

Challenges and Opportunities in Special Education

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Most Common SEN Conditions

- Specific Learning Disabilities
 - Dyslexia
 - Dyscalculia
 - Dysgraphia
 - Dyspraxia
- General Learning Disabilities
- Autistic Spectrum Disorders
- ADHD
- Emotional Behaviour Disorders
- Co-morbid Conditions

Specific Learning Disabilities

Average or above IQ

Significant weakness in one or more of:

written language

spelling

reading

mathematics

handwriting

coordination of movement (includes oral musculature)

No extraneous factors are causal

General Learning Disabilities

| | <u>IQ Range</u> |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Borderline Mild General Learning Disability | 70-79 |
| Mild General Learning Disability | 50-68 |
| Moderate General Learning Disability | 35-49 |
| Severe/Profound General Learning Disability | <35 |

*All GLD's should be accompanied by
Adaptive skill deficits by definition*

Autistic Spectrum Disorders

Classical Autism (Kanner's Autism)

Asperger's Syndrome

Rett's Disorder

Childhood Disintegrative Disorder

Pervasive Developmental Disorder-NOS*

Classical Autism-usually accompanied by a GLD

Asperger's Syndrome-high functioning

*medical terminology

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Gender Ratio

- Primarily Inattentive Subtype female \geq male
- Primarily Hyperactive/Impulsive Subtype male $>$ female
- Combined Subtype male $>$ female

High rate of co-morbidity: SLD, OCD, ODD, CD*

Does not cause antisocial behaviour

*Specific Learning Disability, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Conduct Disorder

Emotional Behaviour Disorders

- Oppositional Defiant Disorder
- Conduct Disorder
- Clinical Depression
- Childhood Schizophrenia
- Bi-polar Disorder
- Social Phobia (school refusal)

Other mental health conditions

Co-Morbid Conditions

Co-morbidity-2 or more conditions existing simultaneously

All conditions must be adequately addressed for successful outcome

High co-morbidity between:

SLD-ADHD

ADHD-ODD

ADHD-Tourette's

Tourettes-SLD

It is becoming uncommon to find a "pure" type

Impact of Conditions on the Child

Social difficulties range from mild to severe

Reduced self-confidence

Reduced self-esteem

Reduced sense of self-efficacy

Difficult relationships with people in super-ordinate positions

Impact of Conditions on the Family

Increased marital stress

Increased rate of depression in mothers

Typically effective child-rearing practices don't work

Social exclusion

At times endless complaints from school (EBD)

Blame the victim/family mentality in society

Blame the victim mentality in education (EBD)

Fathers often distance themselves from the difficulties

Siblings suffer

Difficulty accessing resources and supports

The Education System Response

New guidelines

New legislation

10,000 Special Needs Assistants appointed

Nearly 8,000 special education teachers appointed*

The NEPS service (National Educational Psychological Service)

SENO's (Special Education Needs Organisers)

The NCSE (National Council for Special Education)

The SESS (Special Education Support Service)

*many with no special ed training

New Guidelines

Circulars: 24-03 Staged Approach

Circular 32-03 Retention

Circular 02-05 General Allocation System

Circular 32-03 Grade Retention

The primary curriculum is flexible and child-centred, and can be adapted to meet children's' needs.

Circular 32-03

The level of provision available should enable pupils to make progress in keeping with their needs and abilities and to move consecutively through the different class levels in the school along with their peers.

Circular 32-03

Under the Department's policy, children should only be allowed to repeat a year for educational reasons and in exceptional circumstances. An additional grade level should not operate through the retention of all or a substantial number of pupils at a grade level.

Circular 32-03

In such exceptional circumstances a Principal teacher, following consultation with the learning support teacher/resource teacher and class teacher and parent(s) may conclude that a pupil would benefit educationally by repeating a grade level. A record outlining the educational basis for the decision to retain a child should be kept for any pupil so retained. In addition, there should be a clear programme outlined for such a pupil that records precisely what new approach will be used for her/him and what its expected benefit will be. These records should be retained within the school and should be brought to the Inspector's attention by the Principal when s/he visits the school. No pupil should repeat a grade more than once in a primary school.

Pupils who have completed sixth class must not transfer to another primary school to repeat sixth class. In the event that a school were to enrol pupils from another school to repeat sixth class the pupils shall not be included as eligible pupils for staffing and other purposes. Capitation and other grants in respect of such pupils shall not be paid.

Legislation

Education Act 1998

Boards of Management-children with SEN
enrolment
equality of access

Definition of SEN-a legal definition

Education of Persons with Special Education Needs Act

EPSEN

INCLUSION

ASSESSMENT

EDUCATION PLAN

APPEALS PROCESS

Special Needs Assistants

Are not teachers

No teaching duties

Under supervision of class teachers

Assigned as needed by application through the school

Special Education Teachers

Learning Support Teachers

Special Education Resource Teacher

Resource Teachers-visual impairment
hearing impairment
travellers

Language Support Teacher

National Educational Psychological Service-NEPS

Provided to nearly all school

About 130 nation-wide

Free psychological service

Limited number of referrals per school

Special Education Needs Organisers- SENO's

One for every school

Coordination of the school's SEN service provision

Decision making role for resources provided

National Council for Special Education- NCSE

Overall responsibility for SEN nationwide

Guidelines for writing IEP's

Appeals procedure

Special Education Support Service-SESS

Information access for parents and teachers

Excellent website: www.sess.ie

Significant High Court Cases

O'Donoghue-right to educate children with severe/profound GLD

Sinott-age of termination of education

O'Carolan-appropriate programme/placement

O'Cuanachain-methodology of autism education and delays

Secondary school cases

right to enrol

appropriate programme

services

supports

resources

| Low Incidence Disabilities | Hours of resource teaching support available to school per week |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Physical Disability | 3 |
| Hearing Impairment | 4 |
| Visual Impairment | 3.5 |
| Emotional Disturbance | 3.5 |
| Severe Emotional Disturbance | 5 |
| Moderate General Learning Disability | 3.5 |
| Severe / Profound General Learning Disability | 5 |
| Autism / Autistic Spectrum Disorders | 5 |
| Specific Speech and Language Disorder | 4 |
| Assessed syndrome in conjunction with one of the above low incidence disabilities | 3 to 5, taking into account the pupil's special educational needs including level of general learning disability |
| Multiple Disabilities | 5 |

DES Circular Sp Ed 24/03

The Staged Approach to Special Education

Stage One

Parent/teacher concern about a child's development

physical

social

emotional

behavioural

academic

Stage One cont.

Teacher administers screening measures
screening checklists/profiles
senior infants/first class

For older children:
norm-referenced tests
behavioural measures

Stage One cont.

Teacher creates up short, simple plan

Extra help in the classroom

Share with parents

Areas of concern are the focus

Reviewed regularly with parents

After 2 school terms:

If successful-stop

If unsuccessful-consult with school sp ed team-move to Stage 2

Stage Two

Refer to learning support teacher

Parent permission required

Learning support teacher completes diagnostic testing

If testing indicates need then

parent/teacher/LS teacher draw up plan

including supplementary activities in class/home

Review regularly with parents

If concerns continue after one school term-consider Stage 3

Exception to Stage One and Two

Cases of serious behaviour disruption:

Discuss with parental permission child's needs with:
clinical services HSE
NEPS

May lead to:

More detailed behavioural plan at school/home

or

Referral to Stage Three

Stage Three

For children with serious emotional/behavioural problems

or

Children who aren't helped by Stage Two

Parent permission required

Consult with specialists outside school

NEPS

Paediatrician

SLT, audiologist, OT, etc

Plan made with: LS, RT, CT, parents

DES Circular Sp Ed 02/05

The General Allocation System

Principles of 02/05

1. Pupils needs met immediately
2. Individual applications for Low Incidence conditions
3. Support matched to need
4. 1:1 and group teaching possible
5. Pupils supported by most appropriate teacher

Pupils Covered by 02/05

1. Eligible for Learning Support (<10th %ile)

2. Learning difficulties e.g. mild social/emotional difficulties, mild coordination or attentions control difficulties associated with ADHD, ADD, Dyspraxia

Pupils with conditions such as dyspraxia, ADD and ADHD who have been assessed as being in the low incidence category, will continue to receive an individual allocation of support through the relevant Special Education Needs Organiser

1 & 2 above are Stage 2 intervention categories

Pupils Covered by 02/05 cont.

3. pupils who have special educational needs arising from high incidence disabilities (borderline mild general learning disability, mild general learning disability and specific learning disability).

Some of the pupils who have borderline mild general learning disability and virtually all of the pupils described above with mild general learning disability or with specific learning disability, can be considered to have learning needs that require intervention at stage III of the staged approach

Pupils Covered by 02/05 cont.

Most of the pupils described above will receive additional teaching support in the classroom or in small withdrawal groups in addition to the support they receive from the class teacher. However, some pupils may also require intensive additional one to one teaching support for a specific period of time.

•Intervention with pupils at stages II and III should include a classroom support plan to ensure that the pupils' needs are met for the whole of the school day.

The Individual Education Plan

The single most important document any child can receive!

No IEP=No Special Education

Where Do We Go From Here?

Coordinate service

Bring educational therapists into the DES

Train special education teachers

Close special schools for Mild GLD in 5 years

Teachers in special schools to become peripatetic consultants

Require all special education teachers to have post-grad credentials

Limit the role of the school principal in decision making

Training for NEWB officers

Recognition of the pernicious effect of early school leaving (EBD)

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*Autism in the Mainstream School: A Practical Guide**

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