, and will be informed by the young person's strengths, interests and needs.

The Student Support Plan will contain information on evidence-informed interventions, and the key personnel involved in their implementation. While a member of the special education teaching team and/or Student Support Team, with relevant experience and expertise, should take on the lead role of planning and providing targeted interventions, this is a collaborative process involving the young person, parent/guardians, subject teacher/s and other special education teachers. **Response to intervention in targeted areas of need should be closely monitored, reviewed regularly and recorded in the Student Support Plan.**

Support at this level may also include engagement and collaboration with external professionals for young people with the highest level of need.

The subject-classroom teachers and special education teacher consider ways in which the curriculum can be adapted to suit the needs of young people to make the best use of the additional teaching support time. This may also involve identifying the most appropriate strategies, approaches and evidence-informed intervention programmes and curricular programmes to meet the young person's needs.

There should be flexibility in support and provision. Intervention at this level may be delivered through in-class support, e.g. team teaching, and may take the form of individual and/or small group support, and may be delivered in a variety of settings, including mainstream subject classrooms.

Effective and SMART target setting requires a collaborative approach, involving consultation between teachers, parents/guardian, and the young person. It includes identifying evidence-informed teaching approaches and clarifying the role of all involved in implementing the Student Support Plan.

Figure 9 (on pages 48 and 49) summarises key areas to be considered when target-setting within the Problem-Solving Process.

It is important that evidence-informed approaches identified for the implementation of targets are consistently applied by all teachers involved in teaching and supporting the young person, underpinned by the principles of an inclusive education system and an inclusive culture.

It is also important at this level, that roles and responsibilities are agreed and made explicit in the Student Support Plan, to facilitate a clear and consistent understanding of the nature of the evidence-informed interventions and how they are implemented. For example, the role of the SNA in supporting the implementation of targets relating to primary and secondary care needs of the young person are documented in the Student Support File, to ensure consistency and clarity in understanding of roles to support the young person's needs.

Response to intervention in targeted areas of need should be closely monitored, reviewed regularly and recorded in the Student Support Plan.

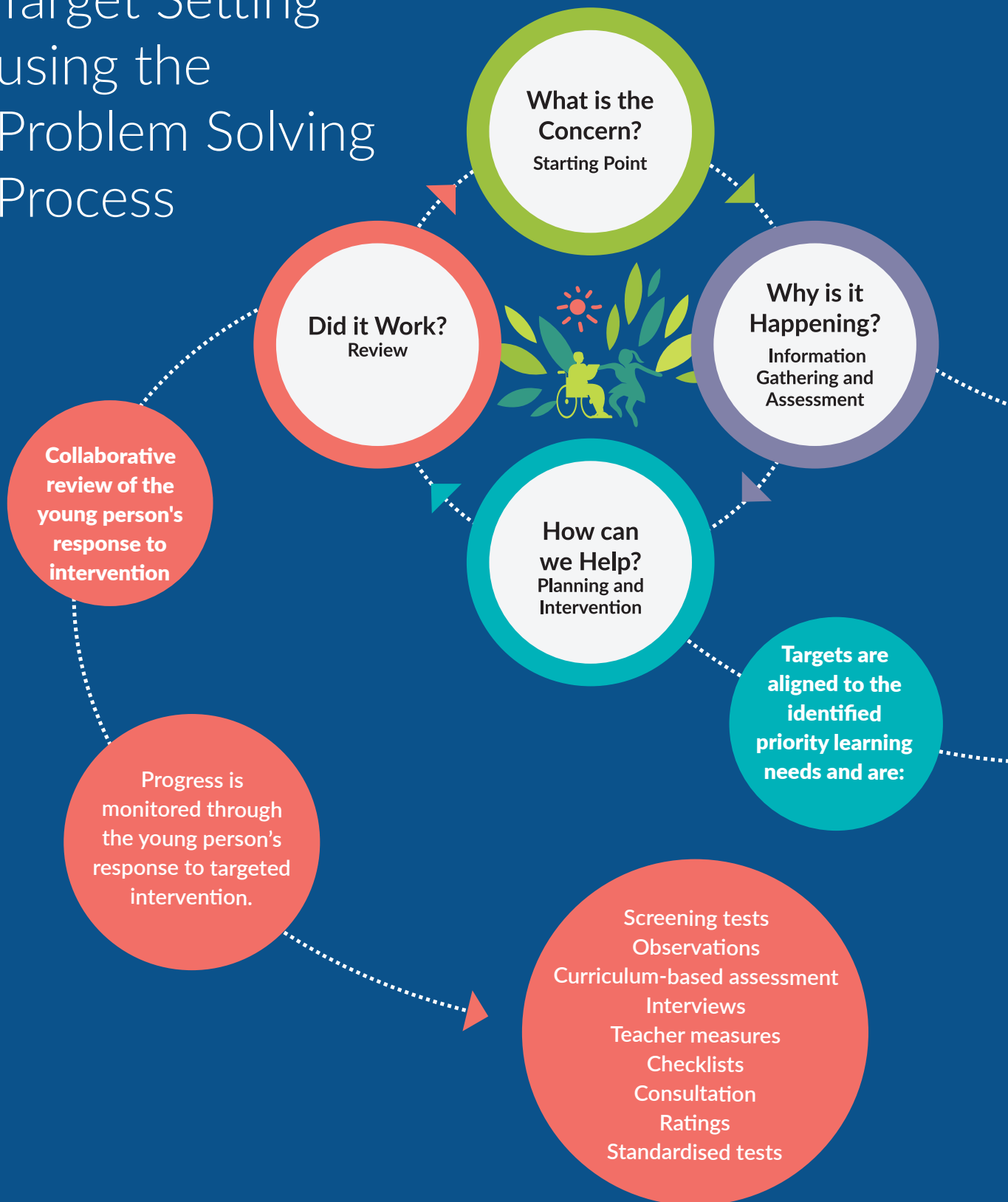
Examples of Student Support Plans at the level of School Support Plus-Few are available in the Indicators of Effective Practice accompanying these guidelines.

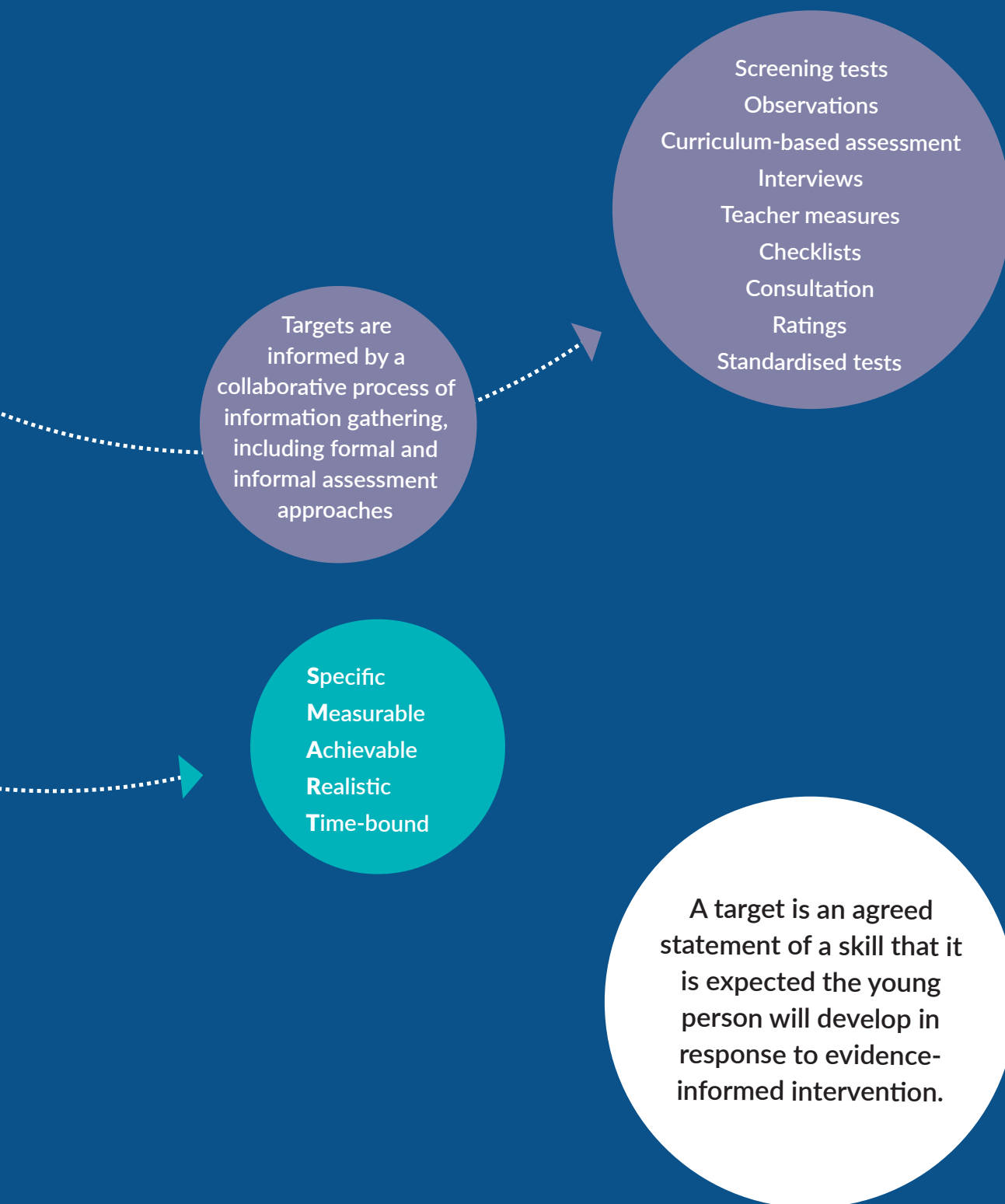


The fourth step in the problem-solving process involves monitoring and review of targeted areas for intervention. This is an important process that takes place at regular intervals to measure progress and inform future planning. The review is usually organised by a member of the special education teaching team and involves the other relevant teachers, young person, their parents/guardians and, where appropriate, the SNA. Where it is also considered appropriate, external agencies may be involved in the review process. Detailed information on monitoring and review at each level of the Continuum of Support is contained in the Indicators of Effective Practice, accompanying these guidelines.

Following the review process, targets should be modified or new targets should be set. The problem-solving cycle continues as concerns are clarified and information is gathered to inform further targets. All information, including the updated Student Support Plan is recorded in the Student Support File.

Target Setting using the Problem Solving Process





Section 5

Supporting Transitions

Transitions have been identified as a significant risk factor to the wellbeing of young people with special educational needs. This includes transitions from primary school to post-primary school, and transitions within and across the school setting. Supporting smooth transitions in the school, such as transitions between special education teaching and subject-class settings, is very important for fostering wellbeing at school.

Each of the four key areas of wellbeing promotion, outlined on page 32, may be applied when considering whole-school preventative and proactive approaches to supporting transitions.

The provision of targeted supports for young people with special educational needs to support their transitions at all stages of their educational journey is essential for fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness within a new environment. This also applies to transitions within the new school environment.

The process of transition is supported by the development of positive relationships between the young person, their teachers and peers.

Transition from one education setting to another is best viewed as a process over time rather than a single event. Advance planning is key to successful transitions. Young people with special educational needs require targeted support with transitions, tailored to their needs. Figure 10 provides an example of how the four key areas of wellbeing promotion may inform support for transitions.

Culture and Environment	Curriculum	Relationships and Partnerships	Policy and Planning
Welcoming and inclusive	Broad and balanced	Key link person to co-ordinate	Advance planning and consultation
Positive learning environment	Multiple and flexible approaches to teaching and learning	Communication between schools/ post-school settings/other education settings	Protocol on support with transitions
Supportive and flexible in responding to needs	Tailored to need	Positive relationships with staff and peers	Sharing of information to ensure continuity
Young person centred	Accommodations to support access, participation and learning	Effective consultation and collaboration with parents/guardians and young people	Monitoring and review of needs

Figure 10 Supporting Transitions - A Whole School Approach



Planning and preparation for transitions from one education setting to another, for young people with special educational needs, should ideally begin two years in advance of the date on which the young person is due to transfer from the school.

When planning for the transition from primary to post-primary, it is helpful to request a copy of any Student Support File which may have been developed in the primary school to help understand the young person's needs, the types of supports provided, and the young person's response to interventions.

While identification of a disability does not fully explain, or predict, the needs of a young person in the context of the school environment, it is helpful for parents/guardians to share any additional information and/or professional reports with their young person's school. A range of information is required to identify and respond to a young person's needs in the school context, using the problem-solving process. A collaborative approach, involving the young person, teachers and parents/guardians will help identify strengths, need and supports required.

The example shown in Figure 10 may also be applied to planning to support young people with transitions during the school day. This may include support with transitions from one class to another, from structured classroom activities to unstructured activities such as break and lunchtimes, and from the home to the school environment. All young people at post-primary benefit from this type and level of support, and planning should be guided by the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.

There are a range of further resources and supports to guide schools with the transition process for all young people at post-primary. These are included in Figure 11.

Transition Supports and Resources
<p>NCSE</p> <p>Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs to make Successful Transitions – Guidelines for Schools</p> <p>Post Primary Transitioning</p> <p>Changing Schools Moving from Primary to Post-Primary School</p> <p>NCCA</p> <p>NCCA Primary to Post-Primary Education Passport</p> <p>NEPS</p> <p>NEPS Primary to Post Primary Transfer Resources</p>

Figure 11 Transition Supports and Resources



Summary

- Special education teaching resources are allocated for the sole purpose of providing additional teaching support to young people with special educational needs.
- Special education teaching support is underpinned by eight key principles which support the inclusion and wellbeing of all young people with special educational needs.
- Roles and responsibilities in relation to special education provision are clearly defined and communicated in schools.
- The Continuum of Support is the framework which guides the provision of support for young people with special educational needs.
- The allocation of special education teaching supports is recorded and monitored at each level of the Continuum of Support.
- The problem-solving process is the mechanism by which special educational needs are identified, supported and reviewed.
- The provision of special education teaching support is a collaborative and holistic process, involving parents/guardians, young people, teachers and other professionals, where appropriate.
- The views and wishes of young people are central to planning and decision-making in relation to special education provision.
- The deployment of special education teaching supports is recorded and monitored by the school and overseen by the board and school management.

Appendix 1

School Provision Plan for Young People with Special Educational Needs

The outline of whole-school interventions and the record of young people with special educational needs who are supported at the levels of School Support-Some and School Support Plus-Few of the Continuum of Support Framework.

Whole-School and Subject Classroom Support-ALL
Outline any current programmes, initiatives or interventions delivered at whole-school level to support and promote inclusion and positive experiences and outcomes for ALL

School Support -SOME					
Young Person's Identifier (e.g. initials)	Year/ Class group	Description of special educational need(s).	Type of Support e.g. small-group, individual, team-teaching etc	Area of Support e.g. literacy, numeracy, emotional, self-regulation etc.	Dates of review of Student Support Plan

School Support Plus-FEW					
Young Person's Identifier (e.g. initials)	Year/Class group	Description of special educational need(s).	Type of Support e.g. small-group, individual, team-teaching etc.	Area of Support e.g. literacy, numeracy, social, emotional, self-regulation etc.	Dates of review of Student Support Plan

Appendix 2

Schedule of Deployment of Special Education Teachers to Support Young People with Special Educational Needs (Post-Primary)

School: Roll No:

School Year: Date reviewed/updated:

Special Education Teaching Allocation: Total hours

Teacher Name	Subject area/s taught	Total Special Education Teaching Hours allocated	Details of support provided

Roles/Area of support <i>e.g. Literacy, numeracy, social interaction, emotional regulation, etc.</i>	Year/class group and time allocation <i>e.g. 1st year 1E x 120 minutes per week</i>	No. of young people per group

Appendix 3

Further Information

The following links may be helpful to post-primary schools.

Guidance and resources for schools

1. The department is committed to cultivating a culture of inclusivity in schools. A wide variety of supports are in place to enable schools to move into a more inclusive space. Inclusive Education.
2. The Continuum of Support aims to provide schools and teachers with tools to assist in identifying and meeting the special educational needs of children in the context of the impact those needs may have on their learning outcomes: Special Educational Needs A Continuum of Support Resource pack for Teachers.
3. The Student Support File allows the school to track the young person's pathway through the Continuum of Support: Student Support Plan.
4. The promotion of wellbeing is central to the Department of Education's mission to enable young people to achieve their full potential. A wide range of wellbeing information and supports for schools, young people and parents is available at: Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.
5. The Catalogue of Resources provides a list of resources developed by the Department of Education, its agencies, support services, other Government Departments and the HSE to assist the promotion of wellbeing across school communities: Wellbeing Resources for Post-Primary Schools.
6. Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying provides a collective vision and clear roadmap for how the whole education community can work together to prevent and address bullying in our schools: Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying.
7. The Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools: Supporting Children and Young People aims to assist school staff to understand the varied nature of young people's strengths and needs, as well as to identify whole-school and individualised approaches to supports for young people. It can be used by staff supporting autistic young people across a range of education environments including mainstream, special-class and special- school settings: Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools – Supporting Children and Young People.
8. Indicators of effective practice are available as a planning tool to facilitate school leaders, school teams and staff to review specific aspects of provision for young people with autism and to prioritise areas for development: Indicators of Effective Practice.

Support Services/Agencies

9. Oide is a new support service for teachers and school leaders which encompasses the Centre for School Leadership (CSL), Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST): Oide.
10. NEPS psychologists work with schools to support the wellbeing, inclusion, learning and social and emotional development of children and young people: NEPS
11. The NCSE provides assistance and advice to schools in the effective provision of support for young people with special educational needs in schools. The NCSE supports schools by processing applications for additional support, assisting schools with effective management of their resources, advising schools, parents and guardians and undertaking research into special education: NCSE.
12. The NCCA advises the Minister for Education on curriculum and assessment for early childhood education, primary and post-primary schools and assessment procedures used in schools and examinations on subjects which are part of the curriculum: NCCA.
13. Middletown Centre for Autism was established in 2007 by the Department of Education Ireland and the Department of Education Northern Ireland to support the promotion of excellence throughout Northern Ireland and Ireland in the education of autistic young people: Middletown Centre for Autism.
14. TESS operates under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, with the aim of promoting school attendance, participation and retention. TESS has three strands; the Statutory Educational Welfare Service (EWS) and the two school support services; the Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL) and the School Completion Programme (SCP): Tusla Education Support Service.
15. Children's disability services are for children and young people up to 18 years who have complex needs: Children's Disability Services.

TPL/Training

16. The aim of the post-graduate diploma programme of continuing professional development is to provide substantial theoretical and practical continuing professional development for teachers working with young people with special educational needs. Post-graduate Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Special Education Teachers.
17. The Autism specific programme will aim to develop teachers' knowledge, understanding and skills in working with students with autism and, thereby, contribute to the school's overall capacity in this area: Post-graduate Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Teachers working with Students with Special Educational Needs (Autism).

Appendix 4

Advice for Gaeltacht schools and Gaelcholáistí on the special education teaching model

The Context

Irish-medium schools provide for the needs of all young people including those with special educational needs. Young people from diverse linguistic backgrounds attend Irish-medium Gaeltacht schools and Gaelcholáistí. Irish-medium schools are the choice of many parents of young people with special educational needs.

To support the implementation of the special education teaching model, Irish-medium schools should consider the following factors:

Whole-school communities, including parents, school management, school leaders and teachers should endeavour to increase their understanding, knowledge and awareness of the suitability of Irish medium education to identify and meet the special educational needs of young people.

Schools are reminded that, in the context of Irish-medium education, the development of young peoples' proficiency in both Irish and English literacy should be addressed in accordance with young peoples' educational needs, as appropriate.

In developing their whole-school approaches to literacy, Irish-medium schools should consider the social, functional and academic language needs of the young person.

This problem-solving approach will guide the school towards providing appropriate support structures and whole-school practices to young people with special educational needs in Irish-medium settings.

School management should deploy special education teaching resources to support the Irish linguistic and literacy skills of young people with special educational needs needed to access the curriculum through the medium of Irish in its entirety.

School leaders and teachers should reflect upon and identify their teacher professional learning (TPL) needs regarding young people with special educational needs who are learning through the medium of Irish. These TPL needs should be discussed with the appropriate personnel in the support services with a view to accessing training suited to the Irish-medium context, with a focus on building capacity and sharing best practice.

Appendix 5

Parent/Guardian Involvement

When reflecting on and reviewing a school's existing practice in encouraging parent/guardian involvement the following points should be taken into consideration, both in terms of existing and future actions:

- How are parents/guardians consulted and informed about the nature of special education needs provision and policy in school?
- How are parent/guardian consulted when special education supports (for example, School Support-Some/School Support Plus-Few) are being proposed for their child?
- Do we involve parents/guardians at each level of the Continuum of Support process?
- To what extent is regular communication facilitated with parents who have a young person with a special educational need?
- What barriers might prevent parents/guardians from being fully involved in supporting their young person in school? What may be helpful in overcoming these barriers?
- Do we provide opportunities for parents/guardians to learn more about special educational needs through contact with other agencies and services?
- How can we support staff members in engaging effectively with parents/guardians?



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

