

**National Council for
Special Education**

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**An Chomhairle Náisiúnta um
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25 January 2005

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To: The Management Authorities of Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools, and the Chief Executive Officers of Vocational Education Committees

The National Council for Special Education

**Information and Guidelines for Second Level Schools in Processing Applications
for Resources for**

Children with Special Educational Needs

On and from 1 January 2005

This notification should be read in conjunction with DES Circular Letter PPT 01/05, which advises the management authorities of schools of the transfer of functions from the Department of Education and Science to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in relation to children with disabilities with special educational needs, on and from 1 January 2005.

This should be regarded as the first step in the assumption of the complete role of the Council in relation to the provision of services to children with special educational needs.

1. New Applications Procedure

Scope

On and from 1 January, 2005, the Department of Education and Science has determined that the NCSE will assume its full functions as set out in the Ministerial Order establishing the Council dated December 2003. As a result, applications for resources in relation to children with disabilities, who have special educational needs, should now be made to the Council through the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO). Such resources could include as appropriate

- Application for additional teaching support for children with special educational needs
- Application for Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support

- Application for school transport for children with disabilities with special educational needs
- Application for other resources e.g. assistive technology

It is important to note that from 1 January 2005, such applications should no longer be sent directly to DES but should be made to the SENO otherwise this will delay the process. Applications from VEC schools may be directed to the appropriate SENO/SENOs through the VEC administration system as is currently the practice. It should also be noted that the relevant professional reports should accompany the application as heretofore.

Role of the SENO – Decisions on Teaching and SNA Applications

With effect from 1 January, 2005, the NCSE will decide on

- applications for additional teaching support from schools in meeting the needs of children with disabilities with special educational needs and
- applications for SNA support in respect of children with disabilities with special educational needs.

In considering such applications, the SENO will take into account a number of factors including

- i) The special educational needs of the child as identified and documented in the professional assessments supporting the application
- ii) The proposals from the school as to how it will meet the needs of the child
- iii) The views of the parents
- iv) The Departmental policy on the teaching and SNA supports to which the school is entitled by reference to the nature and degree of disability of the child
- v) The overall relevant teaching and SNA supports already available in the school to meet such needs

In considering applications the SENO will

- examine the application and the supporting documentation
- consult with and seek clarification from schools and parents as necessary as regards the special educational needs of the child in the school setting and discuss the child's needs with the teachers and parents as appropriate. This may include observation of the child within the school setting and classroom as appropriate.
- take account of any existing teaching resources in the school including teaching or special needs assistant resources that may be freed up by the exit of other children with disabilities from the school.

Role of the SENO – Communication of the Decision

When a decision is made, the SENO will inform the Principal and the VEC where appropriate. The Principal or the Principal and the SENO will inform the parents as to how the needs of the child will be met. A copy of the decision will be forwarded to the Head Office of the NCSE, the relevant VEC where appropriate and also to the Department of Education & Science. A copy of the decision form is attached as Appendix 1.

Capacity of the School to Act on Decision of SENO

It is important to note that Section 8 of the Department of Education & Science Circular letter PPT 01/05 outlines the procedures regarding the appointment of additional staff on receipt of a decision from the SENO where additional teaching or special needs assistant resources are identified. *On receipt of such approval the school authority should act to implement the decision in accordance with Section 8 of the above-mentioned Circular Letter PPT 01/05.*

Role of the SENO – Recommendations on Applications for Assistive Technology/Special Equipment

While SENOs are not currently responsible for deciding on applications for assistive technology/special equipment, the Department of Education & Science will wish to draw on the local knowledge of the SENO as part of the decisions process.

Therefore such applications should be submitted in the first instance to the SENO who is assigned responsibility for your school who will forward them to the Department with a recommendation regarding the application. This should have the effect of speeding up the process of dealing with such applications.

In the case of applications for special equipment for the visually or hearing impaired, the SENO will seek the recommendation of the appropriate Visiting Teacher before submitting the application to the Department

Role of the SENO – Recommendations on Applications for School Transport

Similarly, the Department of Education & Science will wish to draw on the local knowledge of the SENO as part of the decision making process in the case of applications for school transport for children with special educational needs.

Such applications should be submitted in the first instance to the SENO who is assigned responsibility for your school who will forward them to the Department with a recommendation regarding the application. This should have the effect of speeding up the process of dealing with such applications.

Applications Process

The Department of Education & Science has indicated that they will issue forms SN1 and SN2 with Circular Letter PPT 01/05. *These forms should be completed and returned to the SENO who has responsibility for your school as set out below (please see section on contact point for SENOs).*

Where possible, in the interest of the child and administrative efficiency, all applications relating to a particular child included in the SN1 or SN2 forms, ie other supports for transport and special equipment should be forwarded to the SENO attached together for consideration. A sample cover notification is attached as Appendix 2 for this purpose.

Review of Decisions

In the absence of a formalised appeals process, the NCSE will undertake to review the relevant decision on teaching or SNA supports on foot of a request from the school or parents, which is accompanied by relevant additional information, which may not have been to hand at the time of the decision.

Future Role

The above procedures reflect the commencement of the transfer of functions process from the Department of Education & Science to the NCSE. The involvement of the Council in areas such as the assessment of need arising from a disability eg liaison with the health sector as regards the provision of health supports, and the preparation of individual education plans (IEPs) will expand progressively.

Further information notifications/guidelines and circulars will issue from the Council and the Department of Education & Science as appropriate.

Contact Points for SENOs

On 22 December 2004, a notification issued to your school providing the name, official address and contact number for access to the SENO with responsibility for your school. As the SENO will spend considerable time away from the office, it is important that you leave your contact details on the messaging service, if the SENO is not available. The SENO will access such messages regularly and will return your call.

If for any reason your school has not received this information notice, contact may be made with the NCSE at 1-2 Mill Street, Trim, Co. Meath. Telephone: 046 9486400.

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