

Appendix 1

Staged Approach to Special Educational Needs

Stage

A class teacher or parent may have concerns about the academic, physical, social, behavioural or emotional development of certain pupils. The teacher should then administer screening measures, which may include screening checklists and profiles for children in senior Infants and first class, standardised, norm-referenced tests for older children and behavioural checklists where appropriate.

The class teacher should then draw up a short, simple plan for extra help within the normal classroom setting in the relevant areas of learning and/or behavioural management. The success of the plan should be reviewed on a regular basis, with appropriate parental involvement. If concern remains after approximately two school terms, the Special Education Support Team in the school may be consulted about the desirability of a move to Stage II.

Supports available for Stage 1:

- Home/School/Community Liaison teachers, if available, should be involved at this stage and in subsequent stages in supporting and advising the parents of children with difficulties in school.
- Teachers in schools that have access to the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) may consult their area psychologist about their proposed teaming or behavioural management plan.

Stage 11

In the case of children with learning difficulties, if the class teacher's plan fails to achieve the desired outcome, then the child should be referred to the learning support teacher, with parental permission, for further diagnostic testing. If this diagnostic assessment indicates that supplementary teaching would be beneficial, then this should be arranged. Parents and class teacher should be involved with the learning support teacher in drawing up the learning plan, complementing the plan with supplementary activities in class and at home and in implementing the plan.

The learning support teacher and the class teacher should review on a regular basis, consultation with the parents, the rate of progress of each child receiving supplementary teaching. If significant concerns remain after a period of at least one school term then it may be necessary to implement Stage III.

The case of children with emotional or behavioural difficulties, it is recognised that with serious difficulties, more urgent action may be needed. In these cases, the child's needs should, with parental permission, be discussed with the relevant NEPS psychologist or referred to the clinical services of the Health Board. This may lead to a more detailed plan of behavioural management to be implemented at home and in class and/or may lead to referral for further specialist assessment (Stage 111).

Supports available for Stage II:

- The learning support service has been established in order To meet the needs of the children with learning difficulties in the area of English and mathematics. In general, the service is provided for those children from first class up, who score at or below the 12th percentile on standardised, norm referenced tests. Children who score at or below the 2nd percentile should be accorded a high priority for learnt support and review.
- Other support staff and services available to schools may assist with programme planning at this stage.
- Schools may also consult the area psychologist of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), where available, about diagnostic test results and about their proposed learning or behavioural management plans.

Stage III

The school formally requests a consultation, and, where appropriate, an assessment of need from a specialist from outside The school in respect of children with learning difficulties and mld/moderate behavioural problems who have failed to make progress after supplementary teaching or behavioural programme and of children with serious emotional disturbance and/or behavioural problems. Such specialist advice may be sought from psychologists, paediatricians, speech and language therapists, audiologists etc

In consultation with the relevant specialist/s, the learning support teacher, resource teacher if available, and class teacher should then draw up a learning plan, which includes identification of any additional available resources that are considered necessary in order to implement the plan. The parents should be fully consulted throughout this process. This plan should be the subject of regular reviews, leading to revisions of the learning plan and referral for specialist review as necessary.

Supports available for Stage III:

- A consultation may be requested from the National Educational Psychological Service or, where this is not yet available, schools may commission assessments from a private practitioner under The Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments. Any private practitioner engaged by a school should have the relevant Department of Education and Science circulars and guidance notes drawn to their attention