



## **CIRCULAR TO BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT AND PRINCIPAL TEACHERS OF NATIONAL SCHOOLS**

Applications for full-time or part-time resource teacher support to address the special education needs of children with disabilities

### **1. Introduction**

This Circular replaces certain procedural elements of Circular 8/99.

The post of Resource Teacher is an additional post allocated to assist a school or cluster of schools in providing an education which meets the needs of children assessed as having disabilities. Under the direction of the relevant Principal, the role of the Resource Teacher is to provide additional teaching support for these children who have been fully integrated into mainstream schools and who need such support. In addition, s/he should advise and liaise with other teachers, parents and relevant professionals in the childrens' interest.

This is a whole school effort and not the responsibility of the resource teacher alone because these children are fully integrated into a mainstream school and will spend most of his/her time with the mainstream teacher.

### **2. The role of a Resource Teacher**

A Resource Teacher assists schools in providing support for children with special educational needs arising from disability by:

- (a) Assessing and recording child needs and progress;
- (b) Setting specific, time-related targets for each child and agreeing these with the class teacher and principal;
- (c) Direct teaching of the children, either in a separate room or within the mainstream class;
- (d) Team-teaching - so long as the children concerned are deriving benefit from it;
- (e) Advising class teachers in regard to adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, suitable textbooks, use of Information Technology and suitable software and a range of other related matters;
- (f) Meeting and advising parents, when necessary, accompanied by the class teacher, as necessary;
- (g) Short meetings with other relevant professionals, in the childrens' interest - e.g. psychologists, speech and language therapists, visiting teachers, special school or special class teachers.

### 3. How are Resource Teacher posts allocated?

Resource teachers are allocated where there are a number of children with special educational needs arising from a disability who are fully integrated into mainstream national schools where there are no other adequate support teaching resources available to the children. Child eligibility and degree of need are established following consideration of reports on assessments carried out by relevant professionals.

Each child is given a weighting which is determined by the nature and degree of disability and the current pupil-teacher-ratio for that particular disability. For example a child with a mild general learning disability would count as 1/11th of a teacher post. A child who is profoundly deaf would count as 1/6th of a teacher post. The current pupil teacher ratios for each disability are listed in Appendix 1.

Schools should read Appendix II when actively considering applying for a resource teacher appointment.

Resource teacher posts may be sanctioned on a full-time basis - either in a single school or in a cluster of schools - provided there are sufficient children with special educational needs arising from a disability to warrant a full-time post. Alternatively, part-time hours may be sanctioned to provide support teaching for individual children where there are insufficient children with special educational needs to warrant the allocation of a full-time post or of a second full-time post.

### 4. How should an application be made for resource teacher support either on a full-time or part-time basis?

4.1 Completed application forms SER1 and SER 2 (copies attached) should be sent directly to Special Education Section 1, Department of Education and Science, Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

4.2 In some cases, individual schools seeking resource teacher support may already be in receipt of an allocation of such support. In such situations, the Department will sanction a full-time post to replace the school's part-time hour allocations:

- (a). where the total hours involved, including those now being sought, amount to 22 hours or more, and
- (b). where the hours already allocated to the school are not being delivered by way of a full-time post which is shared with other schools.

4.3 Alternatively, a school seeking an allocation of part-time hours resource teacher support may wish to enter into a sharing arrangement with adjacent schools, with a view to creating a full-time post through combining part-time hours allocations. The Department will sanction a full-time post to replace the part-time hour allocations:

- (a). where the total hours involved, including those now being sought, amount to 20 hours or more, and
- (b). where the hours already allocated to the schools are not being delivered by way of a full-time post which is operating on a shared basis.

Where it is proposed to create a full-time post on a shared basis through combining part-time hours in a number of schools, the Principal making the application is required to:

- Confirm that the authorities of all the participating schools are in agreement with the sharing arrangement.
- Identify the base school for the purpose of the sharing arrangement and confirm that all the participating schools are in agreement with this arrangement.
- Specify the schools involved in the sharing arrangement.
- Specify the existing level of resource teacher support in place in each of the participating schools on the basis of which the creation of a full-time post on a shared basis is now proposed.

4.4 Departures from the requirements of 4.2(b) and 4.3 (b) above will be considered where supported by a separate submission from the schools involved in the current sharing arrangement and on the basis of agreed alternative proposals endorsed by the schools in question.

Enquiries about this circular should be made to:

Special Education Section.

Telephone No. (0902) 74621 or (01) 873 4700

Fax No. (0902) 76939

L Kilroy  
Principal Officer

February, 2002

## APPENDIX I

Disability	Current Pupil-Teacher Ratio	Number of Hours Per Pupil
Physical Disability	10:1	3
Hearing Impairment	7:1	4
Visual Impairment	8:1	3.5
Emotional Disturbance and/or Behavioural Problems	8:1	3.5
Severe Emotional Disturbance	6:1	5
Borderline/Mild General Learning Disability	11:1	2.5
Moderate General Learning Disability	8:1	3.5
Severe/Profound General Learning Disability	6:1	5
Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders	6:1	5
Specific Learning Disability	11:1	2.5
Specific Speech and Language Disorder	7:1	4
Multiple Disabilities	6:1	5

- *The Department of Education and Science uses the term “general learning disability” rather than “mental handicap”*

## APPENDIX II

### Glossary of Terms

Does the child concerned have special educational needs arising from one of the following disabilities?	Definition
Physical Disability	<p>Such children have permanent or protracted disabilities arising from conditions such as congenital deformities, spina bifida, dyspraxia, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, brittle bones or severe accidental injury. Because of the impairment of their physical function, they require special additional intervention and support if they are to have available to them a level and quality of education appropriate to their needs and abilities.</p> <p>Many require the use of a wheelchair, a mobility or seating aid or other technological support.</p> <p>They may suffer from a lack of muscular control and co-ordination and may have difficulties in communication, particularly in oral articulation e.g. as in the case of severe dyspraxia.</p>
Hearing Impairment	<p>Such children have a hearing disability which is so serious as to impair significantly their capacity to hear and understand human speech, thus preventing them from participating fully in classroom interaction and from benefiting adequately from school instruction. The vast majority of them have been prescribed hearing aids and are availing of the services of a Visiting Teacher.</p> <p><i>This category is not intended to include children with mild hearing loss.</i></p>
Visual Impairment	<p>Such children have a visual disability which is so serious as to impair significantly their capacity to see, thus interfering with their capacity to perceive visually presented materials such as pictures, diagrams and the written word. Some will have been diagnosed as suffering from conditions such as congenital blindness, cataracts, albinism and retinitis pigmentosa. Most require the use of low-vision aids and are availing of the services of a Visiting Teacher.</p> <p><i>This category is not intended to include those children whose visual difficulties are satisfactorily corrected by the wearing of spectacles and/or contact lenses.</i></p>
Emotional Disturbance and/or Behavioural Problems	<p>Such children are being treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist for conditions such as neurosis, childhood psychosis, hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and conduct disorders.</p> <p><i>This category is not intended to include children whose conduct or behavioural difficulties are being adequately dealt with in accordance with agreed procedures on discipline.</i></p>
Mild General Learning Disability	<p>Such children have been assessed by a psychologist as having a mild general learning disability.</p>

Borderline Mild General Learning Disability	<p>Such children have been assessed by a psychologist as having a borderline mild general learning disability. A psychologist may recommend such children for additional teaching support or special class placement on account of a special learning problem such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mild emotional disturbance associated with persistent failure in the ordinary class (disruptive behaviour on its own, however, would not constitute grounds for special class placement or additional teaching support);</li> <li>• Immature social behaviour;</li> <li>• Poor level of language development in relation to overall intellectual level.</li> </ul> <p>A recommendation to place such a child in a special class or to allocate additional teaching resources to support a school in catering for his/her needs should take into account the extent to which the child is making progress in his/her present learning environment and the other existing support available to the child in his/her school.</p>
Moderate General Learning Disability	Such children have been assessed by a psychologist as having a moderate general learning disability.
Severe or Profound General Learning Disability	Such children have been assessed by a psychologist as having a severe or profound general learning disability. In addition, such children may have physical disabilities.
Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders	A psychiatrist or psychologist will have assessed and classified such children as having autism or autistic spectrum disorder according to DSM-IV or ICD-10 criteria.
Specific Learning Disability	<p>Such children have been assessed by a psychologist as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Being of average intelligence or higher; and</li> <li>2. Having a degree of learning disability specific to basic skills in reading, writing or mathematics which places them at or below the 2nd percentile on suitable, standardised, norm-referenced tests.</li> </ol> <p><i>Children who do not meet these criteria and, who in the opinion of the psychologist, have a specific learning disability are more properly the responsibility of the remedial teacher and/or the class teacher.</i></p>
Children with special educational needs arising from an assessed syndrome	The level of additional support to be provided for children who present with a particular syndrome e.g. Down Syndrome, William's Syndrome and Tourette's Syndrome will be determined following consideration of psychological or other specialist reports which details the nature and degree of the child's special educational needs.
Specific Speech and Language <u>Disorder</u>	<p>Such children should meet <i>each</i> of the following criteria:</p> <p>Assessment by a psychologist on a standardised test of intelligence which places non-verbal or performance ability within the average range or above;</p> <p>Assessment on a standardised test of language development by a speech therapist which places performance in one or more of the main areas of speech and language development at two standard deviations or more below the mean, or at a generally equivalent level;</p> <p>The child's difficulties are not attributable to hearing impairment; where the child is affected to some degree by hearing impairment, the hearing threshold for the speech-related frequencies should be 40Db;</p> <p>Emotional and behavioural disorders or a physical disability are not considered to be primary causes.</p> <p>Children with speech and language <u>delays</u> and <u>difficulties</u> are not to be considered under this category.</p>