An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

Circular No 007/2019

Circular to the Management Authorities of all Mainstream Primary Schools

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 made 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 (Section 3.2)

- 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 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.

DES Circular 0013/2017 provided for the introduction of a revised process for allocating special education teachers (SETs) to primary schools effective from September 2017. This allocation model replaced the previous General Allocation Model and the English as an Additional Language Support (GAM/EAL) scheme, and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) allocation process which had provided additional resource teaching supports to schools.

This Circular should be read in conjunction with DES Circular 0013/2017, which set out details of the manner in which the special education teacher allocation model was introduced. It details the rationale for the introduction of the new allocation model, which was based upon the recommendations of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) 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_FINAL.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.

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

https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/Guidelines-for-Primary-Schools-Supporting-Pupils-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-primary-schools.pdf

DES Circular 0013/2017 had 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 both primary and post primary schools has increased by 37% since 2011, from 9,740 in 2011 to over 13,300 at present.

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 one special education teaching post in place for every four mainstream class teaching posts across the 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.

On 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 schools allocations.

(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 school 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, comprised of 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 in 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 Primary Online Database (POD) 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 POD 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.

DES Circular 0013/2017 advised schools that for future identification of pupils in this category, this model will take account of the decision making process and qualification criteria for the selection of children for access to HSE Children Disability Network Teams.

Schools were advised that for the next and future re profiling of the model, the Complex Needs category will be the existing low incidence allocations for schools, less any leavers included in this category, plus additional allocations for the new component of complex needs category pupils, for the applicable year, or years, since the first school profiles were developed.

For the review of the model at September 2019, at primary school entry level, the model will take account of the decision-making process and qualification criteria for the selection of young children for access to HSE Children Disability Network Teams, to identify new entrants in the complex needs category.

The HSE's procedures for determining access to Children Disability Network Teams are outlined in the National Policy on Access to Services for Children & Young People with Disability & Developmental Delay (HSE 2016). Access is based on the child's functioning capacity across a range of domains, as opposed to being based on formal a diagnosis of disability.

For the review of the model at September 2019, the new Junior Infants enrolments for the 2017/18 school year will be those counted in the complex needs component of the schools educational profile.

The cohort of pupils identified by the HSE as accessing, or assessed as qualifying[1] for access to HSE Disability Services, who enrolled to Junior Infants classes 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.

They are not the same cohort of pupils who may previously have qualified for the old Low Incidence categorisations for resource teaching hours. They are a subset of those pupils, being those identified by the HSE as having the greatest levels of functioning need.

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[1] The HSE identification process includes both those children who access HSE Children Disability Services and/or those who have been assessed as qualifying for access to the Disability Services, but who have yet to receive services.

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-support needs, as evidenced in standardised test performance, this will form part of the future profile reviews.

The revision to the existing complex needs component of the schools profiles will take place on a staged basis, with the junior infant entrants in any given school year identified as the new complex needs data set, replacing the previous year's 6th class low incidence allocation leavers.

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

The new Junior Infant enrolments for the 2017/18 school year, who have been identified as accessing HSE Disability services, will be counted in the new Complex Needs categorisation, with an additional value of 3.5 hours for each identification, provided to the schools allocation to take account of this. This is designed to support the building of the overall school profile and does not imply that children in this category should necessarily be allocated 3.5 hours teaching time. Schools should continue to provide support taking into account each child's learning needs, in accordance with the guidelines.

A value based on the number of Junior Infants with complex needs (as identified by the HSE) 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 class 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 schools profile.

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.

Seven of eight years of the schools existing low incidence value will be maintained.

Data Collection

Each HSE Disability Service Provider has returned to the NCSE details of the number of children who have qualified for access to their Disability Services and who started in a mainstream Junior Infant class in September 2017. This includes children who are accessing their service, or on a waiting list for their service.

Where it had been unclear which school the child may be attending, these issues were addressed by the disability service provider and the NCSE.

The Visiting Teachers for Children with Visual or Hearing Impairment (VTVHI) have also indicated, for each school, the numbers of children on their case-loads, with a moderate to severe/profound level of disability, who entered a mainstream junior infant class in September 2017.

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 number of children enrolled in Junior Infants at September 2017 year identified by the HSE as accessing disability services.**

- **- Less low incidence resource allocation values for the number of students with low incidence disabilities who left school at June 2017.**

Special Classes

Disability Service Providers were not asked to differentiate between Junior Infant pupils enrolling to a mainstream school, or a special class within the mainstream school.

This is designed to support integration in future, should a child identified in the complex needs category enrolling to a special class as a Junior Infant transition to mainstream in future, or be partially included in mainstream.

It is also designed to facilitate the maximum inclusion of children with special education needs, who are enrolled to special classes, in mainstream classes and activities during the course of the school day, in accordance with the pupils' abilities.

Senior National Schools

Senior National schools do not have Junior Infant age enrolments. Therefore, as Senior School low incidence leavers are deducted, unless a counterbalancing allocation is applied, no new values would be allocated to Senior schools, for new enrolling pupils with complex needs.

Junior Infant enrolments from Junior/Infant feeder schools, which are associated with Senior Schools, subsequently enrol to the senior schools, at a later stage.

In order to reflect this future pupil movement, the new complex needs values being applied to the Junior school (s) associated with the Senior School, will also be applied to the Senior School for each year in which new complex needs Junior Infants are being counted.

This will represent an advance on the complex needs values for the Senior Schools, which will balance over time, as pupils move between schools.

Where a Junior School provides pupils to two associated Senior Schools, a value of 50% of the complex needs values in the Junior School will be applied to each Senior School.

Emerging Complex Needs

The Special Education Teaching allocations for schools, including the baseline and educational profile, is provided to meet the totality of special educational teaching in the school, including for pupils who have emerging needs or pupils who may have transferred into the school from other schools.

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 need, or disability category, 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 accessing HSE Disability services 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, as outlined in 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, as long as the pupil remains in the school.

Adjustments -
For each year, as the model is updated, the new cohort of pupils identified by the HSE as accessing Disability Services, who enrolled to Junior Infants classes 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 profiled allocations which will take effect from September 2019, an aggregate of primary school standardised test results over 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 have been used to develop the standardised test values for primary schools.

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.

In general, schools should use the most up-to-date versions of standardised tests. If this involves switching from previous to 'new' versions of the tests for 2018-19, and into the future (whether tests are paper-based or computer-based), this will not negatively impact a school's allocation.

Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools

In many Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools, Irish may be the first language of pupils attending the school. Such schools also provide additional teaching support for pupil literacy through Irish.

Accordingly, for Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools, the standardised test scores in both Irish and English have again been used to calculate the element of the school profile relevant to pupil attainment in literacy.

In Irish language medium schools the support provided for pupils to assist with their literacy development may be conducted in Irish or English, or a combination of both, as considered necessary by the school.

However, for schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme, where schools are required to implement a two-year early-immersion programme through Irish in infant classes where English is not taught during this period, this support should be provided in Irish only.

The Irish-language additional hours provided under the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme is a separate allocation provided by the Department to strengthen and enrich pupils' proficiency in Irish, particularly oral Irish, and must be implemented in accordance with Circular 0009/2019.

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 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 standardised test scores on which part of the profile is based will reflect where pupils have literacy problems. The social context survey for primary schools also took some account of EAL needs in schools. 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)

Where schools can demonstrate that they have high concentrations of pupils requiring EAL they can continue to apply for **Additional Allocations for Schools with High Concentrations of Pupils that require Language Support (EAL)** in accordance with the procedures set out in the primary school staffing schedule for the 2019/20 school year.

8. 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 primary school sector is detailed in Appendix 1.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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 Primary School Staffing Schedule for the 2019/20 school year.
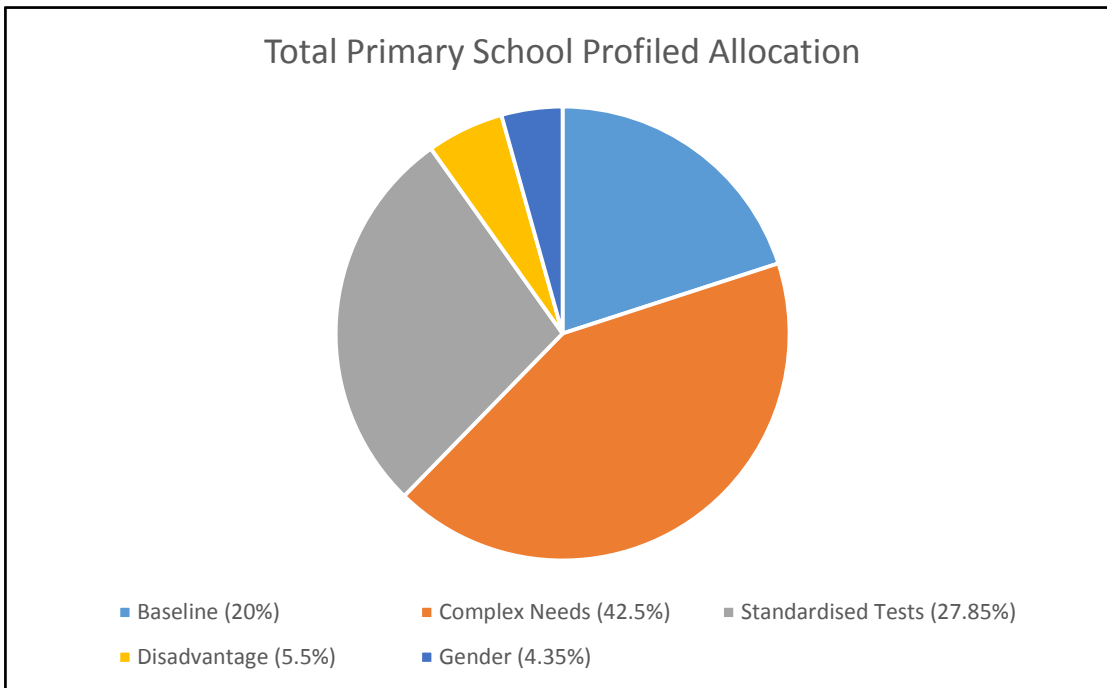
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This circular can be accessed on the Department's website www.education.ie

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25th February, 2019

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 primary schools, will be as follows:

Total Primary School Profiled Allocation

- Baseline (20%)
- Complex Needs (42.5%)
- Standardised Tests (27.85%)
- Disadvantage (5.5%)
- Gender (4.35%)

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 primary schools, in order to create the Complex Needs component for the introduction of the new allocation model from September 2017, meant that for the first time the school profiles were developed in 2017, approximately 50% of

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

The adjustment to the complex needs component of the school profiles, as set out in Section 7.1 above, means that from September 2019 a new cohort of pupils have been identified as the complex needs component for the 2017/18 school year onwards and the sixth class low incidence leavers for the previously year have been deducted.

From September 2019, approximately 42.5% of the total number of special education teaching posts are being used for the Complex Needs profile component.

The fact that a smaller portion of the posts are being used for the complex needs component of the model means that there are a greater number of posts available to distribute in the remaining categories for Standardised Test Scores, Disadvantage or Gender. Many pupils previously identified as low incidence will now be counted under the standardised test category.

Standardised Test Scores

The portion of the overall resources being provided for Standardised test results under the school profile equates to approximately 27.85% of the total allocation for primary schools.

Disadvantage

Approximately 5.5% of the total profiled allocation for 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 4.35% of the total profiled allocation for primary schools will is being 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.