



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Guidelines for Primary Schools

Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Classes



Table of Contents

Key Messages	4
Introduction	5
Terminology	6
Section 1 - Principles Underpinning the Special Education Teaching Model	7
Principles Underpinning the Special Education Teaching Model	10
An Inclusive Education System	10
Inclusive School Culture	10
Collaboration	11
Wellbeing	12
Engagement and Participation	12
Child Centred and Needs Based	13
Evidence-Informed Practice and Outcomes	13
Governance and Accountability	14
Section 2 - The Organisation of Special Education Provision: Planning the Deployment of Special Education Teaching Supports	15
Section 3 - Special Education Provision: Roles and Responsibilities	18
Role of the Board of Management	19
School Policies	19
Governance and Accountability	20
School Self-Evaluation Process	20
Role of the School Principal	21
Role of the Class Teacher	22
Role of the Special Education Teacher	24
Section 4 - The Process for Identifying and Responding to Needs across the Continuum of Support	26
The Continuum of Support Framework	27
Whole-School Support-All	28
Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice	28
The Problem-Solving Process	30

Student Support File	32
Student Support Plan	32
Classroom Support-All	33
School Support-Some	36
School Support Plus-Few	40
Section 5 – Supporting Transitions	46
Summary	48
Appendix 1: School Provision Plan for Children with Special Educational Needs	49
Appendix 2: Schedule of Deployment of Special Education Teachers for Children with Special Educational Needs (Primary)	51
Appendix 3: Further Information	52
Appendix 4: Advice for Gaeltacht schools and Gaelscoileanna on the Special Education Teaching Model	54
Appendix 5: Parental Involvement	55
Figure 1: Principles underpinning the special education teaching model	7
Figure 2: Guide to the allocation of special education teaching resources	16
Figure 3: The Continuum of Support	27
Figure 4: Four key areas of wellbeing promotion	29
Figure 5: The problem-solving process	30
Figure 6: Information gathering Classroom Support-All	34
Figure 7: Information gathering School Support-Some	37
Figure 8: Information gathering School Support Plus-Few	41
Figure 9: Target setting using the problem solving process	44
Figure 10: Supporting transitions: A Whole School Approach	46
Figure 11: Transition supports and resources	47

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



Key Messages

- Special education teaching resources are allocated for the sole purpose of providing additional teaching support to children with special educational needs.
- Special education teaching support is underpinned by eight key principles which support the inclusion and wellbeing of all children 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 children with special education 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, children, teachers and other professionals, where appropriate.
- The views and wishes of children 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, support and 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 children meaningfully in mainstream mixed-ability class groupings. This helps ensure high expectations, and enables children with special educational needs to learn alongside their peers. Mixed-ability teaching has beneficial effects for all children, and helps promote social and personal development.

These guidelines detail how mainstream primary schools utilise their special education teaching resources to support the meaningful inclusion of all children in their learning and the life of the school community. The guidelines are provided in the context of Circular 002/2024, and update the associated *Guidelines for Primary Schools Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*, provided to support the introduction of the revised allocation process for special education teaching in mainstream 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 children whom the school has identified, through the problem-solving process, as having special educational needs, which are recorded in the School Provision Plan for Children with Special Educational Needs (Appendix 1).

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

The importance of providing well-timed, appropriate and targeted support to children 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 Children with Special Educational Needs (Appendix 1), underpinned by the Continuum of Support framework. The inappropriate deployment of the special education teaching hours allocated to a school for purposes other than intended deprives children with special educational needs of direct access to these resources. This can impact negatively on the learning outcomes of the most vulnerable children in our education system.

Effective provision for children 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, children, and other professionals, where appropriate.



The inappropriate deployment of the special education teaching hours allocated to a school for purposes other than intended deprives children 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 children 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 children 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 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 children, including those identified 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 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 children, teachers and parents/ guardians working together to proactively support children with special educational needs.



Wellbeing

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



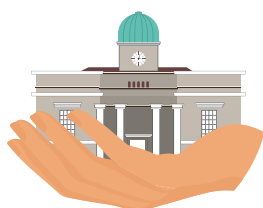
Child Centred and Needs Based

Schools use the Continuum of Support framework, and the problem-solving process, to identify and respond to children'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 children 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 child'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 children 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 children's skills development across areas of 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 children 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 children in educational settings, and in particular for those with special educational needs, and others who may be at risk of marginalisation or exclusion.

An inclusive school culture enables all children, 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 the 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 children, 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, children with special educational needs access and participate in their learning in mainstream educational settings.

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



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

Collaboration

- Collaboration involves the whole school community, including the child, teachers, and parents/guardians, working to effectively and proactively support children's learning and wellbeing.
- The right of the child to express their views in all matters affecting them is central to the collaborative process. Children should be provided with the age-appropriate opportunities and assistance to realise this right.¹
- The principal leads the collaborative process in conjunction with the school's special education teacher(s) and class teachers.
- The collaborative process involves planning, reflection and review of existing policies and practices, including preventative and proactive approaches to support the purposeful inclusion of children 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 their 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 outcomes and responses to targeted interventions
- Collaboration within the school community is of vital importance to ensure consistency of approaches and a shared understanding of a child'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 children with special educational needs.** This is recognised by schools, and is evident in the many good practices and initiatives used to promote parental involvement. **Parental engagement is enhanced when parents/guardians 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.**

¹ Education Act 1998

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



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



Wellbeing

- The wellbeing of children is developed and enhanced through their learning experiences, which include challenges and successes, and achieved through the provision of planned learning activities.
- The wellbeing and best interests of children are a central focus of educational provision.
- The voice and participation of children 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 children with 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 child's strengths, needs and interests.

Engagement and Participation

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

Children with the greatest level of need should have access to the greatest level of support.



Child Centred and Needs Based

- Special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to more significant, and from transient to enduring.
- Children 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.
- Children with the greatest level of need should 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 children's learning 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.

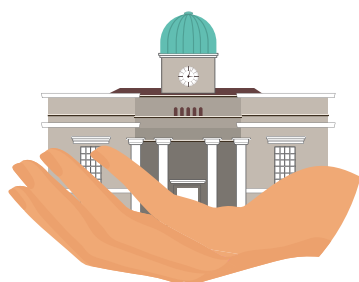
Supports provided to children are evidence-informed and targeted based on identified strengths and needs.



Evidence-Informed Practice and Outcomes

- Supports provided to children are evidence-informed and targeted, based on 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 children'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 functioning are informed by the child's strengths, interests, age and stage of development.
- Interventions are tailored to the child's context in the school setting, with opportunities for generalisation of skills in other settings, for example, 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 children with special educational needs.



Governance and Accountability

- The special education teaching allocation is a resource provided to schools, and is ring-fenced for the sole purpose of providing additional supports to children 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 children with special educational needs, as recorded in the School Provision Plan for Children with Special Educational Needs (Appendix 1).
- It is the legal obligation of the board to manage the school for the benefit of the children and their parents/guardians and to provide an appropriate education for each child at the school for which that board has responsibility.
- Providing well-timed and appropriate support to children with identified needs is crucial to their educational development and their long-term life prospects.
- Schools are accountable in complying with the relevant legislation² and departmental 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.

² 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 support children's special educational needs. **Importantly, those with the greatest level of need should have access to the greatest level of support.**

Children may have a range of identified needs in areas such as literacy, numeracy, language and communication, social interaction, emotional development, sensory and physical development.

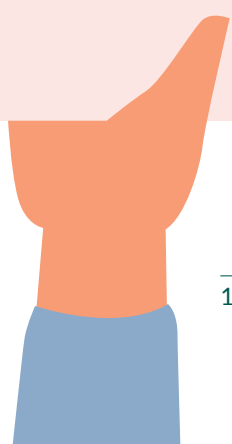
Figure 2 on page 16 sets out actions to guide schools in the deployment of special education teaching supports.



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



Key actions in the provision of special education teaching support		
1	Identify children with special educational needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing information on the children's strengths and 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. This may include teacher observations, information on social and emotional development, standardised tests, and/or other criterion-referenced tests/checklists. Identify all children 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 child, 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. Children with emerging needs may be supported at the level of Classroom Support - All. Special education teaching support is allocated based on identified need at levels of School Support - Some and School Support Plus - Few. Special education teaching hours are recorded on the School Provision Plan for Children 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 children 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 teacher(s) to teach groups/individuals and agree duration, frequency and location of the additional support provision. Ensure that the children 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 Classroom Support/ Student Support Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Classroom Support Plan for children identified with emerging needs at the level of Classroom Support-All. • Develop/update a Student Support Plan for children 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 child, 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 the child 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 teaching/individual additional 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 child'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 child'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 allocation of special education teaching resources

The School Provision Plan for Children with Special Educational Needs and Schedule of Deployment of Special Education Teachers schools to record the planning and deployment of support at each level of Continuum of Support.

Other additional teaching supports in primary schools

There are high enrolments of children in some schools who require English as an Additional Language (EAL) support. 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 children. Schools use the Continuum of Support framework to identify learning needs, plan, implement and review intervention for all children. This is consistent with a unified and coordinated 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.



Section 3

Special Education Provision: Roles and Responsibilities

The following section outlines the 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 children 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 teacher/s, and other relevant staff. It is important that roles and responsibilities are clearly established and agreed.

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

- Board of Management
- School Principal
- Class Teacher
- Special Education Teacher



Role of the Board of Management

The overall responsibility for the provision of education to all children, including children 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 children with special educational needs. Where special education teaching resources are used to support children with special educational needs in 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 children with special educational needs in their school.**

School Policies

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

- Ensure that all children 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 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 children with special educational needs to the greatest extent practicable.
- Arrange for the publication of the school policy on the education of children with special educational needs. This document should include the school's policy on the admission and participation of children with special educational needs, the arrangements for identifying these children, 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 children, including those with special educational needs.
- Contribute to the development of awareness among teachers, non-teaching staff members and children, of the needs of children with special educational needs, and of their particular responsibilities for the inclusion of these children in the school community.

³ gov.ie - School Boards of Management (www.gov.ie)

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 recognises that this is **an additional** resource which is ring-fenced for the sole purpose of supporting children with special educational needs. Where special education teaching resources are used to support children with special educational needs in 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, together with the 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 0064/2024.



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 special education teaching supports. The deployment of special education teaching supports is recorded in the Schedule of Deployment of Special Education Teachers (Appendix 1) to assist in tracking the use of special education teaching resources 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

School Self-Evaluation Process

The board of management oversees the school's engagement in SSE. Schools are familiar with the six-stage evaluation process - *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016 – 2020* (DES, 2016)⁴, and with *Looking at Our School (LAOS) – A Quality Framework for Primary Schools* (DES, 2022)⁵. When applied to a school's provision for children with special educational needs, the SSE process, and the domains and statements of practice detailed in LAOS, enable teachers and school leaders to:



⁴ gov.ie - School Self-Evaluation Guidelines (www.gov.ie)

⁵ gov.ie - Looking at our School 2022 (www.gov.ie)

- 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 children.

Role of the School Principal

The principal has the responsibility for establishing, promoting and implementing inclusive whole-school policies and procedures, which are supportive of the learning of all children, 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.

Principals oversee how the resources, including human resources, and special education teaching hours, which are provided to the school to support children with special educational needs, are being used **to ensure that the children 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 of inclusive whole-school policies and procedures relating to children 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.
- Ensures effective engagement with early learning and care settings and with post-primary schools to support the transition of children with special educational needs.
- Deploys teachers who have the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding to special education teaching roles.
- Ensures that systems are in place for effective collaboration between special education teachers and classroom teachers for the sharing of relevant information on children's needs, to ensure continuity of provision for the children.
- Facilitates teacher professional learning (TPL)⁶ for all teachers in relation to whole-school inclusive teaching and learning practices, and to the education of children with special educational needs.



⁶ 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);

- Encourages special education teachers to undertake the Post-Graduate Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Special Education Teachers⁷ that is available through a number of Higher Education Institutes.
- Ensures that all school staff, including class teachers, special education teachers and special needs assistants (SNAs), are clearly informed of their roles and responsibilities.
- Provides opportunities for the sharing of specialist knowledge with school staff as part of promoting a whole-school inclusive culture.
- Ensures that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the meaningful and effective involvement of parents/guardians, children and external professionals/agencies.
- Ensures that the School Provision Plan for Children with Special Educational Needs (Appendix 1) is updated.
- Ensures that all children identified with special educational needs, who receive additional teaching support, have their needs documented in a Student Support File.
- Ensures that a Classroom/Student Support Plan is developed and contained within the Student Support File for all children identified at all levels of the Continuum of Support.

In the implementation of the special education teaching allocation, the principal can allow time for the special education teacher(s) for information-gathering and assessment, reviewing, monitoring and co-ordinating provision for children 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 children with special educational needs, who have been identified on the School Provision Plan for Children with Special Educational Needs (Appendix 1).

⁷ gov.ie - Post-Graduate Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Special Education Teachers, (www.gov.ie)

Role of the Class Teacher

Class teachers adapt their teaching approaches and methodologies, and make specific accommodations for children within the class, in response to concerns arising in relation to an individual child's progress, application, communication, emotional regulation, or interaction with peers.

Class teachers have primary responsibility for the progress and care of all children in their classrooms, including children with special educational needs. Section 22 (1) of the Education Act 1998 states the primacy of the teacher in the education and personal development of children in schools.

This requires targeted interventions to develop relevant skills related to these needs and to facilitate the meaningful inclusion of children with special educational needs. These include:

- Co-operative teaching and learning.
- Collaborative problem-solving activities.
- Heterogeneous group work.
- Interventions to promote social and emotional development.
- Embedding digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment.

Class teachers adapt their teaching, learning and assessment approaches for children with special educational needs. This can be achieved by, for example:

- Varying the structure, content, mode of instruction and pace of lessons to ensure the meaningful participation and engagement of all children
- Adapting lessons to take account of a child's interests.
- Matching tasks to the child's strengths, interests and needs.
- Adapting and utilising resources, including the use of visual supports, and technology.

The class teacher's duties include:

- Availing of relevant TPL, to develop capacity, knowledge and understanding of special educational needs.
- Using a variety of appropriate methodologies, activities, experiences and materials to cater for children's individual needs and to create a stimulating and supportive classroom environment.
- Collaborating with the principal, other relevant teachers, parents/guardians and external professionals, as required, to support children with special educational needs to participate and engage in meaningful learning.
- Identifying children's strengths, interests, and priority learning needs, to inform the planning, implementation, assessment and regular review of intervention at each level of the Continuum of Support.



- Developing Classroom Support Plans for children with emerging needs who require additional classroom-based support.
- Recording all actions and keeping copies of the Classroom Support Plan/s in the Student Support File.
- Supporting the development of Student Support Plans in collaboration with special education teachers, parents/guardians, children, external professionals as required, in order to plan assessments, interventions, and to track children's progress at the levels of School Support - Some and School Support Plus - Few.
- Ensuring that lessons are accessible through the use of a variety of approaches, including active learning, small-group tuition, individual teaching, and scaffolded instruction.
- Identifying and responding to the learning difficulties and learning preferences of children with special educational needs.

Role of the Special Education Teacher

The special education teacher provides additional teaching to children attending mainstream classes with special educational needs and should lead, model and ensure a high standard of provision. Special education teachers should be familiar with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources appropriate to meeting a variety of special educational needs. Teaching approaches include a combination of team-teaching initiatives, early intervention, small group and individual support. This may include a combination of in-class support and withdrawal of children (if appropriate).

The role of the special education teacher includes:

- Contributing to the development of an inclusive school culture, demonstrated through ethos, values and inclusive school policies and practices.
- Promoting inclusive whole-school preventative and proactive teaching and learning approaches.
- Developing inclusive school structures and systems in the organisation of provision for children with special educational needs.
- Leading in the identification and provision of support for children with special educational needs in the school context, using the Continuum of Support problem-solving process.
- Liaising closely with the principal on the development, implementation and monitoring of whole-school approaches to the education of children with special educational needs.



- Leading, in collaboration with the class teachers, on the development of Student Support Files and Student Support Plans for children with special educational needs who are identified in the School Provision Plan for Children with Special Educational Needs at the levels of School Support-Some and School Support Plus-Few (Appendix 1).
- Collaborating, liaising and communicating with parents/guardians, the child, other relevant teachers and staff, the school principal and relevant others, as part of the problem-solving process.
- Engaging and collaborating with external agencies and services outside of the school as appropriate and necessary.
- Planning to support transitions for children with special educational needs.
- Using evidence-informed teaching and learning approaches to support the special educational needs of children, and monitoring response to intervention.
- Sharing relevant information, regarding the special educational needs of children, with class teachers to support their meaningful engagement and participation in lessons.
- Advising and supporting class teachers when requested.
- Engaging in TPL to upskill and develop the knowledge, competencies and skills required for high quality provision of support for children with special educational needs
- Reflecting on individual professional practice, including teaching and learning approaches, to enhance provision.
- Preparing and planning on a weekly basis in order to address each child's specific needs as reflected in support plan targets.



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

Where more than one special education teacher is involved in providing the additional teaching support, one special education teacher takes the lead in the planning process, and in the coordination of supports for that child.

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
- 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 children 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 children'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 children 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 children with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest level of support.

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



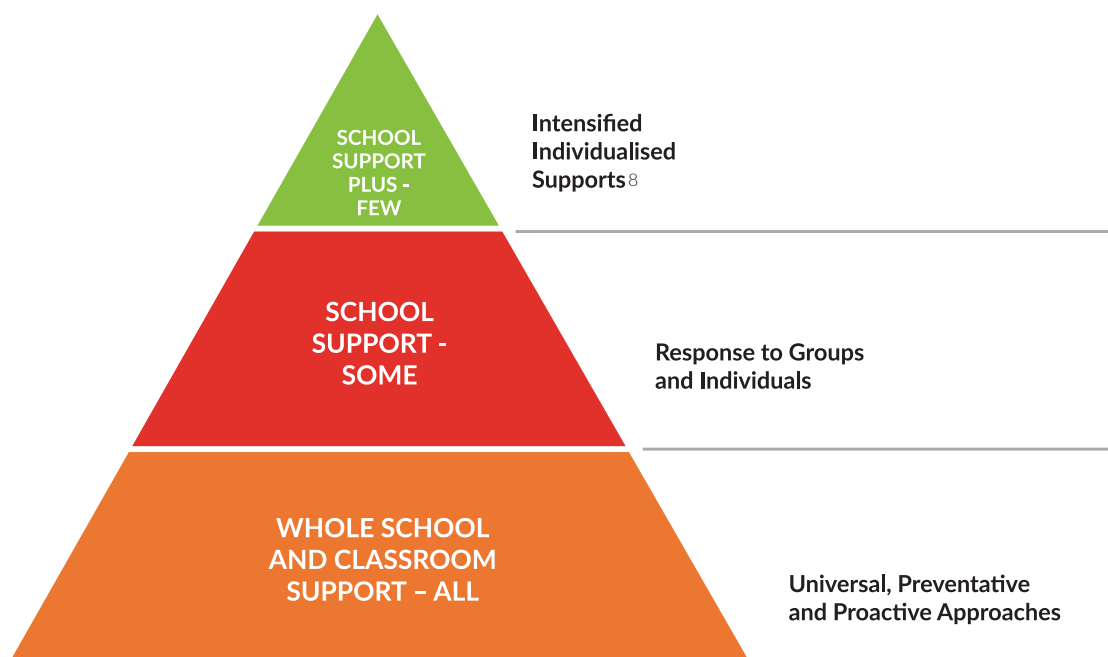


Figure 3 The Continuum of Support

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/Classroom Support - All involves support for all children in the school, and includes universal, preventative and proactive teaching and learning approaches at classroom level.

Classroom Support-All is for those children with emerging needs, in the class context, who have not responded to general adaptations or interventions made by the class teacher to the learning environment, and where areas of need that require specific targeting and additional classroom-based support, have been identified. These are children who have not yet been identified as requiring support at the level of School Support-Some or School Support Plus - Few. **The provision of classroom support is the responsibility of the class 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 includes the involvement of the special education teacher.**

School Support Plus-Few involves the provision of highly individualised, intensive, targeted and additional teaching and learning supports for children whose special educational needs are enduring, and significantly impact on their learning and participation in the school environment. **This level of support includes the involvement of the special education teacher.**

⁸ Individualised support does not equate with one-to-one teaching support. Instead, individualised support means that support for the child is individualised or tailored to their particular strengths and needs.

Whole School Support-All

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

The experience of all children 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.

Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice⁹ 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 children 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 children 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.

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



⁹ gov.ie - Wellbeing in education (www.gov.ie)



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 children with transitions has been identified as key to fostering wellbeing. This is particularly important for those children with special educational needs. Section 5 of these guidelines includes further information on supporting transitions. 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 children. 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 child.

This section outlines how the problem-solving process may be implemented at each level of the Continuum of Support.

The problem-solving process is applied at each level of the Continuum of Support to ensure that interventions and supports are aligned to the identified needs of the child, 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 problem-solving process poses four questions as illustrated in Figure 5:

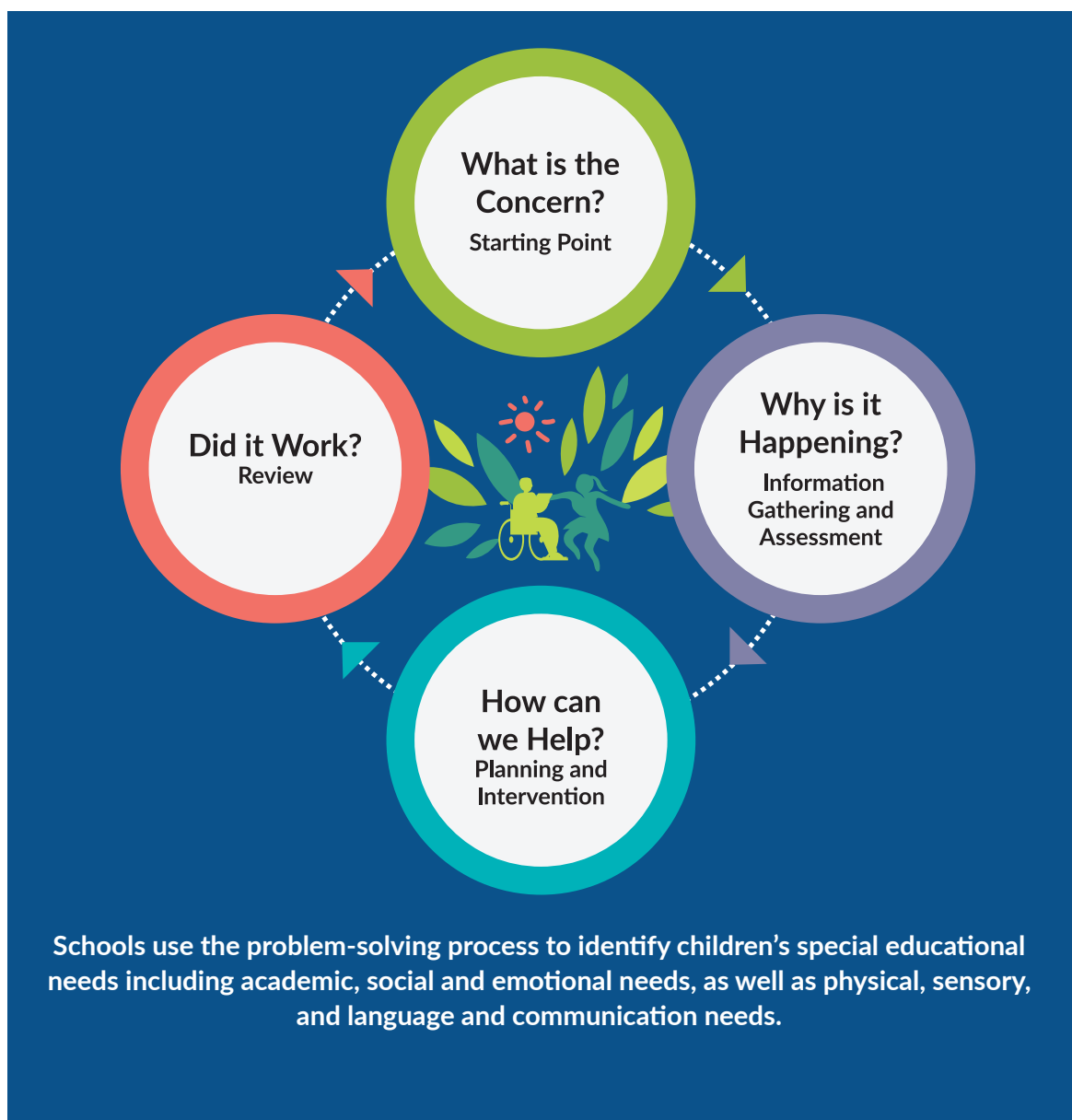


Figure 5 The Problem Solving Process (DES, 2017; 2010; 2007)



The problem-solving process emphasises the necessity of looking at children's strengths, interests 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 the Continuum of Support resource pack for teachers.¹⁰

Where there is a concern in relation to a child, the first step is to develop an understanding of the child's strengths and needs. Some children may have special educational needs identified prior to the transition to 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.

Class teachers should liaise with parents and the school principal where concerns arise.

For other children, needs may emerge over time as they engage with their primary education. These needs may be transient and may relate, for example, to difficulties with the transition to primary, including new daily routines, or they may be more enduring and long term.

Identifying needs

Teachers in all mainstream primary school settings use a range of assessment¹¹ and intervention approaches to identify and meet a child's educational needs. Teachers and children 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 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 child'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, Mo Scéal¹², the Student Support File, parental reports, as well as the views of the child, are all key aspects of the assessment process. This evidence-informed approach facilitates the identification of the child'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 class teachers who have primary responsibility for teaching the child, but may also be carried out by, or in collaboration with, the special education teacher(s).

The Continuum of Support framework supports teachers to gather information, to plan and review the child's progress through the problem-solving process. This process of identification of need is a dynamic and cyclical process, which views the child's response to intervention as central to planning and review in the school.

¹⁰ Resource Pack for Teachers

¹¹ Assessment | NCCA

¹² Mo Scéal | NCCA

Student Support File

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

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

- Log of actions
- Relevant information gathered to develop understanding of strengths, interests and needs
- Student Support Plans that are developed and monitored over time
- Information on attendance
- 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 child at school.
- Copies of relevant information from pre-school settings, including Mó Scéal
- Records of relevant communications with parents/guardians and the child.

Student Support Plan

The Student Support Plan is an individualised learning plan which documents the child's strengths, interests and needs, as well as the priority learning needs that have been agreed as the basis for targets and interventions. Some children may present with many needs and their priority learning needs should be identified and recorded. These inform the targets, supports 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 collaboratively and in consultation with the relevant class teachers, special education teacher, parents/guardians, and relevant professionals, where appropriate. The views of the child 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 child.



Classroom Support-All

In primary schools, the class teacher has primary responsibility for teaching, learning and assessment of progress and participation of all children in their classroom. Classroom Support-All is the first response made by the class teacher, if concerns emerge in relation to a child'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 children can participate in their learning.

Classroom Support Plan

A Classroom Support Plan is a simple plan that outlines the child's special educational needs and the actions, including individualised teaching and management approaches, which will be taken to meet the child's needs. The plan may also include home-based actions to be taken by the child's parents/guardians to support their child's development.

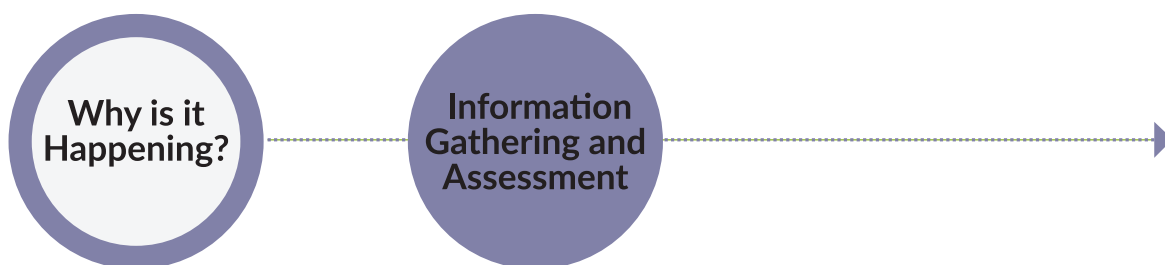
A Classroom Support Plan may be considered necessary where a child has not responded to general adaptations or supports made by the class teacher to the learning environment, and where areas of need that require specific targeting and additional classroom-based support, have been identified.

A Classroom Support Plan is developed in collaboration with parents/guardians. Where this is agreed, a Student Support File should be opened and copy of the plan should be kept in the Student Support File along with a record of consultations and any other relevant information gathered. Examples of Classroom Support Plans are available in the Indicators of Effective Practice for Primary Schools. The four steps of the problem-solving process may be used to guide classroom support where concerns emerge.





The first step is to establish a profile of the child’s strengths and interests, as well as any difficulties or areas of need. The use of curriculum-based assessment and teacher observations may be useful approaches in identifying areas of need.



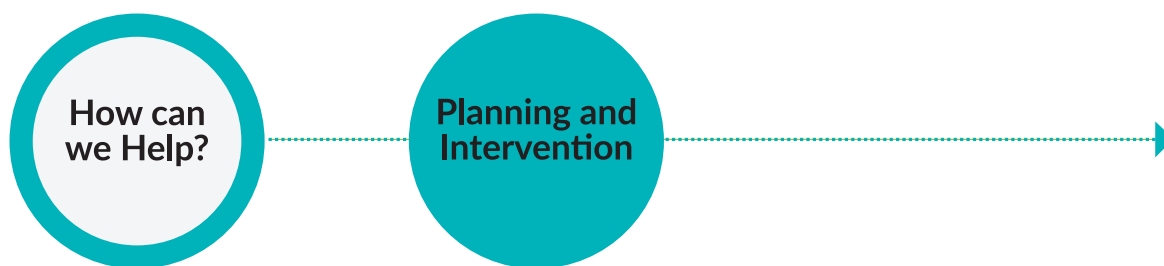
Once concerns are identified, the next step is to gather information to inform the appropriate supports required. Establish any potential factors that may be contributing to the difficulty that the child is experiencing. Figure 6 provides a summary of sources of information that may be useful for this purpose.

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. **Reviewing the learning environment is necessary to provide a responsive and supportive setting for all children, and is a normal part of the class teacher’s planning for teaching and learning.** The Learning Environment Checklist in the Continuum of Support resource pack for for teachers is a useful resource for this process. The next step may include consultation with the child’s parents/guardians to discuss emerging needs in different environments.

Classroom Support-ALL

- Learning Environment Checklist
- Consultation with the child (e.g. My Thoughts about School checklist)
- Parental/guardian consultation
- Teacher assessment, including observation and curriculum-based assessment.
- Standardised literacy and numeracy tests.
- Information from previous setting or pre-school (e.g. Mo Scéal transfer documents).

Figure 6 Information gathering Classroom Support-All



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

Modifications or adaptations to teaching and learning approaches form part of the class teacher's usual lesson preparation. Modifications will tend to be local and specific and would normally reflect the good practice already evident in schools. For example, a child who is having difficulty settling in may be supported by the class teacher to participate in class activities.

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



Based on the class teacher's ongoing formal and informal assessment of progress, a collaborative decision may be made to continue teaching support at the level of Classroom Support. This collaborative decision-making process involves consultation and agreement with parent/guardians, the special education teacher as well as with the child.

Where the child 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 children will have their needs met through whole school approaches and Classroom Support-All, some children require more targeted support.

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

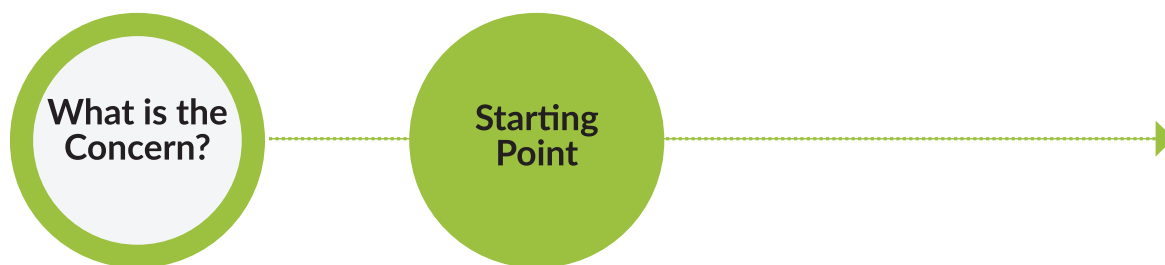
Other children may enrol in a primary school with known needs, and initial meetings with parents/guardians, and a review of accompanying documentation, may suggest that a targeted approach is required from the outset.

While the special education teacher may take the lead in the information gathering, intervention planning and review process, a collaborative approach is necessary to ensure that the child is purposefully and meaningfully included in their learning across the curriculum. Consistency in approaches to supporting the child requires collaboration and communication between the class teacher and the special education teacher, parents/guardians and the child.

This level of support typically involves targeted intervention for small groups of children 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.

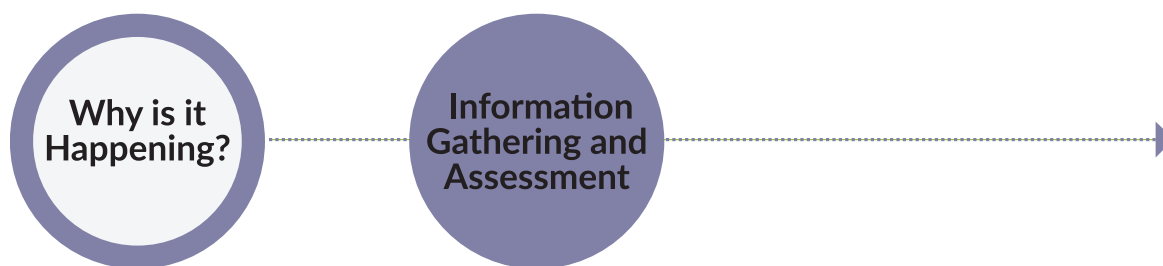
Where it is agreed that a child’s needs warrant more targeted intervention and support, at the level of School Support-Some, then this is recorded in the Student Support File.

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



Some children may have known and documented needs identified prior to enrolling in 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. Class teachers may wish to liaise with the special education teacher where a child does not appear to be responding to intervention at Classroom Support level. The problem-solving process is applied where concerns arise. The first step in the process involves clarifying concerns with the child’s parents/guardians to reach a shared understanding of the child’s strengths, interests and needs.





Once the concerns are clarified, it is important to understand why this is happening. It may be useful at this stage to gather more detailed information about potential underlying strengths and needs, thus building upon the information gathered at Classroom Support level.

Information gathering for the purpose of identification of needs at School Support-Some is a collaborative process, led by the special education teacher, and involving the class teacher, parents/guardians, and the child.

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

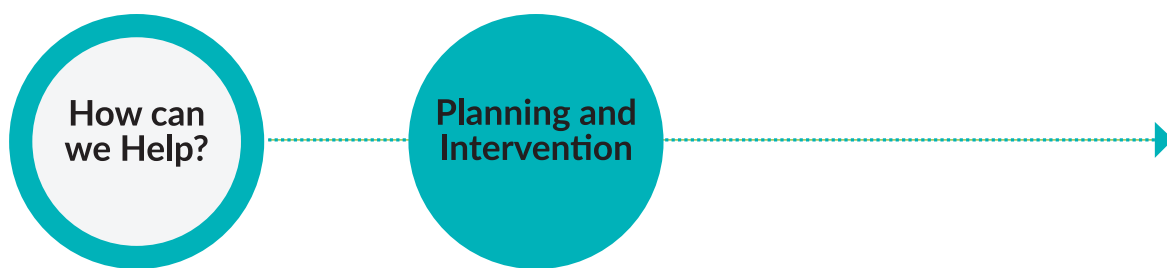
School Support-Some

- Learning Environment Checklist Here
- Information from early learning and care setting or previous school, including Mo Scéal and other relevant documentation
- Teacher assessment, including observation and curriculum-based assessment Formal and/or informal holistic assessment of individual strengths and needs
- Child consultation (e.g. My Thoughts about School checklist)
- 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, social, emotional, motor/physical and sensory needs, 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, and may be delivered through in-class support (e.g. team teaching), and/or small group, 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 targeting particular areas of learning, skill development and/or social-emotional development. **Interventions to address identified needs should be considered in the context of the child’s strengths and interests.** Consistency in approaches to supporting the child requires collaboration and communication between school staff, children and parents/guardians. 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 child. Targets should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART). Effective target setting requires a collaborative approach involving consultation between teachers, parents/guardian, and the child. It includes identifying evidence-informed teaching approaches and clarifying the role of all involved in implementing the Student Support Plan.

Figure 9 (pages 44-45) summarises key areas to be considered when target setting within the Problem-Solving Process

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 the special education teacher who is involved in providing teaching and learning support for the child, is responsible for the overall development, monitoring and collaborative review of the plan.** Examples of Student 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 being 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 themselves may need to change. In this way, **student 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 of intervention targeted, is usually organised by the special education teacher and involves the class teacher, the child and their parents/guardians.

Detailed information on monitoring and review at each level of the Continuum of Support is contained in the Indicators of Effective Practice. 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 needs may continue to be met at the level of **School Support-Some**.

Information on a child'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 child has not responded to evidence-informed intervention as expected, or is experiencing a higher level of need 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 children who have made significant progress and responded well to intervention, consideration should be given to support at the level of **Classroom Support-All**.

School Support Plus-Few

Children 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 children whose needs have been identified as significant and enduring, and those who have not responded to intervention as expected at the level of School Support-Some.

Children with the greatest level of need require access to highly structured and individualised evidence-informed interventions. This may include adapted environments and teaching approaches, which promote independence, engagement, social skills, 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 child'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.

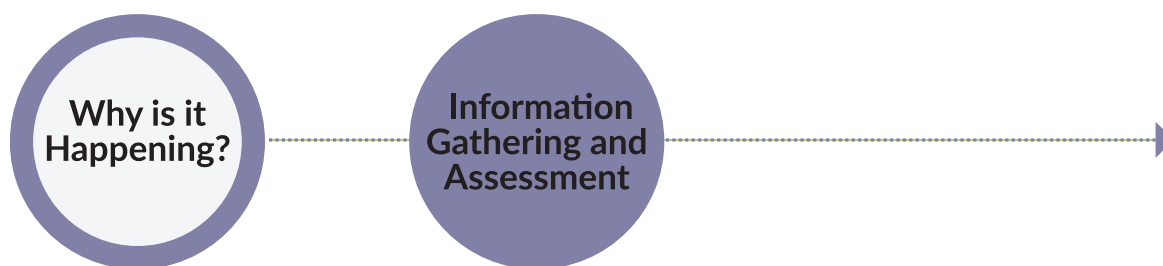


Where it is agreed that intervention at the level of School Support Plus-Few is required, the child may present with special educational needs across multiple domains¹³, or areas of development.

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 child.



¹³ gov.ie - Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools – Supporting Children and Young People (www.gov.ie)



Information gathering to identify strengths, interests and needs at the level of School Support Plus-Few is a comprehensive, collaborative and holistic process, involving the class teacher, parents/guardians, special education teacher, and the child. 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 child in their education, and in all aspects of school life.

It is also important to identify any external agencies that may be involved in supporting a child with more significant and enduring needs, and to request information that may be relevant to supporting the child in the school context. As part of the 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, a Visiting Teacher, NEPS, Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Clinical Psychologist and 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.

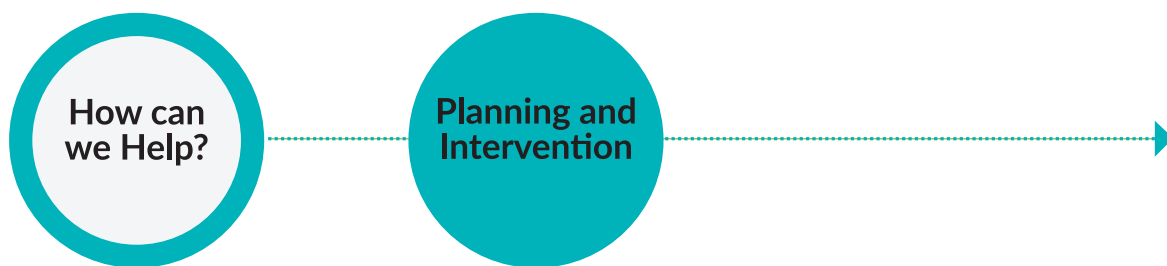
Key areas for consideration when gathering information are outlined in Figure 8.

Figure 8 Information Gathering School Support Plus-Few

School Support Plus-Few

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

- Literacy skills
- Numeracy skills
- Social skills and emotional regulation
- Executive functioning/self-management skills (including organisation, planning and problem-solving)
- Interests and hobbies
- Language and communication
- Motor coordination and sensory needs
- Independence, daily living skills and self-care



Student Support Plans at the level of School Support Plus-Few are highly individualised to reflect the needs of the child across key areas of support, and include targets that are informed by the child’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, with relevant experience and expertise, should take on the lead role of planning and providing targeted interventions, this is a collaborative process involving the child, parent/guardians, class teacher and 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 those children with the highest level of need.

The class teacher and special education teacher consider ways in which the curriculum can be adapted to suit the needs of the child 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 to meet the child’s needs.

There should be flexibility in support and provision. Intervention at this level may take the form of individual and/or small group support, and may be delivered in a variety of settings, including mainstream classrooms.

Student Support Plans at this level should include targets that are aligned to the identified priority needs of the child. Targets should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART). Effective target-setting requires a collaborative approach involving consultation between teachers, parents/guardian, and the child. It includes identifying evidence-informed teaching approaches and clarifying the role of all involved in implementing the Student Support Plan.

Figure 9 (pages 44-45) 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 child, 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 child are documented in the Student Support Plan, to ensure consistency and clarity in understanding of roles to support the child's needs.

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

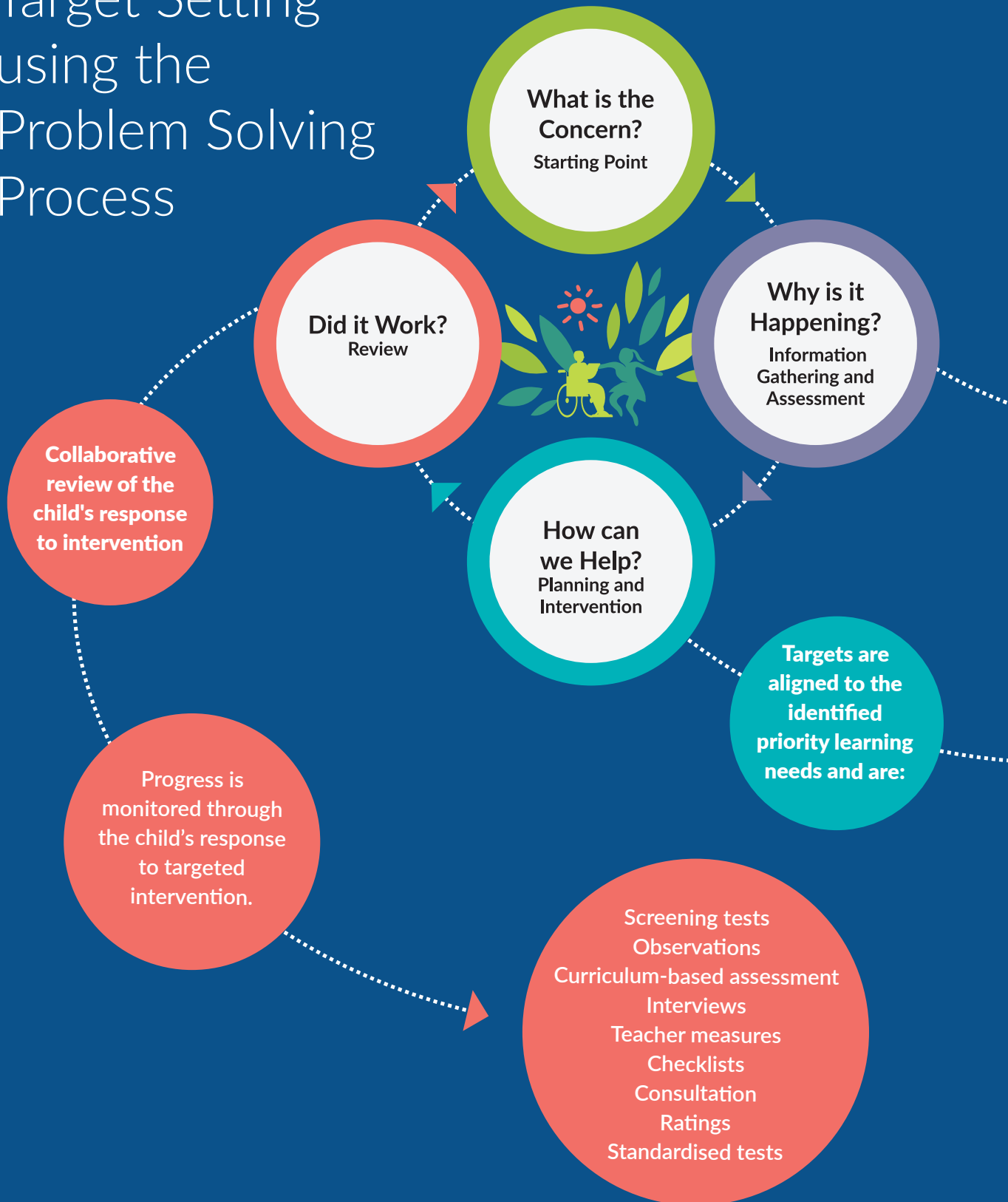
Examples of Support Plans at the level of School Support-Few are available in the Indicators of Effective Practice which accompany these guidelines.



The fourth step in the problem-solving process involves monitoring and review of the child's response to the 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 the special education teacher and involves the class teacher, child, 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 is contained in the Indicators of Effective Practice.

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 children with special educational needs. This includes transitions from pre-school to primary school, from primary school to post-primary school, as well as transitions within and across the school setting. Supporting smooth transitions in the school, such as transitions between special education teaching and mainstream class settings, is very important for fostering wellbeing at school.

Each of the four key areas of wellbeing promotion, outlined on page 29, may be applied when considering whole-school preventative and proactive approaches to supporting transitions.

The provision of targeted supports for the transition from early learning and care settings to primary school, and from primary school to post-primary school is essential for fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness to the new school community. This also applies to transitions within the new school environment.

The process of transition is supported by positive relationships between parents/guardians and schools, between the child and peers, positive child and teacher relationships, and communication between schools.

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. Children with special educational needs require targeted support with transitions, tailored to their needs identified in Student Support Plans. 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 coordinate	Advance planning and consultation
Positive learning environment	Multiple and flexible approaches to teaching and learning	Communication between schools	Protocols 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
Child centred	Accommodations to support access, participation and learning	Effective consultation and collaboration with parents/guardians and children	Monitoring and review of needs

Figure 10 Supporting Transitions - A Whole School Approach



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

Some children come to a new school with known needs. Others may transfer from a different primary school. In this case, it will be helpful to request a copy of any Student Support File which may have been developed to help understand the child's needs, the types of supports provided. Young children coming from early learning and care settings may have their needs documented in their Mo Scéal transition support documents.

While identification of a disability does not fully explain, or predict, the needs of a child in the context of the school environment, it is helpful for parents/guardians to share any additional information with their child's school. A range of information is required to identify a respond to a child's needs, in the school context, using the problem-solving process. A collaborative approach, involving the child, 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 children with transitions during the school day. This may include support for transitions from structured classroom activities to unstructured activities such as break and lunchtimes, and from the home to the school environment. All children benefit from this type and level of support, and planning should be guided by the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.

There is a range of further resources and supports to guide schools with the transition process for all children transitioning from early learning and care settings to primary schools. 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>Preparing Young Children for Primary School</p> <p>Post Primary Transitioning</p> <p>Changing Schools Moving from Primary to Post-Primary School</p>
<p>NCCA</p> <p>Pre-School to Primary Transition Support Materials</p> <p>NCCA Primary to Post-Primary Education Passport</p>
<p>NEPS</p> <p>Transition from Pre-school to Primary School</p> <p>NEPS Primary to Post Primary Transfer Resources</p>

Figure 11 Transition Supports and Resources



Summary

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special education teaching resources are allocated for the sole purpose of providing additional teaching support to children with special educational needs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special education teaching support is underpinned by eight key principles which support the inclusion and wellbeing of all children with special educational needs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles and responsibilities in relation to special education provision are clearly defined and communicated in schools.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Continuum of Support is the framework which guides the provision of support for children with special educational needs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The allocation of special education teaching supports is recorded and monitored at each level of the Continuum of Support.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The problem-solving process is the mechanism by which special educational needs are identified, supported and reviewed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of special education teaching support is a collaborative and holistic process, involving parents/guardians, children, teachers and other professionals, where appropriate.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The views and wishes of children are central to planning and decision-making in relation to special education provision.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Children with Special Educational Needs

The record of children with special educational needs who are supported at the levels of Classroom Support – All; School Support-Some and School Support Plus-Few of the Continuum of Support Framework.

Classroom Support - All						
Pupil ID	Class	Description of special educational need(s)	Area of Support e.g. literacy, numeracy, social, emotional, sensory, life-skills	Type of Support In-class, withdrawal in small groups or individual, school yard	Date of starting at this level of the <i>Continuum of Support</i>	Dates support plan reviewed

School Support - Some						
Pupil ID	Class	Description of special educational need(s)	Area of Support	Type of Support	Date of starting at this level of the <i>Continuum of Support</i>	Dates support plan reviewed

School Support Plus - Few						
Pupil ID	Class	Description of special educational need(s)	Area of Support	Type of Support	Date of starting at this level of the <i>Continuum of Support</i>	Dates support plan reviewed

Appendix 2

Schedule of Deployment of Special Education Teachers for Children with Special Educational Needs (Primary)

School: Roll No:

School Year: Date reviewed/updated:

Special Education Teaching Allocation: hours

Number of full time special education teaching posts

If part of cluster – Cluster school roll numbers: 1. 2. 3.

Name of base school for the cluster group:

Teacher Name:	Details of special education provision (e.g Team teaching, Early intervention etc)	No. of children with special educational needs supported by each special education teacher

Appendix 3

Further Information

The following links may be helpful to 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 student's pathway through the Continuum of Support: *Student Support Plan*
4. The promotion of wellbeing is central to the Department of Education mission to enable children and young people to achieve their full potential. A wide range of wellbeing information and supports for schools, students and parents is available at: *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*
5. The Catalogue of Resources provides a list of resources that are provided by the Department of Education, its agencies, support services, other Government Departments and the HSE to assist the promotion of wellbeing across school communities: *Resources for 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 aims to assist school staff to understand the varied nature of students' strengths and needs, as well as to identify whole-school and individualised approaches to supports for students. It can be used by staff supporting autistic students across a range of educational 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 students with autism and to prioritise areas for development: *Indicators of Effective Practice*
9. The department provides guidance to School board of management in carrying out their role in the effective management and oversight of schools. *gov.ie - School Boards of Management (www.gov.ie)*

Support Services/Agencies

10. 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*
11. NEPS psychologists work with schools to support the wellbeing, inclusion, learning and social and emotional development of children and young people: NEPS
12. The NCSE provides assistance and advice to schools in the effective provision of support for children with special educational needs in schools. NCSE support 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*
13. 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*
14. Middletown Centre 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 children and young people: *Middletown Centre for Autism*
15. 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*
16. Children's disability services are for children and young people up to 18 years who have complex needs: *HSE Children's Disability Services*

TPL/Training

17. 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 students with special educational needs. *Post-graduate Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Special Education Teachers*
18. The Autism specific programme aims 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 Gaelscoileanna on the special education teaching model

The Context

Irish-medium schools provide for the needs of all children including those with special educational needs. Children from diverse linguistic backgrounds attend Irish-medium Gaeltacht schools and Gaelscoileanna. Irish-medium schools are the choice of many parents of children 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 children.
- Schools are reminded that, in the context of Irish-medium education, the development of childrens' proficiency in both Irish and English literacy should be addressed in accordance with childrens' 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 child.
- School should review their assessment and special education policies to allow for the identification of childrens' needs in Irish, English and Mathematics on the standardised tests which are applicable to children in Irish-medium schools.. Results from these tests should be used for identifying need, for planning and interventions, and for reviewing responses to intervention. This problem solving approach will guide the school towards providing appropriate support structures and whole school practices to children 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 children with special educational needs needed to access the curriculum through the medium of Irish in its entirety.
- In the context of schools practising full early-immersion education, supports and interventions for children in the infant classes should be provided through the medium of Irish.
- Irish-medium schools should be aware of the research and supports available to support the learning experiences of children with special educational needs in Irish medium schools
- School leaders and teachers should reflect upon and identify their teacher professional learning (TPL) needs regarding children 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 could be taken into consideration, both in terms of existing and future actions:

- How are parent/guardian consulted and informed about the nature of special education needs provision and policy in school?
- How are parents/guardians consulted when special education supports (for example, Classroom Support-All/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/guardians who have a child with a special educational need?
- What barriers might prevent parents/guardians from being fully involved in supporting their child in school? What may be helpful in overcoming these barriers?
- Do we provide opportunities for parents/guardians to learn more about special education 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

