

Cuts to SNA Allocations following SNA Review Process

IPPN notes the Minister for Education & Youth's statement this afternoon on the pausing of the process to review SNA allocations to schools.

Principles

IPPN's response to the proposed cutting of SNA Allocations in some schools, following the completion of an SNA review process, is underpinned by the following principles:

1. Equal access to a high-quality, inclusive education experience for all children must be a system priority.
2. Additional needs are either met or they are not and, if not, there is a consequential impact not only on the child with additional needs but also on the other children in the class.
3. The resources allocated to schools are deployed to meet identified learning and care needs that are recorded in Student Support Plans.

Response

1. The extent to which schools can meet the additional needs of children is limited by the funds allocated for special education in the DEY's annual budget. That budgetary allocation is **not** based on accurate, up-to-date data in relation to the level of additional needs presenting in schools.
2. IPPN recently conducted a survey of its members, to which over 1,000 school leaders responded.
 - 78.42% responded that the school's allocation of SET hours is not sufficient to meet the needs of the children who present with additional learning needs.
 - 83.73% of schools report that, as result of this under-allocation, there are children in the school who still require the support of a Special Education Teacher but who are unable to avail of such support.
 - 61.54% responded that the school's allocation of SNA posts is not sufficient to meet the needs of the children who present with identified care needs.
 - 85.74% of schools report that, as a result of this under-allocation, there are children in the school who still require the support of a Special Needs Assistant but who are unable to avail of such support.
3. The care needs described in Circular 0030/2014, which informs the SNA Review process, are too narrow and do not reflect the increased complexity of need that schools are trying to support or the invaluable work that SNAs do in relation to assisting regulation and responding appropriately and effectively to behaviours of concern. School contexts have changed utterly in the 12 years since that circular was published and allocations to schools should reflect that.

4. The basis upon which the cut to a school's SNA allocation has been made needs to be communicated clearly and transparently to the school.
5. The workload associated with the preparation of documentation for an SNA Review process is considerable and time consuming. In 67% of schools, the person tasked with leading and co-ordinating special education provision has no allocated leadership time (Deputy Principals, AP1s, AP2s or other staff members). In 23% of schools, teaching principals are doing this work. They have one day a week to balance their leadership of teaching and learning and their leadership of inclusion with procurement, HR, finance, building health & safety, compliance checks and other administrative tasks. It is unreasonable, unfair and unsustainable to expect someone to lead something as complex as special needs provision without giving them time to do so.
6. The circular detailing the SNA Redeployment Scheme should have been published before cuts to SNA allocations were notified to schools. Knowledge of the existence of such a scheme, and how it will operate, would have provided some comfort to those SNAs who have been informed that they will no longer have a post in their school.

Please Note

IPPN's response to this issue has been shared with both the DEY and the NCSE. The data from our member survey on inclusion has also been shared with them.

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17th February 2026