



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Síceolaíochta Oideachais  
National Educational Psychological Service



**wellbeing  
in education**

# Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools:

A Guide to Establishing a Team or  
Reviewing an Existing Team (2021).

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## Foreword – Minister

I am delighted to welcome the publication of the Student Support Team Guidelines, which are designed to assist schools in their establishment and development of student support teams. I know that wellbeing is always at the heart of every school and educational establishment, and I welcome this initiative to underpin this important work.

I would like to thank the National Educational Psychological Service of my Department for developing the Guidelines, which sit in the overall context of the Department's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice. I would also like to thank the many education stakeholders that shared in their development.

In the education sector, we strive to deliver environments in which students can not only learn academic skills and knowledge, but ones in which students feel nurtured, supported and encouraged to grow holistically.

As a former teacher, I am fully aware of the important role school staff play in supporting the wellbeing of students. School staff in addition to supporting academic learning also carry out an important role in developing caring and nurturing environments for our young people.

These Guidelines will assist schools as they establish, develop or review their student support teams. The Guidelines provide a mechanism through which many of the existing student supports that I know schools are providing are co-ordinated and planned. The role of the Student Support Team is more important than ever as we navigate school life during Covid-19.

The Guidelines recognise the importance of building relationships with external support services and developing pathways for onward referrals.

As Minister I will continue to keep the wellbeing of our young people central to the Department's mission to enable our young people to achieve their full potential and be the best they can be in all that they strive to achieve.

***Norma Foley T.D.***  
***Minister for Education***



## Foreword

These guidelines have been prepared by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) following pilot projects with schools in Dublin, Donegal and Cork. I would like to acknowledge the important contribution of the schools who participated in these NEPS projects and whose work significantly contributed to these guidelines. Consultation with a broad range of education partners and stakeholders is also acknowledged with thanks.

This document is a guide to establishing, developing or reviewing student support teams in Post-Primary Schools and describes a way in which the resources of the school can be organised to benefit all students, and in particular those presenting with additional support needs. It is not intended as a comprehensive manual but rather as an aid in establishing a team or reviewing an existing team.

To support a holistic approach to wellbeing promotion in schools the Department of Education has published a Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018-2025) for all schools which informs how schools can best promote whole school wellbeing. Best practice indicates that schools adopt a whole-school, multi-component, preventative approach to wellbeing promotion that includes both universal and targeted interventions. The work of the Student Support Team is central to this approach and schools may choose to introduce, develop or review their Student Support Team structures as part of their wellbeing promotion process in school. We hope that this guideline will be a useful tool to use in this process.

Promoting the wellbeing of our children and young people is a shared community responsibility and is everybody's business. Whilst many factors that influence a young person's wellbeing are beyond the reach of

schools, schools can be a powerful setting for healthy development and provide accessible and effective context to promote protective factors and reduce risk factors. Schools provide a stable and supportive environment for all students while developing core skills and competencies within supportive relationships. All of which are vital protective factors for the development of resilience and coping.

It is likely that, for most young people, difficulties experienced will be short-lived and resolved with good support and minimal intervention. However, some difficulties that arise in adolescence can be of a serious and enduring nature and some students will require more intense and/or long term support, including referral to specialised services. Early identification and intervention will ensure the best outcomes for these young people. A strong support system in a school can be the vital first step in addressing difficulties, whether through providing in-school interventions and/or through involving specialist services and collaborating with these service to provide these critical supports.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to the development and production of these guidelines.

**Anne Tansey**  
**Director**  
**NEPS**



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# Section 1

## Background and Context

This document is a guide to establishing or reviewing student support teams in Post-Primary schools and describes how the resources of a school can be organised to benefit all students but particularly students requiring additional supports at any given time.

## 1. Introduction

This document is a guide to establishing or reviewing student support teams in Post-Primary schools and describes how the resources of a school can be organised to benefit all students but particularly students requiring additional supports at any given time. It is a revision of the *Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools: A guide to Establishing a Team or Reviewing an Existing Team (2014)* publication. This document also aims to support schools who choose to focus on student support team structures as part of the wellbeing promotion process in school, in line with the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018-2025)*.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Whole School Wellbeing Promotion

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To support a holistic approach to wellbeing promotion in schools the Department of Education has published the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018-2025)* for all schools which advises schools on how best they can promote whole school wellbeing. The policy statement and framework for practice provides an overarching structure encompassing existing, ongoing and developing work in the area of Wellbeing Promotion in schools.

The working definition of wellbeing defined by the WHO (2001) and adapted by the Department of Education is as follows:

*'Wellbeing is present when a person realises their potential, is resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their life, takes care of their physical wellbeing and has a sense of purpose, connection and belonging to a wider community. It is a fluid way of being and needs nurturing throughout life.'*

Best practice indicates that schools adopt a whole-school, multi-component, preventative approach to wellbeing promotion that includes both universal and targeted interventions. A whole-school approach involves all in the school community engaging in a collaborative process to improve areas of school life that impact on wellbeing. A multi component approach (figure 1) ensures that key areas that contribute to wellbeing promotion in schools are given a focus.



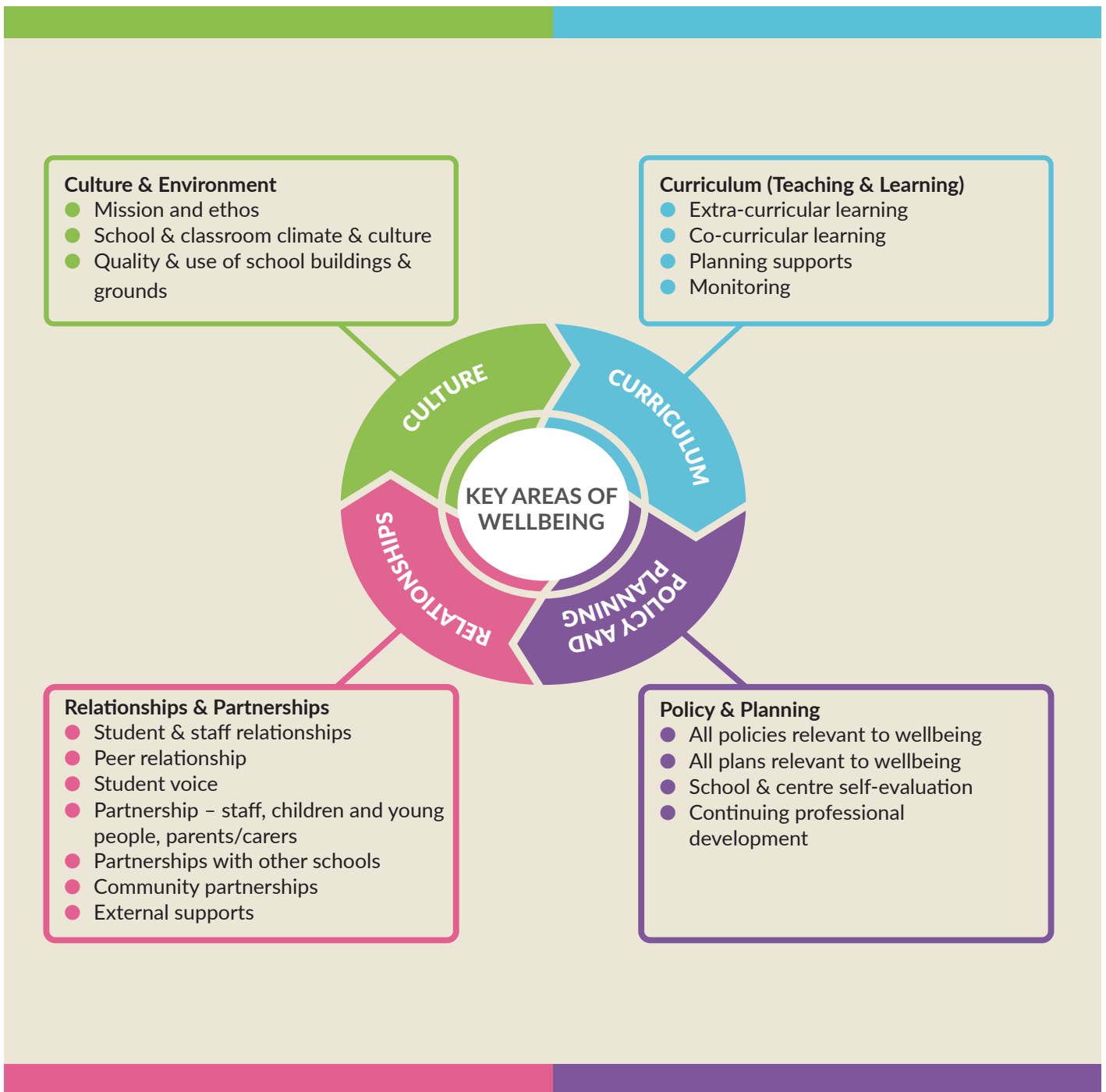


Figure 1: A Multi-component Approach: Four Key Areas of Wellbeing Promotion

Embedded in this whole school multi component approach, and in line with the Department's Continuum of Support (figure 2) is the recognition that students may have different needs at different times. Those at greater risk and with greater needs may require more specific and targeted support, in addition to the support provided to students at the universal level.

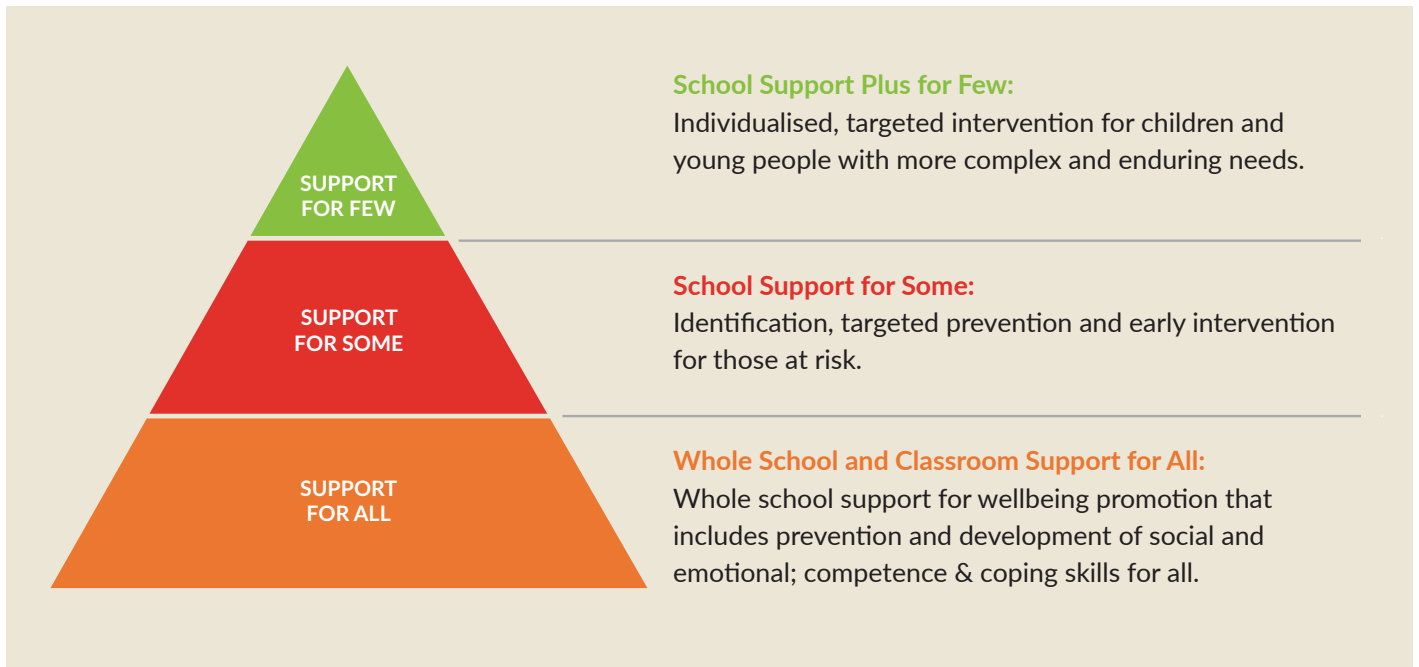


Figure 2: Department of Education/NEPS Continuum of Support

A whole school, multi-component, preventative approach to wellbeing can be achieved through the use of a school self-evaluation process, taking wellbeing promotion as its focus. The work of the student support team is central to this and schools may choose to introduce, develop or review their student support team structures as part of their wellbeing promotion process in school.

## 2.2 Student Support Team Projects

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In conjunction with the publication of the 2014 student support team guidelines, the student support team project (2014-2017) was initiated. This 2014-2017 project sought to support Post-Primary schools in reviewing and improving the structures they had in place using the framework outlined in the *Student Support Teams in Post-primary Schools Guidelines* (2014). The NEPS Student Support Team Project 2018/2019 emerged as an expansion of the earlier 2014 -2017 project, to further the objective that all Post-Primary schools would have effective structures in place to support student wellbeing.

This current revised guideline document draws on the learnings from both projects and includes additional information and resources for Post-Primary schools who wish to establish, develop or review existing student support teams (see Appendix 1 for further detail on the project and schools involved).

### 3. What is a Student Support Team?

A student support team is a central part 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 students. It is a mechanism through which many of the existing student supports are co-ordinated and planned.

A student support team acts as a school hub, bringing coherence to the support system by co-ordinating the valuable work of departments, teams and/or groups such as the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Curricular Planning team, the Special Education Needs (SEN) department, the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) along with guidance and pastoral staff (see Figure 3). School Leadership also has a significant role guiding and supporting the school's student support team.

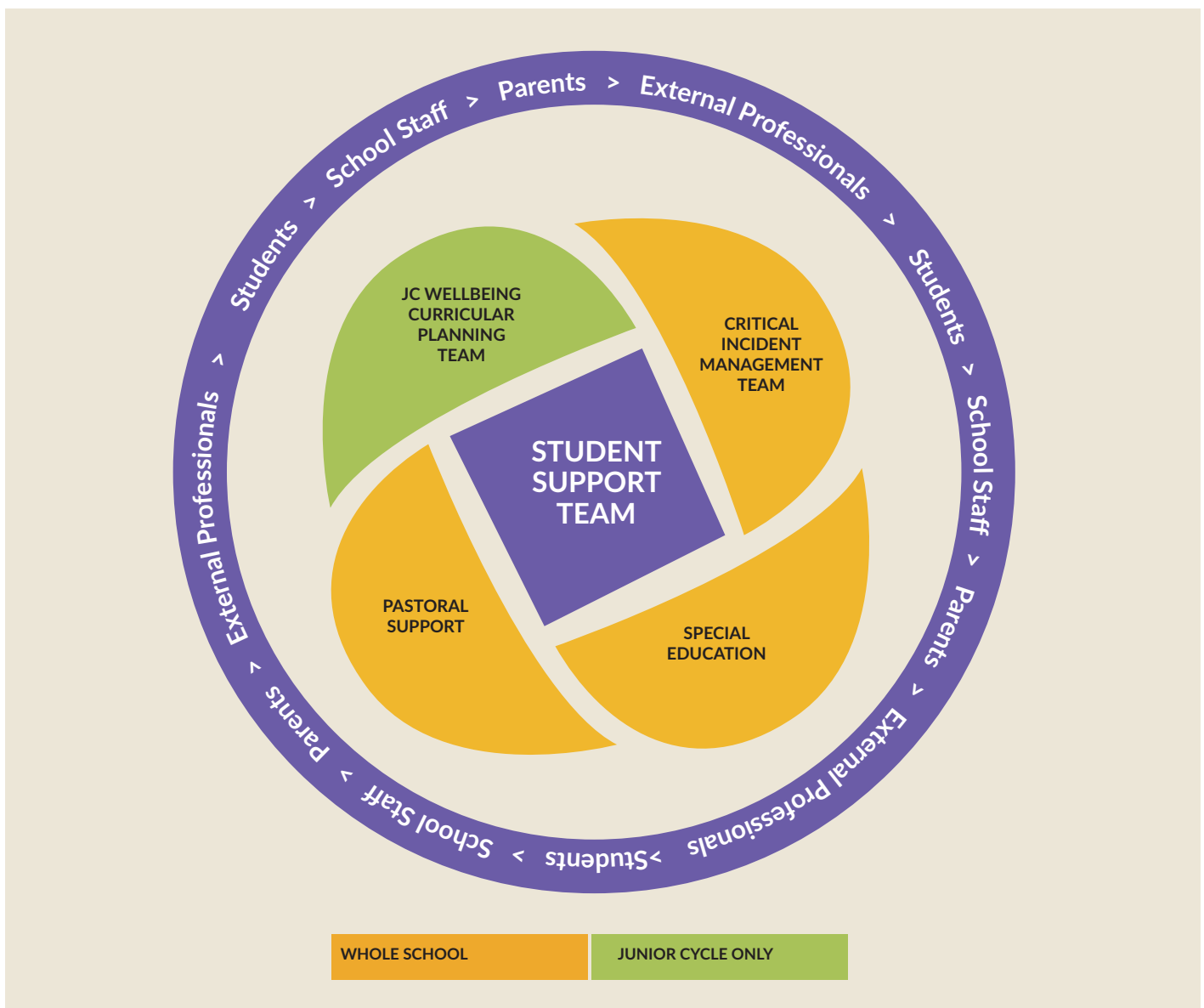


Figure 3: Student Support Team

The range and nature of the work of departments and teams is dependent upon the needs and the available resources within each school.

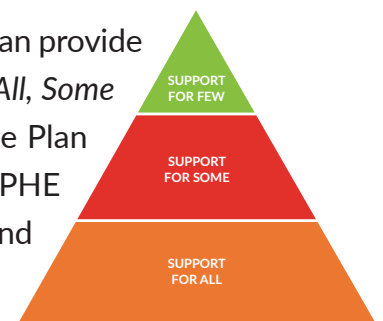
While the various teams that focus on students with additional needs are important, it is also important to take a preventative, early intervention focus. Otherwise, the following issues may emerge:

- opportunities for developing **protective** factors that help increase the learning, health and wellbeing of **all** students in the school may be overlooked;
- students with **emerging needs** or those who would benefit from minimal support may be **overlooked** and only considered when matters have deteriorated;
- students with identified needs may receive interventions from various support teams in school with staff not aware of the support being received from other teams. This may also result in **overlap** in support being offered to some students and a **shortage** of resources for other students;
- a **fire-fighting** model of support with an over-reliance on emergency and external services could develop.

### 3.1 The Role of a Student Support Team

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Through implementing a continuum of support, the student support team can provide for the educational, social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs of *All, Some* and *Few* students to ensure their ongoing wellbeing. The school Guidance Plan sets out the components of this system which includes for example, the SPHE and RSE curriculum; the behaviour support system the role of year heads and the various school policies that apply.



Where a student support team is in place it is concerned with promoting a whole school-approach to wellbeing. Examples of some whole-school approaches include: running an anti-bullying and/or wellbeing week; organising a peer-mentoring system; implementing universal social and emotional learning programmes.

The student support team may lead on accessing the views of key stakeholders by administering questionnaires or organising focus groups, with students, parents and staff to gain insight on the strengths and areas for improvement in the school, in the four key areas of whole school wellbeing promotion (Culture & Environment; Teaching and Learning; Relationships & Partnerships; Policy & Planning).

The student support team can also identify and forge relationships with external support services and develop pathways for onward referrals.



### Support for All – Example

The principal requested a review of the school's Critical Incident Response Plan. The review process was put on the agenda of the student support team meeting and decisions were made on how this review would take place and who would be involved. A member of the student support team who is also a member of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) agreed to lead the review. This work took place outside of the meetings but brought back the team for observations and comments before being signed off by the school principal.

### Support for All and Some – Example

A Post-Primary school with DEIS designation had repeatedly above average number of RACE applications for reading assistance at Junior Cycle (JC) and as a result the school was audited by the SEC. The co-ordinator of the student support team invited the NEPS psychologist to attend a meeting to review applications and help problem solve the issue. It was identified that the school had very good screening in attainment and ability testing. However, the data was not fully understood or utilised by staff. It was agreed that the NEPS psychologist would meet with the SEN co-ordinator to look at the data and help interpret the information, to inform interventions to improve reading results. Reading initiatives were put in place for Junior Cycle students such as Drop Everything and Read, key word week and reading challenges. It was also agreed that any students below an agreed cut off point would be invited to participate in a twelve week paired reading intervention The Transition Year (TY) co-ordinator recruited volunteers from TY to act as reading tutors. The NEPS psychologist gave a short input to the TY volunteers on how to be a reading tutor. The 1st year tutor informed parents about the programme and following the initiative the students were retested and the intervention reviewed at a student support team meeting. Over a 2-year period attainment results in literacy improved and the number of applications for reading assistance at JC dropped.

### Support for Some – Example

A small group of 1st Year students were causing serious behavioural difficulties in some classes. Information gathered by school staff indicated that interventions were required on a number of levels, for example: support for the teachers involved; individualised behaviour support plans for two of the students in the group; an examination of the way in which sanctions were used with the students. All of these actions were included in a plan and were reported back during subsequent student support team meetings.

### 3.2 How Can Student Support Teams Help Students?

Participation in the student support team will benefit its members in their shared understanding of students' needs and planning for suitable interventions. For example, a staff member may obtain information about a student that will assist in planning work experience placements or a special needs co-ordinator may decide to modify a student support plan based on background information on a student.

Essentially, a student support team is a student-focused mechanism put in place by a school in order to:

- co-ordinate the support available for students in the school;
- enable students with support needs to continue to access a full education;
- assist staff to manage those students effectively;
- facilitate links to the community and other non-school support services;
- ensure new staff members are briefed about policies and procedures relating to student wellbeing and support;
- advise school leaders on the development and review of effective student support policies and structures.

## 4. Junior Cycle Wellbeing and the Student Support Team

The student support team should form the hub for all the support structures in the school, including those responsible in the school for planning the Junior Cycle Wellbeing programme.

The expectations for planning for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle are outlined in the [Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines \(2021\)](#). Typically, the work of the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Planning Team includes<sup>1</sup>:

Organising consultations with students, parents and staff to gather their views and suggestions on Junior Cycle wellbeing;

- Organising workshops to engage the whole staff in reflecting on their understanding of wellbeing in order to build a common vision of wellbeing for their students;
- Planning and timetabling for the Junior Cycle Wellbeing curriculum;
- Evaluating Junior Cycle Wellbeing initiatives and programmes;

<sup>1</sup> The work of the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Planning Team is explained further and in detail on page 54 of the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines (2021)

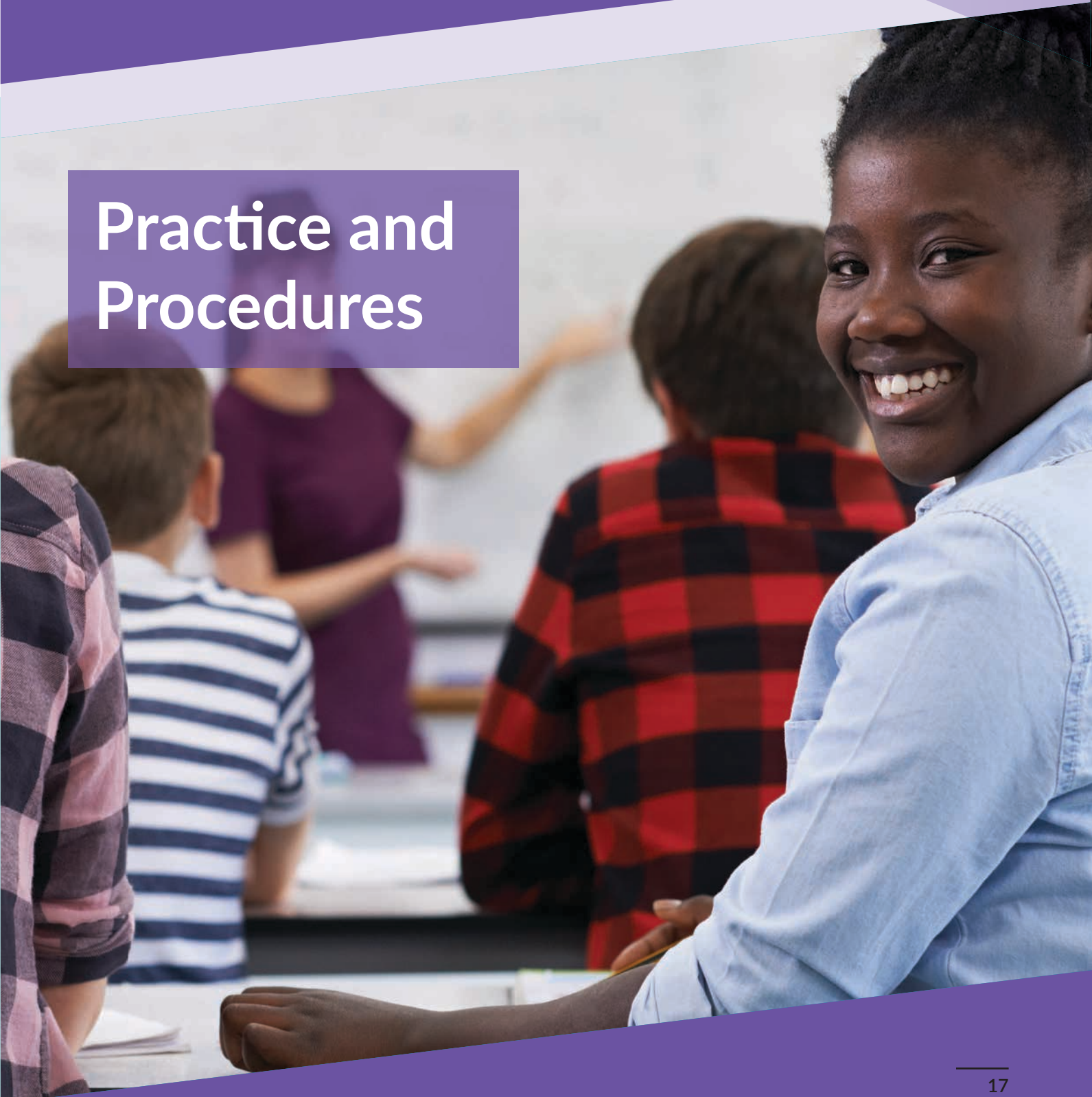
Membership of the team for planning Wellbeing in the Junior Cycle should emerge from an invitation to members of the school community, who are well placed and interested in supporting the planning and development of the Wellbeing programme in Junior Cycle. This team could comprise of similar representatives to the student support team.

Some schools may decide that the student support team alone is sufficient to co-ordinate wellbeing work for both the Junior Cycle programmes and the broader whole school wellbeing promotion work. If separate teams exist and schools gradually develop their wellbeing promotion practice they may decide to merge their Junior Cycle wellbeing planning team with their student support team. School leadership will make this decision based on the school's needs and resource availability.



# Section 2

## Practice and Procedures



## 5. How to Establish or Review a Student Support Team

A school can establish or review their student support team as part of their wellbeing promotion process in a variety of ways.

- By working with the school's allocated NEPS psychologist to support school staff to establish or review the student support team structure within the school.
- By working collaboratively with the local NEPS team with a cluster of Post-Primary schools to support the establishment or review of student support teams. If a cluster group project is being rolled out in an area, schools may be invited to join by their allocated NEPS psychologist.
- It is also possible for schools to use these guidelines as a stand-alone resource to establish, develop or review a school student support team although it is recommended that schools include their allocated NEPS psychologist in this process.

### 5.1 The Role of the NEPS Psychologist in Student Support Team Establishment or Review

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The findings from both the 2014-17 and 2018-19 student support team projects indicated that school staff valued the involvement of their allocated NEPS psychologist in supporting them with this work. If a school decides to prioritise the establishment, or review of their student support team with the support of their allocated NEPS psychologist, it is recommended that discussions take place in the final term of the academic year and that a link teacher is identified for the psychologist to work with. This is to ensure good communication and linkages and that time is protected in the new academic timetable for the student support team development work and the student support team meeting.

If a school requests that the allocated NEPS psychologist prioritises time for student support team establishment or review it is likely that the NEPS psychologist will have a role within the team for the duration of a school year. This would be classified by NEPS as 'Support and Development work' and tasks may include:

- Providing training on the development of the student support team.
- Carrying out observations of the student support team in practice and giving feedback on the process.
- Consultation and action planning with the student support team link teacher/school principal.
- Occasional participation in the student support team which includes providing general advice and support.

- Supporting schools with the evaluation of the school’s student support team through interviews with key staff and using the ‘Checklist to Support the Development of Student Support Teams’, (see below).

## 5.2 A Checklist to Support the Development of Student Support Teams

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It is recommended that prior to establishing, developing or reviewing a student support team that the *Checklist to Support the Development of Student Support Teams* (Appendix 2) is used to identify areas of strength and need within the existing system.

## 5.3 How Much Time Should Be Spent on the Establishment or Review of the Student Support Team?

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A full academic year is the recommended time to engage meaningfully in the establishment or review of a student support team. Once established the student support team should be reviewed and developed over time. Findings from the student support team projects indicated that school staff found having a timeline very useful when reviewing their student support team. It helped them to focus and provide shape and structure for student support team development.

## 6. Putting a Student Support Team into Practice

### 6.1 How Often to Meet and for How Long?

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It is recommended that when a student support team is established, one to two regular class periods per week are set aside for meetings. Findings from the projects indicated that, where possible, larger Post-Primary schools benefitted from having two meetings take place per week, one for the junior cycle and the other for the senior cycle. If two separate meetings take place in a school, it is recommended that the same co-ordinator run each meeting to ensure consistency and a focus on a whole school approach.

### 6.2 Who Should Be Included in the Student Support Team Membership?

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Core membership of the student support team should include:

- a leadership representative – principal or deputy principal;
- guidance counsellor;
- special educational needs co-ordinator;

- representative from the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT);
- Junior Cycle Wellbeing Curricular Planning Team Co-ordinator/whole school Wellbeing Co-ordinator;
- year head/form tutors. (Membership of the student support team should be a routine part of a year head's duties, but all year heads do not need to attend every meeting, or all of a meeting. However, year heads do need to know which students are of concern, as they are a vital link in the referral process and in the communication chain that operates in the school).

Other members of the student support team in schools where these posts exist could include:

- home school community liaison teacher (HSCL),
- school completion officer (SCO),
- chaplain,
- behaviour support teacher,
- SPHE co-ordinator.

Additional participation in some meetings may be appropriate for others as follows:

### **School Staff Members with a Specialist Role**

There may be a staff member who is working in a specialist role or, for example, a subject or resource teacher who is working with a group of students who are of particular concern.

### **Parents/Guardians**

From time to time, parents/guardians may be invited to meet with the team for a particular purpose, such as a project that relates to the wellbeing of students or a member of the parent association may deliver a presentation on behalf of parents.

### **Student/s**

Students may be invited to meet with the team for a particular purpose, such as a project that relates to the wellbeing of students or feedback from the students' council regarding whole-school wellbeing initiatives.

### **Professionals from External Agencies**

Professionals from other services or agencies such as the NEPS or ETB psychologist; NCSE advisors and Education Welfare Officers from Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) may be invited to build

capacity within a student support team. For example, the NEPS psychologist may attend and give support/training on specific areas such as running effective meetings, initiatives such as FRIENDS youth resilience programme, SEN initiatives etc.

## 7. The Student Support Team and Other School Systems

### 7.1 Critical Incidents and the Student Support Team

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The school's Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) may be represented on the student support team. In the case of a critical incident, it is likely that a CIMT would draw support from the student support team during and after the incident. In addition, consultation with the student support team would be important for the ongoing development and monitoring of the school's Critical Incident Management Plan. In some schools the student support team operates as the CIMT given the overlap in roles and responsibilities.

### 7.2 Child Protection and the Student Support Team

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The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who is normally the Principal, has responsibility for ensuring that the reporting requirements for alleged child protection concerns outlined in the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017)* are followed correctly and promptly. The DLP is supported by a deputy DLP. However, each member of the school community, including the board of management, shares the responsibility for implementation of the procedures. Given that alleged child protection concerns can be raised in the context of student support team meetings, it is particularly important that members of the student support team have a clear understanding of the Child Protection procedures and their roles in relation to this.

### 7.3 The Schools Behaviour Support System and the Student Support Team

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The student support team has strong links with the behaviour support system of the school and can initiate preventative programmes for addressing issues that arise.

#### Example

School staff requested the involvement of the student support team following a surge in communication from 1st year parents about concerns regarding their children's unhappiness with the transition to Post-Primary. In conjunction with this, the 2nd year tutor requested support following an increase in altercations and physical behaviour during the lunch period. It was agreed that focus groups would be held with the 1st and 2nd years during SPHE to find out how 1st years felt about their transition to secondary school, to gather the views of 1st and 2nd years on lunch time activities and to problem-solve ways to help. It was also agreed that an increased number of staff would monitor the 1st and 2nd year grounds for a week to assess lunch-time activity and help decide how the grounds could be improved to reduce inappropriate physical behaviour. Staff were given a fortnight to gather this information and feedback to the student support team, so that appropriate interventions could be implemented. Year heads agreed to communicate the plans with teaching staff, having responsibility for behaviour and implementation of the code of behaviour within these year groups. Following observation and feedback from students and staff it was agreed to have a designated space for ball games, request senior pupils to volunteer as referees in the yard and develop an indoor space with board games and activities. The student support team monitored the communication from parents and yard issues that arose during this intervention period to ensure the interventions were effective.

The student support team is not responsible for disciplinary action following inappropriate behaviour of students but should be informed and aware of the school code of behaviour and relevant policies.

## 7.4 Guidance and the Student Support Team

The whole-school guidance plan describes the school guidance programme and specifies how the guidance needs of all students are to be addressed. The guidance counsellor is a member of established student support teams which have a remit for whole school wellbeing promotion at Junior and Senior Cycle. The school can draw on the expertise of the Guidance Counsellor in planning, coordinating and delivering guidance-related learning associated with wellbeing promotion in the whole school. School policies such as the School Assessment Policy, the School Confidentiality Policy and Parental Consent Policy developed as part of the whole school guidance plan will inform the work of the student support team.

Guidance counsellor(s) may have a role in the planning and delivery of the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme. Schools have autonomy to decide how they can include Guidance in their Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme. The *Whole School Guidance Framework* (NCGE, 2017) provides a useful resource to support planning for guidance-related learning in the Wellbeing Programme.

The guidance counsellor also has a role in the whole school and wider school context of wellbeing promotion, including at Senior Cycle.

Feedback from the school staff involved in the student support team projects to date has highlighted the value of structure and procedure and how being a member of the student support team focused their attention on “the value of a solid whole-school approach to student support”. School staff agreed that it facilitated best practice and encouraged “more consistent adherence to agreed procedures”.

## 8. Responsibilities of Student Support Team Members

When establishing or reviewing student support teams, it is recommended that the responsibilities of core team members are agreed, recorded and reviewed on an annual basis.

Typical responsibilities of the core team include the roles of **co-ordinator**, **chairperson** and **minute-taker**. The principal may take on the responsibility of co-ordinator, at least initially, to ensure a successful start. However, over time the principal may appoint another member of the team to this role. The three key roles can be rotated, annually, but the value of experience should be taken into account if rotating roles, as the overall effectiveness of these positions is key to effective functioning of the team. A deputy co-ordinator is also recommended who could lead in the event of the co-ordinator being unavailable.

The **co-ordinator** may:

- organise and make preparation for the meetings;
- gather Student Support team Request for Involvement forms, ensuring a balance of cases and issues for the agenda (see section 10 record keeping for more information);
- liaise prior to the meetings with any additional attendees and arrange for the relevant year heads, other teachers, parents/guardians, students to be present if required;
- brief any new attendees about issues and procedures;
- ensure any documentation to be shared in advance is circulated;
- liaise with relevant agencies and, if appropriate, with parents/guardians;
- arrange feedback to those agencies and parents;
- ensure relevant staff are kept informed of decisions/actions;
- provide support in the development of criteria for monitoring the operation of the student support system.

The **chairperson** may:

- structure the student support team meeting in accordance with the time allocated and agenda;
- engage all student support team members in discussion;
- assign actions to student support team membership at meetings;
- ensure that actions previously agreed are reviewed as part of the agenda at subsequent student support team meeting;
- make appropriate referrals or allocate tasks to another person.

The **minute-taker/ time keeper** may:

- ensure that all records of the student support team meeting are logged on the student support team meeting template;
- ensure that the student support team meeting records are secure and circulated in accordance with the agreed system and requirements of GDPR;
- keep a track of time in meetings to support the completion of the agenda.

In relation to their specific role in the school, the student support team members below may make the following contributions:



The **guidance counsellor** may:

- share as appropriate and within the limits of confidentiality information on particular students;
- agree to provide on-going support or specific interventions to individual students as an outcome of the meeting;
- support subject teachers in their work;
- liaise with outside agencies;
- be a link for parents/guardians who have concerns about their children;
- co-ordinate whole-school wellbeing initiatives.

The **special educational needs co-ordinator** may:

- share specialised information on students with learning difficulties;
- advise on appropriateness of supports for particular students;
- agree to provide ongoing support or specific interventions to individual students or groups of students;
- provide information and/or advice to subject teachers as needed;
- liaise with outside agencies;
- link with parent/guardians as required.

The **year head/form tutor** may:

- collate information from teachers in relation to particular students or issues;
- give feedback to relevant teaching/support staff;
- make contact with parents/guardians and be available to monitor/support individual students.

The **co-ordinator from the JC Wellbeing Curricular Planning Team** may:

- support the planning and timetabling for the Junior Cycle wellbeing curriculum and share information with the student support team as needed;
- suggest appropriate supports/programmes/initiatives for classes;
- organise consultations with students, parents and staff to gather their views and suggestions on Junior Cycle wellbeing or whole school wellbeing promotion;
- evaluate Junior Cycle wellbeing initiatives and programmes;
- plan for new programmes/initiatives to meet the emerging needs in Junior Cycle.

### Example

Two members of staff work with the same student to support learning. Both teachers address literacy and maths difficulties and both have communicated with parents who have expressed concern in relation to duplication of work and confusion as to which teacher has overall responsibility for supporting their child. As a result of this feedback the student support team coordinator organised a meeting between the two teachers where they shared and co-ordinated their plans and agreed a lead teacher to liaise with the parents in future, should the need arise.

(Appendix 3 provides a template to assist schools in defining roles within student support teams)

## 9. Communication and Effective Student Support Teams

The structure and operation of the team will have a significant influence on the development and maintenance of good communication internally and with other school staff and external agencies. This will be key to its success.

### Schools who participated in the student support team projects reported:

- whole-school staff benefited from having an information session at the beginning of the school year on the role and function of the student support team and referral procedures within the school;
- the importance of communicating with parents about the student support team and its purpose within the school. Schools reported various ways of relaying this information to parents including, information in the school newsletter, information night for incoming 1st year students and via the school prospectus.

## 9.1 In-School Communication

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It is recommended that staff are identified in the student support team meeting to provide for the effective communication of information to other staff members. For example, the subject teachers of a student may need to be briefed in relation to an issue and actions required, a Special Needs Assistant may need to be informed of a particular intervention required and the role he/she may play in ensuring practice is adapted. The strategies agreed should be recorded into the student support plan and communicated to members of the school community who are involved with supporting the student/s.

## 9.2 Communication with Parents

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How can schools communicate the role and function of the student support team to parents?

- the role of the student support team can be highlighted by a member of the student support team at the meeting for 1st year parents;
- reference can be made to the role in the a) school enrolment form or b) relevant school policies;
- a description of the student support team can be outlined on the school website;
- the role and function of the student support team can be described in articles in the school newsletter;
- reference can be made to the student support team in the school homework journal;
- if there is a first-time concern about a student and it is on the agenda for a student support team meeting, his/her parents could be contacted by a designated member of the team in advance by phone to inform them of the concern and remind them of the process involved.

## 9.3 Communication with other agencies

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It is essential for the student support team to have information about the various services and agencies which provide support locally and procedures for accessing these services, (see Appendix 4 for an example of a Contact List Document). As agencies and services can change, periodic reviews of what is available and referral procedures is important.

## 10. Student Support Team Procedures

While there is much variation in schools, there are key features essential for the maintenance of a student support team:

- Regular designated meeting times are necessary. It is recommended that the team meet weekly. However, whether weekly, fortnightly or otherwise will depend on the size, needs of the school and the immediacy of the issue. Infrequent and irregular meetings will not facilitate a good process as it could be difficult to address issues adequately and the team becomes reactive to issues rather than working preventatively.

### Examples from project schools:

A school with 1100 students scheduled a double class each week for a student support team meeting. The first class was for the issues/needs of the junior cycle and the second the senior cycle. A school with 250 students had a weekly meeting running for the duration of one class and there was no distinction between junior and senior cycle.

- Adequate time needs to be allocated for preparation to ensure the best use of time. Scheduling meetings well in advance is also recommended..
- At times not all members will be available for every meeting, but as long as the majority of members are available the student support team meeting should proceed. The co-ordinator or designated person agreed at the meeting should undertake to inform the non-attendees about relevant information and decisions taken.
- A designated minute taker assigned by the student support team should record the meeting using the meeting template and circulate actions agreed to members of the student support team after the meeting. The records of the meeting template should be maintained confidentially by the student support team. Dependent on actions agreed, specific members of the student support team can be assigned to follow up with referrers and others. Where a student support plan exists or is required, actions agreed by the student support team may be added to the plan.
- Record Keeping Procedures. There are two main types of information:
  - i. Student Support Team Request for Involvement Form (Appendices 5a-5c)
  - ii. Student Support Team Meeting Record and Meeting Template (Appendices 6a- 6b).

- The Student Support Team Request for Involvement Form can be recorded in hard or soft copy, placed in the student support file and stored securely. The Student Support Team Meeting Record can be stored in a secure student support team meeting file and maintained by the school leadership team.
- Clear and easily accessed Student Support Team Request for Involvement forms for cases and issues are essential. It is best to have some flexibility but the access route should fit with the needs of the school and involve the least number of people. Students who have been identified by external services or by parents/guardians for student support team involvement may be referred through the principal. A sample Request for Involvement Form is provided below and other templates developed by schools may be found in appendices 5a-c.

### Student Support Team Request for Involvement Form for Student Wellbeing

Name of teacher: Mr Kelly Role: Form tutor

Name of Student: Tom Year: 2<sup>nd</sup> year

#### Outline the Issue

Tom is refusing to come to school. At home he is verbally challenging to his Mum (Mrs Doherty) and has strongly resisted when she tries to get him to school. Mrs Doherty has gone to the GP with Tom but she is not happy with the outcome as he did not get a referral to external services. On the days that Tom attends school he generally behaves well, however, he has started to become disruptive in Irish classes. He socialises with a group of boys from his year group and appears to have a stable group of friends.

#### Continuum of Support Level: Support for All/Some/Few

Tom is not receiving any extra support within the school at present, as to date he had not presented with any needs.

#### Actions taken already

- Mrs Doherty has been in contact with the year head and they agreed that if Mrs Doherty is finding it difficult to get Tom to school on time that she will take him in when he is ready, even if late.

- The year head has asked the HSCL to make contact with Mrs Doherty.
- The HSCL did a home visit and found Mrs Doherty to be very upset and willing to seek any support.
- Tom has been offered sessions with the guidance counsellor and refused.

**How do you think the student support team can help with this issue?**

- Offer specific guidance on previous interventions of reluctance to attend school.
- Check whether advice or recommendations from NEPS is required.
- Provide advice on the most appropriate referral pathways to outside agencies for Mrs Doherty.

Name and Role: Mark Kelly, form tutor.

Date: 09/10/22

## 11. Meeting Processes for student support teams

Meeting procedures for student support teams are based on the same principles of good practice that any meeting will follow:

- clarifying the purpose of the meeting;
- reviewing the agreed actions from the last meeting and reporting on progress to date;
- ensuring that all views are heard, while also promoting positive, proactive and compassionate contributions from all attendees;
- staying within time schedules and adhering to the agreed agenda;
- recording decisions taken and proposed actions;
- setting a date for next meeting.

Whenever possible, a collaborative approach is used to reach decisions but the chairperson may at times have to make a decision if agreement cannot be reached. A student support team should be non-judgemental and use a structured problem-solving approach. Student support team members may benefit from access to professional development in running effective meetings. The school's NEPS psychologist, if requested, can advise on a useful structure for case discussions and facilitating action plans.

A solution-focused approach provides a way of implementing a short-term intervention that can be readily evaluated. A solution focussed approach:

- emphasises short-term, goal focused interventions;
- focuses on constructing solutions, rather than analysing possible causes;
- seeks to have elements of the solution already present, i.e. start with an easily achieved target;
- explores how things will be different and what it will take to make this happen;
- develops an action plan;
- includes monitoring and reviewing the action plan.

The following structure may provide a useful approach to a case.

Step 1	<p><b>State problem –</b></p> <p>The meeting begins with a <b>statement of the concern in behavioural terms</b></p> <p>“Dean ----, following suspension for fighting with another student at the lockers, was verbally challenging to Ms ---- in her class before walking out of the room”</p>
Step 2	<p><b>Review information –</b></p> <p>A <b>review of what is known</b> about Dean follows – his history, the level of his ability, and other relevant information from school records.</p>
Step 3	<p><b>Gather more information-</b></p> <p>What is known about the <b>classes or situations where the behaviours</b> occur is examined. Is there a <b>pattern/connection</b>? When do the behaviours not occur? If possible, group and <b>prioritise</b> the main concerns.</p>
Step 4	<p><b>Identify next steps –</b></p> <p>Identify other <b>information required</b> to progress the matter.</p>
Step 5	<p><b>Agree actions and Review –</b></p> <p>Possible <b>actions to be taken are identified</b> – including immediate; medium and longer term. Who needs to be spoken to? Who will speak to the parents/guardians etc?</p>

This structure can also be applied to group/whole school issues:

Step 1	<p><b>The meeting begins with a statement of the concern in behavioural terms:</b></p> <p>“Teachers consider that 1<sup>st</sup> years are not connecting with each other or school staff and are presenting with a range of issues for example, in-group fighting, not participating in social events and a high level of absenteeism.”</p>
Step 2	<p><b>A review of what is known</b> about the 1<sup>st</sup> years follows –</p> <p>This is the biggest 1<sup>st</sup> year group the school has ever enrolled, there is a high level of students with complex needs, the group was lively and boisterous from the first day; a very popular child in the year group was killed in a road traffic accident during the first term. Teachers have reported a change in the atmosphere of the group and are finding it difficult to manage and connect with them.</p>
Step 3	<p><b>What is known about the classes or situations where the behaviours occur is examined. Is there a pattern/connection? If possible, group and prioritise the main concerns.</b></p> <p>Two classes have a high number of students with additional needs. Most behavioural difficulties arise in mathematics, Irish and French classes.</p>
Step 4	<p><b>Where other information is required to progress the matter, this Information is identified.</b></p> <p>Gather more information on absenteeism patterns (what classes and what days). Examine the SEN needs of those in Mathematics, Irish and French and discuss possibilities with the learning support team. Gather the names of those involved in group fighting and examine any patterns or connections.</p>
Step 5	<p><b>Possible actions to be taken are identified and a review date agreed – including immediate; medium and longer term actions. Who needs to be spoken to? Who will speak to the parents/guardians etc?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reallocate SNA time to the classes with the most SEN needs</li> <li>■ Instigate weekly reward systems for attendance</li> <li>■ Offer teachers support on classroom management</li> <li>■ Through SPHE explore grief and loss and consult with the students in planning for a commemoration for the student who died</li> <li>■ Review in 4 weeks</li> </ul>



## Sample Plan for Intervention

### Concerns:

- The second year tutor spoke to the year head about Shane, a normally easy-going student who was observed recently to be in 'bad form' and not talking with his friends as much as before.
- Three subject teachers also mentioned to the principal and the year head that Shane's behaviour had changed. He had made 'smart' comments to a couple of teachers and was often 'off-task'. The year head spoke to Shane who said there was 'nothing wrong' and that he didn't know why he had misbehaved. The year head brought it as a referral to the student support team because Shane's behaviour, though not yet of a serious nature, was uncharacteristic and had altered quite quickly.
- At the meeting, a review of what was known of Shane indicated that the family had not come to attention during routine contacts with all parents. He was considered to be an average student who related well to teachers and had a group of friends.

Following a review of the concerns, it was decided that:

- the year head would speak to Shane's parents about the school's observations;
- the guidance counsellor would meet with Shane;
- a teacher report form would be circulated to all his teachers;

At the next meeting the information available about Shane was reviewed.

- Shane's parents had recently split up and his mother said that he was angry about his father leaving.
- Shane's teacher reports indicated that he was doing less well in Business Studies and Geography but his performance in other subjects was not a concern.
- The guidance counsellor found that Shane didn't know what to expect following his parents separation and was worried that his father might disappear from his life.

### Actions:

- It was decided that the Guidance Counsellor would continue to see Shane and share his concerns with his parents if Shane agreed
- Staff would monitor progress and discuss with NEPS psychologist if required
- A Lean In & Lean Out System would be used to communicate with staff and describe what actions were required (see Appendix 7)
- A formal review would take place in 3 weeks at the student support team meeting

### 11.1 Reviews

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An annual review of the team's work and role is recommended. This gives an opportunity to obtain a profile of the referred students. It also helps to establish if there are clearly identifiable patterns or issues emerging, which may support identification of initiatives at the All, Some and Few levels of the school's Continuum of Support for the following year. While this exercise can be seen as a demanding task at the end of the academic year, it will be of practical value in informing any necessary changes for the coming year. **The Checklist to Support the Development of Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools (Appendix 2) is a useful tool in supporting the review.**

In addition, a review of the composition and organisation of the team will allow for an examination of the place of the team in the support system of the school i.e. what other systems are operating that might overlap with the team's work? The need for modifications and adjustments in how the wider school system works and connects may also be identified.

## 12. Confidentiality and the Student Support Team

In the context of a student support team there are two aspects to the issue of confidentiality.

The first relates to the responsibilities of those who work directly with children and young people in terms of their duty of care. The second is the need to find a balance between, on the one hand, keeping teachers sufficiently informed to enable them to carry out their duties and on the other, avoiding unnecessary disclosure of personal information about students and their families.

All those who work with students need the opportunity at times to express personal views and feelings about issues arising. However, student support team meetings should avoid being solely opportunities for adults to express their frustration. Professional boundaries should be preserved in discussions about young people and teams should ensure that factual information is used when making decisions on a course of action.

The expression 'need to know' is used frequently but the difficulty can be in interpreting the level of 'need'. Teachers who are asked to modify their teaching or their interactions with students should have a reason provided for doing so to help them to understand a student's behaviour. However, they may not need to know exact details of the concern and these should only be shared with the consent of the student/family. Teachers of any student who is being supported should, if possible, be made aware of the support and how long it may continue. The *Lean In & Lean Out system* (Appendix 7) is a way to communicate in a busy school about students who may be going through a difficult time.

Schools who participated in the project used the Lean In & Lean Out system and reported that it was an effective way of communicating that students had needs without breaking confidentiality. This approach works best when teachers have a positive relationship with students. Teacher judgement on the use of this approach is required and modifications used when required.

Students on the Lean In list are deemed to benefit from a little extra attention, encouragement and support. Teachers keep an extra watchful eye on these students to communicate visibility, attention and care as well as watching for signs of distress, deterioration or changes in behaviour.

Students on the Lean Out list are also going through a difficult time. Due to a number of factors, they may benefit from space and tactical ignoring. Some students when disturbed or overwhelmed default into anger which makes them feel more powerful. They are very likely to trigger and act out if they feel hurt, challenged, confronted or misunderstood.

Schools explained the system to their staff at whole staff meeting. Some schools had two covered sheets on a notice board in the staff room with the names of students who were presenting with needs, the names were updated on a weekly basis. The cover ensured that visitors or students entering the staff room would not see the student list. Staff may consider that it is more appropriate to use student initials and their class name. Other schools emailed staff the list on a weekly basis to alert staff to those students who were presenting with a level of need.

Respecting privacy and confidentiality is very important and students often express concerns about 'being talked about'. The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) has developed a comprehensive document – Developing a Confidentiality Policy for Post-Primary Schools. Important Information and Sample Templates are available at [www.ncge.ie](http://www.ncge.ie).

School staff should always be advised of the importance of privacy and confidentiality in relation to any information they receive about students. Families can have strong views about how much of their personal information is known and these views should be respected. Following a format such as the solution focussed approach or similar problem-solving techniques can help prevent circular discussions about students' problems.

**The key question is** – will disclosure of information be of benefit to the student and is this disclosure in line with school confidentiality policy? The welfare of the student is the deciding factor.

The relevant member/s of the student support team decide how much information should be shared. Consultation with parents/guardians, the student, NEPS, or other professionals may help in making this decision.

Sometimes, more serious issues relating to possible neglect or abuse will arise and in those cases, follow-up will be carried out by the Designated Liaison Person, whose role is outlined in the **Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017)**.

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse or neglect should be shared only on a 'need to know' basis in the interest of the child/young person. The test is whether or not the person has any legitimate involvement or role in dealing with the issue. The assurance of confidentiality should not be given to a third party who imparts information.

Any disclosures that relate to an alleged child protection concern must be reported by a teacher to the DLP. Young people have to be informed that this will happen. It is important that they are also made aware that what is discussed will not be disclosed unnecessarily and that privacy will be respected. These issues are less likely to be seen as problems if a student has a positive and trusting relationship with a member of staff. However, at times, it can happen that a student will disclose information that indicates potential self-harm. The staff member must put the student's safety above any issues of trust. It is not the responsibility of the school to assess or investigate alleged child protection concerns. It is a matter for Tusla to assess and investigate and determine what action is needed. In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate risk, and it is not possible to make contact with Tusla, An Garda Síochána should be contacted immediately

### 13. Record Keeping

**Data Protection** is an important element of the work of the team. Information about students is kept, Whether on computer or paper files, the Data Protection Acts of 1988-2018 will apply. These laws are designed to safeguard the privacy of individuals in relation to the processing of their personal information. It is essential that the school has a well-developed and implemented policy on GDPR and record keeping and that records of the student support team are kept in accordance with the school policy. The website [www.gdpr4schools.ie](http://www.gdpr4schools.ie) may be a useful reference point.

Chapter 5 of The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 outlines the requirements for reporting of alleged child protection concerns and chapter 9 outlines the requirements for oversight of the reporting of alleged child protection concerns, including the Principal's child protection oversight report to the board of management.

In addition to formal requirements, the team will need a means of keeping track of discussions and decisions. The tasks in relation to paperwork can include:

- Design of a student support team Request for Involvement Form for Students (see Appendix 5)
- Design of a form for recording the information relating to students of concern (see Appendix 6 (a) and (b))
- Design of an action plan form. This form can ensure relevant personnel know of the plans for a particular student. Alternatively, the team may prefer to keep this record for the team only and to verbally inform others. (see Appendix 6 (a) and (b)).

## 14. Conclusion

This document is a guide to establishing or reviewing student support teams in Post-Primary schools and describes how the resources of a school can be organised to benefit all students and in particular for students requiring additional supports at any given time.

They are a resource for all personnel who have a responsibility for student support in Post-Primary schools but of particular relevance to key staff responsible for planning and reviewing whole school preventative supports and individual support plans. Through implementing a continuum of support, the student support team can provide for the educational, social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs of *All*, *Some* and *Few* students to ensure their ongoing wellbeing.

It is recognised that this is an area of ongoing development and that current thinking and practice may well be superseded by future developments. Therefore this guidance document should be seen as an evolving one that may need adaptation in the light of future new perspectives and needs of individual schools.

## 15. References

Department of Education and Skills & National Educational Psychological Service. (2014). student support teams in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Review and Development

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Department of Children and Youth Affairs. (2011). Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children

Department of Education Child (2017). Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools.

National Centre for Guidance in Education. (2017). Whole School Guidance Framework.

National Centre for Guidance in Education. (2020). Developing a Confidentiality Policy for Post-Primary Schools.

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# Appendices



## Appendix 1

### Student Support Team Projects

In conjunction with the publication of the *2014 Student Support Team Guidelines*, the *Student Support Team Project (2014-2017)* was initiated. This project sought to support Post-Primary schools in reviewing and improving the structures they had in place using the framework outlined in the *Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines (2014)*. Seventeen schools in the Dublin area took part in the project and were supported by NEPS, the NBSS, and the Psychological Services of the ETB. These schools indicated that, following their involvement in the project, their capacity to support students significantly improved.

The NEPS *Student Support Team Project 2018/2019* emerged as an expansion of the earlier 2014 - 2017 project, to further the objective that all Post-Primary schools would have effective structures in place to support student wellbeing. The decision to expand the *Student Support Team Project to Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Post-Primary schools* was included in the *2018 Action Plan for Education*. This action included the commencement, ongoing evaluation and refinement of the training materials for student support team development.

This revised guideline document draws on the learnings from both projects and includes additional information and resources for Post-Primary schools who wish to establish, develop or review existing student support teams.

### Schools who participated in the 2018/2019 student support team Project

Carndonagh Community School, Donegal	Moville Community College, Donegal
Scoil Mhuire, Buncrana, Donegal	Errigal College, Donegal
Deele College, Donegal	Mulroy College, Donegal
Finn Valley College, Donegal	Skibbereen Community College, Cork
St Patrick's College, Cork	Ursuline Secondary School, Cork
North Monastery Secondary School, Cork	Terence Mac Swiney Community College, Cork
Gaelcholáiste Mhuire, Cork	Cobh Community College, Cork
O'Connell CBS, Dublin	Beneavin De La Salle College, Dublin
Mount Carmel, Dublin	Trinity Comprehensive School, Dublin
Pobalscoil Iosolde, Dublin	Blakestown Community School, Dublin
Holy Child Community School, Dublin	St Tiernan's Community School, Dublin



## Appendix 2

### Checklist to support the development of student support teams in Post-Primary schools

*This checklist can be used by a NEPS psychologist assigned to a Post-Primary school or independently by school staff to develop/review the school's student support team. The checklist facilitates a close look at current practice and aims to identify areas for further development.*

Name of Psychologist:	
Name of Staff Member (if consulting):	
School:	
Date:	

#### Key elements of a student support team

Team & Core Purpose	YES	NO	Action
The school has a student support team (SST)			
The SST's core purpose is defined in the context of wellbeing promotion			
The SST deals with student wellbeing promotion at all levels of the Continuum of Support: <input type="checkbox"/> Support for All <input type="checkbox"/> Support for Some <input type="checkbox"/> Support for a Few			
The SST deals with a range of student's wellbeing needs:  Learning, Social, Emotional, Behavioural, Physical.			

**Membership**

<b>Core Membership of the SST includes:</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Action</b>
1) School Leadership			
2) Guidance Counsellor			
3) SEN Co-ordinator			
4) Representative of the JC Wellbeing Curricular Planning team/whole school wellbeing team			
5) Representative from the CIMT			
6) Year Head Representative			

<b>Non-core Membership of the team includes:</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Action</b>
School Completion Officer			
Home School Liaison Officer			
Behaviour Support teacher			
Chaplain			
Other			

<b>Roles &amp; Responsibilities</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Action</b>
All SST members have clear roles and responsibilities			
The SST co-ordinator gathers the items for the SST meeting agenda in advance			
SST members are adequately prepared for meetings and have gathered appropriate information			
There is a chairperson of the SST meeting			
The role of the chairperson is defined			
There is an assigned minute-taker to the SST			
The role of the minute-taker is defined			
There is clarity about who carries out the agreed actions			

<b>Procedures</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Action</b>
There are clear procedures for requesting the involvement of the SST whether for an individual case or more general issue			
SST meetings are timetabled and scheduled on a weekly / fortnightly basis			
There is agreement amongst the SST about how issues and cases are prioritised for discussion at the SST meeting			
A template for structuring and recording the SST meeting is used			
There is usually enough time to discuss what is on the agenda at the SST			
The SST use a proactive and problem-solving approach in their discussions about issues raised			

Communication	YES	NO	Action
There is agreement by the SST about how SST meeting outcomes are communicated to other school staff			
There is a system for communication from the SST to school staff			
Parents/Guardians are aware of the role of the SST in the school			
Students are aware of the role of the SST in the school			
Other agencies are aware of the role of the SST in the school			
The SST is described on the school website			
The SST makes referrals to external agencies			

Record Keeping	YES	NO	Action
A recording template is used for SST meetings			
Actions are recorded			
Actions are reviewed at subsequent SST meetings			

<b>Training</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Action</b>
SST members are familiar with Wellbeing policy and SST guidelines			
SST members have received up-to-date Child Protection training			
SST members have attended training on wellbeing promotion			
SST members have completed training courses offered by the National Organisation for Suicide Prevention (NOSP), e.g. Living Works; Safetalk, ASSIST or Understanding Self- harm			

<b>Outside Agencies</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Action</b>
The SST has an up-to-date knowledge of local services with whom they can link / refer			
A member of student support team has been identified as a link person with responsibility for liaising with external agencies			

<b>Confidentiality</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Action</b>
The student support team has an agreed system for sharing information that ensures confidentiality is maintained			
Records of student support team meetings are stored securely			

Policies	YES	NO	Action
The student support team role is documented within relevant school policies (e.g. enrolment ) and plans (e.g. School Guidance Plan)			

Review	YES	NO	Action
Student support team membership and organisation are reviewed annually			
Student support referral trends and themes are reviewed annually			

## Appendix 3

### Defining Roles within the Student Support Team

School:	
Year:	

The **Co-ordinator** (or **Deputy co-ordinator**) for the student support team will:

Roles:	1:	2:	3:

Co-ordinator (name)	
Deputy co-ordinator	

The **Chairperson** will:

Roles:	1:	2:	3:
Chairperson			

The **Record-Keeper** will:

Roles:	1:	2:	3:
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<b>Record-Keeper</b>	
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The **SEN co-ordinator** will:

Roles:	1:	2:	3:
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<b>SEN co-ordinator</b>	
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The **Guidance counsellor** will:

Roles:	1:	2:	3:
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<b>Guidance Counsellor</b>	
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The **Year Head** will:

Roles:	1:	2:	3:
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<b>Year Head</b>	
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## Appendix 4

### Student Support Team Contact List

Agency	Contact No.
Garda	
Hospital	
Fire Brigade	
Local GPs	
HSE/Primary Care Team	
CAMHS	
Officer for Suicide Prevention	
Inspectorate	
Allocated Psychologist (NEPS/ETB)	
Parish Priest/Clergy	
State Exams Commission	
Employee Assistance Service	
Visiting Teacher Service	

## Appendix 5 (a)

### Student Support Team Request for Involvement Form for Student Wellbeing

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<b>Outline the Issue</b>	
<b>COS Level: Support for All/Some/Few</b>	
<b>Actions taken already</b>	
<b>How do you think the student support team can help with this issue?</b>	
<b>Name and Role:</b>	<b>Date:</b>

## Appendix 5 (b)

### Student Support Team Request for Involvement Form for Students

#### Private and Confidential

Name of Student		Year	
Form Teacher		Year Head	

What are the concerns you have (please tick)?

Learning <input type="checkbox"/>	Social <input type="checkbox"/>	Emotional <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>
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COS Level

What are your main concerns about this student?	
List any steps that have been taken to address the concerns to date: (e.g. discussion with pupil, contact between school and parent/guardian, meeting with parent/guardian, support in class, differentiation of school-work/homework, special education teaching, behaviour plan, mentoring, social skills group)	

Signed:	Date:
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## Appendix 5 (c)

### Student Support Team Request for Involvement form for Students

**Private and confidential**

Name of Student:	
Name of teacher:	
Year Head:	

COS Level:                      All                       Some                       Few

State how you know the student:

What are the presenting needs (tick box)

Emotional <input type="checkbox"/>	Behavioural <input type="checkbox"/>	Learning <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>
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Describe:

Additional information that would help support this student:

Is the student aware of the referral:                      Yes                       No

Signed:	Date:
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Please give to co-ordinator of the student support team

## Appendix 6 (a)

### Student Support Team Meeting Record

#### Private & Confidential

	Referrer	Student	Concern	COS level	Concerns	Follow-up
	Initials	Initials	See Key*	All, /Some /Few	Social/ emotional/ behavioural / learning	By member of SST who will report back at next meeting
<b>Issues</b>		N/A	N/A			
<b>1<sup>st</sup> year</b>						
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Year</b>						
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Year</b>						
<b>TY</b>						
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Year</b>						
<b>6<sup>th</sup> Year</b>						

\*Key: Level of concern - 1: Low, 2: Low to Medium, 3: Medium, 4: Medium to High, 5: High

## Appendix 6 (b)

### Student Support Team Meeting Template

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First Year	Student Initials	Concern	Information gathered	Follow-up
		1(low) - 5(high)	Behavioural, Emotional, Social	Individuals & proposed actions
First Year				
First Year				
First Year				
First Year				

## Appendix 7

### Lean In & Lean Out Communication System

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The Lean In & Lean Out Communication System is a great way to communicate in a busy school about students who may be going through a difficult time.

#### Lean In

Students on the Lean in (aka Focus in) list are deemed to benefit from a little extra attention, encouragement and support.

Teachers keep an extra watchful eye on these students to communicate visibility, attention and care as well as watching for signs of distress, deterioration or changes in behaviour. Teachers can help this student to feel connected and supported by intentionally using their name, making eye contact, reducing isolation by organising paired work, being positive in tone and language and giving them words of encouragement. Keep a close presence and reflect with empathy.

#### Lean Out

Students on the Lean out (aka Focus out) list are also going through a difficult time. Due to a number of factors, they may benefit from space and tactical ignoring. Some students when disturbed or overwhelmed default into anger which makes them feel more powerful. They are very likely to trigger and act out if they feel hurt, challenged, confronted or misunderstood.

Teachers' judgement and relationship with the student prevails and they might try checking in with them on a one to one basis, communicating in a calm tone (so they don't feel in any way threatened). It is suggested that if teachers feel themselves getting angry, hurt or rejected, they use the 3Rs approach:

- **REFLECT** (you may be mirroring their feelings; what is their behaviour telling me? what are my thoughts and feelings? where is our relationship at now/overall?)
- **REGULATE** (strong emotions are contagious, take a moment to sooth and calm yourself if triggered, debrief later)
- **RELAX** and then return to the interaction. Keep anger and frustration out of your voice. Keep an extra watchful eye and communicate any change in behaviour to tutor/ year head or management if you are very concerned. Focus on positives and avoid confrontation.

Schools have developed various different versions of this communication system. Some use a colour coded system with 'In' on one coloured sheet and 'Out' on a different colour. Staff are reminded at staff meetings what the colours refer to. Other schools use two small whiteboards for this job with lean in and lean out explanations attached. Some schools simply use A4 sheets which are updated weekly and double up as a record of the student support team meetings (see example below).

The coloured sheets/whiteboards are located in a work room, staff room or central location. The system with Lean In & Lean Out explained have a cover for confidentiality and/or use initials. Whiteboard markers are attached by string for practicality. Alternatively some schools explain the 'Lean In & Lean Out' system at staff meetings and remind staff to check the lists regularly.

In some schools this is a flexible system so any teacher can add students to the lists as well as the student support team and each teacher is responsible for checking the lists regularly. In others the lists are generated at the student support team. It works best if one member of the student support team is responsible for updating the lists after the meeting.





1st Year .....

2nd Year .....

3rd Year .....

4th Year .....

5th Year .....

**IN -**

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Focus in and...

Support and encourage this student. Reinforcement with positive attention and compliments. Keep a Watch Eye over him/her. Reduce isolation by using their name or writing positive comments in their journal.



1st Year .....

2nd Year .....

3rd Year .....

4th Year .....

5th Year .....

**OUT -**

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Give this student space and a little leeway this week. They might not have all their work done. If they are in trouble try to talk to them about it one to one. Be aware that they are having a difficult time and make them appropriate allowances. Be gentle with them and focus on positive behaviour.

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# Notes

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# Notes

