

## Further Guidance on Special Class Grants

### 1. Start Up

Following receipt of notification from NCSE the start-up grant of €30,000 will be paid directly to the school (mainstream or special schools) where the SEN classroom is to be delivered through the repurposing of existing accommodation. In these circumstances, the school is not required to contact the Department.

This grant will provide good flexibility to schools to facilitate the opening of a new special class and encompasses the existing start-up grant, sensory room fit out grant/creation of a quiet space and also Furniture & Equipment grant and ICT grant all of which have been updated to an overall total of €30,000.

### 2. Small Scale Re-purposing Works: €70,000

Some schools may require small-scale re-purposing works to facilitate the establishment of a new special class in existing accommodation. For these schools, a new simplified application process is also being put in place to support delivery of same in a timely manner. The level of funding involved will depend on the nature of small-scale works to be undertaken and will be up to a maximum of €70,000 for each new special class being opened for the 2025/2026 school year. This grant funding will provide good flexibility to schools to facilitate the opening of a new special class and is in addition to the €30,000 start-up grant.

### 3. Re-Purposing Works above €70,000

A minority of schools may require more significant works relating to the opening of a new special class in existing accommodation. On receipt of such applications, a more detailed technical assessment will be undertaken to validate the scope of necessary works. It is envisaged that this will also determine the initial phase of works needed to facilitate the opening of the special class for the 2025/2026 school year. Any other works will be considered as appropriate as part of the wider capital programme and prioritised accordingly. It is envisaged that such projects will generally be delivered as devolved projects. Project Management supports will be targeted at special schools and mainstream schools that involve more complex projects. Schools that are approved for more significant works will not be separately granted funding under Small Scale Re-purposing Works above.

#### **4. Modular accommodation**

The Department will provide modular accommodation as necessary where it is satisfied there is insufficient capacity within existing accommodation to facilitate the opening of a new special class that is sanctioned by the NCSE. However, given the longer lead in periods involved, it is envisaged that contingency arrangements will need to be put in place at local school level in consultation with the NCSE to facilitate the early opening of new special classes.

Further guidance on grants for the opening of special classes is available in Department of Education [Circular 0080/2024](#).

#### **5. Specialised furniture/equipment grant:**

Schools should make a request in writing for specialised furniture/equipment where this is required for a particular student. The request, along with a report from an occupational therapist, should be submitted to [gov.ie – Special Education Furniture and Equipment Grants \(www.gov.ie\)](#)

#### **6. Assistive Technology:**

As per Circular 0010/2013, schools can apply for a grant to purchase specialist equipment, where this is essential and will be used throughout the school day, for students with a diagnosis of:

- a serious physical disability and/or
- a sensory or communicative disability

For students who are deaf or hard of hearing or students who are blind or vision impaired, the NCSE Visiting Teacher can make recommendations in relation to specific assistive technology e.g., sound field systems, FM systems, braille embossers, distance cameras etc. All other applications for assistive technology should be made to the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) with responsibility for the school.

#### **7. Special Transport Scheme & Bus Escort:**

The school transport scheme applies to children with special educational needs recognised by the Department of Education. Schools should ensure that an application form for school transport for each eligible student is complete and signed by school Principal, signed by parents and then forwarded to the SENO, along with professional report(s), prior to, or at the time of, first enrolment. The SENO completes the report section, confirming that the student meets the criteria for special class or special school placement and forwards the completed application form to the School Transport section of the Department of Education. Applications are forwarded by the SENO to the School

Transport Section in the Department of Education, who make the decision on all applications.

The employment of a School Transport Escort is sanctioned by the School Transport Section of the Department. The Escort is then employed by the board of management.

The School Transport Section of the Department will issue grant funding to the board of management by way of advance payment for the current and/or following school year. An Escort Reconciliation Form will be issued to each school by the Department towards the end of the school year. The reconciliation form must be completed by the school and returned to the Department before the beginning of the next school year.

#### **8. Enhanced capitation grant:**

Enhanced capitation rates are payable in respect of pupils attending special schools and special classes attached to mainstream schools. These rates depend on the particular level of need involved. Grant rates are available at [Circular: 0056/2024](#).