



Understanding the Continuum of Support and Allocation of Support Teaching

In Ireland, educational support for students with additional needs is structured through a system known as the Continuum of Support. This framework is designed to ensure that all students receive the appropriate level of assistance they need to succeed in school. Here's a breakdown to help you understand how it works and how support teaching is allocated in our school:

The Continuum of Support

1. Classroom Support (Support for all)

- **What It Is:** At this level, support is provided within the general classroom setting. Teachers use various strategies to help all students, including those who may need extra help.
- **Examples:** Differentiated instruction, adjusted learning materials.
- **Who It's For:** This is for students who need minor adjustments or extra help but do not require specialised support.

2. School Support (Support for some)

- **What It Is:** When a student needs more focused help, the school may implement specific interventions. This might involve additional resources or a more tailored approach. This can happen in class, or out of class.
- **Examples:** Team teaching in class, Small group work in or out of class, specialised teaching strategies, or targeted interventions based on individual needs.
- **Who It's For:** Students who benefit from more intensive support than what is available in the general classroom.

3. School Support Plus (Support for a few)

- **What It Is:** This level involves more intensive and specialised support. It often, but not always, includes additional resources and outside expertise.
- **Examples:** Involvement of support teachers, small group or 1:1 withdrawal support, engagement with external agencies as appropriate, or more personalised plans and interventions.
- **Who It's For:** Students with significant/complex needs who require substantial additional support to access the curriculum and make progress.

Allocation of Support Teaching

The allocation of support teaching is closely tied to the Continuum of Support. Here's how it works in our school:

1. Assessment and Identification

- Teachers and schools assess students' needs based on observations, assessments, and feedback. This helps determine the level of support required. The class teacher may refer a child to the support team, or it may be based on assessment data.

2. Planning and Resources

- This is a needs-based model. Pupils with the highest level of need (academic, social, emotional or behavioural) receive the most intensive support.
- A diagnosis is not required to be on the continuum or receive support. A diagnosis does not impact the level of support, as it is based on need within the school.
- For students identified as needing more support, the school plans appropriate interventions. This could involve adapting teaching methods, using specialised resources, or allocating additional teaching time.

3. Support Teachers

- Schools have special education teachers or support teachers who work specifically with students who need extra help. These teachers might work in class, or withdraw pupils. They may provide direct instruction, help with individualised learning plans, or work alongside classroom teachers to implement interventions.
- Where appropriate, support teachers will read report recommendations and liaise with outside agencies. It is important to note that we do not have the resources to support every recommendation from an outside professional. The school will assess the levels of need and what support can be offered.

4. Planning and Review

- All pupils who have been placed on the continuum will have a school support plan developed. This will outline the current targets for the child and strategies that may be used to meet them. We meet parents to discuss school support plans in October and review the plans in February. The effectiveness of interventions is regularly reviewed, and adjustments are made as needed. The aim is to ensure that students progress and that support is adjusted based on their changing needs. As schools will always have more need than resources available for support, support may happen in blocks of intervention. The support teachers will work with different pupils and groups of pupils throughout the year and their timetable will change regularly. Interventions and support are targeted and time bound.

Key Points for Parents

- **Understanding:** Most children will need some support in some area over their primary school lives. This is normal and pupils enjoy the support sessions. The only aim is to help students progress.
- **Communication:** Stay in regular contact with your child's teachers to understand the support being provided and how you can reinforce it at home.
- **Involvement:** Be involved in the planning and review process. Your insights are valuable in tailoring support to your child's needs. A support teacher will be in touch by October to plan a meeting.
- **Resources:** Know that the school's resources are limited, and while we will support every child to the best of our ability, it will not be possible to offer specific support teaching to children at all times. The school's support team will assess need and review regularly.