



LEARNING-SUPPORT GUIDELINES





LEARNING-SUPPORT GUIDELINES

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH

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Foreword by the Minister for Education and Science



These *Learning-Support Guidelines* are an important part of my Department's Reading Initiative and are aimed at ensuring that all children achieve appropriate levels of literacy and numeracy during the course of their primary education. Remedial teachers, formerly known as learning-support teachers, make an invaluable contribution to the educational development of large numbers of children. Their work ensures success at school for many children who might otherwise fail. I am confident that these guidelines, particularly by setting the role of the learning-support teacher firmly in the context of a whole-school approach, will further enhance this work. I also believe that they will enable principals and teachers in all schools to take a fresh look at the arrangements that they have in place, both in terms of prevention and early intervention, for children with learning difficulties.

Careful planning is a vital component of every enterprise in which people work co-operatively towards the achievement of common objectives. The *Learning-Support Guidelines* recommend high levels of co-operation between class teachers, learning-support teachers and parents in supporting children who are experiencing learning difficulties. Strategic planning at school level ensures that maximum benefit will be gained from the combined efforts of teachers and parents. It is vital also that class teachers and learning-support teachers have a shared understanding of the learning needs of individual pupils, and of their relative responsibilities in responding to these needs, so that they can co-operate closely in the implementation of effective learning programmes.

Our understanding of important aspects of children's educational development continues to be greatly enhanced through research. Many of the recommendations in these guidelines emanate from a large-scale survey carried out, on behalf of my Department, by the Educational Research Centre. One of the main conclusions of the report of that survey is that early and concentrated support is critical for children who experience learning difficulties. It is most important, therefore, that all schools implement effective early intervention programmes to ensure that children with learning difficulties do not slip through the net at the early stages of their primary education.

These guidelines have been drawn up following extensive consultations between my Department and representatives of parents, school management and teachers. I would like to express my gratitude to the Educational Research Centre, to the Advisory Committee and to the officials of my Department for their excellent work in producing these guidelines, which merit very careful consideration. They will, undoubtedly, result in an even more effective learning-support service and their implementation will assist schools in deriving maximum benefit from a most important resource.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Michael Woods". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Minister for Education and Science

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A considerable number of people contributed to the design and compilation of this publication, *Learning-Support Guidelines*. In particular, the contribution and dedicated commitment of the members of the Advisory Committee appointed by the Department of Education and Science is gratefully appreciated:

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

The primary purpose of the *Learning-Support Guidelines* is to provide practical guidance to teachers, parents and other interested persons on the provision of effective learning support to pupils with low achievement/learning difficulties. The *Learning-Support Guidelines* reflect the changes and advances in Irish Education since the document *Guidelines on Remedial Education*¹ was issued to schools in 1988.

The *Guidelines on Remedial Education* set out the aims of remedial education and provided practical advice for schools on the organisation of a positive school environment for children with learning difficulties. The development of remedial education prior to 1987 was reviewed and recommendations were put forward for the future direction of remedial education. Issues such as the selection of children for remedial teaching, the development of school policies on the prevention, diagnosis and remediation of learning difficulties and the role of the remedial teacher were considered.

The period since 1988 has been a time of significant development and considerable change in Irish education. However, national and international studies of reading achievement indicate that reading standards at primary level in Ireland have not improved

significantly during this time. Moreover, of particular importance is the fact that a significant number of children continue to leave primary education with less than adequate skills in reading and/or numeracy. It is therefore timely and opportune to look again at the delivery of remedial education and to make appropriate revisions to the guidelines available to schools.

New Strategies to Address Low Achievement

Many of the developments in Irish education since the *Guidelines on Remedial Education* were issued have impacted on provision for less able children. The number of remedial teachers at primary level shows a marked increase. In 1988, there were 837 remedial teachers in primary schools and the great majority of these were working in large urban schools. During the 1990s the remedial service was gradually extended and, from September 1999, a service was available in all primary schools. The expansion of the service resulted in the deployment of close to 1,500 remedial teachers, which is almost double the number deployed in 1987. An important feature of this increase was the appointment of remedial teachers to clusters of small schools, many in rural areas.

¹ Department of Education. (1987). *Guidelines on Remedial Education*. Dublin: Stationery Office

Other important developments in the 1990s include initiatives in special education and initiatives designed to benefit schools in disadvantaged areas. In addition, two influential reports were published – the *Special Education Review Committee Report (SERC Report)*² in 1993 and the *Survey of Remedial Education in Irish Primary Schools Report (SRE Report)*³ in 1998.

Initiatives in special education were marked by increased funding resulting in reduced pupil-teacher ratios in special schools and improved provision for pupils with disabilities in mainstream schools. Many new special classes were established in mainstream schools to cater for children with learning disabilities. Such disabilities included mild general learning disability, moderate general learning disability, specific language disorders, specific learning disability and autistic spectrum disorders. Additional visiting and resource teachers were appointed to provide increased support to children with disabilities and to facilitate the inclusion of such children in mainstream schools.

Improvements in the provision for children attending schools in disadvantaged areas were implemented through increases in funding, concessionary teaching posts and programmes such as the Early Start Pre-School Pilot Programme, the Breaking the Cycle Programme, the Home/School/Community Liaison Scheme, the Support Teacher Project and the Eight to Fifteen Early School Leaver Initiative. As well as

providing extra support for pupils, these initiatives had significant implications for the role of the remedial teacher and other additional teachers, particularly with regard to the co-ordination of the services provided by these teachers to the best advantage of all pupils with learning difficulties.

The publication of the *SERC Report* in 1993 provided the impetus for many of the subsequent advances in remedial and special education provision. It made specific recommendations in relation to remedial education and addressed issues such as the extension of the remedial service to all primary schools, the selection of pupils for remedial teaching and the size of remedial teachers' caseloads. The *SERC Report* also recommended that the Department of Education should undertake or commission research into the operation and effectiveness of the remedial education service.

The Department of Education commissioned the Educational Research Centre in Drumcondra to carry out research on remedial education in primary schools and the findings were published in 1998. The *SRE Report* made a series of recommendations for the development of remedial education in schools. Among these was the recommendation that the *Guidelines on Remedial Education* should be revised in order to take account of the changing context in which the remedial education service was being delivered. The *SRE Report* recommended that the revised

² Department of Education. (1993). *Report of the Special Education Review Committee [SERC]*. Dublin: Stationery Office

³ Shiel, G., & Morgan, M. (1998). *Study of Remedial Education in Irish Primary Schools. Final Report*. Dublin: Educational Research Centre

guidelines should set out clearly the aims of remedial education. It also recommended that apparent differences between recommendations in the *Guidelines on Remedial Education* and in the *SERC Report* should be resolved – particularly those regarding the criteria for selecting pupils for remedial teaching and the numbers of pupils who should receive remedial teaching.

New Directions

This document, *Learning-Support Guidelines*, is a direct response to the findings and recommendations of the *SRE Report*. It also reflects many of the changes and advances that have taken place in primary education in recent years. Recommendations aimed at the improvement of remedial education are presented. Suggestions are made with regard to the development and implementation of whole-school policies, the selection of pupils, individual programme planning, teaching methodologies and the role of teachers and parents⁴ in providing learning support for children experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties.

In order to highlight the changes in emphasis contained in this document, the terms “learning support” and “learning-support teaching” are used, from this point, instead of “remedial education” and “remedial teaching”. This change also reflects the current situation in many schools, where the term “learning-support

teacher” is used to denote the expanded role of the “remedial teacher”. It is proposed, therefore, to use the term “learning support” in all future documents and correspondence instead of the term “remedial”. The term “supplementary teaching” in this document denotes teaching provided by a learning-support teacher, that is additional to a pupil’s regular classroom programme.

Supplementary teaching may be provided in a pupil’s own classroom or in a learning-support room.

Specifically, these *Guidelines* emphasise and provide guidance on:

- the implementation in all schools of policies which emphasise the enhancement of classroom-based learning for all pupils, the prevention of learning difficulties and the provision of early intervention and learning-support programmes;
- the development in all schools of a school policy on learning support, within the context of the school plan;
- the role of the principal teacher in guiding the development and implementation of school policy on learning support;
- the role of a teacher in each school with responsibility for co-ordinating the provision of special needs and learning-support services;
- the dual role of the learning-support teacher in providing supplementary

⁴ Throughout this document, the term ‘parents’ denotes parents and/or guardians.

- teaching to pupils experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties, and in supporting and consulting with colleagues;
- the role of class teachers in the implementation of learning-support programmes;
 - the development of a co-ordinated policy on learning support in clusters of schools and the review of this policy on a yearly basis;
 - the development of learning-support programmes in schools in designated areas of educational disadvantage;
 - the identification of pupils experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties and the implementation of structured procedures for diagnostic assessment;
 - the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching based on the outcomes of diagnostic assessment;
 - collaboration between teachers in the planning and implementation of supplementary teaching and other learning-support programmes;
 - collaboration between parents and teachers in the planning and implementation of learning-support programmes;
 - individual programme planning and record keeping for pupils who are in receipt of supplementary teaching;

- the use of specific methodologies for supplementary teaching in English and mathematics.

The following is an outline of the content of the *Learning-Support Guidelines*:

Chapter 1, *Principles and Aims of Learning Support*, outlines the principles which underpin good practice in the provision of learning support in schools, and addresses the aims and expected outcomes of learning support.

Chapter 2, *Whole-School Planning and Organisation for Learning Support*, suggests that all schools should develop a policy statement on the provision of learning support and it provides guidelines for this. The chapter also addresses the challenges that arise in providing a learning-support service in schools in designated areas of educational disadvantage and in schools that share the services of a learning-support teacher.

Chapter 3, *Partnership in Learning Support*, outlines the complementary roles of the Board of Management, the principal teacher, class teachers, learning-support teacher(s), and parents, as well as others involved in providing teaching or specialist support services to the school. It suggests that the adoption of a collaborative approach by all those who work with pupils experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties leads to effective learning support, including positive outcomes for pupils.

Chapter 4, *Screening, Selection, Assessment and Review*, provides guidelines on screening pupils, conducting and reporting the outcomes of diagnostic assessment, selecting pupils for supplementary teaching, and evaluating the progress of pupils at the end of each term of supplementary teaching.

Chapter 5, *Approaches to Planning and Teaching*, provides brief guidelines on planning, teaching, and record keeping. It is suggested that an *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* be drawn up for each pupil availing of supplementary teaching and sample forms are provided for this purpose. Some approaches to organisation and

teaching methods for use in supplementary teaching in English and mathematics are also suggested. The chapter concludes with an outline of some of the possibilities that are afforded by Information and Communications Technology.

An effective learning-support service can play a central role in the raising of national standards in literacy and numeracy and in providing the opportunity for every pupil to reach a competent level in these areas. It is envisaged that these *Learning Support Guidelines* will be a source of advice to school management, teachers and others who are involved in improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools.

CHAPTER 1

PRINCIPLES AND AIMS OF LEARNING SUPPORT

Learning support is designed to help children with learning difficulties to achieve success at school

CHAPTER 1

PRINCIPLES AND AIMS OF LEARNING SUPPORT

1.1 Overview

Despite the many successes of the Irish education system and improvements in provision in recent years, a significant number of pupils leave formal education each year with very low achievement and/or learning difficulties. Many of these pupils complete their formal education without enjoying the experience of school and lacking the basic literacy, numeracy and associated skills that are necessary for independent living. The learning-support service is designed to ensure that all pupils achieve basic literacy and numeracy by the time they complete their primary education. In this chapter, the principles that underpin successful learning-support intervention programmes are set out, the aims of learning support are outlined and the expected outcomes of learning support are described.

1.2 Principles of Learning Support

Effective learning-support programmes are based on the following principles:

- effective whole-school policies and parental involvement;
 - prevention of failure;
 - provision of intensive early intervention;
 - direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need.
- Adherence to these principles results in a greater awareness in schools of the individual learning needs of pupils, an earlier and more effective whole-school response to their needs and a reduction in the numbers of pupils from third to sixth classes requiring supplementary teaching. Schools which are successful in tackling the problem of low achievement among pupils will:
- place a high priority on the enhancement of classroom-based learning and on the prevention of learning difficulties at all levels within the school;
 - support pupils experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties through a team approach which involves the pupils themselves, their teachers, parents and relevant support personnel such as psychologists and speech and language therapists;
 - draw up and implement whole-school policies, systems and supports for pupils with low achievement in English¹ and mathematics;
 - establish effective home-school partnerships, including the development of support strategies for parents;

¹ Throughout this document, the terms 'English' and 'literacy' may denote Gaelige in cases in which Gaelige is the first language.

- provide learning-support programmes for the lowest-achieving pupils in the school, especially those pupils who are performing at or below the 10th percentile on nationally standardised tests of English reading and/or mathematics;
- implement intensive prevention (junior infants to second class) and early intervention (senior infants to second class) programmes, including supplementary teaching;
- if necessary, provide supplementary teaching for the minority of pupils in the senior section of the school (third to sixth classes) who have not yet achieved basic competence in English and mathematics, i.e. those performing below the 10th percentile on nationally standardised tests of literacy and numeracy;
- develop and implement an individual learning programme for each pupil in receipt of supplementary teaching, based on an assessment of needs and a specification of learning targets for the pupil. These programmes are drawn up and implemented collaboratively by the pupil's class teacher, learning-support teacher and parents.

1.3 Aims of Learning Support

The principal aim of learning support is to optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with learning

difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school. This aim can be achieved most effectively through the implementation of whole-school policies and approaches that target the learning needs of the lowest achieving pupils. Such policies and approaches can be developed through consultation; they provide a means of co-ordinating the work of teachers, parents and others on behalf of these pupils. Central to this process will be the enhancement of classroom-based learning and it will include, as appropriate, supplementary teaching by the learning-support teacher in the classroom or in the learning-support room.

The following subsidiary aims relating to the provision of learning-support services for pupils with low achievement and/or learning difficulties arise from the principal aim of learning support:

- to enable these pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level;
- to develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning in these pupils;
- to enable these pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners;
- to provide supplementary teaching and additional support and resources for these pupils in English or mathematics;

- to involve parents in supporting their children's learning through effective parent-support programmes;
- to promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole-school policies on learning support for these pupils;
- to establish early intervention programmes and other programmes designed to enhance learning and to prevent/reduce difficulties in learning.
- enhancement of basic skills and learning strategies to a level which enables these pupils to participate in the full curriculum;
- the achievement of adequate levels of competency in literacy and mathematics by these pupils before they leave primary education;

1.4 Expected Outcomes of Learning Support

The pupils who receive support from the learning-support teacher are normally those whose achievement is at a very low level and who are at risk of not reaching adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school. Other pupils, whose persistent learning difficulties may be associated with a general or specific learning disability, will normally be referred for psychological assessment, in consultation with parents, and may then be supported by a resource teacher or by some other form of special educational provision. Pending such provision, these pupils should receive support from the learning-support teacher.

The expected outcomes of learning-support programmes for pupils with low achievement/learning difficulties can be described as follows:

- improved learning by these pupils;

- the application of independent learning strategies by these pupils resulting in commitment to, and involvement in their own learning, positive attitudes to school and high levels of self esteem;
- partnership between class teachers, learning-support teachers and parents in planning and implementing supplementary teaching programmes for these pupils;
- the implementation of a tracking system at whole-school level to monitor the progress of these pupils.

The effective implementation of learning support is central to the achievement of these aims and outcomes in schools. The role of the learning-support teacher involves high quality interaction with pupils through teaching individuals and groups. It also involves interaction with the principal teacher(s), class teachers and parents in the development and implementation of whole-school policies for the prevention and remediation of learning difficulties. In addition, the role demands linkages with psychological and other child support services. The learning-support teacher also

has a consultative role in the areas of pupil referral to, and placement in special educational services, acquisition of teaching and learning resources, programme planning for individual pupils and groups, and the development of school policies for less able pupils, including those with specific or general learning disabilities.

Finally, the learning-support teacher may be the teacher who, in consultation with the principal, has responsibility for co-ordinating the various pupil-support services which are available both inside and outside the school and who ensures that the appropriate pupil-support services are made available to pupils with learning needs.

CHAPTER 2

WHOLE-SCHOOL PLANNING AND ORGANISATION FOR LEARNING SUPPORT

Learning support is a whole-school responsibility

CHAPTER 2

WHOLE-SCHOOL PLANNING AND ORGANISATION FOR LEARNING SUPPORT

2.1 Overview

This chapter deals with whole-school organisation for learning support. Guidelines are provided on the development of policy in the context of the school plan and procedures for implementing policy are suggested. Particular consideration is given to policy development and implementation in schools in designated areas of educational disadvantage and in schools that have a shared learning-support service.

The aim of learning support is to optimise the teaching and learning process so as to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school. If this aim is to be achieved, the learning-support programme must be fully integrated into the general organisation of the school and its activities. The school plan for learning support should be in tune with and should form one element of the broader school plan that deals with all aspects of the school's operations, including provision for pupils with special needs. In particular, the broader plan should indicate how the different resources available to the school can be integrated to best meet the needs of pupils who have low achievement and/or learning difficulties.

Effective learning support requires a high level of collaboration and consultation involving the Board of Management, the principal teacher, class teachers, the learning support teacher(s), special education teachers, parents and relevant professionals. Such collaboration should be purposely and specifically planned and the responsibilities of each person or group should be clearly defined in the school plan.

2.2 The Whole-School Plan for Learning Support

The following elements should be included in the whole-school plan for learning support. Each of these elements is dealt with in some detail in sections 2.2.1 to 2.2.18 below:

Aims of Learning Support (2.2.1)

Roles and Responsibilities in Learning-Support Provision (2.2.2)

Co-ordinating Learning-Support and Special Needs Services (2.2.3)

Strategies for Preventing Learning Difficulties (2.2.4)

Strategies for Implementing Early Intervention Programmes (2.2.5)

Identifying and Selecting Pupils for Supplementary Teaching (2.2.6)

Provision of Supplementary Teaching by the Learning-Support Teacher (2.2.7)

Continuing/Discontinuing Pupils in Receipt of Supplementary Teaching (2.2.8)

Strategies for Communicating Information (2.2.9)

Approaches to Involving Parents (2.2.10)

Referring Pupils to Out-of-School Agencies (2.2.11)

Monitoring the Progress of Individual Pupils (2.2.12)

Record Keeping (2.2.13)

Resources for Learning Support (2.2.14)

Time-tabling for Supplementary Teaching (2.2.15)

Work Schedule of the Learning-Support Teacher (2.2.16)

Monitoring Implementation of the School Plan on Learning Support (2.2.17)

Reviewing/revising School Policy on Learning Support (2.2.18)

2.2.1 Whole-School Statement on Aims of Learning Support

The aims of learning support in an individual school should arise from the aims of the school, as laid out in the school plan¹, and the principles, aims and outcomes of learning support, as outlined in Chapter 1 of these *Guidelines*.

2.2.2 Whole-School Statement on Roles and Responsibilities in Learning-Support Provision

It is envisaged that the Board of Management, the principal teacher, class teachers, the learning-support teacher, parents and pupils will all contribute to the development and implementation of the school's plan on learning support. The expected contribution of each party is outlined in Chapter 3. Schools should examine these and incorporate them in their school plan, making modifications in line with their own needs and circumstances.

2.2.3 Whole-School Strategies for Co-ordinating Learning-Support and Special Needs Services

The principal teacher in each school will have overall responsibility for developing and implementing school policy on learning-support and special needs services. The principal teacher may co-ordinate these services him/herself, or nominate a teacher on the school staff to do so. The co-ordinating activities in which this teacher is expected to engage should be outlined in the school plan (see Section 3.3.1 in Chapter 3).

2.2.4 Whole-School Strategies for Preventing Learning Difficulties

Learning difficulties can be prevented or at least alleviated by implementing appropriate whole-school programmes in English and mathematics. The school plan should

¹ See Department of Education and Science (1999). *Developing a School Plan: Guidelines for Primary Schools*. Dublin: Stationery Office

indicate the strategies that will be put in place to prevent learning difficulties. Strategies for preventing learning difficulties could include:

- development of agreed approaches to language development and to teaching other aspects of English and mathematics in order to ensure progression and continuity from class to class;
- provision of additional support in language development and in relevant early literacy and mathematical skills to pupils who need it;
- implementation of a whole-school parent involvement programme that focuses on developing children's oral language skills, sharing books with children, and developing their early mathematical skills;
- implementation of paired reading programmes involving adults in the community and pupils in the school;
- ongoing structured observation and assessment of the language, literacy and numeracy skills of pupils in the infant classes to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties.

2.2.5 Whole-school Strategies for Implementing Early Intervention Programmes

The principle of early intervention should underpin school policy on learning support

and the provision of supplementary teaching programmes in English and mathematics.

Research evidence indicates that the implementation of an intensive early intervention programme in the early primary classes (i.e. senior infants to second) is an effective response to meeting the needs of children who experience low achievement and/or learning difficulties. Programmes with the following characteristics have proved most successful in improving pupils' achievements:

- they are set within a specific timeframe, such as an instructional term of 13 to 20 weeks. (Therefore, it is suggested that, for the purposes of organising learning support, the school year should be divided into two or three instructional terms, each between 13 and 20 weeks.);
- they are based on a shared expectation of success by everybody involved;
- they involve small-group teaching or one-to-one teaching when small-group teaching has not been effective;
- they are intensive in terms of the frequency of lessons (daily where possible) and the pace of instruction;
- they include a strong focus on the development of oral language, laying the foundation for meaningful reading activities and further development of language and comprehension skills;

- they emphasise the development of phonemic awareness and a range of other word identification skills;
- they engage pupils in frequent supervised oral and silent reading of texts at appropriate levels of difficulty, and monitor their comprehension of these texts;
- they stress the interconnected nature of listening, speaking, reading and writing;
- in mathematics, they focus on language development and the development of mathematical procedures and concepts.

2.2.6 Whole-School Procedures and Criteria for Identifying and Selecting Pupils for Supplementary Teaching

It is important that the procedures and criteria for selecting pupils for supplementary teaching be clearly outlined in the school plan. As indicated in greater detail in Chapter 4, the identification and selection of pupils should involve:

- (i) administration, scoring and interpretation of an appropriate standardised screening measure by the class teacher (or, in the case of very young pupils, appropriate checklists or profiles);
- (ii) selection of pupils for diagnostic assessment by the learning-support teacher, in consultation with the class teacher;

- (iii) administration of diagnostic tests by the learning-support teacher to each selected pupil (subject to approval by the pupil's parents) to identify the pupil's learning strengths and needs;
- (iv) determination of the nature of the intervention to be provided to the pupil, such as additional support from the class teacher and/or supplementary teaching from the learning-support teacher;
- (v) identification of learning targets and the development of an *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*² for each pupil to whom supplementary teaching is to be provided, in consultation with the pupil's class teacher and parents and, where appropriate, with the pupil himself/herself.

It is envisaged that there will be close consultation between each pupil's class teacher, learning-support teacher and parents during assessment and programme planning. It is particularly important that the perspectives of the pupil's class teacher and parents be taken into account so that a co-ordinated intervention programme involving specific support activities can be planned and implemented in the pupil's classroom and at home.

In selecting pupils for diagnostic assessment and supplementary teaching, priority should be given to those who achieve scores that are at or below the 10th

² The *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*, a record of the results of diagnostic assessment and an indication of the medium-term learning targets and related instructional activities that have been set for the pupil, is described in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

percentile on nationally standardised tests of achievement in English reading and/or mathematics (see Sections 4.2 and 4.3 in Chapter 4).

2.2.7 Whole-School Procedures for Provision of Supplementary Teaching by the Learning-Support Teacher

The primary work of the learning-support teacher is the provision of supplementary teaching to pupils who experience low achievement and/or learning difficulties.

The school plan should indicate the broad parameters under which such teaching will be provided, including procedures for selection, diagnostic assessment, programme planning and implementation, evaluation and review.

2.2.8 Whole-School Procedures and Criteria for Continuing/Discontinuing Pupils in Receipt of Supplementary Teaching

Schools should indicate in the school plan the procedures and criteria that will be applied in deciding whether or not a pupil should continue to receive supplementary teaching. The progress of each pupil who is in receipt of such teaching should be evaluated at the end of each instructional term, and, following consultation with the pupil's class teacher and parents, a decision should be taken about the level of support that can be provided by the learning-support teacher in the future. Depending on the pupil's needs, this may range from infrequent monitoring and

assessment to more frequent and intensive supplementary teaching.

The school's policy on continuation/discontinuation and the way in which it is implemented will have implications for the number of additional pupils who can be provided with supplementary teaching for the first time in each instructional term, and the amount of time that the learning-support teacher will have available for non-teaching or consultative support work.

A decision to continue to provide supplementary teaching to a pupil should result in a revision of the pupil's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* to reflect any changes in emphasis that result from the review of progress.

2.2.9 Whole-School Strategies for Communicating Information

The school plan should indicate how information will be communicated between the class teacher, learning-support teacher and parents of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, so that each party is fully informed about the pupil's learning needs, their role in relation to meeting those needs, and the progress of the pupil.

Where a pupil has been identified as experiencing low achievement on the basis of a low score on an appropriate screening measure and consultation between the class and learning-support teachers, the pupil's parents should be made aware of

the concerns of the school in relation to their child's progress. The school's procedures for diagnostic assessment by the learning-support teacher should be outlined, and the parents' approval to proceed with the assessment should be sought. The parents should also be made aware of the support structures that are available in the school. If the pupil's parents have concerns or wish to contribute to the diagnostic assessment before it has been completed, a meeting with the learning-support teacher should be arranged.

Following diagnostic assessment, the learning-support teacher should discuss the outcomes of the assessment with the pupil's class teacher. Consideration should be given to the type of intervention that best meets the pupil's needs and agreement should be reached on the learning targets in the pupil's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*. Where supplementary teaching is being considered, equal emphasis should be placed on how the learning targets can be achieved in the pupil's class programme and through supplementary teaching.

A meeting should also take place between the learning-support teacher and the pupil's parents to discuss the outcomes of diagnostic assessment and the learning targets in the pupil's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*. If supplementary teaching is being offered, approval should be sought from the pupil's parents and discussions should take place in order to

agree ways in which the parents can support the attainment of the learning targets that have been set for the pupil.

Regular communication between the learning-support teacher and the pupil's parents should be maintained during supplementary teaching so that the pupil's progress can be reviewed and necessary adjustments made. Consultation should take place at the completion of each instructional term (i.e. 13-20 weeks) in the context of reviewing the pupil's progress, determining the level of ongoing supplementary teaching that the pupil needs and identifying new learning targets and related activities.

Finally, it is essential that regular communication between the pupil's learning-support teacher and class teacher(s) should occur throughout each instructional term. The pupil's *Weekly Planning and Progress Record*³, which should be completed by the learning-support teacher, should be shared with the class teacher to ensure continuous communication of relevant information.

2.2.10 Whole-School Approaches to Involving Parents

Parents have rights and responsibilities in the education of their child. Much can be achieved by promoting the active involvement of parents in discussing the outcomes of the initial diagnostic assessment as well as in implementing elements of their child's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*. Parents can

³ The *Weekly Planning and Progress Record* is described in detail in Chapter 5.

contribute to the initial diagnostic assessment by sharing insights into their child's development and learning difficulties, by discussing the outcomes of the assessment and by participating in the selection of learning targets and associated activities based on the child's needs.

The nature of the support that parents will require in implementing the home-based activities suggested in their child's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* will vary. In some cases, parents may be invited to observe the learning-support teacher engaging in or modelling a specific learning activity with their child, which they could use at home. Such activities might include discussing an experience or event, providing feedback on oral reading or on a written exercise or discussing a mathematical problem. In other cases, a particular strategy (for example, sharing a library book) might be demonstrated to a group of parents. In cases where a home-school-community liaison teacher is attached to the school, this teacher could work with the learning-support teacher to provide guidance to parents/guardians on implementing activities designed to support the attainment of the learning targets set for their child.

Other activities of a more general nature might also be organised to increase the involvement of parents in supporting their children's learning, particularly the parents of pupils in the learning-support programme. Such activities might include information sessions on such topics as:

- the purposes and procedures of the school's learning-support service;
- paired/shared reading programmes;
- developing children's oral language;
- motivating children to read more;
- creating a home environment in which literacy can thrive;
- helping children with their homework;
- selecting books that interest children;
- developing children's reasoning and problem-solving abilities;
- developing children's mathematical knowledge.

Parents should be encouraged to contact the learning-support teacher if any difficulties arise during an instructional term and to attend a meeting at the end of each instructional term to review their child's progress in achieving the learning targets set out on his/her *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*. If a decision is taken to continue to provide supplementary teaching, parents can be invited to discuss revised learning targets and activities.

2.2.11 *Whole-School Procedures for Referring Pupils to Out-of-School Agencies*

The school plan should specify procedures for referring children for psychological or other assessments. The teacher with responsibility for co-ordinating special needs

and learning-support services in the school (see Section 2.2.3 in this chapter) should oversee initial contact with parents, liaise with assessment services, and, where appropriate, make arrangements for additional educational provision for children with diagnosed special needs.

Where a child is considered for inclusion in more than one programme in the school (for example, supplementary teaching and resource teaching), the teacher with responsibility for co-ordinating special needs services should discuss with the relevant teachers and the child's parents the programme or combination of programmes that would best meet the child's needs, thus ensuring that the different interventions are appropriately accessed and co-ordinated at all times. If a child is receiving support from a resource teacher in the area of English and/or mathematics, he/she would not normally be provided with supplementary teaching from the learning support teacher as well. If, on the other hand, the child is in receipt of special services to address other needs (for example, behavioural problems or sensory difficulties), it may also be appropriate for the learning-support teacher to provide supplementary teaching. In the implementation of these programmes care should be taken to ensure that there is minimal disruption to the child's class programme and, in this context, the possibility of providing additional programmes in the classroom should be considered.

2.2.12 Whole-School Procedures for Monitoring the Progress of Individual Pupils

The school plan should include specific procedures for monitoring the progress of pupils who are in receipt of supplementary teaching, including:

- ongoing monitoring of each pupil's progress in relation to the attainment of short-term objectives using the *Weekly Planning and Progress Record*, or similar document, so that class teaching and supplementary teaching continue to be responsive to the pupil's needs at all times;
- a more detailed review of the pupil's progress at the end of each instructional term (13 to 20 weeks) with reference to his/her *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*. This review should detail progress to date and should culminate in a decision on the level of support that the pupil will need in the future, the form that that support should take, and, where appropriate, a revision of the learning targets and activities in the child's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*.

The school plan should also include provision for a comprehensive review of the class-based and supplementary teaching programmes of each pupil who does not make expected progress (i.e. fails to achieve the learning targets set out in his/her *Individual Profile and Learning Programmes*) by the end of an instructional term (see Section 4.6.2 in Chapter 4).

2.2.13 *Whole-School Procedures for Record Keeping in Relation to Learning Support*

The school plan should indicate the records to be maintained by the learning-support teacher in respect of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching. Two records that will be helpful for planning and recording achievement and progress are recommended: an *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* and a *Weekly Planning and Progress Record* (see Chapters 4 and 5). Other records that provide evidence of the pupil's progress towards agreed learning targets (for example, tape recordings of oral language, checklists, running records, and samples of written work) can be retained for reference purposes. All records should be stored in a secure location in the school, such as a locked filing cabinet or drawer.

2.2.14 *Whole-School Procedures for the Provision of Resources for Learning Support*

The school plan should include a list of the resources, including tests and teaching materials, that are available in the school for learning support and an indication of the procedures for replacing/repairing resources. The issue of access by class teachers to these resources should also be addressed. School authorities should take into consideration the provision of resources for learning support in the allocation of overall school resources.

It is also desirable that each school would maintain a professional library for teachers which would include books on the teaching of oral language, reading, writing, mathematics and other aspects of the curriculum to pupils experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties.

2.2.15 *Whole-School Approaches to Time-tabling for Supplementary Teaching*

The school plan should indicate when supplementary teaching can be provided to pupils during the school day. A first general principle in this regard is that the supplementary teaching that pupils receive should be in addition to their regular class programme in English and/or mathematics. A second general principle is that pupils should not miss out on the same curricular area each time they receive supplementary teaching. These two principles suggest that a flexible approach to time-tabling should be adopted by the class teacher taking into account the needs of pupils with regard to learning support, their right of access to the full curriculum and the schedule of the learning-support teacher. Similarly, the learning-support teacher should organise his/her work with a view to minimising disruption to class work.

For some pupils in the junior section of the school who need support in English and in mathematics, the possibility of combining support in both areas within the same supplementary teaching session should be considered. Clearly, there are aspects of

both English and mathematics that could be addressed through a common programme, involving, for example, language development in general, oral and written comprehension activities and problem-solving.

The *SRE Report* indicated that there has been an overemphasis in the past on withdrawing pupils from their classrooms in order to provide learning support. It needs to be stressed now, therefore, that withdrawal for supplementary teaching is not the only model envisaged for the provision of learning support in schools. On the contrary, these *Guidelines* place considerable emphasis on the central importance of appropriate classroom-based intervention (whether or not supplementary teaching is involved) in addressing the needs of children with low achievement and/or learning difficulties and they also emphasise the vital importance of co-ordinating the work of the class teacher and learning-support teacher at all times. For this reason, the provision of supplementary teaching by the learning-support teacher to pupils in their own classroom (with the approval of, and in co-operation with, the class teacher) should always be seriously considered as an alternative to the withdrawal of pupils from their classroom.

Schools with a shared remedial service may face particular challenges in providing the type of intensive daily intervention that is needed if significant progress is to be achieved by pupils, particularly those pupils

in the junior section of the various schools in the cluster. It is suggested, in this context, that consideration be given to rotating the provision of supplementary teaching between schools in the cluster so that pupils in the junior section in each school can receive frequent intensive supplementary teaching from the learning-support teacher for a specified instructional term and additional indirect support for the remainder of the school year (See Section 2.4 in this chapter).

2.2.16 *Whole-School Policy on the Work Schedule of the Learning-Support Teacher*

The work of the learning-support teacher entails providing as many supplementary teaching lessons as possible. However, the school plan should recognise that, in addition to providing supplementary teaching, the learning-support teacher must also allocate time to non-teaching activities. These activities could include overseeing the early intervention and prevention programmes, conducting diagnostic assessments, maintaining and reviewing pupil records, co-ordinating special needs services and consulting with teachers and parents.

Although the learning-support teacher should be regarded as a staff member in each school in which learning-support services are provided, he/she should not be expected to provide teaching cover for colleagues who are absent. The learning-

support teacher should not be expected to be available for playground supervision in schools other than the base school.

2.2.17 *Whole-School Approaches to Monitoring the Implementation of the Whole-School Plan on Learning Support*

Provision should be built into the school plan for monitoring the implementation of the school plan itself as it relates to learning support. Monitoring can be accomplished through regular meetings between the principal teacher, the learning-support teacher and the teacher with responsibility for co-ordinating special needs and learning-support services, in order to examine specific aspects of the school plan. Such meetings should occur at least once each school term, and should address the following issues, as appropriate:

- development and implementation of the school's prevention and early intervention programmes;
- implementation of the school's screening programme for the selection of pupils for diagnostic assessment;
- implementation of the various procedures that necessitate the involvement of the class teacher and the parents, for example, diagnostic assessment, the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching and programme planning;
- implementation of appropriate criteria for continuing/reducing support levels for pupils at the end of a term of supplementary teaching;
- allocation of the learning-support teacher's time across various teaching and consultative activities;
- progress of pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching, with reference to the learning targets in their *Individual Profiles and Learning Programmes*;
- implementation of parental involvement programmes;
- involvement of class teachers and parents in implementing suggested activities in pupils' learning programmes;
- alignment of pupils' class and supplementary teaching programmes;
- referral of pupils for additional assessment and support;
- co-ordination of the learning-support service and other support services for pupils with special needs;
- time-tabling of pupils for supplementary teaching;
- adequacy of resources for supplementary teaching.

As part of the monitoring process, the principal teacher should also consult with class teachers and parents on these issues. The outcomes of the review process

should be shared with the Board of Management and the teaching staff in the school.

2.2.18 Whole-School Strategies for Reviewing Policy on Learning Support and Revising the School Plan

A comprehensive review and revision of the elements of the school plan dealing with learning support should take place every two to three years, and should take into account the views of the Board of Management, the principal teacher, the learning-support teacher(s), other teachers on the school staff, and the parents of pupils in the school. This review should be instigated by the principal teacher and the outcomes should lead to a revision of the school plan and changes in specific practices as appropriate.

2.3 Developing and Implementing Policy on Learning Support in Schools in Designated Areas of Educational Disadvantage

Schools in which low achievement in English and/or mathematics is a serious problem (including some schools in designated areas of educational disadvantage) should be made aware of school-wide restructuring programmes that have been shown to increase achievement across all pupils in these subjects, and remedial teachers should play a key role in implementing such programmes. (SRE Report, Recommendation 8)

Large numbers of pupils in schools in designated areas of educational disadvantage experience particular difficulties in acquiring basic skills in English and mathematics. The school plan for learning support in such schools should address the implementation of a whole-school early intervention programme, of which provision of supplementary teaching by the learning-support teacher would be just one element. Other issues to be considered include:

- involvement of all teachers in school-based in-service training and programme planning in the areas of English and mathematics, with particular reference to methods and approaches designed to prevent or alleviate learning difficulties;
- development of systematic and effective approaches to co-ordinating the additional resources available to the school for preventing and alleviating learning difficulties;
- use of a range of models for grouping pupils, including mixed-ability grouping within classes, where, for example, more able and less able pupils work co-operatively on literacy and numeracy tasks;
- provision of additional opportunities for children to engage in language and literacy activities such as after-school homework clubs or summer programmes in which structured and supervised opportunities for extending the work of the school are given;

- allocation of additional funds, as necessary, for the purchase of learning materials so that all pupils have access to a range of materials at appropriate levels of difficulty, including a wide range of suitable reading material;
- close co-operation between the learning-support and home-school-community liaison teachers in involving parents who experience literacy and numeracy problems in programmes designed to develop their own skills and to enable them to support their children's learning;
- close co-operation between the learning-support and home-school-community liaison teachers in providing guidance to parents of selected pupils on procedures for implementing activities in their child's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*;
- involvement of members of the community in the promotion of literacy-related activities in the school.

The particular balance that the learning-support teacher achieves between supplementary teaching and consultative activities will depend on the specific circumstances of the school. However, it is envisaged that, in designated areas of educational disadvantage, the learning-support teacher will, in co-operation with other staff members, play a pivotal role in implementing a range of programmes and activities designed to improve the overall achievement of pupils in the school as well

as the achievement of pupils who are in receipt of supplementary teaching. In this context, it is possible that the description of two specific intervention programmes, *Success for All* and *Reading Recovery* (see Appendix A) which have gained international recognition, will be of particular interest to schools in areas of educational disadvantage. The role of the learning-support teacher in schools in designated areas of educational disadvantage are elaborated in Section 3.5.7 in Chapter 3. Also, particular attention should be paid to the development of oral language as outlined in the revised primary school curriculum in English (Ireland, 1999a, 1999b)⁴; and the methodologies recommended in Sections 5.6, 5.7 and 5.8 in Chapter 5 of this document.

2.4 Developing and Implementing Policy on Learning Support in Schools with a Shared Learning-Support Service

This section deals with the development and implementation of policy in clusters of schools that share the services of the same learning-support teacher(s). A particular emphasis is placed on the development and implementation of an agreed cluster-wide policy on learning support.

2.4.1 The Need for a Cluster-Wide Policy

Where a cluster of schools shares the services of the same learning-support teacher(s), it will be necessary for each

⁴ Ireland (1999a) *English Curriculum*. Dublin: The Stationery Office
Ireland (1999b) *English Language: Teacher Guidelines*. Dublin: The Stationery Office

school in the cluster to contribute to the development of a cluster-wide policy on learning support. The development and implementation of a cluster-wide policy is essential to ensure that the learning-support service gives priority to the needs of those pupils in each school who experience low achievement and/or learning difficulties. Such a policy should also enable the learning-support teacher to maintain an appropriate balance between teaching and other consultative services across the school cluster.

Within each school in a cluster, the school plan for learning support should reflect agreed cluster-wide policies and procedures.

2.4.2 Setting Up a Learning-Support Service

When a learning-support service is being set up in a cluster of schools, a meeting involving the principal teachers, the learning-support teacher(s) and, if possible, the inspector(s) attached to each school in the cluster should be convened by the principal of the base school to address the following issues:

- *Co-ordination of special services across the schools in the cluster, including the role, as appropriate, of the learning-support teacher in co-ordinating services in individual schools.*
- *Criteria for selecting pupils for supplementary teaching in English and mathematics, with reference to the*

needs of pupils in different schools in the cluster so that resources are directed towards the schools with the greatest needs. In selecting pupils for supplementary teaching, priority should be given to those pupils who score at or below the 10th percentile on standardised tests of achievement in English and/or mathematics.

- *Criteria for continuing, reducing and discontinuing support for pupils who are in receipt of supplementary teaching from the learning-support teacher.*
- *Arrangements for providing frequent intensive early intervention programmes to pupils in the junior section of the school.* Where it is not possible to provide frequent supplementary teaching to pupils in senior infants to second class throughout the school year, the provision of supplementary teaching might be rotated between schools so that pupils in the junior section in each school can receive frequent (4-5 times per week), intensive supplementary teaching from the learning-support teacher for a specified instructional term (13-20 weeks) each year, and additional indirect support for the other part of the school year.
- *Arrangements for providing supplementary teaching to pupils in the senior section of the school.* Arrangements should be made for providing supplementary teaching to pupils in the third to sixth classes who

experience very low achievement and/or learning difficulties. Where a cluster of schools implements an intensive and successful early intervention programme involving pupils in the junior section in each school, fewer pupils in the senior section will require supplementary teaching.

- *The maximum number of pupils in the cluster who can be provided with supplementary teaching.* Agreement should be reached on the maximum number of pupils in the cluster who can be provided with supplementary teaching by the learning-support teacher in any given instructional term (approximately 30 pupils). Where the aggregated number of pupils with low achievement is greater than this number, priority should be given to those pupils whose achievement is lowest.
- *Consultation between the learning-support teacher and class teachers in the cluster.* The learning-support teacher should consult with the staff of each school in the cluster on the topic of learning support at least once a year. Often, this consultation will occur at staff meetings.
- *Substituting for absent colleagues.* The learning-support teacher should not be expected to provide teaching cover for absent colleagues.
- *The involvement of the learning-support teacher in playground supervision in*

schools in the cluster. The learning-support teacher should not be expected to carry out playground supervision in schools other than the base school. The fact that the learning-support teacher has to travel between schools should be taken into account in assigning playground duty in the base school.

- *Travel between schools.* The issue of travel between schools during the school day by the learning-support teacher should be addressed in the context of deciding how best to meet the needs of pupils across all the schools in the cluster. A general principle is that travel time should be kept to a minimum so that the amount of time that is available for working with pupils and engaging in consultative activities is maximised.

Following this meeting, a summary of the outcomes should be sent to each participant at the meeting.

2.4.3 Reviewing Cluster-Wide Policy on Learning Support


The principal teacher of the base school should convene and chair an annual meeting involving the other principal teachers in the cluster, the learning-support teacher(s) and, if possible, the relevant inspector(s) to review the issues outlined in Section 2.4.2 above. In general, this review should take place after the beginning of the school year, as soon as the needs of each school in the cluster are known. A particular

focus of the review should be a consideration of the needs of each school in the cluster so that the services provided by the learning-support teacher can be directed towards those pupils who have the greatest needs. The possibility of providing services to some schools on a rota basis so that

pupils in the junior section can receive intensive daily intervention for an instructional term should also be examined. Following the review, a record of the outcomes should be sent to each participant by the principal teacher of the base school.

CHAPTER 3

PARTNERSHIP IN LEARNING SUPPORT

A photograph of a man sitting on a couch, reading a book to two children. The man is wearing a plaid shirt and is looking down at the book. The boy on the left is wearing a light-colored shirt and is also looking at the book. The girl on the right is wearing a dark dress with a white collar and is looking at the book. The background shows a shelf with a dog figurine and a framed picture. The entire image has a blue tint.

Partnership between class teachers, learning-support teachers and parents is essential for effective learning support

CHAPTER 3

PARTNERSHIP IN LEARNING SUPPORT

3.1 Overview

To facilitate the effective implementation of a school policy on special needs and learning-support services, the roles of the different partners – the Board of Management, the principal teacher, class teachers, learning-support teacher(s), parents and pupils – should be outlined in the School Plan. The expected role of each partner is addressed in turn in this chapter.

3.2 The Board of Management – Policy Development and Support

The Board of Management has an important role in developing, supporting and monitoring school policy on learning support and special needs. The Board of Management should:

- oversee the development, implementation and review of school policy on learning support. If the school shares the services of a learning-support teacher with other schools, the Board should ensure that the school policy, as outlined in the school plan, is in line with agreed policy covering the provision of learning support across all the schools in the cluster;
- oversee the development, implementation and review of school policy on special needs services in general;

- ensure that adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the learning-support teacher;
- provide a secure facility for storage of records relating to pupils in receipt of special needs and learning-support services.

3.3 The Principal Teacher – Overall Responsibility

The principal teacher has overall responsibility for the school's learning-support programme and for the operation of services for children with special educational needs. Part of this work involves ensuring that the teachers and parents of pupils who are selected for diagnostic assessment and supplementary teaching are enabled to fulfil their roles as outlined in the school plan.

3.3.1 Role of the Principal Teacher in Developing and Implementing Learning-Support and Special Needs Services

An important part of the principal teacher's role is the co-ordination of learning-support and special needs services, particularly in light of the broader range of services that are now available to schools to meet the needs of pupils with diagnosed general or

specific learning disabilities. The principal teacher should:

- assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policies on learning support and special needs;
- work with teachers and parents in the development of the school plan on learning support and special needs;
- monitor the implementation of the school plan on learning support and special needs on an ongoing basis;
- monitor the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that this service is focused on the pupils with very low achievement;
- assume direct responsibility for co-ordinating learning-support and special needs services or identify a teacher to perform this role;
- oversee the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and/or learning difficulties so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need;
- keep teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed in initiating referrals;
- help teachers to increase their knowledge and skills in the area of learning-support

teaching by, for example, providing guidance and advice with regard to teaching methods and materials and by encouraging teachers to avail of relevant in-career development.

The role of co-ordinating learning-support and special needs services may be fulfilled by the principal teacher him/herself. Alternatively the principal teacher may assign these duties to another teacher such as a special education teacher, learning-support teacher or post holder. Typically, the duties assigned to this role would include the following:

- maintaining a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and/or special educational services;
- helping to co-ordinate the caseloads/work schedules of the learning-support and resource teachers;
- supporting the implementation of a tracking system at whole-school level to monitor the progress of children with learning difficulties;
- advising parents on procedures for availing of special needs services;
- liaising with external agencies such as psychological services to arrange assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs;
- arranging for classroom accommodation and resources, as appropriate.

3.3.2 Role of the Principal Teacher in Supporting the Work of Class Teachers

The principal teacher should:

- consult with class teachers on how they can contribute to the implementation of the school plan on learning support in such areas as:
 - the prevention of learning difficulties;
 - the screening and identification of pupils who may need supplementary teaching;
 - participation in the development of an *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* for each pupil who has been selected for supplementary teaching;
 - provision of appropriate long-term support to pupils for whom supplementary teaching is no longer being provided by the learning-support teacher;
 - identification of pupils who may have general or specific learning disabilities;
- ensure that class teachers are centrally involved in planning and directing the appropriate learning activities and implementing the other recommendations in the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* of each pupil in their classes who is in receipt of supplementary teaching;
- develop an awareness among class teachers of the characteristics and effects of general and specific learning disabilities, the support services that are available for pupils with diagnosed disabilities, and the arrangements that need to be made within classrooms to meet the learning needs of these pupils;
- facilitate communication between class teachers and parents of pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching;
- support the professional development of class teachers by encouraging them to attend courses on matters relating to learning difficulties in English and mathematics and by creating an environment and a structure in which the learning-support teacher can share knowledge and skills with other staff members.

3.3.3 Role of the Principal Teacher in Supporting the Work of the Learning-Support Teacher

In order to support the implementation of school policy on learning support as outlined in the school plan, the principal teacher should arrange a meeting with the learning-support teacher and the teacher with responsibility for co-ordinating special needs and learning-support services at least once each school term to discuss the implementation of the school plan on learning support outlined in Section 2.2.17 in Chapter 2.

3.3.4 Role of the Principal Teacher in Working with Parents, Out-of-School Agencies, and the School Community

While the learning-support teacher will consult with parents and outside agencies on an ongoing basis, the principal teacher can facilitate the involvement of parents in the learning-support process by:

- establishing school policies and procedures which enable parents to become involved effectively in the provision of learning support;
- encouraging the organisation of information sessions for all parents on issues relating to the school's learning-support service;
- overseeing the development of links between teachers and the providers of assessments and other services;
- facilitating the involvement of other members of the community (for example, grandparents, older siblings, retired adults) in contributing to the learning-support programme by inviting them to train for and participate in activities such as paired reading, story telling and library time.

3.3.5 Role of the Principal Teacher of a School in a Designated Area of Educational Disadvantage

Schools in designated areas of educational disadvantage may have significant numbers of pupils who, for a variety of reasons, have

low achievement in English and/or mathematics. The principal teacher's role in such schools includes co-ordinating the efforts of all teachers as individuals and as members of the team in the prevention of learning difficulties, the raising of overall levels of achievement in English and mathematics and the provision of extra supports for pupils with low achievement. Encouraging parental involvement in the learning-support process will be an important part of this role. The principal teacher should also provide leadership in the implementation of the recommendations regarding the school policy on learning support as outlined in Section 2.3 of Chapter 2 and should oversee other initiatives designed to improve learning opportunities for pupils in general, and lower-achieving pupils in particular.

3.3.6 Role of the Principal Teacher of a School with a Shared Learning-Support Service

It is important for principal teachers of schools that share a learning-support service to work co-operatively with each other and with the learning-support teacher. A cluster-wide policy that provides for the learning needs of pupils with very low achievement in each school in the cluster should be developed and implemented. The principal teachers should:

- attend an initial meeting (convened by the principal teacher of the base school), of all the principal teachers of the schools in the cluster, the learning-

support teacher(s) and, if possible, the relevant inspector(s), to develop cluster-wide policies on the issues outlined in Section 2.4.2 in Chapter 2 of these Guidelines;

- attend an annual meeting, (convened by the Principal Teacher of the base school), of all the principal teachers of the schools in the cluster. This meeting would be attended also by the learning-support teacher and, where possible, the inspector(s) attached to the schools. The purpose of the meeting would be to review and revise, as necessary, cluster-wide policies on the issues outlined in Section 2.4.2. in Chapter 2.

3.4 The Class Teacher – First Line Responsibility

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class(es), including those selected for supplementary teaching. A particular responsibility of the class teacher is to create a classroom environment in which learning difficulties can be prevented or at least alleviated. This is best achieved by grouping pupils for instruction, providing lower-achieving pupils with strategies for reading and problem solving, adapting learning materials for lower-achieving pupils, and liaising closely with their parents. Where a pupil is selected to receive supplementary teaching, it is essential that the class teacher should contribute to developing the learning targets in the pupil's

Individual Profile and Learning Programme and to the planning and implementation of activities designed to attain those targets. Where supplementary teaching cannot be provided for a pupil, or is being phased out or discontinued, the class teacher will need to develop and implement a support programme that meets the pupil's changing needs, in consultation with the learning-support teacher.

These *Guidelines* advocate a significant change in the role of the class teacher in terms of increased emphasis on consultation with the learning-support teacher and with parents. It is envisaged that this consultation will lead to close co-ordination and continuity in the learning programmes offered to pupils by the class and learning-support teachers and to the development of strong links between the learning activities of pupils at school and at home.

3.4.1 Role of the Class Teacher in Developing and Implementing the School Plan on Learning Support

In supporting the development and implementation of the school plan on learning support, the class teacher should:

- implement teaching programmes which optimise the learning of all pupils, and, to the greatest extent possible, prevent the emergence of learning difficulties;
- implement the school policies on screening and selecting pupils for

supplementary teaching in English and in mathematics by administering and scoring appropriate screening measures (such as rating scales, curriculum profiles or standardised tests of achievement), and by discussing the outcomes with the learning-support teacher in the context of each pupil's general performance in class;

- for each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, collaborate with the learning-support teacher in the development of an *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* by identifying appropriate learning targets and by organising classroom activities to achieve those targets;
- for each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, adjust the class programme in line with the agreed learning targets and activities on the pupil's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* and maintain a record of pupil's progress towards achieving those learning targets;
- differentiate the class curriculum appropriately to meet the needs of all pupils within the class. With regard to teaching pupils with low achievement, the following general approaches and methods are recommended:
 - group teaching;
 - modifying presentation and questioning techniques to maximise

the involvement of pupils with low achievement in class activities;

- placing emphasis on oral language development across the curriculum;
- providing pupils with extra tutoring in the key basic skills in literacy and numeracy;
- setting learning targets at an appropriate level;
- providing learning activities and materials which are suitably challenging but which also ensure success and progress;
- carrying out error analyses of a pupil's work in order to pinpoint specific areas of difficulty for particular attention in subsequent lessons;
- setting up "buddy systems" in class, i.e. more able pupils working collaboratively with other pupils in peer tutoring programmes and paired reading programmes.

3.4.2 Role of the Class Teacher in Collaborating with the Learning-Support Teacher

A key element of successful learning-support intervention is a very high level of consultation and co-operation between the class teacher and the learning-support teacher. Central to this consultation is the development, implementation and review of

Individual Profile and Learning Programmes.

In this context the class teacher should:

- discuss the results of screening measures with the learning-support teacher and advise on the selection of pupils for diagnostic assessment;
- in the case of each pupil in the class for whom the learning-support teacher has completed a diagnostic assessment, review the outcomes of the assessment and discuss with the learning-support teacher the type of joint intervention that would best meet the pupil's needs;
- for each pupil who has been selected for supplementary teaching on the basis of screening procedures and initial diagnostic assessment, discuss the learning targets and instructional activities for inclusion in the pupil's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* and, where possible, attend the initial meeting between the learning-support teacher and the pupil's parents;
- for each pupil who is receiving supplementary teaching, implement appropriate learning activities within the mainstream classroom, especially the activities which have been included in the pupil's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* and maintain suitable records of progress;

- for each pupil who is receiving supplementary teaching, review the pupil's progress towards the attainment of agreed learning targets and contribute accordingly to the *Weekly Planning and Progress Record*;
- participate with the learning-support teacher in a review of the progress of each pupil at the end of an instructional term;
- contribute to the development and implementation of the pupil's revised *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* if supplementary teaching is being continued following review at the end of an instructional term.

3.4.3 *Role of the Class Teacher in Collaborating with Parents of Pupils in Receipt of Supplementary Teaching*

It is accepted practice for class teachers to consult with the parents of all their pupils from time to time. However, for parents of pupils who are in receipt of supplementary teaching, additional time should be devoted to consultation and collaborative planning. Such collaboration is particularly important before the commencement of supplementary teaching. In the case of each pupil who has been identified as experiencing low achievement and/or a learning difficulty following administration of an appropriate screening measure, the class teacher should:

- make parents aware of the concerns of the school about their child's progress;
- outline the school's practices regarding the administration of diagnostic tests by the learning-support teacher, and seek the approval of the pupil's parents to proceed with such assessment;
- outline the support that is available in the school to pupils who experience low achievement and/or learning difficulties;
- indicate to the pupil's parents that a meeting with the learning-support teacher will follow the assessment;
- after the diagnostic assessment, attend, if possible, the meeting between the pupil's parents and the learning-support teacher, and indicate how the pupil's class programme will be modified in order to achieve the agreed learning targets in the pupil's *Individual Profile and Learning Plan*.

Once supplementary teaching is under way, the class teacher should maintain regular contact with the parents of each pupil who is in receipt of such teaching and keep them informed of their child's progress. Where supplementary teaching is being reduced or discontinued, the class teacher should indicate to the pupil's parents the particular arrangements in the mainstream classroom that will continue to support their child's learning needs.

3.4.4 Role of the Class Teacher in Identifying and Supporting Pupils with General or Specific Learning Disabilities

The class teacher plays an important role in the initial identification of pupils who may have general or specific learning disabilities. The class teacher should:

- be alert to the possibility that some pupils may have a general learning disability, or a specific learning disability in English and/or mathematics, and bring their concerns to the attention of the teacher in the school who has responsibility for co-ordinating special needs and learning-support services;
- modify the class programmes of pupils who, following psychological assessment, have been diagnosed as having general or specific learning disabilities, by implementing appropriate teaching strategies and programmes, in consultation with relevant teachers and professionals including, where appropriate, the learning-support teacher.

3.5 The Learning-Support Teacher – Supplementary Teaching, Collaboration and Consultation

It is envisaged that collaborative and consultative activities involving the learning-support teacher, principal teacher(s), class teachers, parents and other professionals will increase as these *Guidelines* are implemented in schools. Nevertheless, the

main focus of the learning-support teacher's work will continue to be the provision of supplementary teaching to pupils, either in the pupils' own classrooms or in a learning-support room. Clearly, the level of collaboration between the learning-support teacher and the class teacher is crucial, as is the impact that the overall learning-support intervention has on the day-to-day teaching and learning activities in the classroom. In this context, a reasonably flexible approach to the delivery of supplementary teaching may be adopted. However, the learning-support teacher's room cannot, as a matter of course, be regarded as the most suitable setting for supplementary teaching. There are obvious disadvantages associated with frequent and/or prolonged withdrawal of pupils from their regular classrooms. Serious consideration must, therefore, be given to the planned implementation of shared teaching approaches, involving the class teacher and the learning-support teacher, in the pupil's regular classroom.

The activities of the learning-support teacher should include:

- assisting in the implementation of a broad range of whole-school strategies designed to enhance early learning and to prevent learning difficulties;
- developing an *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching, in consultation with class teachers and parents;
- maintaining a *Weekly Planning and Progress Record* or equivalent for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of learning support;
- delivering intensive early intervention programmes and providing supplementary teaching in English and/or mathematics to pupils in the junior section of the school (senior infants to second class);
- providing supplementary teaching in English and/or mathematics to pupils in the senior section of the school (third to sixth classes) who experience low achievement and/or learning difficulties;
- co-ordinating the implementation of whole-school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, in line with the selection criteria specified in the school plan and input from the pupils' class teachers and parents;
- contributing to the development of policy on learning support at the whole-school level, and, where relevant, at the cluster level;
- providing advice to class teachers in such areas as individual pupil assessment and programme planning, as well as approaches to language development, reading, writing and mathematics for pupils experiencing learning difficulties;
- contributing at the school level to decision-making regarding the purchase of learning resources, books and

materials to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties in their mainstream classrooms, in the school library and in the learning-support teacher's room. Funds provided for these materials should not be limited to the learning-support grant provided by the Department of Education and Science;

- performing a defined role in co-ordinating the provision of special needs and learning-support services in one or more schools, if requested to do so by the principal teacher(s).

3.5.1 Role of the Learning-Support Teacher in Collaborating with the Principal Teacher

The learning-support teacher should work closely with the principal teacher to develop and implement the school's learning-support programme, and, where relevant, the overall co-ordination of special needs and learning-support services. The learning-support teacher should:

- if requested by the principal teacher, co-ordinate the overall services for children with special needs and for children in receipt of supplementary teaching (Section 3.3.1 in this chapter) and advise the principal teacher on issues that arise in relation to this work;
- meet with the principal teacher and, where relevant, the teacher with responsibility for co-ordinating special needs and learning-support services, at least once each school term, to discuss

issues relating to the development and implementation of the school plan on learning support (see Section 2.2.17 in Chapter 2);

- advise the principal teacher on issues that arise in the day-to-day implementation of the learning-support programme in the school.

3.5.2 Role of the Learning-Support Teacher in Collaborating with Class Teachers

The learning-support teacher should work closely with class teachers to implement school policies on preventing learning difficulties, screening pupils for learning difficulties, interpreting the outcomes of diagnostic assessments and providing supplementary teaching and other forms of learning-support. The learning-support teacher should:

- consult with the school staff as a group on a regular basis, but at least once a year, on such issues as:
 - implementing programmes to prevent learning difficulties;
 - selecting pupils for supplementary teaching;
 - interpreting the outcomes of diagnostic assessment;
 - planning classroom activities based on agreed learning targets as specified in the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* of each pupil

- who is in receipt of supplementary teaching;
 - monitoring and recording the progress of pupils in achieving agreed learning targets;
 - supporting children experiencing learning difficulties for whom supplementary teaching cannot be provided, or has been reduced or discontinued;
- consult with individual class teachers on a regular basis to address such issues as:
 - implementing classroom programmes designed to enhance learning and prevent learning difficulties;
 - screening pupils for learning difficulties with a view to conducting diagnostic assessments, if needed;
 - identifying pupils for supplementary teaching, based on the outcomes of appropriate screening and diagnostic assessment;
 - developing and implementing activities in the classroom as outlined in the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* for each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching;
 - monitoring and reviewing the attainment of learning targets set out in the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching;
- monitoring the progress made by pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching, as indicated in the pupils' *Weekly Planning and Progress Records*;
- the provision of appropriate ongoing support in the classroom for pupils for whom supplementary teaching/learning-support has been reduced or discontinued;
- supporting pupils with learning difficulties for whom it may not be possible to provide supplementary teaching/learning-support (e.g. if parents do not agree to such formal intervention);
- identifying children who may have general or specific learning disabilities.

3.5.3 Role of the Learning-Support Teacher in Consulting and Collaborating with Parents

As indicated in Sections 2.2.9 and 2.2.10 in Chapter 2, effective communication with parents is critically important to the success of a learning-support programme. In addition to providing general information to parents about the learning-support services that are available in the school, the learning-support teacher should:

- meet with the parents of each pupil who has been selected for diagnostic assessment (if such a meeting is requested at this point by the parents);

- after the initial diagnostic assessment has been completed, meet with each pupil's parents to discuss the outcomes of the assessment, the learning targets in the child's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*, the actions to be taken by the school to meet those targets, and the ways in which attainment of the targets can be supported at home;
- communicate on an ongoing basis with the parents of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching so that progress can be positively affirmed and any difficulties in implementing the pupil's learning programme at school or at home can either be anticipated and avoided or addressed without delay;
- consult with the parents of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching at the end of the instructional term to review the pupil's attainment of agreed learning targets, to discuss the level of supplementary teaching (if any) that will be provided in the next instructional term, and to revise the pupil's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* as necessary;
- consult with parents when supplementary teaching is to be discontinued, and identify ways in which the pupil's learning can continue to be supported at school and at home;
- demonstrate techniques and strategies to parents that will enable them to help with their child's development in such areas as oral language, reading, writing and mathematics;
- where relevant, collaborate with other teachers (such as the home-school-community liaison teacher) to advise parents on ways in which they can support their children's learning at home.

3.5.4 Role of the Learning-Support Teacher in Co-ordinating the Selection of Pupils for Supplementary Teaching

As indicated in Section 2.2.6 in Chapter 2, the learning-support teacher plays an important role in co-ordinating the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching. The learning-support teacher should:

- co-ordinate the administration by class teachers of a whole-school screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and/or learning difficulties in English and mathematics;
- consult with class teachers on the identification of pupils who may need diagnostic assessment, taking into account the pupils' scores on an appropriate standardised screening measure, agreed criteria for identifying pupils, teachers' own views of the pupils' difficulties and needs, and the number of pupils to whom learning support can be provided;
- carry out a comprehensive diagnostic assessment of each pupil who has been identified as experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties

and, in consultation with the class teacher and parents, identify the type and level of learning-support that is needed to meet the pupil's needs.

It should be noted that specific procedures and other matters relating to the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching are addressed in Chapter 4 of these *Guidelines*.

3.5.5 Provision of Supplementary Teaching by the Learning-Support Teacher

As indicated in Section 2.2.7 in Chapter 2, the provision of supplementary teaching is the main role of the learning-support teacher. The learning-support teacher should:

- devise and implement an early intervention programme that involves delivering intensive small-group or one-to-one tutoring in English and/or mathematics to pupils in the junior section of the school (senior infants to second class) who have been selected for supplementary teaching, in the setting that is deemed most appropriate to the pupils' needs (i.e. the pupil's own classroom or, as required, the learning-support room);
- similarly provide supplementary teaching in English and/or mathematics to groups of pupils or to individual pupils in the senior section of the school who have been selected for supplementary teaching;

- maintain a record of the attendance of pupils at supplementary teaching sessions;
- during supplementary teaching sessions, work intensively with pupils towards the attainment of learning targets set out in their *Individual Profiles and Learning Programmes*;
- complete a *Weekly Planning and Progress Record* in respect of each individual or group of pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching.

3.5.6 Involvement of the Learning-Support Teacher in Conducting Assessments and Maintaining Records

In addition to providing supplementary teaching to pupils, the learning-support teacher is involved in administering a range of formal and informal assessments, and in maintaining records of the outcomes of those assessments. The learning-support teacher should:

- conduct an initial diagnostic assessment of each pupil who has been identified as having low achievement and/or a learning difficulty based on the results of an appropriate screening measure and record the findings of the assessment in the pupil's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* (see Section 4.4 in Chapter 4 and Section 5.4 in Chapter 5);

- monitor the ongoing progress of each pupil in receipt of supplementary teaching in relation to the attainment of agreed learning targets and short-term objectives that arise from them, and record the observations in the *Weekly Planning and Progress Record* (see Section 4.6.1 in Chapter 4);
- review the progress of each pupil at the end of an instructional term and record it on the pupil's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* (see Section 4.6.2 in Chapter 4).

3.5.7 Role of the Learning-Support Teacher in a School in a Designated Area of Educational Disadvantage

As indicated in Section 2.3, the needs of pupils in schools in disadvantaged areas may differ somewhat from those of pupils attending schools in other areas. In particular, a significant numbers of pupils in these schools may be at risk of experiencing serious learning difficulties. The learning-support teacher plays an important role, therefore, in helping to develop and implement whole-school programmes which are designed to enhance learning and which contribute to the prevention or alleviation of learning difficulties and to an overall increase in pupil achievement. In addition to providing supplementary teaching to pupils experiencing low achievement, the learning-support teacher should also:

- advise class teachers on procedures for assessing pupils' progress;

- work with the school staff to plan and implement programmes to prevent or alleviate learning difficulties;
- provide advice to class teachers on matters such as the grouping of pupils for instruction and selecting learning materials that meet pupils' needs and interests;
- work with other teachers in the school to ensure that the additional resources available to the school (such as smaller class sizes) are directed at meeting pupils' learning needs;
- consult with the home-school-community liaison teacher to identify ways in which parents of pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching can support the attainment of learning targets in their child's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*;
- work with the home-school-community liaison teacher to identify ways in which parents with literacy problems can be encouraged to participate in programmes designed to improve their own reading skills.

3.5.8 Role of the Learning-Support Teacher in a Cluster of Schools

As indicated in Section 2.4 in Chapter 2, teachers providing learning-support services in a cluster of schools face additional challenges in meeting the learning needs of pupils. The learning-support teacher should:

- contribute to the development and review of a policy document that specifically addresses how supplementary teaching can best be provided in a cluster of schools (see Section 2.4.1 in Chapter 2);
- attend meetings (convened at least once a year by the principal teacher of the base school and attended by the principal teacher of the other schools in the cluster) to address issues relating to the provision of learning-support services in all the schools in the cluster (see Sections 2.4.2 and 2.4.3 in Chapter 2);
- consult with the staff of each school in the cluster at least once each year to discuss the development and progress of the learning-support provision in the school and to discuss, in particular, the involvement of the class teachers in the provision;
- where possible, provide frequent (i.e. four or five times a week) intensive supplementary teaching to pupils experiencing low achievement in English and/or mathematics who are in the junior section of each school (senior infants to second class). To achieve this, serious consideration should be given to providing intensive supplementary teaching for fixed periods and on a rota basis to the schools in the cluster. For example, intensive daily intervention might be provided by the learning-support teacher for an instructional term (13 to 20 weeks) to one or more schools, with

other schools in the cluster receiving less intensive support during that time;

- arrange travel between schools in such a way that the frequency and intensity of the learning support are at the highest level possible.

3.6 Parents – Collaborating and Sharing Information

Parents, through their unique knowledge of their own child, have much to contribute to their child's learning programmes.

International research has demonstrated the positive influence which the involvement and participation of parents can have on children's learning and overall progress in school. This influence has been shown to be powerful and lasting. It applies, in particular, to the capacity of individual parents to enhance their child's learning in specific areas such as language development, literacy and mathematics. Collectively, the active involvement of the community of parents in school life has also been shown to enhance the effectiveness of the school as a whole. Finally, collaboration and sharing of relevant information between teachers and parents have been shown to be of critical importance, particularly in situations where the child requires learning support.

3.6.1 Role of Parents in Supporting the Work of the School

Parents can prepare for and support the work of the school by:

- providing a home environment in which there are opportunities for adults and children to participate together in language, literacy and mathematical activities in the early years before formal schooling begins;
- supporting the work of the school by participating with their child in such activities as
 - using Information and Communications Technology (ICTs), where available, to support learning in English and/or mathematics;
 - book sharing/reading stories;
 - storytelling;
 - paired reading (listening to and giving supportive feedback on oral reading);
 - discussions about school and other activities to build vocabulary and thinking skills;
 - writing lists and short accounts about children's experiences;
 - counting, measuring and other activities involving number;
 - visits to zoos, museums, libraries etc. to broaden the range of their child's experiences;

- talking positively about school and school work;
- availing of real-life situations to discuss the importance of language, literacy and mathematics;
- modelling involvement in language, literacy and mathematical activities at home by engaging in and talking about these activities;
- where their child is in receipt of supplementary teaching, implementing suggested home-based activities outlined in their child's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* and discussing the outcomes with the child's teachers.

3.6.2 Role of Parents in Communicating with the School

Parents should keep the class teacher informed of the progress that they observe in their child's learning. They should also let the school know of any learning difficulties that they observe in their child at home. If, following diagnostic assessment, the child has been identified as requiring supplementary teaching, the parents should attend a meeting with the learning-support teacher to discuss:

- the results of the assessment;
- the learning targets in the child's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*;

- the actions to be taken by the school to meet those targets;
- the ways in which attainment of the targets can be supported at home.

Where a child is in receipt of supplementary teaching from the learning-support teacher, the parents should:

- discuss their child's progress with the learning-support teacher at the end of each instructional term, and, in cases where supplementary teaching is to be continued, discuss the revised learning targets and activities in their child's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*;
- at the discontinuation of supplementary teaching, discuss with their child's teachers how the child's future learning needs can continue to be met at school and at home;
- participate in activities organised by the school that are designed to increase the involvement of parents in their children's learning;
- become familiar with and contribute to the development of the school plan on learning support individually and through involvement in parents' associations.

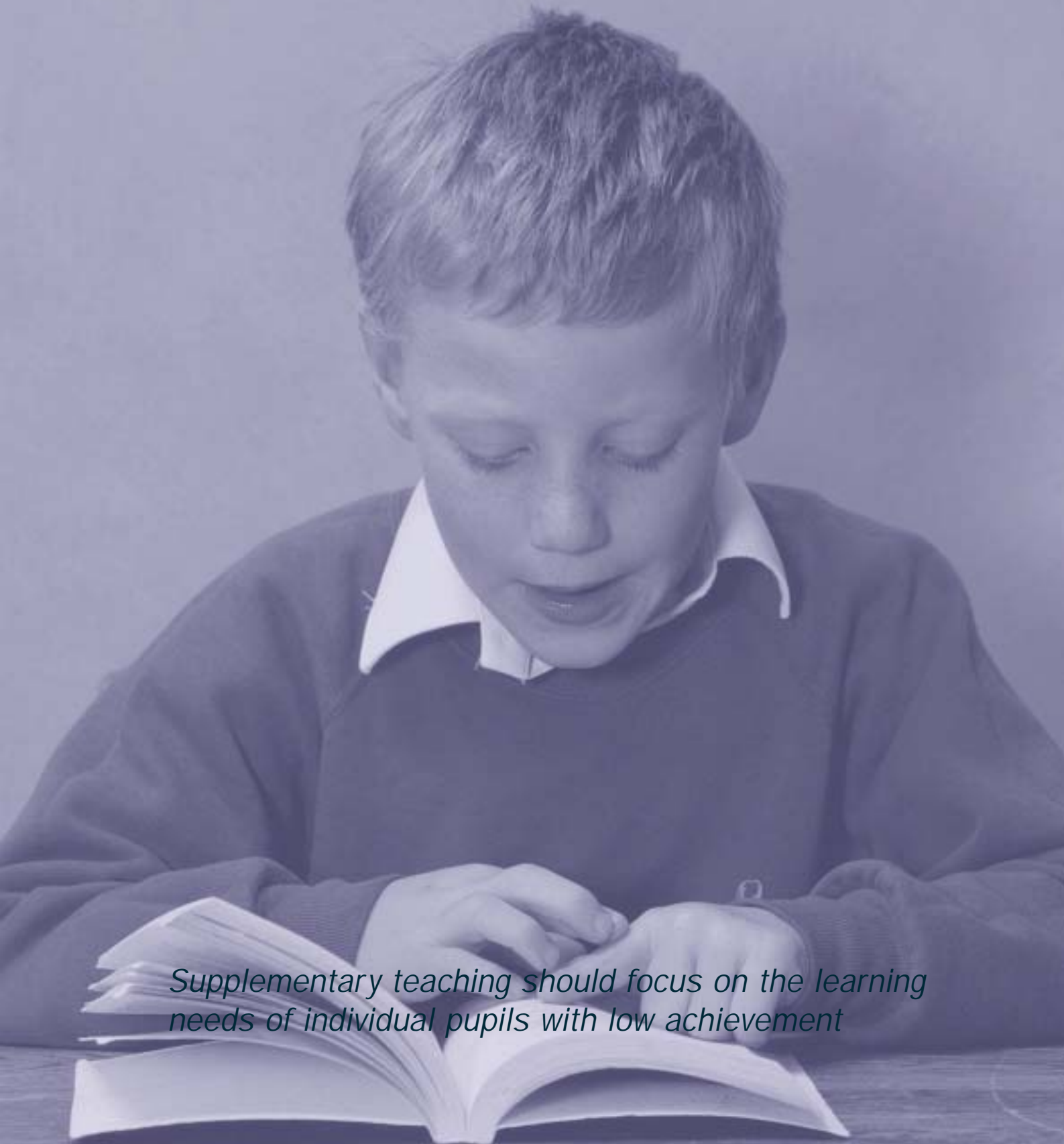
3.7 Pupils – Planning and Monitoring their Own Learning

The involvement of pupils in the development, implementation and review of their own learning programmes is an important principle underlying effective supplementary teaching. Pupils can become more independent as learners if they perceive themselves to be stakeholders in the learning process. Pupils who are in receipt of supplementary teaching should, as appropriate:

- become familiar with the medium and short-term learning targets that have been set for them, and they should be given the opportunity to contribute to the setting of such targets;
- contribute to the selection of texts and other learning materials that are relevant to the attainment of their learning targets;
- develop "ownership" of the skills and strategies that are taught during supplementary teaching and learn to apply these learning strategies and skills to improve their own learning;
- contribute to the evaluation of their progress by participating in appropriate assessment activities, including self-assessment.

CHAPTER 4

SCREENING, SELECTION, ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW



Supplementary teaching should focus on the learning needs of individual pupils with low achievement

CHAPTER 4

SCREENING, SELECTION, ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW

4.1 Overview

This chapter addresses the question of who should receive supplementary teaching and the factors that should determine the focus and content of such teaching. Guidelines for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching are presented in the early part of the chapter. This is followed by an outline of the procedures for:

- preliminary screening of pupils by their class teacher and selection of pupils for diagnostic assessment;
- initial diagnostic assessment by the learning-support teacher, interpretation of the outcomes of the assessment and determination of the most appropriate form of learning support for each pupil;
- review of each pupil's progress at the end of an instructional term, comprising assessment of the pupil's progress, evaluation of the learning programme which has been implemented, consideration of the level of learning support the pupil may require in the future and, where appropriate, revision of learning targets and associated activities in the pupil's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* (see Figure 4.1).

It should be noted that Chapter 5 contains recommendations on the setting of learning

targets, the choice of instructional activities and record keeping. Guidelines on the completion of an *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* for each pupil and the maintenance of *Weekly Planning and Progress Records* are also included.

The suggested sequence for screening, selection, diagnostic assessment, programme planning, programme implementation and programme review is outlined in the flowchart in Figure 4.1. It is recommended that schools develop policies for each of these elements, and review the policies from time to time, so that the class teachers, learning-support teacher and parents all have a clear understanding of the procedures involved.

4.2 Selection of Pupils for Supplementary Teaching – General Issues

The *SRE Report* identified anomalies in the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching. It found that some pupils with achievement test scores within the average range were in receipt of supplementary teaching while other pupils with very low achievement were not in receipt of such teaching. Since the learning-support service was established to provide for the needs of pupils with low achievement rather than those within the average range, these

Guidelines strongly discourage the practice of including pupils with average attainment in the caseloads of learning-support teachers. Rather, the needs of pupils with low achievement should, at all times, be the particular focus of the learning-support provision. The identification of these pupils is therefore the most important factor in the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching.

Based on the *SERC Report*, pupils who achieve scores that are at or below the 10th percentile on standardised tests of achievement can be regarded as having low achievement. Therefore, the following recommendations are made with regard to the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching/learning support:

- Priority should be given to pupils who are performing at or below the 10th percentile in English reading and/or mathematics;
- Schools may exercise limited flexibility in the deployment of the learning-support teacher(s) provided that the needs of the pupils who achieve scores at or below the 10th percentile have been met;
- Schools should implement a policy of early intervention. The great majority of pupils who receive supplementary teaching from the learning-support teacher will be in the junior section of the school (senior infants to second class). Only those pupils in the senior section (third class to sixth class) who have very low achievement and/or serious learning

difficulties should receive supplementary teaching. These recommendations are consistent with the concept of a sliding scale of achievement test scores as suggested in the 1987 *Guidelines on Remedial Education*;

- Intensive small-group or individual supplementary teaching should be provided by the learning-support teacher. Group size has been identified as an important factor influencing the level of progress that pupils make. While the nature and severity of pupils' learning difficulties will ultimately influence group size, it is likely that intensive early intervention involving pupils with low achievement in the junior section of the school (senior infants to second class) will be most successful in groups of approximately four pupils. Where a pupil does not make satisfactory progress in a small-group setting, consideration may be given to providing individual teaching;
- In the context of providing an overall effective learning-support programme that would include both teaching and non-teaching duties, it is expected that the learning-support teacher would be engaged in providing supplementary teaching to approximately 30 pupils with low achievement and/or learning difficulties at any given time during the school year;
- Since some pupils will make significant progress during a term of supplementary teaching, some turnover of pupils is to be

expected at the end of each instructional term, and at the end of the school year. This implies that, although the learning-support teacher may work with approximately 30 pupils at any given time, over the course of the full school year, more than 30 pupils will receive supplementary teaching;

- The duration of supplementary teaching should not exceed two to three years for the great majority of pupils. Although some level of support may be offered to pupils by the learning-support teacher after this time, only those with very serious difficulties should continue to require ongoing supplementary teaching;
- Supplementary teaching should be made available to pupils with low achievement in mathematics. Schools that do not provide such a service should introduce it on a phased basis over a period of two to three years as the school's needs in English are reduced.

4.3 Preliminary Screening for Learning Difficulties

A first step in identifying pupils who may need learning support in English or mathematics is for the class teacher to administer one or more screening measures. The particular screening measures that are administered will depend on the age and stage of development of the pupils concerned. In general, screening checklists, rating scales, screening profiles or curriculum profiles will be used with

pupils in senior infants or at the beginning of first class. From the middle of first class onwards, standardised, norm-referenced tests can be used¹.

4.3.1 Applying a Cut-off Score

Most screening measures yield an overall (raw) score that summarises a pupil's achievement across items (for example, the number of skills achieved or the number of items answered correctly). If a norm-referenced measure is used, derived scores such as standard scores, percentile ranks, or reading ages may be available. Where a number of different derived scores are available, it is recommended that schools use percentile ranks to compare the achievement of pupils. On a nationally-standardised test of achievement, a pupil's percentile rank indicates his/her standing relative to other pupils nationally at the same class level or in the same age range. Unlike percentile ranks, reading ages are particularly difficult to interpret and should therefore be avoided (see Glossary).

In selecting pupils for diagnostic assessment and supplementary teaching, priority should be given to those pupils who achieve scores at or below the 10th percentile. In order to allow for measurement error, consideration may be given to selecting pupils who achieve scores up to and including the 12th percentile. Once schools are satisfied that the needs of pupils who have very low achievement and/or serious learning difficulties have been met (i.e. intervention has been

¹ Each of these screening measures is defined in the Glossary.

successful), a limited degree of flexibility may be exercised in the deployment of the learning-support teacher. The learning-support teacher might, for example, devote time to working with class teachers in further enhancing the classroom learning environment and in developing prevention and early intervention programmes for the junior classes in the school.

4.3.2 Input from the Class Teacher

The judgement of the class teacher is an important factor in the selection of pupils for diagnostic assessment. The class teacher will be in a position to confirm whether or not the score achieved by a pupil on a screening measure is an accurate reflection of the pupil's performance in class. The class teacher will also be able to contribute to the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* of each pupil selected for supplementary teaching by providing information about the pupil's strengths and weaknesses and identifying learning activities that can be implemented in the pupil's own classroom to achieve agreed learning targets.

4.3.3 Input from Parents

Once a pupil has come to the attention of the school because of low achievement and/or learning difficulties, it will be possible for the class teacher, in the context of ongoing contact with the pupil's parents, to make them aware of the situation and to:

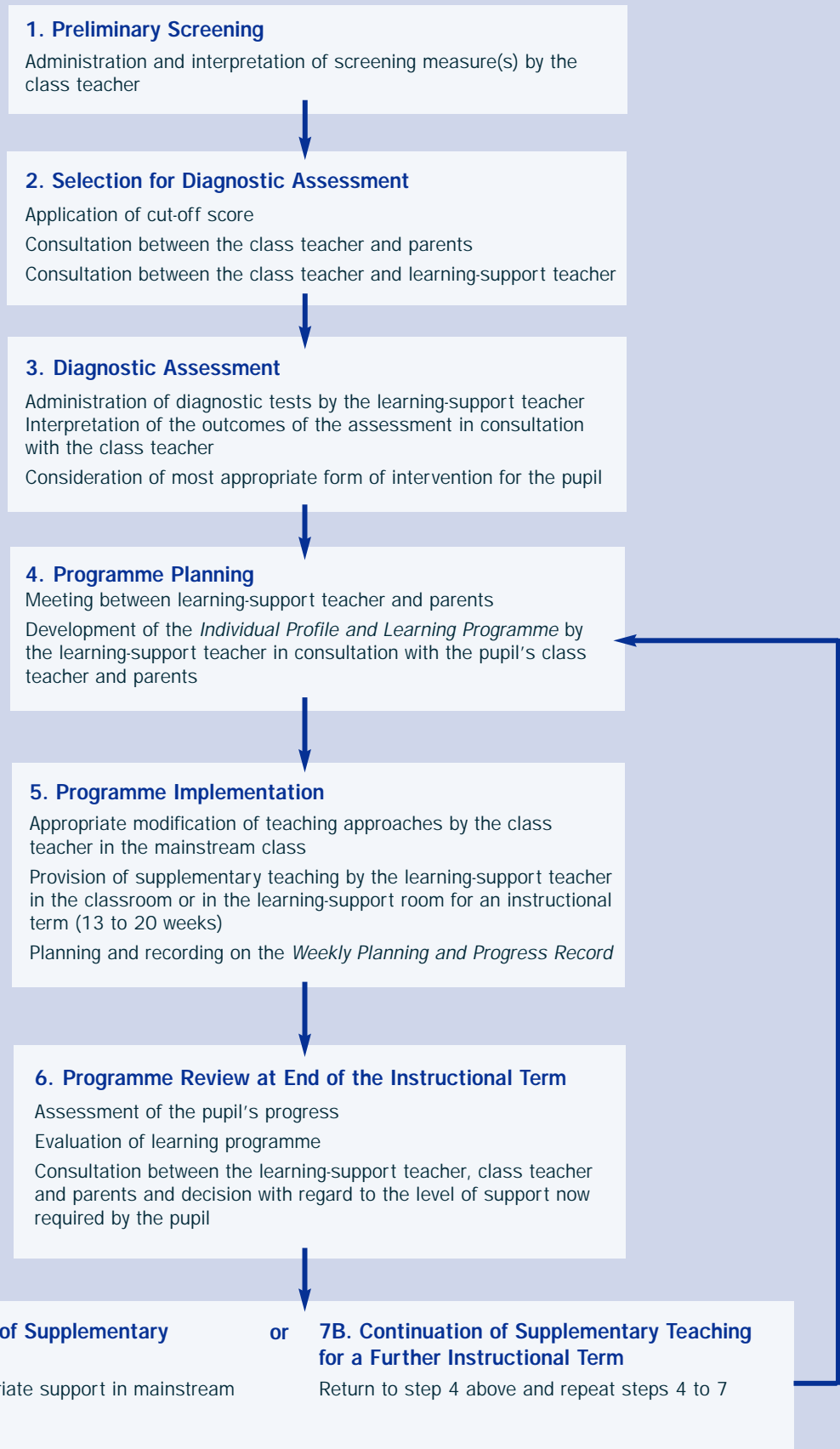
- ascertain the parents' views about the child's performance at school;
- outline school practices regarding the administration of diagnostic tests by the learning-support teacher;
- outline the support that is available to pupils in the school whose achievement is low and/or who experience learning difficulties;
- seek the parents' approval to proceed with the diagnostic assessment, which may lead to supplementary teaching;
- indicate that a meeting between the parents and the learning-support teacher will take place following the diagnostic assessment and prior to the commencement of supplementary teaching.

If, following diagnostic assessment, it is agreed that the pupil should receive supplementary teaching, the parents can contribute to the development and implementation of their child's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* by discussing the learning targets for their child and by identifying activities that can be implemented at home to support the work of the school in achieving the agreed targets.

4.4 Diagnostic Assessment

When a pupil has been selected for diagnostic assessment, following screening procedures and consultation with the class

Figure 4.1 Supplementary Teaching: Selection and Implementation



teacher and parents, the learning-support teacher, who will have access to a range of diagnostic tests and guidelines on interpreting results, should proceed with the administration of these tests.

4.4.1 Objectives of the Diagnostic Assessment

The objectives of the diagnostic assessment conducted by the learning-support teacher are to:

- identify those aspects of English and/or mathematics in which the pupil has either particular strengths or learning difficulties;
- identify the pupil's learning needs;
- generate information essential for the completion of the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*;
- identify, in consultation with the pupil's class teacher, the appropriate level and duration of learning support that should be provided and the form that such support should take (for example, additional support by the pupil's class teacher in the mainstream class, provision of supplementary teaching in the pupil's own classroom, withdrawal of the pupil for supplementary teaching in the learning-support room);
- identify and record medium-term learning targets that can be attained during the initial instructional term (13-20 weeks).

4.4.2 Content of the Diagnostic Assessment

The particular set of diagnostic tests to be administered will depend on the pupil's stage of development. The following elements are often found in diagnostic assessments designed for pupils at the early reading or emergent literacy stage (senior infants and first class):

- Print awareness (knowledge of functions of print and awareness of environmental print);
- Print conventions;
- Phonemic awareness² and ability to identify rhyming words;
- Letter identification (upper- and lower-case);
- Knowledge of letter sounds;
- Word recognition (knowledge of sight words);
- Visual discrimination;
- Word identification skills;
- Understanding of the meanings of words and sentences;
- Spelling (including the quality of approximate spellings);
- Writing (penmanship).

For pupils who have moved beyond the early stages of learning to read, diagnostic

² See Glossary

assessment often focuses on such elements as:

- Reading accuracy;
- Sentence and passage comprehension;
- Word recognition;
- Meaning vocabulary (knowledge of word meanings);
- Word identification skills;
- Systematic analysis of pupils' difficulties in oral reading (e.g. miscue analysis);
- Reading rate and fluency;
- Information location and study skills;
- Spelling;
- Writing (composition).

Other elements of learning that can be addressed in a diagnostic assessment in order to generate a more complete picture of a pupil's needs include:

- Oral language proficiency (e.g. listening comprehension; expressive language skills);
- General (non-verbal) reasoning skills;
- Receptive vocabulary;
- General attitude to books and reading;
- Motivation to learn;
- Social adjustment.

A diagnostic assessment of mathematics might focus on the following elements:

- Conservation of number;
- Understanding of mathematical concepts;
- Number sense;
- Understanding and ability to use the language of mathematics;
- Computation skills;
- Ability to use numbers in realistic situations;
- Problem-solving strategies;
- Recall of number facts (tables);
- Implementation of mathematical procedures, including algorithms (e.g. for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division);
- Mathematical reasoning skills (for example, recognising number patterns);
- Ability to represent mathematical ideas.

(See also Section 5.7 in Chapter 5.)

4.4.3 Summarising the Results of the Diagnostic Assessment

The results of diagnostic assessment should be recorded on an *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*. The 'profile' element of the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* should include the following:

- Names of any formal tests (including screening and diagnostic tests) that have been administered before the commencement of supplementary teaching and a brief summary of the results;
- Names and results of any formal tests that have been administered at the end of an instructional term in order to measure progress;
- Outcomes of relevant informal assessments or observations;
- Any relevant information provided by the class teacher, parents/guardians, psychologists, speech and language therapists etc.
- An indication of the pupils' learning strengths and priority needs.

The process of completing this element of the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* is outlined in Section 5.3 in Chapter 5. Figure 5.1 in the same chapter provides an example of a completed Profile, while a blank version of the form can be found in Appendix B.

4.5 Programme Planning

Following diagnostic assessment, the learning-support teacher is in a position to develop the 'learning programme' component of the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*, in consultation with the class teacher and parents, by planning a range of learning-support activities which are

designed to achieve the learning targets that have already been set out. The process of developing this component of the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* is outlined in detail in Section 5.3 of Chapter 5.

4.6 Reviewing the Progress of Individual Pupils

The progress of each pupil should be monitored on an ongoing basis throughout the instructional term. A more in-depth review should be conducted at the end of the term of instruction (i.e. after 13 to 20 weeks).

4.6.1 Ongoing Monitoring of Progress and Learning Needs

Much of the progress that a pupil makes will be evident from the activities in which the pupil engages during supplementary teaching sessions. For example, careful monitoring of a pupil's oral reading can provide information on reading rate and fluency, knowledge of sight vocabulary, knowledge of phonics and other word identification skills as well as reading comprehension. Analysis of a pupil's writing samples can provide information about the pupil's ability to construct sentences, present ideas in writing, spell words and write legibly. A discussion with a pupil about the procedures used to solve a mathematical problem can provide information about the pupil's problem-solving strategies. Records of oral reading (running records), annotated writing samples, records of pupil conferences and

other evidence of development should be retained by the learning-support teacher for later review.

Day-to-day observations of a pupil's progress that are made during supplementary teaching should be recorded on the *Weekly Planning and Progress Record* (see Section 5.4 in Chapter 5). Feedback from the pupil's class teacher and parents can be similarly recorded.

4.6.2 Reviewing Progress at the End of an Instructional Term

An in-depth review of a pupil's progress should be organised by the learning-support teacher at the end of each instructional term (i.e. after 13 to 20 weeks of instruction). The primary purposes of this review are to determine whether or not agreed learning targets have been achieved, and to decide on the level of supplementary teaching, if any, that should be provided in the following instructional term. This involves:

- reviewing records of the pupil's ongoing development and progress, including *Weekly Planning and Progress Records*;
- administering or re-administering diagnostic tests that might provide additional information about a pupil's progress or learning needs, and recording the outcomes in the pupil's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*;
- discussing the pupil's progress with the class teacher, focusing in particular on the outcomes of relevant learning activities specified in the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*;
- discussing the pupil's progress with his/her parents, focusing in particular on the outcomes of learning activities in the pupil's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* that were implemented at home;
- deciding, in consultation with the pupil's class teacher and parents, whether the same level of supplementary teaching should continue for another instructional term, or whether supplementary teaching should be reduced or discontinued. This decision should take into account the pupil's learning needs, the criteria for continuation/discontinuation outlined in the school plan and the needs of other pupils in the school/school cluster who have very low achievement. It should also involve a discussion of the type of ongoing support which would be available to the pupil within his/her own classroom;
- in the case of pupils for whom supplementary teaching is to be continued, establishing new learning targets and learning activities in consultation with the pupil's class teacher and parents, and recording these in the pupil's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*.

If, after a number of terms of supplementary teaching, it is found that a

pupil has made very little progress towards achieving the targets in his/her *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*, a comprehensive review of the pupil's needs should be undertaken. The review should entail:

- conducting a detailed re-assessment of the pupil's strengths, needs, self-esteem and motivation;
- conducting a detailed re-evaluation of the pupil's learning-support programme, including learning targets, instructional activities, and levels of collaboration within the school and between home and school, in the delivery of the programme. In pinpointing reasons for the pupil's lack of progress, particular attention should be given to determining whether or not the design of the pupil's individual programme matched his/her learning needs;
- developing a revised programme for the pupil to target specific needs and to harness interests and learning strengths. If the pupil's difficulties prove to be particularly serious, consideration might be given to providing individual tutoring for a period of time;
- developing cognitive and meta-cognitive procedures to increase the pupil's involvement in the planning and implementation of his/her own learning programme. Involvement in setting targets, choosing books and materials, and monitoring progress can give pupils more control over their own learning and

can have a very positive effect on performance and motivation.

If the pupil's difficulties are markedly unresponsive to supplementary teaching, consideration should be given, in consultation with the pupil's parents, to referring the child for psychological assessment. Such an assessment would provide additional information and advice to the school on drawing up an appropriate learning programme for the pupil. It would also allow for the possibility of providing resource-teacher support or other special educational support for the pupil, as appropriate.

4.7 Record Keeping

The learning-support teacher should maintain records of the outcomes of diagnostic assessment, of the agreed learning programmes and of pupil progress. As indicated elsewhere in these *Guidelines*, maintenance of the following records is strongly recommended:


- an *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*, which should be completed for each pupil after the initial diagnostic assessment, and should be revised following a review of progress at the end of each instructional term (i.e. after 13–20 weeks);
- a *Weekly Planning and Progress Record*, which should be completed on a weekly basis for each pupil or group of pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching;

- additional records of pupil progress such as records of oral language, records of oral reading errors, and work samples that can be used to track a pupil's progress and learning needs over time.

Additional information on the development and use of these records is provided in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

APPROACHES TO PLANNING AND TEACHING



The key to success is the extent to which regular classroom teaching and supplementary teaching provide a co-ordinated response to the individual needs of pupils

CHAPTER 5

APPROACHES TO PLANNING AND TEACHING

5.1 Overview

In this chapter, guidelines for programme planning and record keeping at the level of the individual pupil are presented. Some approaches to organisation and teaching related to learning support in English and mathematics, including the use of ICTs, are also suggested. Additional approaches, particularly for use within the classroom can be found in the relevant *Teacher Guidelines (1999)* for the primary school curriculum.

5.2 Diagnostic Assessment and Planning

Individual programme planning is recommended for all pupils receiving supplementary teaching in order to optimise each pupil's learning opportunities. The diagnostic teaching procedures recommended here involve medium- and short-term planning. The development of *Individual Profile and Learning Programmes* addresses medium-term planning before supplementary teaching begins. Short-term planning, progress records and programme evaluation can be maintained during a term of supplementary teaching through the completion of the *Weekly Planning and Progress Record*. At the beginning of a term of supplementary teaching, planning should be based on the targets and learning activities outlined in the *Individual Profile*

and Learning Programme. Once supplementary teaching has begun, the records and evaluations of the supplementary teaching sessions themselves can be used as the basis for on-going planning and teaching.

5.3 Individual Profile and Learning Programme

The *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* is used to record relevant information relating to a pupil's learning attainments and his/her learning strengths and needs. It also contains an outline of his/her individual learning programme. The first stage in the development of an *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* involves the collection of the relevant information through diagnostic assessment and through discussion with persons who have a knowledge of the pupil. Following this, the pupil's learning strengths and needs are specified and decisions are taken regarding the choice of learning targets and activities.

Much of the work involved in completing an *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* is carried out and co-ordinated by the learning-support teacher. However, as indicated in Chapter 3, it is strongly recommended that an inclusive approach involving the pupil's class teacher, parents and the pupils

themselves be adopted both in the diagnostic and planning stages and later in the implementation and monitoring of the learning programmes.

A completed sample *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* is presented in Figure 5.1. A template is included in Appendix B and may be photocopied for use as required. Similar forms are to be found in the relevant literature. Teachers may choose to use a ready-made form or devise an alternative that suits their own particular needs. Whichever style of form is used, it is critical that the relevant formal and informal information in respect of each pupil is recorded in an accessible manner, so that it is available for use in making decisions about the child's learning targets and activities. Suggestions for completing an *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* are outlined below.

Details of the Pupil, Class, Teachers, etc.:

Details of the pupil's class placement, names of his/her class teacher and learning-support teacher as well as the date on which the pupil first joined the supplementary teaching programme are recorded in the first part of the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*.

Information from Assessment: The second part of the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* is used to record information obtained through screening and diagnostic assessment, as outlined in Section 4, Chapter 4. Formal assessment information is collected through the application of norm-

referenced, criterion-referenced and diagnostic tests. Very useful information can also be obtained by means of informal schedules and checklists. The choice of assessment instrument depends greatly on the pupil's age and levels of attainment as well as on the type of information required. The results of assessments can be recorded on the *Profile* before and after the implementation of the supplementary teaching programme.

Other Information: Additional information which is important for planning the pupil's learning programme is summarised here. Such information can be obtained from parents, the pupils themselves, the class teacher and other professionals, such as psychologists or speech and language therapists, who have assessed and/or worked with the pupil. This information can be acquired by means of telephone calls, meetings, interviews and from reports.

Learning Strengths/Attainments and

Priority Learning Needs: Following the completion of the assessment/information gathering phase, the pupil's learning strengths/attainments and priority learning needs can be stated. These statements provide a means of linking the results of assessment to the setting of specific learning targets for the pupil. For example, statements of learning strengths and needs in reading would take into account a pupil's current reading level and might also refer to such factors as reading fluency and comprehension, ability to use reading

Figure 5.1: Individual Profile and Learning Programme (Completed)

Name <i>Eamonn Murphy</i>	Class <i>2nd</i>			
Address	Class teacher <i>M. O'Neill</i>			
	Learning Support teacher <i>M. O'Rourke</i>			
Telephone	Commencement date of supplementary teaching: <i>4.9.99</i>			
Date of Birth <i>24.4.92</i>	Review Date: <i>17.12.99</i>			
Screening Assessment <i>Drumcondra Primary Reading Test Form A</i>	Date <i>14.6.99</i>	Result <i>Total Reading: Percentile 9</i>	Date	Result
Diagnostic Assessment <i>Neale Analysis of Reading Ability Form A</i>	Date <i>3.9.99</i>	Result <i>Read Acc. Percentile 8 Read. Comp. Percentile 5</i>	Date	Result
<i>Aston Index Vocabulary Scale</i>	<i>6.9.99</i>	<i>Vocab. Age 7.5 years</i>		
Informal Assessment before Supplementary Teaching <i>6th September 99 On running record of reading - Uses initial consonant to guess unknown words - Does not recognise common words: baby, with, went, from - Does not read for meaning Letter names: all known Letter sounds: knows 12 sounds (see list) Consonant sounds, unsure of short vowels Dolch list: Recognised 32 words (see list)</i>		Informal Assessment after Supplementary Teaching		
Summary of Other Information (For example from parents, class teacher, psychologist, speech and language therapist etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral language: doesn't volunteer information or initiate conversation • Oral reading: lacks fluency, reads word by word • Reading for meaning: poor recall of stories • Word identification skills: lacks confidence and is weak generally, sometimes tries to use initial letter to sound out words, doesn't use context clues or syllabication • Enjoys listening to stories and looking through picture books at school, does little reading at home • Works well for short periods, but can be easily distracted, behaviour generally good 				
Learning Strengths and Attainments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can say the names of all the letters and some letter sounds (see list) • Basic sight words (see list) • Enjoys looking at books and listening to stories • Tries to sound out unknown words, using initial consonant • Can be well motivated and co-operative 				
Priority Learning Needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To volunteer one item of 'news' about personal experiences from time to time • To increase basic sight vocabulary • To develop phonemic awareness • To use word identification strategies • To improve reading accuracy and comprehension • To develop oral language ability in structured situations and contexts and by using own experiences, books and stories 				

Individual Profile and Learning Programme (Completed)

Learning Targets for the Period <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To recognise the first 100 words in Dolch List at sight To recall all consonants sounds, short vowels and common consonant blends To read lists of rhyming words To read onset and rime for example m-an, p-an, d-an, r-an To divide words into syllables orally To recognise root words and common word endings for example, play -ing, -s, -ed, -er To blend consonant-vowel-consonant combinations To develop reading comprehension skills To experience reading as an enjoyable, worthwhile activity To read to Stages 6 of "Branch" Reading Programme and "Bloom" Readers Set F 				Date Achieved	
Learning-Support Activities – Learning-Support Teacher <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: familiar and new reading material every day, Core readers: "Branch Reading Programme" and "Bloom" Readers Sight Vocabulary: Use flashcards to teach new words in Readers and in Dolch List (visual and auditory aspects), also games and activities such as bingo, snap, fish in the pond, sentence making Comprehension strategies: attending to the meaning of oral and silent reading to ensure it makes sense, questioning and discussion before, during and after reading, prediction of what will happen next, discussion of story outcomes, oral and written exercises - locating main ideas, sequencing, summarising and retelling Oral language using a structure to make oral presentations, e.g. newstime, responding to books and stories Developing word identification strategies - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using the context to identify unfamiliar words phonemic awareness, including oral syllabication skills onsets and rimes learning the remaining consonant sounds, short vowel sounds and consonant blends blending consonant vowel consonant words - oral and written work common word endings -s, -ing, -ed, -er 					
<i>Materials: e.g. Magnetic board and letters, blackboard, flashcards, word lists, sentence strips, cutting, pasting and writing activities for learning new words, blending practice, onset and rime, root words/word endings, etc</i>					
Learning-Support Activities – Class Teacher <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written exercises to follow up and reinforce words learned in supplementary teaching Reading and Comprehension exercises using suitable materials (see list) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example by preparing reading in advance by discussing picture and title clues, by predicting what will happen next and by retelling and discussing stories after reading Individual spelling programme, including onsets and rimes, "cvc" words, personal words for writing Rewards for achievements and genuine effort e.g. stars, notes home and to learning-support teacher Language development across curricular areas, emphasis on retelling, sequencing and summarising Class paired reading programme (partner- Seán) Computer programmes – "Wordsmith", and programmes from "Branch Reading Programme" and "Bloom" Readers to reinforce sight vocabulary & phonics Modifying and adapting the class curriculum – for example by specific questions, individual worksheets, diagrams, eye contact during class lessons, group work, support from other pupils especially with written exercises (Seán and Gary) Listening to, enjoying and responding to stories read aloud to class by teacher 					
Learning-Support Activities – Home <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading for ten minutes five nights a week (paired reading), maintaining a record of reading completed, providing support through encouragement, praise and by helping with unknown words Discussing the story during and at the end of each reading session Listening to, enjoying and responding to stories read aloud by parents 					
Supplementary Teaching		4 Group	Duration of Programme from 06-09.99 to 20.12.99		
		o Individual	Number of Weeks 14		
Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Time	11.00-11.40	2.00-2.40	11.00-11.40	2.00-2.40	9.20-10.00
Location	In class	L-support room	In class	L-support room	L-support room

strategies, phonemic awareness, motivation, work habits and home support.

Learning Targets: Medium-term learning targets are now set for a specific period of supplementary teaching. These targets should be based on a careful consideration of the pupil's learning strengths and needs. Learning targets in reading might include fluent reading at a specific level of a reading programme, or of a named book. Targets might also include the development of a higher level of pupil commitment to the task of learning to read, awareness of certain phonological patterns and the mastery of specific word-identification strategies. In order to provide a record of the pupil's achievements during and at the end of an instructional term of supplementary teaching, the date on which the pupil is considered to have achieved a specific target is noted under "Date achieved".

Learning-Support Activities Based on Learning Targets: This section of the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* is designed to include an outline of the specific learning activities to be undertaken by the pupil during an instructional term under the direction of his/her class teacher, learning-support teacher and parents. These learning activities should be planned by all concerned and implemented in a collaborative manner. Such collaboration greatly enhances the likelihood of a successful outcome to the learning programme. Short meetings between the class teacher, learning-support teacher and

parents are useful for agreeing the learning targets and for planning the various learning activities to be pursued. Where such meetings are not feasible, alternative arrangements for communicating information should be made, so that all parties contribute to the implementation of the pupil's learning programme with the highest possible level of agreement and collaboration.

Supplementary Teaching: In the final section of the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* organisational details are outlined. These reflect decisions that have been taken in relation to such issues as individual or group teaching, duration of the instructional term, times of instruction and the location of supplementary teaching.

5.4 Weekly Planning and Progress Record

The approach to short-term planning and record-keeping presented here is designed to put into effect an on-going cyclical system for lesson planning, teaching, record-keeping and evaluation. It is recommended that detailed short-term planning and recording of progress be carried out in respect of each pupil who is receiving supplementary teaching. A partially completed, sample *Weekly Planning and Progress Record* is provided in Figure 5.2. Blank forms, which can be photocopied for use are to be found in Appendix C.

It is recommended that a *Weekly Planning and Progress Record* be completed each

Fig 5.2: Weekly Planning and Progress Record (Completed)

Area of Curriculum: <i>English</i>		Week ending: <i>17.9.99</i>					
Names	Attendance					Class teacher	Reader
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri		
<i>Éamonn:</i>						<i>Ms O'Neill</i>	<i>"Branch" Reading programme Stage 2 "The Wild Garden"</i>
<i>Anna</i>						<i>Ms O'Neill</i>	<i>"Bloom" Readers Set C "The Pencil Thief "</i>
<i>Brian</i>						<i>Ms O'Neill</i>	<i>"Bloom" Readers Set C "The Flower Pot"</i>
<p>Familiar Reading</p> <p><i>With teacher: Reading prepared on previous day and practised at home</i></p> <p><i>Independently and with partners: "Branch" Reading Programme Stage 1, "Bloom" Readers Sets A & B</i></p>							
<p>Revision of Learning Strategies</p> <p><i>Sight vocabulary: (from last week) a, I, it, the, his, and, in, of, to, he, is, that, was</i></p> <p><i>Phonemic awareness: Rhyming words: man, ran, fan,; gun, sun, bun,</i></p> <p><i>Onset and rimes: m-an, r-an, f-an, ... g-un, s-un, b-un,</i></p> <p><i>Oral language and Comprehension: Retelling stories from familiar reading – focus on sequence, vocabulary</i></p>							
<p>New Learning Strategies</p> <p><i>New sight vocabulary: all, be, for, as, but, had, at, are, have (flashcards)</i></p> <p><i>Comprehension: oral retelling of stories read, N.B. sequence, vocabulary, main idea</i></p> <p><i>Oral language: "Coming to school", telling my story, N.B. sequence of events</i></p> <p><i>Phonemic awareness: Rhyming words: fat, mat, bat,; pin, bin, tin, (oral work, listing, odd man out, nursery rhymes and jingles, also using charts, word lists)</i></p> <p><i>Onsets and rimes: ... f-at, m-at, b-at,; p-in, b-in, t-in,; (magnetic board and letters)</i></p> <p><i>Individual letter sounds: practice and revision of word lists and key words for m, s, b, g, t, l, p, r, d, a, "Branch" alphabet frieze, charts and pupil word lists</i></p> <p><i>Writing sentences using sight vocabulary and words from readers</i></p>							
<p>New Reading</p> <p><i>Own individual Readers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>introduce and practise new reading</i> - <i>picture and context clues</i> - <i>set questions before reading</i> - <i>prediction</i> 							
<p>Summary of Progress</p>							
<i>Name</i>	<i>Learning-Support Teacher</i>		<i>Class Teacher</i>		<i>Home</i>		
<i>Éamonn</i>							
<i>Anna</i>							
<i>Brian</i>							

Daily Planning Sheet

Pupil/s:

Day	Familiar Reading	Revision of Learning Strategies	New Learning Strategies	New Reading	Progress
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					

week in respect of each group or individual for whom supplementary teaching is provided. Learning-support teachers are invited to use the form in Appendix C, or an equivalent form from among the many that are available in the relevant literature. The system adopted for short-term planning and recording should be easy to use and should not demand a lot of paperwork, thus ensuring that the main emphasis will be on effective teaching and learning.

The first part of the *Weekly Planning and Progress Record* is used to record information such as the curricular area of the lesson, the pupils' names, records of attendance, the period covered by the *Weekly Planning and Progress Record*, names of class teachers and learning-support teacher and other relevant information.

In the second section, an overall programme of activities to be implemented during a week of supplementary teaching is outlined. Care should be taken to allocate an appropriate amount of time to each activity, so that a proper balance is maintained among the different activities in the lesson. A programme of activities in reading might, for example, include familiar reading, revision of reading strategies, the learning of new reading strategies and finally the opportunity to read a new text.

The third section of page one is used to record observations of learning and lesson evaluations during and/or following the complementary learning activities with the

learning-support teacher, the class teacher, and at home. Such observations relate to learning activities undertaken during the week and might include signs of pupil progress such as reading accuracy and/or comprehension, the successful application of learning strategies such as the ability to segment oral words into phonemes, knowledge of specific letter names and/or sounds and increased understanding of mathematical procedures. Reading errors/miscues and any other aspects of learning which cause difficulty for a pupil can also be recorded.

The relevant information should be recorded during the course of the week by the learning-support teacher in consultation with the class teacher and, as appropriate, with parents. The information recorded in this way will be very helpful for planning learning activities to be implemented during the following week with a group or individual and particularly to ensure that the lesson content meets the specific learning needs of each pupil. Over a period of time, *Weekly Planning and Progress Records* build into an essential reference source not only for the on-going planning of learning activities, but also for monitoring pupil progress and for informing decision-making regarding a pupil's need for supplementary teaching. When used in these ways, the *Weekly Planning and Progress Records* provide evidence of the effectiveness of the pupil's learning programme.

The second page of the *Weekly Planning and Progress Record* is presented as an option for learning-support teachers who are seeking guidance on daily planning and recording. This page, titled *Daily Planning Sheet*, can be used for planning specific learning activities on a lesson-by-lesson basis. A detailed plan for each aspect of the lesson can be written in the boxes on the form. Observations by the teacher on the learning behaviour of the pupils during the lesson and evaluation of the success of the lesson can be recorded in the final column. A summary of the teacher's observations and lesson evaluations can be entered into the final section of the first page of the *Weekly Planning and Progress Record* at the end of the week.

A periodic examination of the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* by the learning-support teacher will reveal whether or not the pupil's progress is on track. Such an examination may also give rise to changes in the learning targets and activities in the pupil's programme. At the end of an instructional term (13 to 20 weeks), an in-depth review of progress should take place. Based on this review, decisions are made about the level of support to be provided for the pupil in the future. If it is decided that the pupil requires another term of supplementary teaching, the pupil's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* should be revised and updated. In this way a sense of urgency is maintained and learning support is focused on each pupil's specific needs and strengths.

5.5 Delivery of Supplementary Teaching – General Guidelines

Supplementary teaching should be based on the individual strengths and needs of each pupil. Because of differences in pupils' strengths, needs, targets and learning activities, it is not possible to set out strict programme guidelines regarding what should be taught in each supplementary lesson. Nevertheless it is desirable to set out some principles, approaches and methods which relate to the general context within which the instruction takes place.

As indicated elsewhere in these *Guidelines*, supplementary teaching should be directed at the lowest achieving pupils. These pupils should receive particular attention through carefully-planned intervention within the classroom and, where necessary, through withdrawal from the classroom for small-group or individual teaching. The key, at all times, to the success of such intervention is the level of co-operation and co-ordination between the class teacher and the learning-support teacher and the extent to which classroom-based learning is enhanced for the pupils in question.

It is recommended that supplementary teaching be provided for pupils over a predetermined period or term of instruction. Schools might choose to divide the school year into two or three periods for supplementary teaching i.e. three instructional terms of thirteen/fourteen weeks or two terms of approximately twenty weeks.

The learning targets, review dates and activities should be agreed at the beginning of the instructional term. At the end of this period, pupil progress can be assessed against these targets. Decisions can then be taken as to whether the pupil should continue to receive the same or a reduced level of supplementary teaching, or be discontinued from the supplementary teaching programme. When pupils are discontinued from the supplementary teaching programme, their progress should be monitored regularly by the class teacher, learning-support teacher and parents.

Supplementary teaching will sometimes take place in the learning-support teacher's room rather than in the regular classroom. However, when withdrawal for supplementary teaching is complemented by the implementation of collaborative approaches and direct intervention in the classroom, then real and sustained progress can be made by pupils and the negative aspects of regular withdrawal from class can be minimised.

To enable pupils to become independent and self-reliant, they should be taught appropriate learning strategies and they should be assisted and monitored in the application of these strategies to their day-to-day work in the classroom. Learning strategies are acquired through direct teaching and through experience and guided practice in facing new and appropriate learning challenges. For example, pupils can learn strategies for identifying an unfamiliar

word, composing a sentence, or solving a problem in mathematics. However, pupils also need to develop 'frameworks' for new knowledge and skills. Teachers can support learning in a very important way by signalling the introduction of new ideas and by demonstrating to the pupil(s) how a new idea can be "fitted" into previous knowledge and applied in different contexts.

5.6 Supplementary Teaching in English

Supplementary teaching sessions in English should be planned individually for each pupil so that the activities in each lesson meet the pupil's individual learning needs. General guidelines are presented here regarding the context, methodology and presentation of these lessons.

5.6.1 Management of Time

For efficient management of time and to ensure that each element of the lesson is allotted an appropriate amount of time, it is useful to subdivide the 30-40 minutes of a supplementary teaching session into smaller, manageable time segments. This is to ensure that each aspect of a pupil's individual programme receives adequate attention and that a proper balance between the various learning activities in the lesson is maintained. For example, a reading lesson lasting forty minutes might be divided into four parts as follows:

Part	Content	Time
1.	Familiar reading: re-reading familiar books, review of reading completed at home and in class	10 mins.
2.	Revision and consolidation of learning strategies	5 mins.
3.	New learning strategies: learning new vocabulary and practising word identification strategies	15 mins.
4.	New reading: introducing, practising, discussing and assigning new reading material	10 mins.

Suggestions regarding lesson content, methodology and teaching approach are provided below.

5.6.2 Developing Skills and Strategies

Direct instruction in specific knowledge and skills such as phonemic awareness, letter names, letter sounds and sight vocabulary as required by individual pupils is recommended. Some drill and practice is therefore inevitable. Pupils' interest and engagement can be maintained by using meaningful learning materials and graded activities to facilitate successful learning outcomes. While drill and practice are useful as reinforcement techniques, developmental reading strategies should arise as much as possible from meaningful contexts. For example, the teaching of sight vocabulary is more effective when linked to meaningful reading. Comprehension skills can be developed through suitable questioning and discussion, through cloze procedure and

sequencing exercises, or through more direct strategy training as described below.

Structured training in the application of learning strategies accelerates pupils' progress towards independent learning. For example, strategy training in reading comprehension can dramatically improve pupil performance in this area, while training in the use of word-identification strategies can help to accelerate fluency and independence in reading. Pupils develop competence in the use of learning strategies by applying them in realistic situations and contexts, and receiving feedback on what they have done. Pupils with learning difficulties often require a considerable amount of practice before becoming proficient.

The following five-step procedure is recommended for teaching learning strategies:

1. The teacher describes what the strategy is (for example, blending sounds, making predictions, self-questioning) and when and where to use it;
2. The teacher demonstrates how to apply the strategy, often "talking aloud" or "thinking aloud" to provide pupils with a model for using the strategy;
3. The teacher gradually releases responsibility for using the strategy to pupils as they engage in guided practice. The pupils apply the strategy, receiving help and feedback from the teacher as

needed. The teacher's questions may help pupils to think about why they are applying the strategy and what modifications may be needed in the current context;

4. The pupils engage in independent practice, receiving feedback from the teacher only after they have applied the strategy;
5. The pupils apply the strategy in the course of their everyday reading in English and in other areas of the curriculum.

5.6.3 Developing Oral Language

Because of the fundamental importance of language development, particularly oral language, in learning to read, pupils who are in receipt of supplementary teaching will need support in the following broad areas of oral language:

- being exposed to rich and varied language environments and contexts structured by the teacher;
- experiencing a wide range of oral language through the use of story books and literature;
- participating in activities in which language is used as a tool for thinking and learning (i.e. use of language to analyse, hypothesise, and solve problems);

- developing knowledge of vocabulary and sentence structure;
- exploring a variety of topics and genres beyond those related to everyday experiences.

An important aspect of the oral language programme designed to improve reading proficiency will involve preparing pupils to understand and interact with more complex texts. Pupils will need to experience a wide vocabulary, a range of topics and genres, more complex syntax, and more elaborate use of tense. This can be accomplished by reading challenging texts aloud to pupils and inviting them to reflect on and talk about the texts so that they can structure language in new ways. This will entail dialogue between teacher and pupils where the language and form of the text is the subject. Pupils should also be supported in presenting an extended talk or monologue about a text to an audience of teachers and peers. Bridging the gap between oral language and reading may be accomplished by having pupils tell a story (that they have recently read) to a group who have never heard it before, by having pupils describe the language used in a poem, or provide an oral summary of an informational text from a particular perspective. Other oral language activities that support children in moving forward in reading include:

- sharing prior knowledge about the topic of a text;

- telling a story based on a sequence of pictures;
- planning, predicting and ordering events in stories read aloud by the teacher;
- suggesting alternative words to describe objects or events in stories;
- expressing personal reactions to stories read aloud by the teacher;
- asking questions about a text that has been read;
- recalling or retelling a story or informational text read aloud by the teacher.

5.6.4 Developing Emergent Literacy Skills

In the infant classes, the majority of pupils acquire a knowledge of the conventions of print (that words consist of letters, that text progresses from left to right etc.), print concepts (the meaning of “letter”, “word”, “sentence”, “page” etc.), the purposes and functions of print (for example, the insight that printed words convey meaning), letter-name knowledge, and phonemic awareness (the ability to segment words into phonemes). However, diagnostic assessment may indicate that some pupils who present themselves for supplementary teaching have not mastered these critical concepts and skills, and will therefore need instruction in them. Some emergent literacy concepts such as the left-to-right directionality of print, the links between the

pictures and the printed message, or the use of full stops at the end of sentences can be taught in the context of storybook reading or informal writing activities. Others, such as letter-name knowledge or phonemic awareness, may call for a more formal instructional approach.

5.6.5 Developing Phonemic Awareness

Beginning readers who have difficulties in the area of word identification are likely to benefit from formal training in phonemic awareness. Initially, instruction will focus on the units of sound in spoken words. Later, some attention will also be given to examining the structure of written words. The following elements might be included in a programme for pupils who have been diagnosed as having difficulties in the area of phonemic awareness:

- recognising rhyme and alliteration;
- segmenting oral words into syllables;
- segmenting oral words into their onsets and rimes;
- isolating sounds in oral and written words;
- segmenting oral words into their phonemes;
- counting phonemes in oral words;
- blending a sequence of oral sounds to form a word;

- deleting phonemes in oral and written words;
- substituting phonemes in oral and written words.

Many of these activities can be presented in a game format which pupils can enjoy while also extending their phonemic awareness. Indirect support in developing phonemic awareness can also be provided by inviting pupils to write short texts, as spelling can provide systematic practice in segmenting words into their sounds and representing the sounds in sequence.

5.6.6 Developing Word-Identification Skills

Once children have developed some phonemic awareness as well as an initial “sight vocabulary”, they will benefit from instruction in word identification. The following elements might be included in a programme designed to develop word-identification skills:

- development of a sight vocabulary related to the pupil’s own interests and experiences and to their current reading material;
- early instruction with those letters whose sounds can be produced in isolation (/f/, /m/, /s/) and the words in which they occur (e.g. s-s-s-snake);
- direct explicit instruction in initial blending of letter sounds already learned; the process of blending sounds to form words should be modelled by the teacher who should point to the letters in a word as their sounds are articulated and blended;
- instruction that links phonemic awareness with instruction in phonics, including practice in segmenting some or all the sounds represented by the letters in printed words;
- phonics rules (generalisations) which should be presented as tentative, and having exceptions as well as conforming patterns; only rules that work most of the time should be taught;
- flexible approaches to applying knowledge of letter-sound correspondences and phonics rules (for example, trying out a different sound for a vowel if the initial attempt is unsuccessful);
- experience in breaking printed words into phonemes and building them up again;
- instruction that links phonics to writing, for example, spelling can provide systematic practice in segmenting words into their sounds and representing the sounds in sequence;
- strategies for dividing words into syllables;
- strategies for combining the use of grapho-phonetic, semantic and syntactic clues to identify new words;

- practice in reading texts that contain a good proportion of phonetically-regular words so that pupils can apply new phonics skills;
- structural analysis.

Above all, word-identification skills should be viewed as a means of helping pupils to read more fluently and meaningfully. Once pupils have acquired the basic understanding of letter-sound correspondence, they should be taught to work from the most to the least efficient word-identification strategy, i.e. if the child fails to recognise a word from the context, he/she can then engage in structural, syllabic and grapho-phonetic analysis.

5.6.7 Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies

It is important to provide pupils with a range of reading comprehension strategies from their earliest exposure to books and print. The five-step procedure for developing learning strategies that was described in Section 5.6.2 in this chapter may be used. Instruction should be provided in at least some of the following strategies, in the context of the stories and informational texts that pupils read:

- setting goals for reading, by deciding on a purpose prior to reading;
- identifying the time and place(s) in which a story is set;
- predicting what might happen in a story, based on the title, pictures etc.;
- verifying or confirming that predictions were appropriate;
- identifying the characters in a text and their links to one another;
- identifying a problem besetting a main character and tracing how it was resolved;
- describing a character's reactions to events;
- identifying important parts of a text and providing a summary;
- sequencing the ideas in a text;
- identifying theme, message or main idea in a text;
- relating prior knowledge or personal experiences to the text;
- generating questions while reading (self-questioning);
- "thinking aloud" after reading part of a text;
- monitoring whether or not reading makes sense (comprehension monitoring).

5.6.8 Linking Reading and Writing

Learning to read can be supported by activities that involve writing. One useful method is the language-experience approach, which is especially useful with

younger pupils, and has also been used successfully with older pupils who experience reading difficulties. Approaches to teaching writing are described in detail in the *Teachers' Guidelines* for the revised English curriculum (see reference on page 32). Expressive and creative writing can also be linked to reading (for example, by inviting pupils to develop written responses to a text they have read) with profitable results for pupil performance in both reading and writing. In providing instruction in writing, attention might also be given to elements of the writing process such as drafting, revising and editing. This is an example of where co-operation between the class and learning-support teacher could prove effective.

5.6.9 Engaging Pupils in Reading Continuous Text

Pupils' reading skills are likely to improve significantly through frequent reading of continuous text. Therefore, pupils should be provided with frequent opportunities in school and at home to read books that are at an appropriate level of interest and are suitably matched both to the pupils' current reading ability and to their emerging reading skills. Opportunities for reading continuous text can be provided through periods of "Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR)", suitable library activities and paired reading programmes. Books and other materials can be graded and organised accordingly. This facilitates the provision of materials to pupils at an

appropriate instructional level. "Book level" can also be used as an informal method for monitoring pupil progress.

5.7 Supplementary Teaching in Mathematics

The principles of effective learning-support programmes in reading are also relevant for programmes in mathematics. Because the principles relating to reading have already been outlined in this chapter, attention is devoted here to those aspects specifically relevant to mathematics. Effective supplementary teaching in mathematics involves diagnostic assessment, individual programme planning and instruction, as well as record keeping. Therefore, it is recommended that an *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* be developed for each pupil receiving supplementary teaching in mathematics and that *Weekly Planning and Progress Records* also be maintained.

5.7.1 Assessment of Learning Difficulties in Mathematics

The collection of information to be used in completing a pupil's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* in mathematics involves the use of formal, informal and diagnostic assessment techniques. Formal assessment is usually carried out by the application of standardised tests which compare the pupil's performance with national norms. Informal assessment includes the use of checklists, observation schedules and discussions with teachers and parents. Diagnostic assessment

involves an in-depth analysis of a pupil's attainments and difficulties in written and oral work and of his/her approach to learning. Diagnostic assessment is especially useful for pinpointing gaps in a pupil's learning to date and for planning appropriate teaching and learning programmes. Diagnostic assessment in mathematics seeks the answer to questions such as:

- What is the pupil's current level of knowledge in mathematics?
- What gaps exist in the pupil's current knowledge and understanding?
- What strategies does the pupil use?
- What are the priority learning targets in mathematics for this pupil?

Diagnostic assessment may be carried out by the application of published diagnostic tests, teacher observation of a pupil as he/she completes a mathematical operation, analysis of errors in written work, and discussion with the pupil as to how he/she arrived at answers or solutions to problems.

The desired outcome of diagnostic assessment is a profile of the pupil's learning strengths and needs which will highlight the concepts and skills that have proved difficult to acquire and the gaps in the pupil's early learning to date. A list of attainable medium-term and short-term goals can then be drawn up and can be used in completing the pupil's *Individual*

Profile and Learning Programme. Further diagnostic information on the pupil's learning strengths and weaknesses will emerge as supplementary lessons are implemented. This can be noted in the *Weekly Planning and Progress Record* and used in short-term planning.

5.7.2 Content of Supplementary Teaching in Mathematics

Individual programmes in mathematics should focus on the achievement of higher order as well as lower order skills and should expose pupils to the various aspects of mathematics over a short period of time. This entails instruction in and review of topics on a cyclical basis. Through experiencing the full range and variety of mathematics, pupils with learning difficulties are enabled to deepen their understanding and knowledge of mathematics and to see the interrelated nature of the subject more clearly. As in English, the learning-support programme in mathematics should be closely linked with work in the classroom and the pupil should experience continuity and progression in both settings.

Mathematics teaching and learning support for pupils with learning difficulties will include opportunities for:

- direct teaching, demonstration and exposition by the teacher;
- teaching of the language of mathematics;
- discussion between the teacher and pupil(s);

- discussion among the pupils themselves;
- appropriate work with concrete materials;
- opportunities to practise and consolidate fundamental skills and routines using oral as well as written examples;
- problem-solving and the use of mathematics in everyday situations;
- investigative work, including the exploration of the environment and the making of “mathematical” observations.

In so far as possible, the teaching of mathematics should be grounded in real contexts and situations. Rich learning contexts can be provided by the pupils themselves, or can be found in the classroom and the wider school environment.

5.7.3 Oral Exposition and Discussion in Mathematics Teaching

It is recommended that emphasis be placed on oral exposition and discussion as part of the mathematical learning environment. Use of mathematical language by pupils while engaged in appropriate learning activities facilitates the development of concepts and a sound knowledge of the subject. In addition, a pupil’s use of language often gives a good insight into his/her strengths and learning needs in mathematics. Frequent oral revision also provides opportunities for deepening conceptual understanding and for applying skills and knowledge in realistic contexts. Therefore,

pupils should be given regular opportunities to discuss their work and to explain orally how they would attempt to solve a problem, or how they arrived at a particular solution.

Calculators and computers are valuable learning aids for pupils with poor computation skills. Computation can be carried out with speed and accuracy by using calculators. This can result in the availability of more time for working on other areas of mathematics such as carrying out investigations and problem solving.

Computers can also be used profitably by pupils with learning difficulties, especially for the reinforcement of basic skills and concepts and the completion of problem-solving activities.

5.7.4 Developing Conceptual Knowledge in Mathematics

Conceptual development is best fostered when a pupil moves gradually from working with concrete materials to the semi-concrete and eventually on to the abstract when he/she is ready. An appropriate line of development is as follows:

Stage 1. Work at the level of concrete materials:

- Initially the teacher introduces the topic only with concrete materials (for example counters, lollipop sticks), or structural materials (for example, Dienes blocks), while illustrating the concept or skill orally;

- The pupils model the teacher, working with concrete materials while simultaneously using and associating appropriate language with the experience.

Stage 2. Work at the semi-concrete level:

- The teacher now introduces recording by representing numbers with pictorial symbols on a display board;
- The pupils model what the teacher has done using concrete materials and using appropriate language to describe what they are doing;
- The pupils begin recording by representing numbers with pictorial symbols.

Stage 3. Work at the abstract level

- The abstract level is introduced when the teacher records the numbers in the problem while modelling with concrete materials;
- The pupils record the numbers as they replicate the teacher's actions using concrete materials;
- Following guided experience and practice, the pupils are ready to solve problems using numbers only and without the use of concrete materials;
- If a pupil continues to encounter difficulty performing an operation or solving a problem, the pupil should return to the semi-concrete stage and

continue to use the materials while recording until he/she is ready to move on to the abstract level.

When the pupil has developed an initial understanding of a mathematical concept or skill, further practice using appropriate examples, materials and contexts enables him/her to fully assimilate the concept and to develop efficiency and speed in using the operation. Excessive use can be made of mechanical repetition of basic written operations in an effort to develop mathematical concepts and skills. This practice is strongly discouraged because of the absence of a meaningful context and because inaccuracies and incorrect processes can become ingrained. On the other hand, the use of realistic situations and concrete materials, and the exploration of the classroom and school environment are stimulating and effective ways of developing mathematical knowledge and skills. Games can also be an integral part of the programme, pupils love to play them and they provide an enjoyable and stimulating means of using and developing mathematical knowledge and skills.

5.8 Using Information and Communications Technology (ICTs) to Support Children with Learning Difficulties

Interactive computer-based systems allow the possibility of individualising the educational process to accommodate the needs, interests, and learning styles of

individual pupils. Individualised planning is as fundamental to the successful use of ICTs in supplementary teaching as it is to other forms of learning support. The planning process would include:

- identifying a pupil's individual learning needs;
- considering how ICTs might be used to meet those needs.

Even relatively unsophisticated drill-and-practice software offers learners the advantages of self-paced instruction. Typically, these software packages expose learners to progressively graded blocks of material and the learner is then required to respond to a series of items or questions posed by the computer. Pupils who are in receipt of supplementary teaching could thus be more easily afforded the opportunity to work with material suited to their stage of development in the classroom or in the learning-support context. Commercial software packages are readily available to develop reading skills such as the following:

- sight vocabulary;
- phonemic awareness;
- listening and reading comprehension.

The use of ICTs can enable pupils to practise a skill they have not fully mastered at a pace that can be regulated by the teacher or by the pupils themselves. Where appropriate equipment is available, it can afford pupils opportunities to work with

material suitable to their stage of development both in the classroom and in the learning-support context.

5.8.1 Intelligent Tutoring Systems

Intelligent tutoring systems are sophisticated software packages that can be designed to automate certain forms of tutorial learning. Such systems can assess the pupils' level of mastery of specific concepts, knowledge or skills and can provide a sequence of learning activities based on an initial assessment. They afford pupils a degree of control over the pace of instruction and they provide a programme of learning activities based on a record of a pupil's achievement. A pupil's performance on a question, or degree of mastery of an area of content, determines the sequence, the level of difficulty and the pace of introduction of new material. Additional time can be spent on material with which the learner is having difficulty, while avoiding needless repetition of subject matter that has already been mastered. Intelligent tutoring systems have been designed to teach aspects of reading, spelling and mathematics.

Modern versions of intelligent tutoring systems are capable of monitoring learners' responses to a learning task and making inferences about the level of mastery achieved on a particular task. Such systems then provide additional learning activities at the same stage if the learner has not mastered the task or moves the learner to the next stage, if mastery is demonstrated.

5.8.2 Adaptive/Assistive Software

Adaptive software can be used to support children's reading, writing and mathematics. Some information-based software packages allow readers to select support in the form of definitions of key vocabulary, a simpler version of the text, supplementary contextual information, or an indication of the main idea for each paragraph.

Learners can select the supports as required. Some electronic encyclopaedias, for example, have an online dictionary where pupils can obtain assistance with unfamiliar words. Therefore, if a pupil encounters an unknown word while reading a passage to obtain information, she/he could enable the computer to 'speak' the word and/or obtain the meaning of the word from an online dictionary.

Computers in schools are normally equipped with multimedia features such as sound cards and video cards. Software is already available that converts text to speech and can be particularly helpful in enabling poor readers to access the content of textbooks on history, geography and science, as well as mathematics text books. Publishers may be willing to provide digitised forms of textbooks where the printed form is in use in a school.

5.8.3 Talking Books

Talking books present text visually and aurally and pictures that can be animated. Many talking books also have built-in facilities for tracking children's attempts at

reading them. Recently, reading programmes that include talking books for the early stages have been produced. One of the main reasons for using talking books is their capacity to motivate children who are not interested in reading and, although they can support good teaching, they are not a replacement for it.

5.8.4 Internet and E-mail

Information technology offers new tools for teaching reading, writing and mathematics. Although much of the software available to date is limited in what it can teach, some software can help to motivate children and can provide an interesting context within which to practise skills they have developed. Interest in accessing and creating electronic text could motivate some reluctant learners and open up new opportunities for pupils with learning difficulties. The interactive nature of communication through web sites and e-mail networks offers alternative ways of learning and provides an authentic context for the development of writing skills.

5.8.5 Word Processing

Word-processing packages specially designed for children have become increasingly common in schools in recent years. Word processors provide the following advantages over the traditional pen-and-paper for pupils who have learning difficulties:

- motivate children to write;

- assist with the layout and presentation of written work at the drafting stage;
- obviate the need for extensive re-writing when editing written work;
- enable the inclusion of artwork and pictures to further enhance the visual appeal of written work;
- greatly improve the accuracy of spelling in written work.

In addition to helping pupils with creative and expressive written work, word processing software can also assist pupils

with project work and with written work across the curriculum.

The suggestions offered here are by no means exhaustive and it is likely that further applications of technology to supporting learning will be developed in the future. It is likely, for example, that computers will be used in the early identification of learning difficulties and software for this purpose is in the early stages of development at the time of writing. It is important, therefore, that the use of information technology in supporting children with learning difficulties be kept under continual review.

APPENDIX A

SPECIAL INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES

APPENDIX A

SPECIAL INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES

In recent years, experimental approaches designed to cater for children with learning difficulties have been tried in different countries. The Reading Recovery programme, developed by Marie Clay, and Success for All pioneered by Robert Slavin, have proven to be consistently successful in providing for children with low achievement and/or learning difficulties. Some of the principles of these programmes (diagnostic assessment, early intervention and intensive learning support) are reflected in the Learning-Support Guidelines. A short description of these special programmes is included here for information purposes. Suggestions for sources of more detailed information are also provided.

Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery was developed by New Zealand educator and researcher Dr Marie M. Clay. This approach was pioneered with teachers in New Zealand in the 1970s and has now been adopted by schools in Australia, Canada, USA and the United Kingdom.

Reading Recovery is a short-term, early intervention approach to catering for young readers who are experiencing difficulty in learning to read. The Reading Recovery intervention is aimed at the lowest achieving children after they have been

taught to read for one year. The Reading Recovery programme is designed to meet the needs of the 10–20 per cent of lowest achieving readers. The child's regular classroom instruction is supplemented with daily one-to-one, 30-minute lessons for 12 to 20 weeks with a specially trained Reading Recovery teacher. Daily instruction continues until the child can read within or above the class average and has demonstrated the ability to use reading and writing strategies independently. The child is then "discontinued" from Reading Recovery, providing the opportunity for another child to enter the Reading Recovery programme. If the child does not make the expected rate of progress during the 12–20 week period, he/she is referred to out-of-school agencies for further investigation.

A comprehensive diagnostic assessment of a child's reading behaviour is one of the defining features of the Reading Recovery approach. Data about the child's letter identification skills, sight vocabulary, concepts about print, phonemic awareness and reading and writing skills are the main focus of the assessment. This information indicates each child's stage of development, determines the starting point for individualised tutoring and provides the baseline against which progress is measured.

The first two weeks of each child's *Reading Recovery* programme are designed to develop the child's strengths. This period, referred to as "roaming around the known", includes a range of activities based on what the child can already do and is mainly designed to build the child's confidence and establish a rapport between the child and the *Reading Recovery* teacher.

Reading Recovery lessons are highly structured and usually include the following activities:

- Reading familiar stories
- Reading a story that was read for the first time the day before
- Working with letters and/or words using magnetic letters
- Writing a story
- Assembling a cut-up story
- Reading a new book that will be read independently the next day.

Success for All

Success for All (Slavin, 1995) is a comprehensive approach to enabling schools in general, and disadvantaged schools in particular, to cater for children who have learning difficulties. The focus of the programme is on prevention and early, intensive intervention. The preventive aspects of *Success for All* focus on providing research-based instructional

programmes to children in pre-school and during their primary schooling in reading, writing and oral language, backed up by intensive professional development and support for teachers. One of the subsidiary objectives of the programme is to help all teachers to constantly improve their instructional strategies through a curriculum-based assessment programme to monitor pupils' success and identify children in need of additional help. *Success for All* also includes an extensive programme of parental involvement. The instructional approaches make widespread use of co-operative learning and maintain a balance between phonics, children's literature, creative writing, and home reading.

Even the best instructional programs cannot ensure success for every child. For this reason, *Success for All* schools also provide one-to-one tutoring to individual children who are struggling in reading. Tutoring focuses on children aged 6 to 7. The idea is to ensure that children are successful the first time and never become "poor" readers. The tutoring model emphasises teaching children metacognitive skills, such as asking themselves whether what they read makes sense, and is closely integrated with classroom instruction. Another important aspect of this early, intensive intervention is providing family support, in collaboration with local agencies and health services, where necessary.

Research on *Success for All* (Slavin et al., 1996) has shown consistent positive

effects of the programme on student reading achievement as measured by individually administered reading tests as well as standardised measures. *Success for All* students in nine school districts throughout the U.S. have averaged three months ahead of matched control students by the end of first grade and more than a year ahead by the end of fifth grade. The effects are particularly large for the students who are most at risk, those in the lowest quarter of their grades.

References

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Further information about Reading Recovery is available from the Reading Recovery Council of North America at <http://www.readingrecovery.org>

APPENDIX B

INDIVIDUAL PROFILE AND LEARNING PROGRAMME

Individual Profile and Learning Programme

Name		Class		
Address		Class teacher		
		Learning Support teacher		
Telephone		Commencement date of supplementary teaching:		
Date of Birth		Review Date:		
Screening Assessment	Date	Result	Date	Result
Diagnostic Assessment	Date	Result	Date	Result
Informal Assessment before Supplementary Teaching		Informal Assessment after Supplementary Teaching		
Summary of Other Information (For example from parents, class teacher, psychologist, speech and language therapist etc.)				
Learning Strengths and Attainments				
Priority Learning Needs				

Individual Profile and Learning Programme

Learning Targets for the Period					Date Achieved
Learning-Support Activities – Learning-Support Teacher					
Materials					
Learning-Support Activities – Class Teacher					
Learning-Support Activities – Home					
Supplementary Teaching		<input type="radio"/> Group <input type="radio"/> Individual		Duration of Programme from to	
				Number of Weeks	
Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Time					
Location					

APPENDIX C

WEEKLY PLANNING AND PROGRESS RECORD

Weekly Planning and Progress Record

Area of Curriculum						Week ending	
Names	Attendance					Class teacher	Reader
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri		
Familiar Reading							
Revision of Learning Strategies							
New Learning Strategies							
New Reading							
Summary of Progress							
<i>Name</i>	<i>Learning-Support Teacher</i>			<i>Class Teacher</i>		<i>Home</i>	

Daily Planning Sheet

Pupil/s:

Day	Familiar Reading	Revision of Learning Strategies	New Learning Strategies	New Reading	Progress
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					

GLOSSARY

Criterion-referenced Test – a criterion-referenced test can provide information on whether or not specific curriculum-based objectives have been met. Such tests are more prevalent in mathematics than in English. A distinction can be made between criterion-referenced tests that must be administered following standardised procedures, and those that call for a more informal approach to administration, such as the “mastery” tests that accompany mathematics and English reading schemes. In general, the outcomes of a criterion-referenced test can point to teaching and learning needs.

Curriculum Profiles – curriculum profiles are measures of a pupil’s achievement on the curriculum that are based on teachers’ judgments. They allow for a criterion-referenced interpretation of achievement. Curriculum profiles in English point to a pupil’s strength and weakness in such areas as oral language, reading and writing.

Diagnostic Test – a diagnostic test is designed to provide specific information about a pupil’s strengths and weaknesses in some aspect of learning, such as phonemic awareness, oral reading or number concepts. In general, a diagnostic test is individually administered, and may or may not provide norm-referenced information. Administration of a diagnostic

test will generally result in quantitative information (for example, the number of items answered correctly) and qualitative information (the types of oral reading or writing errors made by a pupil). Like criterion-referenced tests, the results of a diagnostic test can guide programme planning and instruction.

***Individual Profile and Learning Programme** – an *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* is prepared for each pupil who has been selected for supplementary teaching. The programme summarises the outcomes of diagnostic assessment, and indicates the medium-term learning targets related to the pupil’s needs, and learning activities for school and home that are designed to meet those needs. The development and implementation of the *Individual Profile and Learning Programme* involves the pupil’s class teacher, learning-support teacher and parents.

***Instructional Term** – an instructional term is defined as a period of between 13 and 20 weeks. The school year may be divided by the learning-support teacher into two or three instructional terms for administrative purposes. The progress of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching should be reviewed at the end of each instructional term.

Norm-referenced, Standardised Test – a norm-referenced, standardised test of achievement in reading, spelling and/or mathematics enables teachers to obtain an overall indication of a pupil's achievement, and interpret it with reference to the performance of other pupils nationally in the same age range or class level. In general, group-administered standardised tests are most appropriate for pupils from the middle of first class onwards.

Percentile Rank – a percentile rank indicates a pupil's standing relative to pupils in some appropriate comparison (norm) group such as all pupils nationally at the same class level, or in the same age range. For example, if a pupil achieves a percentile rank of 25, it means that the pupil did as well as or better than 25% of pupils on whom the test was standardised, and that 75% of pupils in the norm group did better.

Phonemic Awareness – phonemic awareness is the ability to segment spoken words into their constituent sounds. Unlike oral language, in which attention to the individual sounds in words is rarely necessary, reading and spelling require children to have a conscious awareness of, and the ability to manipulate, the sounds in spoken words. Phonemic awareness is an important prerequisite for learning to read and spell. However, phonemic awareness also develops through engagement in reading and spelling.

Rating Scale – a rating scale allows teachers to record their judgements about pupils' achievement on key indicators of learning (skills). Some rating scales allow users to generate subscale scores (for example, scores for auditory processing, visual processing, and language development) as well as an overall score. Many rating scales allow for a norm-referenced interpretation of outcome scores, where a pupil's score(s) can be compared with those of some appropriate reference group, such as all pupils nationally at the same class level.

Reading Age – a reading age is a type of age-equivalent score based on the age in the test standardisation population at which the average pupil earns a given raw score. Reading ages have been strongly criticised as measures of reading achievement in recent years because they are susceptible to misinterpretation. For example, a two-year gap between reading age and chronological age in first class might point to low achievement in reading; a gap of this width in the fifth or sixth classes would be more common, even for pupils with average reading skills. For this reason, the use of reading ages for selecting pupils for supplementary teaching is strongly discouraged.

Screening Checklist – a screening checklist is a list of indicators of early learning skills, emergent literacy skills, or skills involved in the development of mathematical knowledge. Drawing on their observations of

the pupil during ongoing teaching and learning activities, teachers check each item on the list to indicate whether or not it has been achieved. A total score on the checklist may be obtained by summing the number of items (skills) that have been achieved.

Standard Score – a standard score expresses an individual's score on a standardised, norm-referenced test in terms of its distance from the mean (or average) in standard deviation units. For example, a standard score of 85 on a test with a mean score of 100 and a standard deviation of 15 is one standard deviation below the mean.

***Supplementary Teaching** – supplementary teaching is the teaching provided by the learning-support teacher to a group of pupils (or to an individual) in the learning-support room or in the pupils' own classroom. Supplementary teaching is based on the

learning targets and activities described in the pupils' *Individual Profiles and Learning Programmes*.

***Weekly Planning and Progress Record** – a *Weekly Planning and Progress Record* is completed by the learning-support teacher for each individual or group of pupils who is in receipt of supplementary teaching. The record outlines short-term learning targets, and the responses of pupils to activities designed to attain those targets. A pupil's *Weekly Planning and Progress Record* can be used to facilitate communication between a pupil's class and learning-support teachers, and can also be used in evaluating a pupil's progress at the end of an instructional term.

** The definitions of these terms are specific to the contexts in which they are used in this document.*

