



Circular No 008/2019

**Circular to the Management Authorities of all Post Primary Schools: Secondary, Community
and Comprehensive Schools and the Chief Executive Officers of the
Education and Training Boards**

Special Education Teaching Allocation

1. Summary of Circular

The main issues addressed in this Circular are:

- Special Education Teacher (SET) allocations will be updated for mainstream schools from September 2019. (Section 2)
- 1,000 additional special education teachers (SETs) have been provided for schools since 2017, while the total number of SETs has increased by 37% since 2011, from 9,740 in 2011, to over 13,300 at present. (Section 3)
- There will be no reduction to the overall number of special education teaching posts within the school system. (Section 3)
- As re profiling is occurring, some schools will gain additional allocations, where the profile indicator data indicates these schools have additional needs. Some schools will receive slightly reduced allocations, where the data indicates less need. (Section 3.1). Most schools (70%) will retain their existing allocations, with no change. (Section 3.2)
- The allocations are being done in line with the principles of equity and fairness which underpin the new model which is designed to be responsive to identified needs
- Where adjustments occur, the adjustments will take place on a graduated basis. Schools with a reduced allocation will receive their full profiled allocation plus 80% of their retained element. The retained element is the portion of the allocation which is over and above what the profile indicates should be allocated for the school. (Section 3.2)
- Changes to Allocations will be capped to 20% of the adjustment to the retained element which would otherwise have occurred had a graduated approach not been applied. Changes are being applied on a gradual basis, in order to assist schools to transition more smoothly from the previous allocation system to the profiled model. (Section 3.2)
- To minimise disruption to schools allocations, small gains and losses will not be applied.

- The allocations which are being made for schools effective from September 2019 will remain in place for two years, following which, revised profiled allocations will be considered for schools from September 2021. (Section 4)
- The Circular sets out details of the criteria and data which have been used to update the various components of schools' profiles at this time. (Sections 6 and 7)
- Schools will be notified of the details of their allocations. A school may appeal where they consider incorrect profile data was used, or was incorrectly calculated. (Section 9).

2. Purpose of Circular

The purpose of this Circular is to advise schools that Special Education Teacher allocations will be updated for mainstream post primary schools with effect from September 2019. The Circular also provides details of the criteria which will apply to update schools' profile allocations at this time.

From September 2017, as set out in DES Circular 0014/2017, a revised process for allocating special education teachers was introduced for post primary schools. This allocation model replaced the Learning Support and English as Additional Language Support (LS/EAL) scheme, whereby a general allocation of resources had previously been allocated to post primary schools annually, and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) allocation process which had previously provided additional resource teaching supports to schools.

This Circular should be read in conjunction with DES Circular 0014/2017 which set out details of the manner in which the new allocation model was introduced. It also set out details of the rationale for the introduction of the new allocation model which was based upon the recommendations of the National Council for Special Education Working Group Report: *Delivery for Students with Special; Educational Needs: A Proposed New Model for Allocating Teaching Resources for Students with Special Educational Needs (2014)*

http://ncse.ie/wpcontent/uploads/2014/09/Allocating_resources_1_5_14_Web_accessible_version_FI_NAL.pdf

The model for allocating special education teachers is designed to distribute teaching resources fairly to schools, taking into account the profiled needs of each school.

It replaced the previous model which was considered inequitable, encouraged unnecessary labelling of children with special educational needs, was considered a blunt response and required a formal diagnosis and application procedure as a pre-condition to access teaching resources.

Based on policy advice received from the National Council for Special Education, the new allocation model was developed to address these inadequacies by creating a profile for each school which is needs-based and gives schools autonomy to decide how to deploy the resources they have.

In order to ensure the new model is responsive, it is reviewed on a regular basis to reflect changes in the enrolments and profiles of schools.

The Circular should also be read in conjunction with the *Guidelines for Post Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*, which are available at:

<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/Guidelines-for-Post-Primary-Schools-Supporting-Students-with-Special-Educational-Needs-in-Mainstream-Schools.pdf>

<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/supporting-students-with-special-educational-needs-key-actions-for-post-primary-schools.pdf>

DES Circular 0014/2017 advised that the additional teaching supports which were being provided from September, 2017, would be left in place initially for a period of two years, and that revised profiled allocations would be due to be made to schools from September 2019.

Revised allocations of Special Education Teachers, therefore, will be made for schools effective from September 2019.

3. Support for the Special Education Teacher Allocation Model

Very significant additional resources have been made available to provide extra Special Education Teaching posts for schools in recent years.

In total, 1,000 additional special education teachers have been provided for schools since 2017.

Overall, the total number of special education teachers available for allocation to schools has increased by 37% since 2011, from 9740 in 2011, to over 13,300 at present. (Section 3)

The extra resources provided has ensured that schools have sufficient resources to provide additional teaching support for pupils with additional learning needs in mainstream schools.

There is currently an average of approximately 1 special education teaching post in place for every 6.75 mainstream class teaching posts across the post primary school sector.

The additional resources provided since 2017 both significantly increased the overall level of special education teaching supports available for schools and have also assisted schools to transition from the previous allocation system, to the new profiled allocation model, with minimal disruption.

3.1 Allocation Adjustments

Notwithstanding the additional provision which has been made to provide extra special education teachers for schools in recent years, which has been significantly in excess of demographic growth levels, the special education teacher allocation model is designed to distribute, at regular intervals, the total available number of special educational teachers across the school system, based on the profiled needs of schools at the time of the review.

At the re-profiling stage, where changes in pupil numbers, or to the educational profile, for schools occur, the allocations for some schools may change.

The redistribution will be based on the relative need of each school, as calculated by the application of the key indicator data set out in Sections 6 and 7 of this Circular.

The needs of some schools may increase, while the needs of some others may decrease. Adjustments to allocations to individual schools will be required to reflect this, with some schools receiving additional allocations, and some receiving reduced allocations.

There will be no reduction to the overall number of special education teaching posts within the school system.

Some schools will gain additional allocations, where the profile indicator data indicates these schools have additional needs, while some schools will receive reduced allocations, where the data indicates less need.

Where adjustments occur, the adjustments will take place on a graduated basis, over time.

3.2 Graduated Adjustment

DES Circular 0013/2017 advised schools that future adjustments to allocations will take place on a graduated basis, which will take account of changes to school enrolments and the profile data, since the initial allocations were developed.

The extent of redistribution at the review stage will therefore be managed to ensure that no school is substantially affected in the short term as re-profiling occurs.

Any redistribution of resources across the school system will take place in a graduated manner.

The effect of unnecessary disruption to schools allocations, due to small adjustments to the allocations will also be minimised.

In re-profiling schools' allocations for September 2019, the following criteria will apply:

- (i) Where the revised profiled data indicates that a school continues to have a retained element to their overall special education teacher allocation, as of September 2019, the school will retain 80% of this retained element. A reduction of 20% will be applied to the retained element.

Schools will receive the full allocation which the profile indicates is required for their school. Schools will also retain 80% of the retained element indicated in their profile while 20% of the retained elements will be redistributed to other schools whose profiles indicate increased additional need.

- (ii) Where the application of a reduction to any retained element is such that the impact on the allocation would be small, the school will be allowed to maintain its existing allocation without any adjustment.

Accordingly, where the model indicates that there is a reduction required of 10 hours or less, no reduction will apply. Schools will be allowed to maintain their existing allocations. To apply a 20% reduction to a retained element of 10 hours or less, would apply reductions of 2 hours or less. This would create undue administrative adjustment to allocations for relatively minor adjustments.

The reduction of 20% to retained allocations will only apply to schools who have a retained element to their allocation of greater than 10 hours.

This will help minimise disruption to recruitment, deployment.

(iii) The model is required to redistribute the overall level of resources available within the system, based on the relative need of schools. As the downward adjustments are being applied in a managed and transitional manner, as set out in sections (i) and (ii) above, in order to create the fairest re distributional balance within the resources available for allocation, the same criteria will apply to any upward adjustments in the re profiling process.

Increases for schools will therefore also be capped to 20% of any potential upward adjustment, for any school which would have been due to gain in excess of 10 hours.

4. Revision of Profiles

The allocations which are being made for schools effective from September 2019 will remain in place for two years, following which, revised profiled allocations will be considered for schools from September 2021.

5. School Profiles

The allocation of special education teachers to mainstream schools is based on a school's educational profile, which comprises two components:

- Baseline component provided to every mainstream school to support inclusion, assistance with learning difficulties and early intervention, and

- A school educational profile component, which takes into account:
 - The number of pupils with complex needs enrolled to the school.
 - The learning needs of pupils as evidenced by standardised test results for literacy and numeracy.
 - The social context of the school including disadvantage and gender.

The allocations, which are being provided to schools from September 2019, based on the profiled indicators noted above, are calculated in the following manner.

6. Baseline

The Baseline allocation of each schools profile is made up of 20% of the total number of the Special Education Teaching posts which are available, redistributed on an equal basis, proportionately, between all schools, based on each school's enrolment numbers.

For the introduction of the Special Education Teacher Allocation Model in 2017, the data which was used was the Post Primary Online Database (PPOD) enrolment data for the 2015/16 school year.

For the review of Special Education Teacher Allocation Model at 2019, the data being used is the PPOD enrolment data for the 2017/18 school year, which is the most complete recent enrolment data available.

The baseline allocation represents only one component of the allocation. For a complete overview of their special education teaching allocation, schools must consider their baseline allocation, alongside the allocation they receive under the educational profile component, which gives them their total allocation.

7. School Educational Profile.

7.1 The number of pupils with complex needs enrolled to the school.

For the introduction of the new allocation model, from September 2017, the existing NCSE 'Low Incidence' allocations which had been made for each school during the preceding 2016/17 school year, were used to establish the complex needs component of the new model for each school.

For the updating of the model at 2019, the first year new entrants who previously had Low Incidence Teaching Hours (LITHs) in primary school are identified and counted as the new enrolments in the post primary complex needs group.

This provides continuity within the system, across the primary and post primary sector, until the new complex needs categorisation has fully replaced the old low incidence model categorisations at primary school level.

The information on students with low incidence teaching hours has been gathered using a data matching function. Information held by the NCSE on students with LITHs in 6th class in primary school in June 2017 who were the primary school leavers for that year, was matched with information held by PPOD on the post primary schools to which these students enrolled in September 2017. This gave a value for the number of new entrants in the low incidence category enrolling to post primary schools at September 2017.

A value of 3.5 hours has then been applied for each pupil counted in the new complex need category.

Pupils for whom resource teaching hours may have been previously provided under the old low incidence resource teaching allocation model will be able to receive additional teaching support, if required, from the schools overall profiled allocation for special education teaching support. Should they have additional learning needs, as evidenced in standardised test performance, this will form part of the future profile reviews.

For the review of the model in 2019, an adjustment of one year's complex needs pupil data will be applied.

A value based on the number of pupils with complex needs who enrolled in school in September 2017 for the 2017/18 school year will be applied.

The resource teaching allocations previously applicable for the sixth year school low incidence leavers for the previous 2016/17 school year will be deducted.

The balance remaining will be new complex needs allocation for this part of the school's profile.

Five of six years of the school's existing low incidence value will be maintained.

The 'low incidence' values for all other pupils for whom allocations were previously provided in the complex needs category will be maintained and will continue to be maintained for schools until such pupils leave the school.

The NCSE has also provided details of school leavers in receipt of NCSE low incidence hours for the 2016/17 school year.

The new Complex Needs value for each school from September 2019 will be:

- **The current Complex Needs value for each school**
- **+ Plus the value for the number of students with LITHs in 6th class in primary school in June 2017 matched to the post primary schools to which these students enrolled in September 2017.**
- **- Less low incidence resource allocation values for the number of students with low incidence disabilities who left school at June 2017**

Emerging Complex Needs

Consideration of data indicates that emerging needs over the course of a school year, for low incidence disabilities, has been broadly consistent with the overall proportion of low incidence allocations which had been made to schools.

The Special Education Teaching allocations for schools, including baseline and educational profile, is provided to meet the totality of special educational teaching in the school, including for pupils with emerging needs or pupils transferring into schools during the course of the model.

The total special education allocations provided for schools anticipate that there will be some emerging needs over the course of the model. Schools are resourced to provide for such emerging needs, within the totality of the allocation.

For the most part, where there is pupil movement within the school system, it is anticipated that the number of new pupils with emerging or additional needs arriving to a school will be broadly balanced by leavers. The provision of a school's profiled allocation, which includes a baseline allocation within it is designed to provide for this. Adjustments will therefore not be made to the overall school profile over the course of the model to account for normal pupil movement or where some pupils have been assessed as having additional needs.

Where exceptional circumstances arise, to the extent that a school profile changes in a manner beyond which could have been anticipated, a review process is available to consider this and to make adjustments to allocations for schools where necessary.

Profiled Allocation

The provision of a total allocation for special education teaching resources for schools, based on each school's profiled allocation, has moved the allocation system from one which previously provided additional allocations for schools primarily based on the diagnosis of special educational needs for individual children.

The allocation model provides an overall total allocation of special education teaching resources to schools, based on the profiled needs of schools, as indicated by a set of key data indicators.

The number of pupils with complex needs is one such indicator. However, it should be noted that this is a value indicator which is designed to assist with the development of school profiles. It is not intended to count every child who has special educational needs.

The complex needs value indicator is intended to provide an indication of the distribution of pupils across the mainstream school sector and to recognise this in the development of schools' educational profiles.

It is not intended that the school profiles should seek to identify and count every child in every school who has a diagnosis of a particular special educational need, or to seek to apply a value for each such pupil in a manner similar to the individualised application and allocation model which had been in place prior to 2017.

The new school profiled allocation process therefore provides an allocation of special education teaching resources for schools based on the school profile data indicators.

This provides a profiled allocation for schools in which schools may allocate additional teaching time to the pupils who need it in their school without a requirement for them to have a diagnosis of disability to access additional teaching time.

Schools have discretion, in accordance with the guidelines, as to how they can distribute resources under this model, based on the individual needs of pupils. No reduction in allocations have been made to schools in respect of any pupils who were previously in receipt of a Low Incidence special needs allocation in that school, for as long as the pupil remains in that school.

Adjustments -

For each year, as the model is updated, the new cohort of pupils identified as having enrolled to first year in each school year from 2017/18 onwards, are those who will be counted as the new data set for new pupils with complex needs enrolling to schools.

Adjustments will be also made for pupils who previously had low incidence resource teaching allocations who leave the school each year.

In this context, the requirement for schools to advise school leavers to the NCSE will remain a feature of the revised arrangements.

7.2 Standardised Test Results

For the introduction of the allocation model in 2017, as standardised test data is not yet available for post primary schools, Junior Certificate examination results in English and Mathematics were used. The examination result data in English and Mathematics represent the literacy and numeracy achievement scores and have been applied in a graduated manner by the Educational Research Centre to create a value for each school.

An aggregate of post primary school Junior Certificate test results over 2013, 2014, and 2015, were used for the first phase of the introduction of the new allocation model.

For the review of the model at 2019, the junior cert English and Maths scores from 2016 and 2017 will also be used.

The use of an aggregate of four years' data is designed to provide the most accurate picture of a school's educational profile over a period of time, and also to ensure that schools are not penalised for improving performances generally, or over a shorter period of time.

7.3 Social Context: Disadvantage

For the review of the model in 2019, the data being used to update the disadvantage component of the school profiles is the Post Primary Online Database (POD) and CSO data from the National Census of Population as represented in the Pobal HP Index for Small Areas, as represented in the Haase Pratschke Index of Deprivation (HP Index), which is a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area.

Variables used in the compilation of the HP Index include those related to demographic growth, dependency ratios, education levels, single parent rate, overcrowding, social class, occupation and unemployment rates. This data is combined with pupil data, anonymised and aggregated to small area, to provide information on the relative level of concentrated disadvantage present in the pupil cohort of individual schools.

7.4 Social Context: Gender

The special education teacher allocation model continues to take account of gender differentials by giving a small additional weighting for gender based on the number of boys attending each school. The weighting for each school will therefore take account of the gender profile i.e. number of boys attending.

7.5 English Additional Language Support (EAL)

The Special Education Teaching allocation model provides all schools with a baseline teaching allocation to assist pupils who have learning and literacy difficulties, including those arising from English Additional Language (EAL) needs.

The profiled allocation for schools therefore takes account of EAL needs in schools.

7.6 Additional Allocations for Schools with High Concentrations of Pupils that require Language Support (EAL)

Schools where a significant number of the total enrolment is made up of language support (EAL) pupils with less than B1 (Level3) proficiency can make an appeal to the Independent Post Primary Teachers Appeals Board for additional resources. Procedures for making an appeal are set out in the annual post primary staffing circulars.

8. Fee Paying Post Primary Schools

On the introduction of the new allocation model, fee paying schools retained their existing allocations as their profiled model allocations.

The existing allocations were used to create a set level of resource allocation for such schools. In a normal year the number of new pupils enrolling with complex needs should broadly balance the number of pupils leaving who had previously been in the low incidence resource teaching category.

The existing allocations for fee paying schools will again be maintained from 2019 to provide for those schools special education teacher allocations.

In circumstances where fee paying schools can demonstrate that the number of pupils they have enrolled with complex needs requiring highly individualised and differentiated learning programmes that are significantly different to those of their peers, is significantly greater than the number of leavers with low incidence disabilities, such schools may make contact with the NCSE.

9. Total Profiled Allocation

The total profiled allocation which is being made to each school is designed to ensure that all schools have a set level of special education teaching support in order to provide additional teaching support for all pupils in their school, including those who may enrol in future, who have identified needs.

Details of how the total profile allocation is applied for the total post primary school sector is detailed in Appendix 1.

10. Appeal Process

The NCSE will be notifying schools of the allocations by letter and website publication. Details of the review/appeal process will be set out as part of this notification and will be published on the NCSE website www.ncse.ie

The appeal will consider circumstances where schools consider that their school profile has been calculated incorrectly, using the data set out in this Circular. An appeal may be submitted for a review of the information used and of the calculation of the allocation.

Where exceptional circumstances arise in schools over the course of the model, to the extent that a school profile changes in a manner beyond which could have been anticipated, a further review process is available to consider this and to make adjustments to allocations for schools where necessary.

11. Rounding

For schools who are receiving an additional allocation under the new allocation process, allocations are rounded to units of 2.5 hours, in order to simplify allocations for schools.

For schools who are receiving a reduction to the retained element of their allocation the new allocations will be rounded to the nearest 0.50 hours.

Schools who are not receiving adjusted allocations will maintain their existing allocations.

12. Filling of Posts

Special Education Teaching posts should be filled in accordance with the published staffing and redeployment arrangements which will be set out in the Post Primary School Staffing Schedule for the 2019/20 school year.

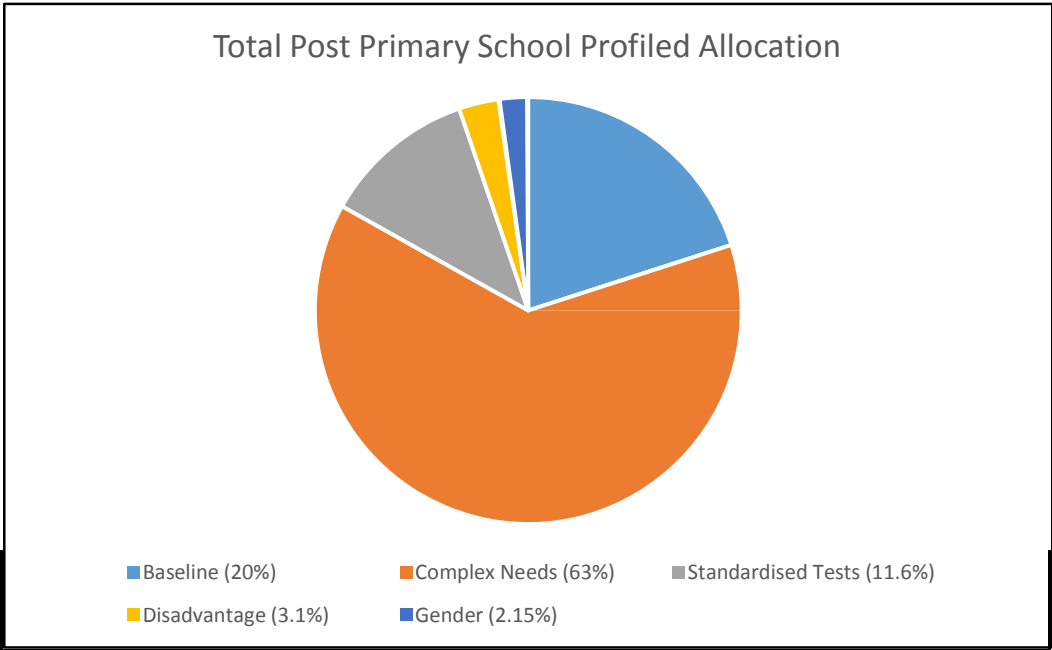
This circular can be accessed on the Department's website www.education.ie

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Appendix 1: Total Profile Allocation

Though the individual allocations will vary for each particular school, based on the number of pupils in each school qualifying within each category for whom a profiled allocation is being made, the allocation of the total existing resources for redistribution, based on a profiled allocation model, for post primary schools, will be as follows:



Baseline

The Baseline allocation of each school profile is made up of 20% of the total number of special education teaching posts available, redistributed equally between all schools, based on each school’s enrolments for the 2017/18 school year, which is the most complete recent enrolment data available.

Complex Needs

Maintaining the existing 2016/17 Low Incidence allocations for post primary schools, in order to create the Complex Needs component for the introduction of the new allocation model from September 2017, meant that when the school profiles were developed in 2017, that approximately

60% of the total number of Resource/Learning Support posts were allocated to post primary schools for the 2016/17 school year are being used for the Complex Needs profile component.

As the number of pupils assessed annually as having low incidence special educational needs increased over recent years, the number of pupils with low incidence diagnosis transferring to post primary school from 6th class primary school is greater than the number of 6th year post primary school leavers who had low incidence allocations.

For this reason the total allocation for complex needs at post primary school level has increased from 61% in 2017, to 63% in 2019.

From September 2019, approximately 63% of the total number of special education teaching posts are being used for the Complex Needs profile component.

Standardised Test Scores

The portion of the overall resources being provided for Standardised test results under the school profile equates to approximately 11.6% of the total allocation for post primary schools.

Disadvantage

Approximately 3.10% of the total profiled allocation for post primary schools is being allocated to provide some part of the allocation for disadvantage. This will vary between schools, depending on the social context of each school.

Gender

Approximately 2.15% of the total profiled allocation for post primary schools will be allocated to provide some part of the allocation for gender.

The actual allocation distribution will vary between schools, depending on the number of pupils within each category of the profile.