

Barbara Reilly

From: eCorrespondence (Education) <Education-Correspondence@cloud.gov.ie>
Sent: Wednesday 11 March 2020 10:37
To: Barbara Reilly
Subject: DES-CU-00906-2020

Ms. Barbara Reilly
breilly@SDUBLINCOCO.ie

PLEASE QUOTE REF NUMBER ON ALL CORRESPONDENCE.
Our Ref: DES-CU-00906-2020

Dear Ms. Reilly,

I refer to your recent e-mail to the Minister for Education and Skills, Mr. Joe McHugh TD, in relation to special educational supports at Firhouse Educate Together National School.

Very significant levels of financial provision are made to ensure that all children with special educational needs can be provided with an education appropriate to their needs.

The Department currently spends approximately €1.9 Billion - a fifth - of its annual educational and training budget on making additional provision for children with special educational needs.

This represents an increase of over 50% in total expenditure since 2011, at which point €1.247 billion per annum was provided. Included in this provision is funding towards Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), Special Education teachers, and special classes, all of which are at unprecedented levels.

The number of SNAs in the school system has increased from 10,575 in 2011 to approximately 15,950 at present; supporting in the region of 37,500 pupils.

Budget 2020 provided funding for an additional 1,064 SNAs, bringing the total number of SNA posts for allocation to primary, post-primary and special schools by the end of 2020 to over 17,000. This will represent an increase of over 60% on 2011 levels.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for allocating a quantum of SNA support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school.

The NCSE allocates SNA support to schools in order that students who have care needs can access SNA support as and when it is needed.

In considering applications for SNA support for individual pupils, the NCSE take account of the pupils' needs and consider the resources available to the school to identify whether additionality is needed or whether the school might reasonably be expected to meet the needs of the pupils from its current level of resources.

SNAs are not allocated to individual children but to schools as a school based resource.

The NCSE has an appeals process which allows school or parents to appeal decisions made in relation to allocations of SNA support. Information on the NCSE appeals process is available at:

The SNA allocation to Firhouse ETNS was increased to 10.64 SNA posts with effect from 3 December 2019.

Over 13,500 Special Education Teacher posts are currently allocated to mainstream primary and post primary schools; in comparison with 2011 when there were 9,740 posts.

Budget 2020 provided funding for an additional 120 posts which means that 13,620 Special Education Teaching posts will be available for allocation to mainstream schools by the end of 2020; an increase of almost 40% on 2011 levels.

The Special Education Teaching allocation provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on each school's educational profile. This includes a baseline component, based on school enrolments, provided to every mainstream school to support inclusion, prevention of learning difficulties and early intervention.

It also includes an allocation based on the school's educational profile, based on what each of the following three elements contribute to building this profile:

- Students with complex special educational needs.
- Percentages of students performing below a certain threshold on standardised test results
- Social context of school which includes gender and educational disadvantage.

Firhouse ETNS currently has an allocation of 74.50 Special Education Teaching (SET) Hours, or nearly 3 full special education teaching posts, for an enrolment of 171 pupils at the time that the model was developed. This represents an allocation of 1 special education teacher for every 57 pupils, which is considerably in excess of the national average SET allocation of 1 special education teacher for every 100 pupils in primary schools.

A process is in place where schools can seek a review of their allocations, including the utilisation of their allocations, in circumstances where a school considers that very exceptional circumstances have arisen subsequent to the development of the profile.

Details of this appeal process, which is managed by the NCSE, is available at:

<https://ncse.ie/review-of-special-education-teacher-supports-where-there-are-exceptional-circumstances-or-needs-arising-in-a-school-2>

The school should apply under this process if they wish to have their special education teacher allocation reviewed.

I hope this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Derek Newcombe
Private Secretary