

24th November, 2023 (date prepared)
14th February, 2024 (date issued)

Deputy Christopher O’Sullivan,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 46733/23

“To ask the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth to outline the criteria involved for the allocation of therapist allocation for special schools; the reason a school (details supplied) has not received any allocation; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Details: St Killians in Cork City. Pupil Roll 90 pupils. Diagnoses SLD/DCD/SSLD/ASD and complex needs Therapeutic Interventions-Essential to allow pupils to regulate and access the curriculum, to support learning, mental health and a sense of well-being. Many pupils with complex needs are still struggling the after effects of COVID when everything shut down. Pupils communication skills are noted to have declined, emotional regulation severely compromised and ability to manage social interactions appropriately are hugely affected. These are already challenge for pupils with Complex Needs but the situation is compounded by the continuing lack of services on top of everything else they have already experienced in their lives. Anecdotally, pupils are have increased anxiety and mental health difficulties, engagement with education is much harder for them and more and more pupils require additional supports and staff to keep them safe

Dear Deputy O’Sullivan

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for Children; Equality; Disability; Integration and Youth for response.

Children’s Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) have been established to provide services and supports for all children with complex disability needs within a defined geographic area. The Government has prioritised the reinstatement of health and social care supports in special schools. In that regard, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare (CKCH) is continuing to engage with its CDNT lead agencies to progress this work.

In 2021 CKCH received an allocation of 5.8 posts to support special schools in Cork. In 2022 twenty six additional posts were allocated to children’s disability services in CKCH based on

the numbers of schools and the whole time equivalent (WTE) staff in situ prior to the establishment of CDNTs in Cork. This allocation also included posts for the two new special schools in Carrigaline and Rochestown. In August 2023 an additional allocation of 7.5 Therapy Assistant posts were allocated to five special schools in Cork. The lead agencies have commenced the recruitment process for these posts. In the interim, the teams have provided supports to children based on each child's needs and resource availability.

As well as providing dedicated supports for children attending special schools, the CDNTs continue to provide supports for children with complex disability needs who are accessing main stream schools, special classes, preschools etc. The overall aim in establishing CDNTs is to address inequity in the system. Services for children with complex disability needs are required to support children and families regardless of where they live or where they go to school. Children attending special schools tend to rank high in order of priority on CDNT internal prioritisation systems and consistently receive a higher level of service. These services may be delivered on site in school, but on many occasions it is more appropriate to provide services in other settings, such as the family home or a clinic setting.

St. Killian's Special School is aligned to Children's Disability Network Team CDNT 8 which has a caseload of 563 as at 31.08.2023. There are four special schools in the CDNT 8 catchment area (ref table 1).

Table 1: Special Schools in CDNT 8 geographical area

School	Number of Children Enrolled	CDNT	No of Children in CDNT
Scoil Bernadette	126	8	563
Scoil Eanna	74	8	563
St. Killian's Special School	70	8	563
St. Paul's Special School	96	8	563

It should be noted that two of the posts allocated for special schools in 2021 were assigned to CDNT 8. The detail regarding these posts is provided in table 2 below. 6.6 posts were allocated to CDNT 8 in 2022.

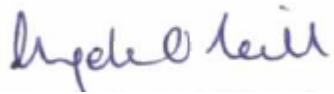
Table 2. Status of 2021 Allocation of Posts to Special Schools - CDNT 8

Discipline	Grade	WTE allocated	WTE filled	CDNT	Lead Agency
Psychologist	Staff	1.0	1.0	Central Cork CDNT8	COPE
Physiotherapist	Senior	0.5	0.5	Central Cork CDNT8	COPE
OT	Staff	0.5	0.5	Central Cork CDNT8	COPE
	Total	2.0	2.0		



If I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Angela O'Neill".

**Ms. Angela O'Neill,
Head of Disability Services,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare**

