

# The special educational needs of bilingual (Irish-English) children

by Deirdre Ní Chinnéide, POBAL

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RESEARCH REPORT



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(Irish- English) children**

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## Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
ASD	Autistic spectrum disorder
CA	Classroom assistant
CASS	Curriculum Advisory and Support Service
CPD	Continuing professional development
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
EAL	English as an additional language
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECRML	European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages
ELB	Education and Library Board
EM	English-medium
EP	Education plan
EPD	Early Professional Development
ESA	Education and Skills Authority
EWO	Educational welfare officer
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IM	Irish-medium
IBSE	Integrated Bilingual Special Education
INSET	In-service training
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
KS	Key Stage
LNI	Learning Northern Ireland
NIHRC	Northern Ireland Human Rights Consortium
NIO	Northern Ireland Office
NISLTTF	Northern Ireland Speech and Language Therapy Task Force
NQT	Newly qualified teacher
RCSLT	Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
RNIC	Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum
SEBD	Social, emotional and behavioural disorder
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

SENCA	Special Educational Needs Classroom Assistant
SEND0	Special Educational Needs and Disability Order
SLC	Speech, Language and Communication
SLCT	Speech, Language and Communication Therapy
SLT	Speech and Language Therapy
SMT	Senior Management Team
WM	Welsh-medium

## Executive summary

### Key Findings

- 17% of pupils in Irish medium (IM) primary and post-primary settings are recorded as experiencing special educational needs (SEN). 5% of children in IM at the pre-school phase are recorded as experiencing SEN. At just under 1%, the number of IM pupils across all phases with statements of SEN is around a quarter of the overall percentage of pupils with a statement of SEN in all sectors.
- As in all schools, IM schools rely heavily on teachers' professional judgement in the identification of SEN. IM teachers report that they feel uneasy about making judgements about pupils with SEN and particularly when they are not supported by standardised tests in Irish. The proportion of young, inexperienced teachers is greater in the IM than in any other sector. Some Educational psychologists indicate concern at the low level of referrals to them from the IM sector.
- There is a need for greater awareness of SEN across the IM sector but especially at the post-primary phase where half of all respondents reported minimal or no understanding of the Code of Practice.
- Overall, responses from the IM sector indicate a high level of dissatisfaction with SEN-related support services for pupils who require additional support with their learning. Most respondents (74%) from the IM primary phase indicated their dissatisfaction with current SEN provision, 38% of respondents from pre-school phase and 34% from post-primary phase indicated they are unhappy with the provision.
- There is an apparent lack of sufficient time for some SENCOs to address SEN issues. This is an area which schools should address as part of the school's capacity building and to enable SENCOs to identify and monitor pupil progress over time.
- Most of the educational psychologists interviewed believe that the assessment of cognitive ability and numeracy skills through the medium of English provides an accurate profile of pupils in the IM sector whose first language is English. The assessment of children whose first language is Irish is less straightforward. They are aware that care must be taken when assessing bilingual children using assessment tools designed for monolingual English-speaking pupils and report that the absence of standardised tests in Irish is a challenge for them.

- Almost three quarters of educational psychologists in this study said that they would welcome and benefit from training on the IM sector, a better understanding and awareness of IM sector in general, of pupils' needs, and improved understanding of approaches taken to literacy in Irish and English in IM schools.
- More guidance, based on research and best practice is needed as to the timing of the beginning of formal study of English and the place of English in addressing the additional needs of SEN pupils.
- The most common source of SEN training reported to the research team was Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Given the relative youth and inexperience of the IM sector and the fact that teachers are expected to take on additional responsibilities at a much earlier stage than in other sectors, ITE providers for the IM sector must ensure that SEN is treated as a priority.
- A majority of respondents from the pre-school phase report that effective support is provided by early years agencies such as Altram, the Early Years Organisation and SureStart. Almost half rated SEN support from IM primary schools as effective, less than a quarter found speech and language therapy and educational psychology services effective.
- In the primary and post-primary phases, just over half of the respondents found SEN support from ELB Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) and IM CASS effective. Primary respondents found SEN support from educational psychology, behavioural support and peripatetic support services to be effective.
- Respondents indicate a need for IM-specific support which takes account of the challenges and complexities of identification and assessment of SEN and teaching the curriculum through the medium of a second language in an immersion education programme.
- IM sector teachers generally have issues with services only delivered in English and feel that they don't fully meet the needs of the children. Non-teaching educational professionals hold that the language of delivery of courses ought not to prevent IM teachers from attending courses, which are generic and that strategies can be adapted to the IM situation. Course providers must ensure that resources are made available in Irish. IM teachers note a need for more, regular, IM-specific training to equip them to identify and make appropriate provision for pupils who require additional help in the context of the IM immersion education sector.

- Schools report a lack of literacy resources including a graded reading scheme in Irish. In particular they mentioned the need for resources designed to support teachers in all areas of SEN, especially for older pupils who experience difficulties with literacy.
- Classroom assistants (CAs) offer valuable support to children experiencing SEN. CAs need more training and development in the area of SEN to maximise this support. Some CAs employed specifically to support children with SEN feel they are used too often to carry out administrative and clerical duties and few of them are involved in lesson planning. Parents raised concerns about situations where children regularly had to be taken from school early when the CA was absent and reported that this had a negative impact on the children's self-esteem.
- Parents of children with SEN were generally satisfied with the efforts of schools to address their children's needs and valued the support of external agencies. However, the matter of home or hospital tuition for pupils from IM schools who have to spend long periods of time in hospital, or at home, as a result of health problems is causing concern. Additionally, parents whose children have transferred from the IM sector reported feelings of frustration that they were being dissuaded by health and education professionals from pursuing IM education for their child, as a result of the child's additional needs.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### IRISH-MEDIUM SECTOR'S CAPACITY IN PROVIDING FOR SEN CHILDREN

#### **Recommendation 1: Awareness of Code of Practice Procedures**

SEN should be given an even higher priority across all phases in the IM sector. (4.1.2, 5-6, 8, 10)

#### **Recommendation 2: Placing pupils on SEN Register**

In consultation with SENCOs, IM teachers should ensure pupils are placed on Stage 1 of the Code of Practice at the point of concern, to ensure additional help, and a faster referral process to external support and in moving those pupils on who should move to Stages 4 and 5. (4.7-3, 15, 18; 4.7.18)

#### **Recommendation 3: Cross-phase/sector collaboration in IM sector**

There should be greater cross-phase and sector collaboration, liaison and sharing of information: for example in terms of expertise, approaches, strategies, planning, pooling of SEN resources, exploiting ICT as an excellent motivator in SEN pupils' learning and evaluating, on SEN issues on a cross-phase basis, among classroom assistants, CAs and SENCOs, teachers, SENCOs, heads of departments and principals in the IM sector. (4.1.2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10; 4.9.13; 4.11.33, 35)

#### **Recommendation 4: SENCOs in IM settings**

SENCOs should ensure effective dissemination of information on SEN issues and offer support to all staff. School structures should be established to ensure that SEN support in Irish is available in every IM setting, including the possibility of sharing SENCOs and SEN teachers. In those IM schools where the SENCO is not a member of the SMT, the SENCO should ensure, in cooperation with the principal, that SEN is given an appropriately high priority in the school (4.10.26; 4.6.2, 3, 4, 5)



## **EXTERNAL PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY IN PROVIDING FOR THE IM SECTOR**

### **Recommendation 5: DE policies on SEN in IM schools**

DE should ensure SEN-related policies are fit-for-purpose for the Irish medium sector. These SEN policies should be informed by SEN research and practices in immersion education internationally, utilise best practice, ensure support for parents of IM SEN children and promote informed decisions about IM SEN pupils' education. (4.2.9-16; 4.5.9; 4.8.20, 22, 19, 26)

### **Recommendation 6: The Review of SEN and Inclusion and further research**

DE should ensure that the needs of the IM sector are reflected, and taken account of in DE's ongoing Review of SEN and Inclusion.

### **Recommendation 7: Ensuring informed decisions about IM pupils**

DE should cooperate and collaborate on IM SEN issues with other governmental departments and service providers which influence the quality of IM pupils' learning and whose workers make or contribute to decisions on pupils with SEN, to ensure that those decisions are made on an informed basis. (4.8.14, 16, 19, 20, 22)

### **Recommendation 8: Building capacity in support services**

DE should encourage and collaborate with ESA, to conduct audits on Irish language proficiency and knowledge of bilingual education among all SEN service providers to IM settings. They should ensure their services are fit-for-purpose and should take action to ensure they have sufficient capacity and have regard for children taught through the medium of Irish. (4.5.9, 20-23, 30)

### **Recommendation 9: Dissemination of best practice across phases in IM sector**

DE should encourage and collaborate with ESA to facilitate research-led CPD, communication and dissemination of best practice relating to

identification and recording of SEN, referral and assessment procedures, among others, at all phases, through C2K and LNI including the utilisation of new media. (4.2.9, 10, 15; 4.5; 4.9.13-15; 4.10)

### **Recommendation 10: Ensuring informed decisions in assessing SEN pupils in IM settings**

DE should encourage and collaborate with ESA in ensuring that decisions made about IM pupils who present with SEN are informed using a broad profile of assessment, to ensure equity of response between IM and EM sectors (4.2; 4.5; 4.3.15-16)

### **Recommendation 11: SEN in Teacher Education and in Classroom Assistant Training**

DE policy should collaborate with DEL in order to encourage HEIs to further develop ‘SEN studies on IM pathways’ in ITE programmes and in early teacher professional development.

There should be development of accredited development programmes for bilingual ancillary staff, to allow them to work alongside such providers as speech and language therapists and educational psychologists in IM settings; and for CAs to provide them with the necessary training in childcare, SEN, and the Irish language. (4.6.6, 8, 9; 4.3.39, 40, 49; 4.4.6-9, 19, 24-5; 4.10.16; 4.11.10,11,12; 4.3.33, 37, 50; 4.9.33, 35, 49; 4.10.31)

## **PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES**

### **Recommendation 12: Coordinating IM teachers’ CPD with availability of Irish language SEN resources**

ESA should facilitate and coordinate the development of professional resources in Irish for EPD and CPD for IM teachers. ESA should ensure that resource providers are appropriately equipped, through ring-fenced

resourcing, to adapt and create fit-for-purpose SEN support resources in Irish. (4.11.9, 20, 23, 24-5, 27)

### **Recommendation 13: Providing Irish language assessment tools**

DE should encourage resource providers to gather, assess and disseminate assessment materials currently in use in IM schools and should commission research into: producing standardised Irish language literacy assessment and diagnostic tools, perhaps on an all island basis, to meet pupils' needs. These should include:

- a. curricular resources, including further development of a graded reading scheme in Irish and a spelling scheme in Irish;
- b. specialized SEN resources to support pupils with ASD, SEBD, ADHD, partial sight, SLT resources; and
- c. literacy and numeracy tools for the assessment of Irish language and literacy.

(4.11.10,32; 4.3.5, 49; 4.2.7-18; 4.3.20, 25)

### **Recommendation 14: Creating SEN support materials for IM schools**

Resource providers should ensure they respond to the needs of the IM sector, including for SEN resources.(4.11.1, 10, 20, 23, 27, 31, 34)

## MAIN FINDINGS

### IRISH-MEDIUM SECTOR'S CAPACITY IN PROVIDING FOR SEN CHILDREN

During data collection 55% of IM sector teachers had 5 or less years teaching experience. (4.9.44)

Around 17% of pupils in IM primary and post-primary settings are recorded as experiencing SEN and three most frequently reported SEN are: moderate learning difficulties (35%), mild learning difficulties (19%) and SEBD (15%). (4.1.4)

There is a greater diversity of needs in the IM primary phase than the post-primary phase. (4.1.7, 10)

Overall, just less than 1% of pupils in the IM sector have a statement of SEN which is around a quarter of the overall percentage of pupils with a statement of SEN in other sectors. (4.1.15)

Almost three times as many boys than girls in the IM sector have a statement of SEN (4.1.15) and ASD represents the most frequently cited category of need among those with statements. (4.1.16)

The percentage of key stage 2 IM pupils recorded on the SEN register is closest to the norm of the percentage recorded in other sectors however there is a lower percentage of IM pupils, in relation to the norm across all sectors, on the SEN register at pre-school, foundation stage and at years 10, 11 and 12. (4.1.2)

As is the case in other sectors, there are about ten times as many pupils recorded on stages 1-3 of the Code of Practice as there are recorded on stages 4 and 5. (4.1.3)

Just over half of IM sector pupils on the SEN register present with moderate or mild learning difficulties with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) being the other significant category of SEN recorded. (4.1.7, 10)

Speech and Language difficulties constitute 59% of the SEN reported in the IM pre-school phase. (4.1.14)

Cognitive and Learning is the largest SEN area reported in IM primary settings which resonates strongly with the picture for primary settings for all sectors. Areas of SEN not recorded in the post-primary IM sector are Communication and Interaction, Medical Conditions/Syndromes and Physical. (4.1.5-6, 8, 10)

A number of IM schools are proactive in providing additional support to pupils who require it through withdrawal arrangements with the SENCO, SEN teacher and, in some cases, a CA. (4.3.42-5)

A range of strategies and resources in use to support SEN pupils include *Emotional Literacy* (The School of Emotional Literacy, 2008), speech and language programmes, *Primary Movements* (Primary Movement, 2008), *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 2002) and *Jolly Phonics* (Lloyd, 2005.) Schools also use resources in Irish such as *Fónaic na Gaeilge* (BELB, 2005), *Áis Mheasúnaithe sa Luathlitearthacht* (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007), and speech and language resources (Blacksheep Press, 2008). However with few SEN resources in Irish, IM teachers create their own resources including reading books and accompanying resources, worksheets and games. Most additional support focuses on literacy, through the medium of Irish or English or through both, as required. (4.3.39-40, 49)

The effective and valued additional support of CAs benefits SEN pupils' work and self-confidence and teachers' work, while offering an additional source of Irish but adequate training and professional development for CAs in SEN is vital in maximising support provided, since CAs are often young people with little experience or training in SEN support. Almost two thirds of CAs involved in this study who are not specifically employed to assist SEN pupils actually do so and need training in order to understand their role. (4.4.2, 6-10, 19, 24-5, 27, 29)

A small number of SENCOs expressed concern that the time spent supporting pupils is limited owing to other duties in the school. (4.4.23)

The vast majority of SENCOs in the study were not involved at all in lesson planning while the majority of CAs are involved to some extent in this work with a further 14% involved a lot. (4.4.30)

### **Specific issues in pre-school phase**

Almost half of pre-school respondents claimed that additional assistance in the setting was needed but it is challenging to recruit suitably qualified staff with both childcare qualifications and Irish language proficiency. Those who are recruited with a less than desirable level of Irish proficiency can burden other staff. A high rate of turnover in staff exists which militates against long-term SEN plans. Their greatest needs are recorded as resources to support their work, funding for resources and appropriate accommodation. (4.11.3-8, 20, 23)

### **Specific issues in primary phase**

Almost all respondents at primary level claim to have either a full or general understanding of the Code of Practice, the stage of the Code, and all in the case of the in-school referral process. There is a significant difference between reported levels of

understanding in IM primary and IM post-primary phases, where a significant proportion of respondents indicated little or no understanding of the Code of Practice and of in-school referral procedures. A much greater percentage of respondents from the post-primary phase (50%) reported having minimal or no understanding of the referral procedures involved when making a referral to educational psychology and for a statutory assessment, than those in the primary phase (16%). Some responses from educational psychologists give the impression that there should be more referrals to them from the IM sector. (4.7.13-8)

The vast majority (87%) of IM primary settings in the study have a SENCO with 27% of them having no Irish language proficiency (in IM units). The range of teaching experience of SENCOs in IM primary units is from six to twenty years with 60% of them classroom teachers and 70% of them serving on SMTs. In IM primary schools a third of SENCOs have fewer than five years teaching experience and three quarters of them are classroom teachers and serve on SMTs. A significant majority of SENCOs in IM primary settings have less than four hours per week for SEN duties. The majority (77%) of SENCOs received professional development for the post as SENCO and almost one third accessed additional qualifications in SEN. (4.6.2-3, 5-9)

### **Specific issues in post-primary phase**

All IM post-primary settings have a SENCO, one of whom is proficient in Irish, two of whom are members of school management teams. Two of the three post-primary settings reported that the SENCO is a class teacher. Each SENCO had a particular timetable for SEN duties, one had 11-15 hours per week while another had 21-25 hours per week. The remaining setting did not detail hours spent on SEN duties. One SENCO had 6-10 years of teaching experience and the other two SENCOs had twenty-one years or more. Two SENCOs received training for the post and one SENCO had obtained additional qualifications in SEN. (4.6.11-3)

One IM post-primary setting established a SEN support centre operating in September 2008 appointing a coordinator and SEN staff. (4.3.50)

## **EXTERNAL PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY FOR THE IM SECTOR**

A high percentage of IM schools are currently accessing SEN support for pupils who require additional help with aspects of their learning. The most accessed service in IM pre-school settings were social worker services, in primary it was the educational psychologists' service and all three post-primary settings reported using the educational psychologists, outreach, educational welfare and social worker services. (4.5.2)

The percentage of CAs who reported that they had received SEN-related training is smaller than the percentage of IM pre-school staff and primary and post-primary teachers. (4.10.7)

While a significant majority (81%) of the educational psychologists in this study indicated that they had a full or general understanding of bilingualism, just over half of them claimed that they had a full or general understanding of the IM sector. While 31% of them received training in bilingualism, only 5% had minimal training on the IM sector and for the most part, believe that current assessment practices provide an accurate profile of pupils whose first language is English and that they generally understand IM pupils' needs. (4.5. 20-1, 23-4)

Educational psychologists are unable to assess pupils' literacy progress in Irish owing to the lack of assessment materials in Irish which may result in a delay in the provision of appropriate support. Three major challenges to their work in IM sector they cited included personal Irish language competence (24%), the lack of assessment material in Irish (20%) and accurate diagnosis of learning difficulties (12%) (4.5.27). They aim to minimize challenges to their work by: cooperating with members of staff, the use of non-verbal assessment instruments, considering theories of bilingualism and immersion. (4.5.29).

Responses indicate a need for further awareness raising among health and education professionals in respect of the ethos and pedagogies of the IM sector in order to improve provision for pupils and provision for pupils who received some part of their primary education in an IM school and are now being educated in an EM primary or post-primary setting. A large majority of educational psychologists (72%) said that they would benefit from training on the IM sector in terms of: improved understanding and awareness of IM sector, improved understanding of pupils' needs, increased understanding of assessment practices and improved understanding of approaches taken to literacy in Irish and English in IM sector. (4.5.22-3)

Recommendations to support the work of educational psychologists in the study included standardized assessments in Irish, improving their personal Irish language skills, training on IM pedagogy, a family liaison officer, afterschool support for children with no Irish at home, additional resources in Irish, and peripatetic and outreach support services through the medium of Irish. (4.5.30)

There is a high level of dissatisfaction with the support provided by SEN-related support services in terms of providing appropriate support for pupils in IM education. Reasons offered include the current lack of: provision of support service in Irish, understanding of IM sector among professionals and, resources and assessment materials in Irish. (4.5.9)

In the primary and post-primary phases, a quarter of those who rendered SEN provision satisfactory (23% at primary and 35% at post-primary), quoted external support services, however 21% referred to the knowledge and expertise of teachers in schools and 21% to the availability of in-school support for pupils. (4.2.4)

Concerns regarding current SEN provision relate to professional development for practitioners at all levels, the provision of appropriate assessment procedures and support services for pupils who require additional support with their learning; assessment materials, and the provision of sufficient financial, human, and educational resources to meet the needs of pupils receiving their education through the medium of Irish. (4.2.4-5)

Aspects of current IM provision are deemed satisfactory namely: ethos; good relationships between pupils and teachers, between teachers and parents and between IM schools; access to support services; and the expertise, experience, and diligence of teachers in the IM sector. However, overall, a high level of dissatisfaction with current provision for SEN pupils in the IM sector is reported, especially in the primary phase. (4.2.2-3)

### **Findings in the pre-school phase**

Of the 39% of those who rated SEN provision satisfactory, 67% referred to the availability of external support as a positive aspect. Of the 38% of those who rated SEN provision unsatisfactory, the main reasons (among others) they quoted involved the lack of: appropriate provision (20%), qualified Irish-speaking staff (20%), external support (13%) and information (13%). (4.2.3, 6)

A large majority rated the support from other staff and the leader effective, support from early years agencies is deemed effective by a majority while 23% found SLT and educational psychology services effective. Almost half rated SEN support from IM primary schools effective but a significant minority reported no experience of support from that source or from Behavioural or Peripatetic Support Services. (4.9.2-5)

IM voluntary playgroups are not able to access ELB-based support services but would welcome information regarding where to access professional SEN support. (4.9.5, 24-5, 27-9)

### **Findings in the primary phase**

75% had received formal training on SEN and the most frequently cited professional development was during ITE. Training in Reading Recovery English and Irish should be available for more IM teachers. (4.10.10, 12, 30)

The vast majority rated SEN support of principal and other staff effective and 45% described SEN support from other IM schools in the same way. Less than half found SEN



support from principals and teachers in EM schools effective and the same percentage indicated no experience of support from that source. Just over half found SEN support from CASS and IM CASS effective. 69% found SEN support from educational psychology effective, behavioural support (46%) and peripatetic support services (55%). The same percentage of respondents found SLT services effective as found it ineffective (32%) and 40% found Occupational Therapy services effective. (4.9.8-12)

Guidance, based on national and international research and best practice is needed as to the timing of the beginning of formal study of English and the place of English in addressing the additional needs of SEN pupils. (4.9.49)

### **Findings in the post-primary phase**

Although 90% of them received professional development in SEN, primary teachers availed of a wider range of training providers than their post-primary colleagues. (4.10.11-2)

A large majority (71%) found SEN support from principal and other teachers in school effective while 70% of them reported that they have not experienced SEN support from other IM schools or that it was not available to them. 67% of them reported no experience or access to SEN support from principals and teachers in EM schools. (4.9.13-4)

Almost half found CASS services effective in SEN support and 24% found IM CASS who interweave SEN support into their work, an effective source of SEN support. 44% rated the support of behavioural support services effective, 34% for educational psychology and 27% for peripatetic support services. Over half (53%) had no experience of SLT services and 61% of occupational therapy services which is reflected in the percentages for rating them effective: SLT (17%) and occupational therapy (9%). (4.9.15-7, 23)

### **Issues across the primary and post primary phases**

Although the principal outcome of SEN training for teachers was an improved understanding of the needs of pupils, training did not take the IM situation into account, was more theoretical than practical and was not followed up on. Need exists for training in early identification of SEN in IM education with the bilingual dynamic and in the range of complexities within the immersion context and in strategies for meeting the needs of pupils. (4.10.19, 27)

The biggest obstacles to professional development are finding substitute cover, time to attend training and availability of suitable courses and accessing professional development courses even after school hours is difficult due to need to travel sometimes long distances. (4.10.42-3)

A number of practitioners from the IM sector access the generic SEN support services available to them, for example, CASS, educational psychology, behavioural support etc. and indicated their appreciation of support services which take account of the IM sector and providers who are willing to work with IM practitioners to provide resources in Irish. However, indications are that the most frequently cited sources of SEN support come from within school settings. IM sector may need to become more aware of the services available to them but, understandably, IM schools have issues with services delivered to the IM sector only in English. (4.9.14, 4.9.19 – 4.9.23)

Other issues are around: advice and guidance regarding SEN in the IM sector, the identification of SEN, support for teachers in recently established schools, support for newly and recently qualified teachers, communication between teachers and external professionals, the issue of English language and literacy and bi-literacy for pupils with SEN in IM education and appropriate provision for pupils in IM settings in areas of social disadvantage. There is a need for IM-specific support which takes account of the challenges and complexities of identification and assessment of SEN and teaching the curriculum through the medium of a second language in an immersion education programme. (4.9.31-52)

Non-teaching educational professionals insist that the language of delivery of courses ought not to prevent IM teachers from attending courses, that courses are generic and that strategies can be adapted to the IM situation (4.10.14). Although training is in English, it is relevant in equipping teachers with holistic skills to help those who need specialised help. (4.10.33)

IM teachers want practical, appropriate resources in Irish which are ready for use in the classroom and one outreach centre provides tailored, appropriate effective SEN support for the IM sector. (4.9.19-22)

A high percentage of IM sector teachers have received some form of training on SEN. IM teachers need to be encouraged to avail of ELB opportunities for SEN training. (4.10.32-3)

While respondents found training useful, they highlighted a need for regular, IM-specific training to equip them to identify and make appropriate provision for pupils who require additional help. (4.10.7, 17-20)

Of the respondents who rated SEN provision unsatisfactory, the main reasons involved the lack of: resources in Irish (28%), assessment tools (21%), services in Irish (15%) and appropriate support (10%). (4.2.7)

Other issues cited were: equality of access to appropriate support for SEN pupils in IM, the unfairness of using English language assessment when formal study of English literacy only begins at year 4, the lack of formal support through Irish and of expertise in

the support services (4.2.9); lack of parity of treatment and availability of services across both IM and EM sectors, the 'one size fits all' approach in support services as far as suitability for the IM sector is concerned; the unfairness of the non-existence of assessment materials for IM pupils' contexts (4.2.10); the inappropriateness of current in-school provision for SEN pupils in IM sector; the tailoring of in-class teaching in addressing SEN pupils' needs; the enormity of the problem (4.2.11); SEN pupils are expected to engage with a wide range of learning areas, both at primary and post-primary phases, through the medium of a second language; SEN pupils with an additional learning area but without additional help (4.2.12-3); a planned, structured strategy is needed to bring about appropriate support system and close the gaps (4.2.15); frustration of teachers trying to meet the needs of SEN pupils in class with the resources available to them. (4.2.16)

The percentages of respondents satisfied with SEN services working in the IM sector were: pre-school: 11%; primary: 34% and post-primary: 22%. The percentages for no experience of using SEN services were: pre-school (54%); primary (12%) and post-primary (37%). (4.5.3)

Satisfaction at pre-school level stems, for half of the respondents, from the availability of support, at primary and post-primary, two thirds cited availability and one third were satisfied with contact kept with teachers. (4.5.6)

Of those who reported services as unsatisfactory, one third cited the lack of services in Irish and one fifth each cited the lack of contact with teachers and of appropriate resources in Irish. (4.5.9)

### **Classroom assistants**

Few qualified CAs with Irish language proficiency are available. (4.11.12)

Responses from CAs and teachers indicate a need for SEN training in appropriate strategies for CAs, particularly those who are employed to provide specific support for SEN pupils. The data highlight access to SEN training as a key issue for CAs. CAs desire training in order to improve provision for SEN pupils, a point also highlighted about them by teachers and educational professionals. Nevertheless, the obstacles to them developing themselves in SEN issues include the availability of courses for CAs, the times and days of courses, school budget or personal financial matters. (4.10.35-8, 44)

## **PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES**

IM Teachers still spend a significant amount of time and energy in creating resources including SEN resources and thus adequate and appropriate resourcing for SEN is seen as a significant need in the IM sector. (4.11.1, 34)

## **Issues across the primary and post-primary phases**

Often adequate provision for SEN is heavily reliant on school budget, and this can cause problems in IM schools because they tend to be quite small. (4.11.17)

There still are significantly fewer support materials available in Irish for SEN than there are available in English. (4.11.27)

For the most part, satisfaction with generic resources in Irish was indicated however, the significant need for Irish language resources in SEN provision specifically and in terms of use in classroom and by professionals working with IM pupils who require additional help is highlighted. Additional hours and training for CAs, resources, peripatetic support and standardised tests/assessment tools are cited as the four major areas for improvement in respect of SEN. Nevertheless, budgetary issues and funding influence the type and quality of provision that schools can make for SEN pupils. (4.11.9, 10, 24-5, 27)

Those experiencing difficulties in their learning need to be considered in the level and type of language used in resources for the IM sector. There remains a need for a graded reading scheme in Irish to promote decoding, recognition of high-frequency words and word repetition and for materials to support older pupils who experience difficulties in the acquisition of literacy skills. (4.11.28, 30-2)

The computer was widely highlighted as a great motivator for SEN children in the IM sector. (4.11.33)

## **Education professionals**

A quarter of non-teaching education professionals raised the issue of peripatetic or outreach support, through the medium of Irish, for pupils who require additional help with their learning. (4.11.18)

## PARENTS AND THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN IN THE IM SECTOR

Parents are generally happy with the in-school support for their children including class teachers, CAs (when highly fluent in Irish) and external support and they recognise the additional skills that IM education gives SEN children but are anxious about the length of time in identifying and addressing additional needs, and in making referrals. (4.8. 2-3, 5, 7-8, 10, 21)

Parents of SEN children reported being dissuaded by non-teaching professionals from speaking Irish to them or sending them to IM schools and described the anxiety for both child and parents when a child leaves the sector. They also expressed the wish for greater understanding amongst health and education professionals of IM education and bilingualism and that Irish-speaking professionals should be assigned to IM schools and information should be shared across health and education professionals. (4.8.19, 20, 22)

Continuity in teaching children through the medium of Irish when sick at home or in hospital is desirable (4.8.14, 16)

## Introduction

International literature highlights the cognitive, social and cultural benefits of bilingualism for children and young people who experience special educational needs (SEN). Researchers recognise the importance of the additional opportunities and skills which bilingualism offers children and young people who face certain challenges in life as a result of their additional needs (Döpke, 2005 and Cummins, 2000). However, in spite of a growing body of evidence in support of the advantages of bilingualism for children with special educational needs, international literature cites examples of parents of bilingual children experiencing learning difficulties who have been advised by professionals to raise their children monolingually (Baker, 2007).

Most children in Irish medium schools come from English-speaking families with a small number coming from bilingual (Irish – English), and a few from Irish-speaking, families. It has been reported that some pupils in Irish medium (IM) schools have left IM education to be educated in an English medium (EM) mainstream or special education settings, as a result of SEN issues (Mhic Aoidh, 2004 and Nic Annaidh, 2005).

The publication of the *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs* (the Code of Practice) in September 1998 (Department of Education for Northern Ireland, 1998) and subsequent introduction of the *Special Educational Needs and Disability Order* (SENDO) in September 2005 enshrine in law the obligation on all schools and Education and Library Boards (ELBs), to meet the needs of pupils who require additional help and support with their learning, and reaffirm the role of parents as partners in the process of identification of, and provision for, their children's needs. In light of the responsibilities on mainstream schools to take reasonable steps to make appropriate provision for pupils with SEN, IM settings, equally, have a responsibility to provide inclusive education which takes account of the individual learning needs and styles of all pupils and makes mainstream immersion education through the medium of Irish accessible to all those who desire it.

### Aims and objectives of the research

The aims of this research project are:

1. to identify the special educational needs of bilingual children;
2. to investigate the support needs of bilingual children and their parents;
3. to recommend the structures which need to be put in place within the appropriate sectors;
4. to inform future planning based on projections of growth in the IM education sector;

5. to raise awareness among professionals of the specific requirements of bilingual (Irish – English) children with special needs; and
6. to provide a benchmark for professionals within the appropriate sectors in their attempts to improve provision.

The project's original aims reflected POBAL's vision for a wide-ranging study on the specific requirements of Irish – English speaking children from 0 to 18 and their families, including those of Irish-speaking children with special educational and health needs. It was decided, in consultation with DE, to alter the focus of the research from children 0 to 18 to children 3 to 16 in IM education, and to identify the specific needs of Irish-speaking children who experience SEN, and the needs of their parents.

## Main findings

### Identification and reporting of SEN

The highest percentages of pupils identified and recorded as experiencing SEN in the IM sector are at KS2 (Year 5, Year 6, and Year 7). The percentages of pupils identified at IM pre-school level, foundation level, KS1 level and post-primary level are lower than the overall percentage of pupils identified in the IM and EM sectors. Further, there is a marked difference between the percentage of pupils identified and recorded as experiencing in IM statutory nurseries and IM voluntary play groups. The data indicate an under-representation and under-reporting of SEN at these levels in the IM sector (see section 4.1).

The data indicate a higher percentage of pupils identified and recorded as experiencing SEN and a greater diversity of SEN in the IM primary phase than in the IM post-primary phase. There is a need for collaboration and communication between IM and EM post-primary schools and their IM feeder primary schools to ensure future SEN provision at post-primary level is made based on the trends of SEN currently presenting in the IM primary phase (see section 4.1).

### Professional development for practitioners

The research findings pinpoint the high level of importance placed on the role of teachers and pre-school staff in the identification of SEN and appropriate provision of in-class support for pupils who require additional help with their learning. Professional development and support for IM practitioners is, therefore, key in the provision of appropriate support for pupils (see paragraph 4.10).

Practitioners in the IM pre-school, primary and post-primary phases currently face challenges which impinge on their access to regular, up-to-date professional development. The fact that a significant proportion of IM schools are small, coupled with the current lack of suitably qualified substitute teachers in the IM sector, represents the greatest obstacle to access to professional development. Further, small IM settings reported issues relating to financing, as well as accessing substitute cover in order to facilitate professional development for staff (see section 4.10).

While a high percentage of practitioners have accessed SEN-related professional development for staff, current programmes of professional development for practitioners are not IM-specific and do not take account of the learning experience of pupils in an immersion education setting, the impact of bilingualism on the thinking processes of bilingual children who experience SEN, and the challenges of delivering the



curriculum through the medium of a second language. IM practitioners must be aware of the most effective strategies for meeting the needs of pupils who experience ASD, dyslexia, SEBD, and learning difficulties etc. in the context of the IM immersion education programme (see section 4.10).

### **External SEN support service for pupils**

The data show that, for the most part, IM primary and post-primary settings currently have access to the generic support services provided by ELBs. The vast majority of support services such as outreach and peripatetic support, behavioural support, ASD support, and educational psychology are made available through the medium of English (see section 4.5).

The research identified a small number of SEN-related education and health support services which are currently being made through the medium of Irish, or which are providing support resources through the medium of Irish, in collaboration with IM practitioners (. There is, however, no joined-up approach to the provision of services and/or resources in Irish. There is a need for awareness raising and dissemination of current practice in Irish among education and health service providers in order meet the needs of Irish-speaking pupils who require additional support. Furthermore, there is a need for information regarding the language proficiency of education and health professionals to inform service providers when allocating and planning services for bilingual children (see section 4.5).

The research findings highlight the challenges in accessing home or hospital tutoring through the medium of Irish for pupils whose health problems require them to miss a significant amount of their education in school, and, therefore the need for partnership between support service providers and the IM sector (see appendix 1case study 1).

### **Support for IM practitioners**

The research findings support data from literature that the IM sector has a high proportion of newly and recently qualified teachers, some of whom are working in small, recently established IM settings where they have little on-site support. Some practitioners in the IM sector are accessing professional support in respect of SEN, there is, therefore, a need for dissemination of information and awareness raising with regard to the generic sources of support available. However, there is also need for a greater level of IM-specific support for newly and recently qualified teachers and IM pre-school staff to assist them in the identification and assessment of, and provision for pupils who require additional support in the context of the IM immersion education programme (see section 4.9).

## Support for parents

Responses from parents whose children experience SEN identify a need for support for parents during what is a very difficult time. The vast majority of parents of pupils in the IM sector do not have a high level of Irish language proficiency. The importance placed on the role of parents as partners in their children's education is well documented (Hickey, 1998; Phillips *et al.*, 1999; and DE, 2005). There is clearly a need for a system of support to empower parents who do not speak Irish themselves to support their children in the home, and become more actively involved in their children's education, in the identification and assessment of their children's needs, and in the SEN provision made for them in the IM sector (see section 4.8).

## Assessment practices and materials

There is evidence that IM primary and post-primary settings are employing literacy and numeracy assessment materials in Irish available to them and, in some cases, adapting assessment materials in English to assess pupils' progress (see section 4.3).

There currently exists no standardised means by which educational psychologists can assess pupils' Irish literacy development. The lack of assessment materials in Irish means that pupils from the IM sector are, for the most part, assessed through the medium of English using assessment materials which have been designed for monolingual English-speaking children. While educational psychologists reported that assessment of cognitive ability in English provides an accurate profile of pupils' ability for pupils whose first language is English, current assessment practices do not take account of pupils' bilingualism and risk failing to profile pupils' strengths as well as areas of weakness (see section 4.3).

The research findings indicate concerns among teaching practitioners and educational psychologists that the lack of assessment materials in Irish hinders teachers in providing statistical data on pupils' attainment to enable them to monitor progress and to make accurate, evidence-based referrals to the educational psychology service (see section 4.3).

## Resources

### Educational resources

The research findings indicate that teachers and pre-school staff invest a considerable amount of time creating resources for use on a whole-class basis, and resources designed to meet the specific needs of individual pupils. While previous attempts to

encourage IM practitioners to pool resources have been largely unsuccessful, IM settings are producing high-quality resources and the dissemination of school-produced resources throughout the sector may go some way in adding to the SEN resources currently available. However, there remains a need for a wider range of appropriate, professional, motivating, age-appropriate resources SEN support resources to meet the diverse spectrum of need in the IM sector as well as the further development of Irish literacy resources (see section 4.11).

### **Human and financial resources**

The research shows that IM settings are making use of the financial and human resources available to them in order to meet the needs of pupils with SEN including effective use of classroom assistants (CAs) to provide additional support, employment of SEN CAs using the school budget to meet the needs of pupils who require additional support, and deployment of teachers and SENCOs as SEN teachers to provide additional withdrawal support (see section 4.11).

Challenges in respect of finance and personnel, in some IM settings, however, have restricted the level of additional support which the settings are able to provide. Responses from school principals reported difficulties in accessing appropriately trained SEN CAs, the difficulties created by part-funding for CAs when support is required throughout the day, and access to finance to deploy teachers or SENCOs to provide additional support to pupils (see section 4.11).

The issue of funding is particularly acute in the IM pre-school phase where difficulties in respect of access to funding have, in some instances, impacted on the employment of staff and staff turnover which, in turn, restrict the level of support settings are able to offer children who require additional help (see section 4.11).

### **Current provision**

The research has identified examples of best practice in the IM sector in terms of the in-school provision made for pupils, use of resources, and collaboration with parents and external support service providers. Furthermore, a small number of support service providers within certain ELBs and health trusts are currently making use of the linguistic proficiency in Irish of their staff to provide SEN services in Irish for IM settings or individual pupils. In other instances, support service providers are working with practitioners in the IM sector to adapt SEN-specific resources for use in Irish. It is vital that current examples of best practice are disseminated throughout the IM sector and throughout ELBs, health trusts and any new organisations set up as a result of the intended establishment of ESA.

## Methodology

The research took place over a two-year period from September 2006 to September 2008 with data collection carried out in IM schools and other agencies from January 2007 through to May 2008. The collection of data was divided into two phases. The first phase involved the completion of a quantitative questionnaire in all IM pre-school, primary and post-primary settings in the north of Ireland. The second phase of data collection concentrated on the collection of qualitative data.

Qualitative questionnaires were completed by IM pre-school staff, primary and post-primary teachers, CAs, and parents in a sample group of IM settings and by educational psychologists.

A total of 27 structured interviews were carried out with representatives of the ELBs, agencies related to the IM sector, and representatives of IM settings, and 8 semi-structured interviews were carried out with SEN teachers and SENCOs, and representatives of the IM pre-school sector.

A series of four focus groups was organised by the research team and the research also had the opportunity to speak to, and record the viewpoints of IM practitioners at two cluster group sessions organised as part of professional development for IM teachers by IM CASS, and at a training session on SEN for teachers from the IM sector.

Case studies were written to record data provided by parents of pupils who experience SEN, and to record examples of good practice in five IM settings.

## The research project

The research project was carried out by POBAL, the umbrella organisation for the Irish-speaking community in the north of Ireland, for the Department of Education. The total cost of the project was £130,199.

## Report

The full research report entitled 'The special educational needs of bilingual (Irish – English) children 3-16 years' is available on the Department of Education website at [http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/32-statisticsandresearch\\_pg/32\\_statistics\\_and\\_research-research\\_pg.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/32-statisticsandresearch_pg/32_statistics_and_research-research_pg.htm)

## Chapter 1: Introduction

**1.1** International literature highlights the cognitive, social and cultural benefits of bilingualism for children and young people who experience special educational needs (SEN). Researchers emphasise the additional opportunities and skills which bilingualism offers children and young people who face certain challenges in life as a result of their additional needs (Döpke, 2005 and Cummins, 2000). However, in spite of a growing body of evidence in support of the advantages of bilingualism for children with special educational and health needs, international literature cites examples of parents of bilingual children experiencing learning difficulties who have been advised by professionals to raise their children monolingually (Baker, 2007). This indicates the need for improved information and understanding among professionals of the issue of appropriate provision for bilingual children with additional needs.

**1.2** In the Northern Irish context, an appreciation of the increasing need for improved awareness of these issues has emerged due to the continued growth of the Irish Medium (IM) immersion education sector since its establishment in 1971, with the first IM primary school in Belfast, Scoil Ghaeilge Bhéal Feirste (Maguire, 1991). There are currently approximately 4,390 pupils attending IM schools (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, 2007). This research focuses on IM settings in existence in the academic year 2006-2007. At that time there were 42 IM pre-schools; 3 statutory nurseries\* and 39 voluntary play groups\*; 31 IM primary schools, 22 stand-alone IM schools and 9 IM units in English Medium (EM) schools; and 3 IM post-primary settings, 1 IM post-primary school in Belfast, 2 IM streams in EM schools in Armagh and Derry. With the growth and development of the sector has come a broadening in the spectrum of need within the IM sector, which reflects the increasingly diverse range of learning difficulties and complexities presenting in classrooms across the north of Ireland. It has been reported, however, that some pupils in IM schools have, in the past, left IM education to be educated in an EM mainstream or special education setting, as a result of SEN issues (Mhic Aoidh, 2004 and Nic Annaidh, 2005). Indeed, data collected as part of this research indicate some concerns amongst practitioners in the IM sector in relation to the appropriateness of current provision for pupils in the IM sector who require additional support with their learning.

**1.3** The publication of the *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs* (the Code of Practice) in September 1998 (DE, 1998) and subsequent introduction of the *Special Educational Needs and Disability Order* (SENDO) in September 2005 enshrine in law the obligation on all mainstream schools and Education and Library Boards (ELBs), to meet the needs of pupils who require additional

help and support with their learning, and reaffirm the role of parents as partners in the process of identification of, and provision for, their children's needs. In light of the responsibilities on mainstream schools to take reasonable steps to make appropriate provision for pupils with SEN, IM settings, equally, have a responsibility to provide inclusive education which takes account of the individual learning needs and styles of all pupils.

**1.4** The Code of Practice highlighted the unique learning experience of pupils in IM schools who are receiving their education through the medium of, what is for most in the north of Ireland, a second language. In respect of the identification and assessment of SEN, the *Code of Practice* states:

The identification and assessment of the special educational need of children whose first language is not English (and /or Irish in the case of Irish-medium school) requires very careful consideration. Lack of competence in the language used in the school must not be equated with, or allowed to mask, learning difficulties as understood in this Code. The child's needs should be considered in the context of his or her home, language, culture and community. Where necessary to ensure full understanding of the measures the school is taking, use should be made of interpreters and translators; and assessment tools should, as far as possible, be culturally neutral and applicable to children from a range of home backgrounds (DE, 1998:8).

**1.5** In addition to the Code of Practice and the SENDO legislation (2005), the rights of children are protected by a number of pieces of legislation, notably the Children's Order (1995) and the Human Rights Act (1998). The Northern Ireland Human Rights Consortium (NIHRC) has outlined its view that the proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland will seek to supplement the rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and enact legislation in respect of the right not to be discriminated against and issues such as equality of treatment and opportunity (NIHRC, 2008). The development of the IM sector in the north of Ireland, and the protection of the Irish language, are recognised in legislation. In respect of provision of IM education, the Education (Northern Ireland) Order (1996) placed an obligation on the Department of Education to 'facilitate and encourage the development of Irish-medium schools'. With regard to the Irish language, the Good Friday Agreement endorsed the 'importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of various ethnic communities' (NIO, 1998:24).

**1.6** In its ratification instrument (2001) in respect of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML), the UK government recognised the Irish language both under the general protections of Part II of the Charter and under the more specific provisions of Part III. The ratification instrument includes eight paragraphs under Article 8 in relation to education matters which are the responsibility of the devolved government and one paragraph relating to education matters which are the responsibility of the UK government in the north of Ireland. <sup>1</sup>

### Background to the research project

**1.7** The present research project is the result of work carried out over a two-year period by POBAL, the umbrella organisation for the Irish-speaking community, and the Advisory Group established by them, to examine and advise on research into the provision for SEN in the IM sector in the north of Ireland.

**1.8** The additional needs of children with Irish who have SEN were highlighted by Gorman in her report for POBAL, *Necessities and Priorities: The Irish Speaking Community and the State* (2001). Furthermore, anecdotal evidence arising from queries from parents through POBAL's work with teachers and parents in IM schools, and through its ongoing work to develop services for the Irish-speaking community identified a need for research into the needs of bilingual children with SEN and the needs of their families. Following a series of exploratory meetings with health and education professionals in 2000-2001, POBAL brought together a panel of expert

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<sup>1</sup> The Article 8 paragraphs that are the responsibility of the devolved administration are: Article 8: Education, Paragraphs 1a (iii) 1b (iv) 1c (iv) 1d (iv) 1e (iii) 1f (ii) 1g 1h, Total: 8; The Article 8 paragraphs relating to matters which are the responsibility of the UK government in the north are: Article 8: Education, Paragraph 2, Total: 1 (9 in total). In addition, Article 14: Transfrontier exchanges, Paragraphs a b, Total: 2 also contain references specifically to education, as follows:

#### **Article 14 – Transfrontier exchanges**

The Parties undertake:

- a to apply existing bilateral and multilateral agreements which bind them with the States in which the same language is used in identical or similar form, or if necessary to seek to conclude such agreements, in such a way as to foster contacts between the users of the same language in the States concerned in the fields of culture, education, information, vocational training and permanent education;
- b for the benefit of regional or minority languages, to facilitate and/or promote co-operation across borders, in particular between regional or local authorities in whose territory the same language is used in identical or similar form.

practitioners from the health and education sectors in 2002 to discuss the emerging issue of adequate provision for Irish-speaking children with special educational and health needs. Arising from their discussions the Advisory Group met with representatives of the Department of Education (DE) and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) to raise awareness in respect of the specific needs of Irish-speaking children with SEN and the need for appropriate provision within their departments to meet the current need.

**1.9** In 2005 funding was secured from DE to conduct research into the special needs of bilingual Irish – English-speaking children in the north of Ireland. The research took place over a two year period from September 2006 to August 2008 with data collection carried out in IM schools and other agencies from January 2007 through to May 2008.

### **Aims of the research**

**1.10** The aims of the research are:

1. to identify the special educational, health, linguistic and social needs of bilingual children;
2. to investigate the support needs of bilingual children and their parents;
3. to recommend the structures which need to be put in place within the appropriate sectors;
4. to inform future planning based on projections of growth in the IM education sector;
5. to raise awareness among professionals of the specific requirements of bilingual (Irish – English) children with special needs; and
6. to provide a benchmark for professionals within the appropriate sectors in their attempts to improve provision.

### **Emergence of IM-specific issues**

**1.11** The initial aims reflect POBAL’s vision for a wide-ranging study on the specific requirements of Irish – English speaking children from 0 to 18 and their families, including those of Irish-speaking children with special educational and health needs. For the most part, the proposed aims of the original study informed the design and implementation of the research project. With the relatively recent growth of the IM



sector in the north of Ireland, however, there has been increasing recognition of SEN issues specific to the IM sector and, therefore, the need to define current provision for pupils in the IM sector who experience SEN. It was decided, in consultation with DE, to alter the focus of the research from children 0 to 18 to children 3 to 16 in IM education, and to identify the specific needs of Irish-speaking children who experience SEN, and the needs of their parents.

### Research participants

**1.12** In order to obtain information on the areas laid down in the research aims it was decided to include a range of target groups including IM pre-school staff, principals and teachers, SENCOs, classroom assistants (CAs), educational psychologists, and parents.

**1.13** The data presented in the research report were obtained using qualitative and quantitative questionnaires, semistructured and structured interview, focus group discussion and case studies from the range of target groups listed above. The target groups surveyed and methods of data collection used are summarised below.

**1.14** Questionnaire respondents cited in the presentation of the research finding include:

- IM school principals or IM unit co-ordinators in all IM settings in the north of Ireland who completed the quantitative questionnaire during the first round of data collection;
- pre-school leaders and assistants from a sample of IM pre-school settings;
- primary and post-primary school principals, teachers and SENCOs from a sample group of IM schools and units;
- classroom assistants (CAs) from a sample group of IM schools and units;
- educational psychologists; and
- parents.

**1.15** Interview participants include:

- IM pre-school leaders;
- SEN teachers\* and SENCOs;
- IM school principals;
- non-teaching educational professionals; and
- parents.

**1.16** Focus group discussions involved:

- IM pre-school staff; and
- representatives of IM primary and post-primary schools and units.

## Parents' and health professionals' participation

### Challenges posed by contacting parents

**1.17** The initial focus on children from 0 to 18 years would have required contact with parents of children outside of the IM sector. The change of focus from children 0 to 18 years to children 3 to 16 years currently in IM education, limited contact with parents of children outside the IM sector, who had been in IM education but are now being educated in EM post-primary schools. Some contact was made with parents of primary school age children who have been removed from the IM sector, and with the parents of children below pre-school age who have been identified with additional needs.

### Securing participation of health professionals

**1.18** The research team viewed the inclusion of the experiences and views of health professionals to be of great importance in defining current provision and making recommendations for the development of future provision of health care services for children with Irish who require additional support. However, approval to include health professionals in the study was required from all the health trusts. All five health trusts in the north of Ireland were contacted to seek approval to conduct research among key personnel in the relevant disciplines. Unfortunately, the project coincided with a period of transition and restructuring within the health trusts and boards, and as a result, approval was not secured from all health trusts within the allocated time frame. The overall findings of this study, therefore, do not reflect the views of health professionals.

### Presentation of data

**1.19** The findings of the research are presented in the report under the following chapter headings:

1. chapter two provides an overview of international literature on bilingualism, immersion education, and provision for bilingual children with additional needs; and of relevant literature on the issues for the IM sector;
2. chapter three discusses the methods and methodologies employed in the research design, data collection and methods of analysis;
3. chapter four presents the findings of the study in depth. The chapter discusses the prevalence of SEN in the IM sector, respondent attitudes to current provision, current in-school practices and models of best practice identified in the IM sector in relation to SEN provision, issues of assessment for pupils in the IM sector, continuing professional development and support for practitioners in the IM sector and the provision of SEN support resources for pupils receiving their education through the medium of Irish;
4. chapter five provides a critical discussion of the findings of the context of the literature reviewed in chapter two of the report; and
5. chapter six, contains the report's conclusions and makes recommendations for ways forward in the development of provision for pupils with additional needs in the IM sector.

### **Educational reform and the present study**

**1.10** The publication of the research report on SEN provision for pupils in the IM sector is timely given the current period of ongoing educational reform which has seen the introduction and implementation of the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum (RNIC), and the planned establishment of the Educational Skills Authority (ESA), as part of the wider reforms undertaken within the Review of Public Administration (RPA).

**1.11** In respect of provision for pupils in IM schools with additional needs, the publication of the present report is opportune in light of the ongoing reviews within DE, the *Review of Irish Medium Education* and the *Review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion*, and the publication of research on best practice in the IM sector (Mac Corraidh, 2008). It is envisaged that the findings and recommendations of this report, with its focus on SEN in the IM sector will contribute to the body of recent educational initiatives and developments relevant to the IM sector.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

**2.1** It is widely recognised that bilingualism is not a cause of SEN (Baker, 2006), however it is also recognised that some children who are bilingual will have SEN. The Education (Northern Ireland) Order (1996) defined SEN as, ‘a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made’. This definition of SEN is quoted in the Code of Practice. The publication of the Warnock Report (1978) was influential in placing the issue of SEN high on the policy agenda and influencing subsequent legislation (DE, 2002). The importance of creating provision for children experiencing SEN was subsequently recognised by the Education Act (1981) in England and Wales and the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order (1986), the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and the Code of Practice, culminating in the *Special Educational Needs and Disability Order* (SENDO) (2005) which strengthened the rights of children with SEN to be educated in a mainstream school (DE, 2005:8).

**2.2** Provision for SEN within the IM sector has been identified as an emerging issue as the sector continues to expand and develop (DE, 1999 and Gorman, 2001, Ó Coinn, 2002, Nic Annaidh, 2005). All children, including those in immersion settings, require high quality learning experiences which include access to adequate resources, appropriate assessment procedures and access to support services (DE, 2008). However, it is recognised that children with SEN in an immersion education programme may face additional challenges in their learning (Davies, 2006). Davies (2006:25), for example questions what exactly is meant by ‘language acquisition’. If we take ‘language acquisition’ to include written competence in the language this may well pose challenges for the child who experiences difficulties with written competence in his/her first language. Given that some languages exist in verbal format only, Davies poses the question ‘would oral competence in a language be acceptable for pupils who experience difficulties with the written form?’ International literature suggests that there is no reason why children with SEN, both those who are bilingual as a result of their family background, and those bilingual as a result of an immersion education programme, should not maintain their bilingualism (Cummins, 2000; Baker, 2006). Appropriate support and intervention is essential for bilingual children with SEN in order for them to achieve their full potential in both languages (Neil *et al.* 2000). The implementation of SENDO legislation (2005) strengthened the legal obligation on all schools, including those in the IM sector, to make adequate provision for SEN. Research suggests that in the past parents of children with SEN were advised to transfer their child to an English

Medium (EM) school in order to access adequate and appropriate support to meet the child's needs (Nic Annaidh, 2005). The increased emphasis placed on inclusive education, as a result of the SENDO legislation, has highlighted a need for research into the area of current SEN provision for bilingual children, and the most effective means of meeting the additional needs of bilingual children who require additional support with their learning.

**2.3** This review will examine international literature and, where it exists, literature relating specifically to the IM sector in the north of Ireland on the issue of the specific needs of bilingual children who require additional help and support with their learning.

**2.4** The review is divided into three main sections.

Section 1 will include an overview of the following: bilingualism, immersion education and IM education in Ireland, an overview of SEN and bilingual children, the challenge posed by the language difficulties versus learning difficulties dilemma for professionals working with bilingual children, assessment of bilingual children and the importance of language in assessment procedures.

**2.5** Section 2 will look at a number of particular learning difficulties in the context of bilingualism. The special needs examined include: speech, language and communication (SLC) difficulties; dyslexia; social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD), hearing impairment, and Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

**2.6** The final section, Section 3, considers the issue of appropriate education for bilingual children who experience SEN, the needs of parents whose children are bilingual and have SEN and the role of parents in their children's education and the provision of healthcare-related services for bilingual children with SEN.

**2.7** This review does not claim to be exhaustive but will provide an overview of key issues raised in international literature in relation to SEN provision for bilingual children, and literature relating to IM education. Recent IM research has cautioned against generalising from international research when informing practice, without acknowledging the specific context of IM education (Mc Kendry, 2006 and Andrews, 2006). Nevertheless, research carried out in other immersion contexts contributes to our understanding of immersion education in the local context (Mac Corraidh, 2008).

## Section 1

### Bilingualism and immersion education

**2.8** In 1998 the Department of Education (DE) commissioned a review of the international literature related to immersion education (Neil *et al.*, 2000). The review examined various aspects of immersion education including types of immersion, types of bilingualism, assessment in an immersion education context, cognitive aspects and academic advantages of bilingualism, biliteracy and SEN in bilingual children, sociocultural aspects of an immersion education system and language planning. The review focused on literature related to French in Quebec, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh and Irish.

**2.9** The review (Neil *et al.*, 2000) reports Cummins' threshold theory (1976) which differentiates between children who develop high second language (L2) skills at no cost to the first and who, therefore, benefit from the associated cognitive advantages, and children who do not adequately acquire two languages and consequently, do not make the same cognitive gains. Academic success in an immersion education setting relies on reaching a threshold level in L2. The attainment of this threshold level is influenced by social, attitudinal, educational and cognitive factors, which are likely to be found in an immersion education setting (Cummins, 1976).

**2.10** Johnstone (1994), cited in Neil *et al.* (2000) defines some of the terms used in international literature in relation to bilingualism. First language (L1) maintenance describes the case of minority language pupils who receive a significant proportion of their education in their mother tongue without excluding the majority language. Second language (L2) immersion is when majority language children are educated predominantly through the second language. Submersion occurs when minority language children are educated in a majority language setting. Additive bilingualism is the result of a positive experience of first (L1) and second (L2) languages, with L1 adding to L2, and subtractive bilingualism comes about when the mother tongue (L1) is submerged by the majority language (L2).

### Irish Medium immersion education

**2.11** Immersion education occurs when students are immersed in, and educated through the medium of a second language, where language and content are taught simultaneously. The term 'immersion education' covers variations in programme types based on, age of the children, length of time spent in the programme and balance of, and exposure to, the languages in question. Immersion education can be classified

according to the age at which the child is immersed in the language, and the degree of immersion experienced (Johnson and Swain, 1997, cited in Neil et al., 2000). IM immersion reflects the Canadian model, as implemented by the St. Lambert experience, in which English-speaking children were educated through the medium of French (Maguire, 1991). There are notable differences between the Canadian and the Irish immersion models, not least that the Canadian model involves two dominant languages of French and English, while the Irish model involves one dominant language and one minority language (Mac Corraidh, 2008). This characteristic of IM immersion leads to its classification as a heritage language immersion programme (Scullion, 2004).

**2.12** From the humble beginnings of Scoil Ghaeilge Bhéal Feirste established in 1971, the IM sector in the north of Ireland has flourished (Nig Uidhir, 2006). There are currently 43 IM pre-schools, 32 IM primary schools and units and 3 centres of IM post-primary provision in the north of Ireland. At present, approximately 4,390 children receive education through the medium of Irish (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, 2007).

**2.13** A number of statutory and non-statutory organisations support IM education developments in the north of Ireland. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, the Council for Irish-medium education in the north of Ireland, was founded in 2000 by the Department of Education (DE) under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement (NIO, 1998), to promote, facilitate and encourage IM education and schools in the north of Ireland (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, 2006b). Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta provides financial support for independent IM schools. St. Mary's University College, Belfast provides undergraduate and postgraduate Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in immersion methodologies. An tÁisaonad, also based at St Mary's University College, produces IM teaching materials and resources. The Northern Ireland Education and Library Boards (NIELBs) have created three IM advisory posts (one advisor and two advisory teachers) to support IM teachers' continuing professional development (CPD). The Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) facilitate the adaption of curriculum proposals to the immersion education context, and provide resources for the implementation of the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum (RNIC) in IM schools. Altram supports pre-school and early years provision through the medium of Irish. Gaeleagras um Shainriachtanais Oideachais (GESO) is a voluntary organisation founded to provide support for teachers and parents in the area of SEN. In the south of Ireland, IM education is supported by a number of organisations. Some of these include An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) which aims to promote the development of Gaeltacht and IM education, and the teaching of Irish in all schools through the provision of teaching resources, the provision of support services, and, through research (COGG, 2008); GAELSCOILEANNA TEO. which aims to develop IM

education at primary and post-primary levels (GAELSCOILEANNA TEO., 2008); and Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta, a voluntary organisation which aims to support the promotion of education and care services in Irish for pre-school age children (Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta, 2008). From a broader prospective, the promotion of Irish teaching and learning in both the north and south of Ireland, and support for the IM sector, come under the remit of Irish language organisation, Foras na Gaeilge (Foras na Gaeilge, 2008).

**2.14** The increase in the number of settings offering IM education (Nig Uidhir, 2001), the provision of ITE for the IM immersion education sector and the establishment of An tÁisaonad for the development of teaching and learning resources for IM school, both in St Mary's University College, and the establishment of the support organisations discussed above (Ó Coinn, 2002) indicate significant development in the IM sector since its establishment in 1971. There remain, however, aspects of the IM sector which require further development (Ó Coinn, 2002).

**2.15** Ó Coinn (2002) reports that the greatest challenges currently facing the IM sector are the scarcity of teachers and the lack of resources for IM schools. The lack of appropriate learning and teaching resources was highlighted by a survey on SEN provision in the IM sector, carried out by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in 1999. The survey reported 'a shortage of appropriate specialist teaching and learning resources for Irish-medium education, such as graded reading schemes, Reading Recovery materials and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) software' (DE, 1999: 6). A lack of adequate resources not only affects children who experience SEN but also impacts on the effective implementation of literacy strategies which requires a wide range of graded books, which is currently unavailable in Irish (Nig Uidhir, 2001). Mac Corraidh (2008) reports that the development of Irish literacy resources is limited. Respondents to his study described current reading materials in Irish as 'dull, outdated, and unattractive' (Mac Corraidh, 2008: 93). The Áisaonad has done much to contribute to the publication of Irish educational resources, but there is still a noted dearth of appropriate resources for the IM sector, which often requires teachers to create their own resources (Mac Corraidh, 2008). Not only is this time consuming but it also leaves IM schools using resources which may not be as attractive as professionally produced resources (Knipe *et al.*, 2004).

**2.16** In terms of provision of appropriate resources for pupils in the IM sector, the ETI survey also highlighted a need for more extensive external resources in order to meet the needs of children with moderate and severe learning difficulties (DE, 1999). Mhic Aoidh (2004) reports that support structures in the EM sector for pupils experiencing



SEN are available and are clearly visible. In the IM sector, however, support structures for pupils who require additional support as a result of SEN are still being developed.

### **Initial teacher education and continuing professional development**

#### **Literacy in the Irish Medium sector**

**2.19** With regard to literacy, it is generally accepted that the Common Underlying Proficiency theory applies to literacy, as it does to language acquisition, that skills and strategies acquired in the first language are transferred to the second (Cummins, 2000). Neil *et al.* (2000) discuss biliteracy within the context of immersion education programmes. Within early total immersion education settings in Canada, for example, early literacy skills are acquired in the immersion language, which is a second language for most students. Cummins and Swain, (1986 as cited by Neil *et al.*, 2000:43) stated that pupils from an immersion system achieved high levels of proficiency in the second language while developing normal levels of proficiency in their first language. Kennedy (2007) examines the effect of IM education on children's English academic competence. The research, carried out on children aged 8-9 and 11-12 in an IM and EM school, concludes that IM education does not impede the children's English academic progress and that, despite lesser exposure to English education, the children in IM schools showed equal academic proficiency to the children educated through the medium of English (Kennedy, 2007). Research carried out by Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir (2004) on emergent literacy in Gaeltacht and all-Irish schools in the south of Ireland shows that a number of methods are currently to be found in IM schools: the introduction of literacy in Irish first, followed by English; literacy in English first and literacy in both languages simultaneously. Furthermore, the report suggests that teachers within these sectors are seeking guidance on how to teach early literacy. In a study carried out by Ní Bhaoill (2004, as cited in Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir, 2004:5) 'many schools [...] stated that there was a lack of clear guidance in the curriculum documents' to enable them to formulate policy according to the learning needs of the children in all-Irish schools and that there was a great need for clearer guidance. In the context of evidence-based policy in the south of Ireland, Ó Laoire and Harris (2006) have cautioned against a universal curricular prescription on the sequence of the introduction of Irish and English reading in IM schools. General practice in the IM sector in the north of Ireland, at present, is that the foundations of reading are developed in the target language (Irish) before formal teaching of English begins (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007).

## Special educational needs and bilingual children

**2.20** Cognitive advantages of bilingualism are now widely recognised, both internationally and in the local context (Baker, 2007 and McKendry, 2006), however, there is evidence to suggest that bilingualism is sometimes blamed for problems and difficulties which bilingual children may experience, particularly with regard to academic achievement (Cummins, 2000). Although limited, research into the needs of children who experience SEN suggests that bilingual children with SEN are being disadvantaged as a result of lack of understanding of bilingualism amongst professionals, inaccurate assessment procedures and inappropriate support for bilingual children identified as having special needs (Baker, 2006). There is an obligation to address the issue of appropriate assessment and support for bilingual children on moral and ethical grounds, and legal grounds, owing to current legislation. Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990 (UNCRC, 1990), for example, states that 'state parties shall recognise the right of the child to education'. The broad terms of the rights and limited enforcement mechanisms, however, render enforcement of this legislation difficult. Equally, the right to education is included in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which was ratified by the UK in 1951, adopted into domestic legislation in the Human Rights Act 1998 and which came into force in 2000 (reported by Task Group on Dyslexia, 2002). Further, Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) and the Equality (Northern Ireland) Order 2000 impact on equality laws in Northern Ireland. The most relevant piece of legislation pertaining to SEN to date is the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order 2005 (SENDO). The legislation strengthened the rights of children with SEN to be educated in a mainstream school, and required Education and Library Boards (ELBs) to provide parents with advice and information, to provide a means of resolving disputes and to comply with orders of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal within the prescribed periods (DE, 2005).

**2.21** When examining the issue of bilingual children who experience SEN it is important to differentiate between bilingual children from a minority language background and bilingual children who are so as a result an immersion education programme. For the purposes of this review the group 'bilingual children' can be divided largely into two groups; (a) children whose first language is a minority language, who are learning a majority language as a second language and who are, for the most part, members of an immigrant community, and (b) children who are being educated in an immersion education programme whose first language, more often than not, is a majority language and who are being immersed in a minority language. It is recognised, however, that some children who are being educated in an immersion education system are also being

raised through the medium of the immersion language e.g. children in the IM sector whose home language is also Irish.

**2.22** For the most part, the international research which exists on the issue of SEN and the bilingual child focuses on minority language children who are immersed in a majority language, usually in an educational or community setting. While the situation of the minority language child immersed in a majority language differs from that of children in the IM sector who, more often than not, come from majority language backgrounds (English) and are immersed in a minority language setting (Irish), there are similarities to be found between the two situations. While the international literature on the specific needs of bilingual children who are experiencing SEN has relevance for the issue of SEN provision in the IM sector, it is recognised that the literature must be reviewed in the specific context of the IM sector.

**2.23** The Education (Northern Ireland) Order (1996) defines the term SEN as ‘a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made. The term ‘learning difficulty’ means that the child has significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his/her age, and/or has a disability which hinders his or her use of everyday educational facilities’ (cited in DE, 1998). Furthermore, Baker reminds us (2006:255) that the term ‘special needs’ can also apply to bilingual children with exceptional abilities, such as high IQ and outstanding ability in a particular subject, for example, music or mathematics. It is recognised that, in general, bilingual children will meet the same problems and difficulties as monolingual children throughout their lives. However, the presence of a second, or in some cases a third language, may mean that bilingual and multilingual children who experience SEN might face additional challenges with regard to assessment, support and intervention and access to services (Baker 2007).

**2.24** Given that the Warnock Report (1978) anticipated that approximately 20% of pupils would have SEN at some stage in their school career, and that approximately 2% of these children would require long-term, additional support and, therefore a statement of SEN, one might expect this figure to be reflected in the bilingual population also. Research indicates, however, that a number of factors influence the number of bilingual children identified as experiencing SEN (Baker, 2006; Deponio *et al.*, 2000; Nic Annaidh, 2005). In some instances, an over-representation of bilingual children being referred to special education has been noted. In the United States, for example, some evidence exists to suggest that bilingual children are over-represented amongst those with SEN (Harry, 1992, as cited in Baker, 2006). In other cases, however, such as that of bilingual children surveyed in Scotland, research confirms that ‘bilingual

learners are significantly under-represented among pupils who are assessed as having specific learning difficulties/dyslexia' (Deponio *et al.*, 2000).

**2.25** In the north of Ireland, research carried out by Nic Annaidh (2005) highlighted identification of SEN as one of the most common causes of concern among Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) and principals in the IM system, as well as fears that children educated in the IM sector are being under-represented in referrals for assessment for SEN. It is, therefore, difficult to ensure that statistics currently held on the number of children in the IM sector identified as experiencing SEN are accurate.

**2.26** The question of provision for SEN in the IM sector has been recognised as an emerging issue in recent years. (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, 2006b; Mhic Aoidh, 2004; Shaw and McRory, 2004; Nig Uidhir, 2001, O'Hagan, 2000). Ó Coinn (2002) cites unsatisfactory provision for SEN and insufficient SEN resources amongst the challenges facing the sector at present. Nig Uidhir (2001) reports that while teachers in the IM sector are gaining a lot of experience in the field of SEN on an individual basis, and while the support group GESO has been in existence since 2000 to support teachers, psychologists, parents etc, the lack of adequate training and resourcing is hindering improvement of the SEN provision available for children within the IM sector (:201).

**2.27** The ETI survey (DE, 1999:2) reported that 'most of the schools are located in areas which have suffered from high levels of unemployment, social deprivation and the effects of a long period of civil unrest'. Boyle (2005) examined the issue of SEN in the IM sector in the context of the relationship between social deprivation and achievement. Boyle (2005:105) cites Mortimore and Whitty (1997) who suggest that the issue of social deprivation and SEN is strongly linked to that of social deprivation and levels of achievement. Boyle (2005:90) reports that the salient issues emerging from the research were: '(1) age and experience of the teaching staff in the IME sector and the growth of the sector; (2) resources; (3) SEN provision; and (4) intervention programmes'. Considering that most of the research on the issue of SEN within immersion programmes has been carried out based on the French immersion education system in Canada where the majority of schools are in middle class areas, Boyle (2005:105) recommends that further investigation be carried out on SEN, social deprivation and bilingualism in the local context. Furthermore, the research highlights the issue of threshold levels in Irish, and the impact of poverty on language development and underachievement.

## Identification and assessment of special educational needs

**2.28** Historical perceptions that bilingualism is a contributory factor in the underachievement of bilingual children have been discredited on methodological grounds and in light of a greater understanding of equality issues (Cummins, 1984). There is a body of evidence supporting claims that bilingualism makes a positive contribution to children's cognitive and affective development (Hickey, 1997; Neil *et al.*, 2000; McKendry, 2006). A number of studies have been carried out in order to investigate the achievement of bilingual children in immersion education programmes in comparison with their monolingual peers. Neil *et al.* report 'broad agreement in current research findings that point to an equivalent or favourable performance among total immersion pupils in comparison with English medium peers' (2000: 58).

**2.29** A well documented assessment-related issue is the importance of differentiating between language difficulties and learning difficulties. The need for accurate and appropriate assessment for bilingual children was highlighted by a number of court cases in California during the 1970s, notably *Diana v. The California State Board of Education* (1970) and *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) (McLean, 1995). Such cases have clearly impacted on the assessment of bilingual children to date. Following the litigation of the 1970s in California, a see-saw effect between over-referral of bilingual children for special education and an underestimation of SEN in bilingual children has been witnessed in America, thus underlining the importance of accurate assessment (Baker, 2006). He cautions that bilingual children risk being misdiagnosed and deprived of the necessary support systems to assist them with their education if accurate, fair and non-discriminatory assessment procedures are not followed. He advocates a number of factors that must be taken into account when assessing a bilingual child for SEN. These factors include the possibility that the child's difficulty may be temporary; the need for a wide diversity of measurement and observation devices and ensuring the tests are culturally appropriate reflecting the language and culture of the child; the choice of assessor; ensuring the language used in assessments is appropriate to the child; the use of interpreters, if necessary; consideration of external factors such as the school environment, the input of the child's teacher and the type of test used (Baker, 2006).

**2.30** Frederickson and Cline (1996: 4) have also warned that 'thinking solely in terms of a stark choice between 'language problem' and 'limited learning ability' is a gross oversimplification'. They voice concern that such a mindset could result in the use of an inappropriate assessment procedure, which does not take cognisance of the other factors which may influence the underachievement of bilingual children. Peer (1997), cited in Everatt *et al.* (2000), identifies mitigating factors influencing bilingual students'

learning, such as home background; cultural differences; impoverished language skills; speech and vocabulary development and inefficient memory competency. Rogers and Pratten (1996) caution against the dangers of maintaining a 'language difficulties' hypothesis until a learning disorder has been officially diagnosed. They note that, while this method may avoid political pitfalls for professionals brought about by a misdiagnosis, such as charges of racism or employing culturally biased assessment procedures, it deprives the child in question of the additional support which they require, which may in turn have a detrimental effect on the child's future education and self-esteem.

**2.31** IM practitioners and other multiagency partners, e.g. educational psychologists and speech and language therapists, are challenged to differentiate between language difficulty and learning difficulty when making decisions regarding the identification and provision of support and intervention for pupils. Frost (2000) makes reference to Hall's research on the identification of dyslexia in bilingual children (Hall, 1995) which highlights two common errors to be avoided when diagnosing a learning difficulty; these are; '*false positive labelling*' i.e. diagnosing a learning difficulty where one is not present and '*false negative labelling*' i.e. failing to diagnose a learning difficulty where, in fact, one exists. Long and Clarke (2008:6), in the context of assessing for dyslexia in IM schools, acknowledge 'that there is a risk that the possibility of dyslexia is masked by insufficient mastery of Irish as the language of tuition and/or English as the second language that is formally taught'. They call for research 'in order to understand better the transfer of skills and the possible confusions arising from learning to read in two different alphabetic systems' (6).

**2.32** Paragraph 2.15 of *The Code of Practice* (1998) refers to the difference in language and learning disorders in relation to the IM context;

The identification and assessment of the special educational needs of children whose first language is not English (and/or Irish in the case of Irish-medium schools) requires very careful consideration. Lack of competence in the language used in the school must not be equated with, or allowed to mask, learning difficulties as understood in the Code. The child's needs should be considered in the context of his/her home, language, culture and community. Where necessary, to ensure full understanding of the measures the school has taken, use should be made of interpreters and translators and assessment tools should, as far as possible, be culturally neutral and applicable to children from a range of home backgrounds (DE, 1998: 8).

**2.33** This highlights a further challenge, which is the absence of appropriate assessment tools such as the standardised tests which are available to EM pupils. The *ETI Survey of Provision for SEN in IM Primary Schools* (1999) reported that schools were making 'steady progress in developing a system of identifying and recording concerns related to the behaviour and learning difficulties of individual students.' However, the survey noted that a significant deficiency in the identification of SEN in IM schools was the lack of standardised reading tests (DE, 1999: 4).

**2.34** Valdés and Figueroa (1994), as summarised in Baker (2000), propose three possible solutions to the issue of assessing bilingual children; ensuring the use of curriculum assessment contexts which are 'appropriate, comprehensible and meaningful to the child', temporarily banning all testing of bilinguals until such times as more appropriate tests are available and the introduction of bilingual norms, more curriculum based and portfolio type assessment and, a greater cultural and linguistic awareness of bilinguals. While reporting that many favour the third proposal, Baker argues that such changes in assessment procedures only represent the beginning of what is needed to remedy the problem. Baker urges that what is needed is a radical 'shift in the politics and policy dimensions of assessment' of bilinguals (Baker, 2000:135).

**2.35** One form of assessment for SEN used with bilingual children is norm-referenced tests whereby one individual is compared with another (Baker, 2006). This method of assessment has, however, been criticised for basing the norms on the test scores of monolingual majority language children which may, therefore, disadvantage bilingual children (Baker, 2006 and Frederickson and Cline, 1996). Damico (1991), cited in Cloud (1994), advocates abandoning norm-referenced assessment in favour of a descriptive communicative-assessment approach. Although criticised by some, Ortiz and Garcia, as discussed in Cloud (1994:256), favour the use of norm-referenced language assessment instruments, supplemented by other assessment procedures that describe 'both receptive and expressive skills in the first and second languages.'

**2.36** Cloud (1994) advocates 'ecological assessment', as documented by Heron and Heward (1982), in which the child's learning environment, the teacher's expertise, the curriculum and the amount, and nature, of the instruction as well as the child's own personal characteristics, are examined. Such information allows the development of an instructional programme which is unique to the child's individual needs (Cloud, 1994). Research carried out by Deponio *et al.* (2000) on children learning English as a second language, highlights the importance of an 'inter-agency approach' to assessment of bilingual children, in which a member of the school management team (SMT), class

teacher, learning support, English as an additional language (EAL) support and, a professional proficient in the child's first language all participate in the assessment process.

**2.37** Another form of assessment used is Curriculum Based or Curriculum Related Assessment (CRA), or criterion referenced testing. CRA seeks to establish what the child can do within the context of the curriculum used and, to identify areas in which progress can be made. Possible assessment procedures within the realms of CRA range from informal observation to highly structured assessment of class work. Whatever the procedure used, it is imperative that the assessment methods used are non-biased and non-discriminatory (Baker 2000). Frederickson and Cline (1996: 6), however, caution that 'CRA can only be a non-discriminatory approach if the curriculum itself on which the assessment is based is non-discriminatory.'

**2.38** Recent research in the field of assessment of bilingual children has led to a move towards ipsative assessment which charts the progress of the individual child over time, and compares his/her achievement with their prior attainments, as opposed to those of their peers (Gravelle, 1996 and Cummins, 2000)

**2.39** In the context of the IM sector, Long and Clarke (2008) emphasise the benefits of ongoing observation and informal, curriculum-based, and metacognitive assessment. Given the lack of standardised assessment materials in the Irish language for the identification of SEN in the IM sector, as previously discussed (DE, 1999; Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir, 2004; Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007), teaching practitioners in the IM sector, therefore, employ a combination of formal and informal assessment techniques (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007). Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir (2004) list observation, informal assessments and running records as the most frequently used forms of assessment used by teachers in IM and Gaeltacht schools in the south of Ireland. Recent work by Clay and Nig Uidhir (2007) has resulted in the publication of assessment material for early literacy in the IM sector, *Áis Mheasúnaithe don Luathlitearthacht*. Their work involved a redevelopment of *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Clay, 2006), discussed in Clay and Nig Uidhir (2007). This resource consists of six standardised tests in Irish to facilitate the assessment of children's early literacy in Irish. The results of the assessment in Irish will assist teachers in assessing pupils' Irish literacy development and in identifying children who require additional support. The resource will allow teachers to plan appropriately to support individual children with their literacy development in Irish (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007).



## Language used in assessment

**2.40** It is not only the assessment strategy which impacts on the outcome of assessment of bilingual children. The language through which the assessment is conducted can also influence the accuracy of assessment (Baker, 2000). It is well documented that learning difficulties are evident across languages and for that reason, criterion of cross-lingual evidence is recommended when assessing a bilingual child (Baker, 2000:132). Speech and language therapist, Juarez (1983, discussed in Cloud, 1994), for example, advocates that a bilingual child be assessed for speech and language difficulties in both languages in order to accurately differentiate between a language disorder and limited second language acquisition. The *Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists Handbook, Communicating Quality* (2006: 269) states that assessment should be carried out 'in all the languages to which they [the children] are exposed'.

**2.41** Much of the international literature on bilingual children who experience SEN is based on research involving children whose first language is a minority language, for example Spanish or Portuguese, and who are learning a majority language, such as English, as a second or additional language (Cummins, 2000 and Baker, 2006). Baker (2000:124) asserts that such bilingual children are often tested in their weaker, second language (the majority language), 'inaccurately measuring both language and general cognitive development'. Ambert (1986), cited by Cloud (1994), highlights the danger of misidentification of SEN if a child is assessed in a language which they have not yet fully mastered, or if he/she is assessed against the performance indicators of native speakers.

**2.42** The theory behind the advantages of bilingual assessment of a bilingual child can be found in Cummins' theory of language development (Cummins, 1984). Cummins' theoretical framework identified two facets of language development; (a) Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) which refer to visible aspects of language acquisition such as pronunciation, basic vocabulary and grammar and, (b) Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) which covers the semantic and functional meaning of language. According to this theory, while BICS are essential for social interaction and communication, they have little bearing on academic achievement. It is the development of CALP which is vital for educational attainment. Furthermore, Cummins stated that, while second language learners may acquire BICS within two years of beginning to learn the language, it can take between five and seven years to acquire CALP. For this reason, bilingual children who appear to educators to have mastered the second language, may not be assessed accurately according to their linguistic needs and may be misdiagnosed as a result.

**2.43** Frederickson and Cline (1996) highlight the dangers created for a child who has English as an additional language and who appears to educators to be fluent in English and is, therefore, assessed using resources designed for children with English as a first language. They express concern that the child may be diagnosed as having learning difficulties to explain his/her academic underachievement, when, in actual fact, the child has not adequately developed his/her CALP skills necessary for academic success. Landon (1999), discussed in Deponio *et al.* (2000), suggests that development of good phonic skills in early literacy may mask difficulties in comprehension. When difficulties are identified at a later stage, the child is judged to have difficulties with phonic awareness or have perceptual problems when, in fact, the child's difficulties may arise from cultural unfamiliarity with the text.

**2.44** The literature on the assessment of bilingual children who speak a majority language as a second, or additional language, indicates some disagreement in respect of the language of assessment (Cloud, 1994). Research carried out by Miramontes (1987), as discussed in Cloud (1994) showed that the assessment of a child's reading skills in their native (minority) language improved the accuracy of the identification of a learning disability. On the other hand, Willig (1986), cited in Cloud (1994), states that assessment of bilingual children should be conducted in their strongest or dominant language i.e. that which 'is more developed, is preferred when the two languages are equally appropriate and intrudes on the phonological, syntactic, lexical or semantic system of the other' as defined by Mattes and Omark (1984, discussed in Cloud (1994), and not necessarily their native tongue. Baker (2000:132) affirms that bilingual children with a majority language as a second, or additional language, 'must be assessed in their stronger language', using tests and diagnostic materials in that language, but that 'ideally, assessment should be bilingual'.

**2.45** In the context of the IM sector, it is recognised that standardised assessment materials in Irish are limited (DE, 1999; Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir, 2004; Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007). Children from the IM sector are usually assessed by an educational psychologist who does not speak Irish and without Irish language assessment materials (Nig Uidhir, 2001). Research in the IM sector indicates that there are varying levels of language competence and variations in pupils' experience of, and exposure to Irish across the sector (Nig Uidhir, 2001 and Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir, 2004). Nig Uidhir (2001) observes that students from the IM system in the north of Ireland sitting GCSE and A level examinations are offered a choice of language according to which they believe to be their stronger language. The fact that some students choose to sit the paper in English and some in Irish is evidence of varying levels of language competence and confidence to write in academic format, and reflective of differing language

experiences amongst students in the IM sector. For this reason, Nig Uidhir affirms it is important that the choice remains with the students themselves (Nig Uidhir, 2001).

### Use of translated material

**2.46** In addition to the language in which assessment is carried out, the type of language used can also influence the outcome of the assessment. Baker (2000:132) identifies the difficulties posed by the use of translations of assessment materials from one language to another, which may produce ‘inappropriate, stilted language.’ Moreover, he asserts that assessors must take cognisance of language variations, and ensure that assessment materials reflect such variations in order to avoid a scenario where a child is misdiagnosed for using language which is natural to them (Baker, 2000). Peer and Reid (2000:4) argue that ‘problems of cultural and linguistic bias, differing syntax and structure’ render the scores of translated tests unreliable and therefore, invalid.

**2.47** Mac Corraidh (2002) examines the issue of translated assessment materials in the IM primary school context. He refers to the added task placed on children from the IM sector who sit an Irish translation of an examination paper which was originally designed in English, particularly if the language used in the translation does not reflect the natural language of children of that age.

**2.48** The *All Wales Reading Test*, created to measure reading performance in children in Welsh Medium (WM) and EM schools, represents a positive example in which the natural language of the children was taken into account in the assessment design process. Designers of the test identified syntactical and lexical variations in regional Welsh dialects and employed strategies to ensure that the language used was as standardised as possible. To this aim, the age of the target group was taken in account when selecting particular literary forms, and separate English language and Welsh language tests were created so the tests were not direct translations of each other (Forbes and Powell, 2000).

### Bilingual co-workers

**2.49** One means of overcoming the difficulty of language in a particular assessment, as suggested by international literature, is the use of interpreters or bilingual co-workers. Rogers and Pratten (1996) cite the work of bilingual co-workers in the Leicestershire Educational Psychology Service who work alongside educational psychologists in

assessing the needs of bilingual children referred to the service. They report that 'the rapport that is established between a child and an adult who identifies with the child in terms of language and culture is very important'. The role of the bilingual co-worker involves 'legal assessment of special educational needs, school based work accompanying the educational psychologist, family work accompanying an educational psychologist and a social worker, independent family work and independent teaching/counselling' (:83).

**2.50** O'Hagan (2000) cites The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists' handbook, *Communicating Quality 2* (1996) which advocates the use of a bilingual co-worker service in order to provide speech and language therapy in the language of choice, to take the client's home language and culture into account, to contribute to the diagnosis process between first and second language difficulties, and to empower the carers of bilingual clients to participate in management of the client's speech and language difficulties. O'Hagan's research (2000) highlighted a number of difficulties experienced by the parents of bilingual children, who speak Irish, when accessing speech and language therapy services in Northern Ireland. O'Hagan reports that there are no Irish language co-workers in the speech and language therapy service in Northern Ireland, and suggests that the consequences of this may be reflected in the negative experiences reported by some respondents to his research (O'Hagan, 2000:203-204).

## Section 2

### Categories of SEN

#### Speech, Language and Communication difficulties

**2.51** Much has been written about the importance of effective communication skills in cognitive, social, and emotional development. Positive self-esteem, learning and the development of relationships are all dependent on the ability to communicate effectively (RCSLT, 2006; Brennan, 2004; and Law, 1998, cited in NICCY, 2005). If those who experience speech, language and communication (SLC) difficulties do not receive adequate and appropriate support they risk serious detriment to their self-esteem, relationships with others and academic achievement (RCSLT, 2006). Moreover, from an educational point of view, SLC difficulties can hinder a child's access to the curriculum and, as a result of the link between language and literacy, negatively impact on literacy development (Harron *et al.* 2006).

#### Identification of SLC difficulties

**2.52** The Northern Ireland Speech and Language Therapy Task Force (NISLTTF) (2008) highlight the importance of early identification of SLC difficulties. It states that, 'the majority of speech, language and communication difficulties manifest in the early years. Early identification is therefore, key to ensure that children's educational and social development will not be compromised in later years' (NISLTTF, 2008: 31). Furthermore, in the context of the early identification, the Task Force (2008) cites the need for appropriate strategies to take account of 'looked after children (LAC), children for whom English is a second language, and children from Irish Medium backgrounds' (NISLTTF, 2008: 31).

#### SLC difficulties

**2.53** Early definitions of SLC difficulties (Bloom and Lahey, 1978 and Crystal, 1980), cited in Miller (1984), influenced the early belief that bilingualism caused children to experience difficulties in speech and language. Recent research on the cognitive advantages of bilingualism (Cummins, 2000; Baker, 2007; and McKendry, 2006) has largely discredited this belief. The RCSLT handbook, *Communicating Quality 2* (RCSLT, 2006: 269) stipulates that 'bilingualism is not a disorder and it is not therefore, appropriate to be considered as a condition with measurable prevalence'. It is documented, however, that, similar to monolingual children, bilingual children may experience SLC difficulties at some point in their lives (RCSLT, 2006 and Baker, 2000).

## Instances of SLC difficulties

**2.54** International literature varies in its estimation of the number of children likely to experience SLC difficulties. Wei *et al.* (1997), as discussed in Baker, (2000, 128) suggest that around 5% of all children will experience some form of language disorder. Law (1998), as cited by NICCY (2005), reports that 6-8% of children aged 0 -11 present with SLC needs. Some of the forms of language disorder experienced by children are documented by Wei *et al.* (1997), discussed in Baker (2000:128). They include language delay, stuttering or stammering, very slow development in language competence, speaking less often and less accurately than normal, inability to produce certain sounds or remember new words, and never achieving the same language competence as peers (*ibid.*).

## Bilingual children and SLC difficulties

**2.55** In cases of bilingual children who present with SLC difficulties, such as language delay or stuttering, it is reported that their bilingualism is sometimes blamed when no other explanation can be obtained (Baker, 2006, Döpke, 2006a). Baker (2000:128) asserts, however, that 'bilingual children are neither more nor less likely to show problems' with SLC difficulties than monolingual children. While bilingual children may present some inaccuracies when speaking a second language, such linguistic inaccuracies do not necessarily constitute an SLC difficulty or disorder. Moreover, Baker (1995) reports that some researchers have claimed that early bilingualism can cause cognitive overload and that the child, therefore, requires additional language processing time which can cause the child to stutter. Baker (1995) cites subsequent research which suggests that if some bilingual children do experience stuttering temporarily during the language acquisition process, it normally disappears as language fluency develops, and that 'overall, bilinguals appear no more likely to stutter than monolinguals' (:102). Given that international research shows that bilingual children may experience SLC difficulties at some stage in their lives, it is necessary that services make appropriate provision to adequately meet the needs of bilingual children. NICCY's *Overview of Speech and Language Therapy Provision in Northern Ireland 2004/2005* (2005:24) makes reference to the need for 'increased demand for services for bilingual children which is not catered for within service growth'.

## Assessment of, and provision for, SLC difficulties

**2.56** It sometimes happens that parents are advised by well-meaning professionals that a child's bilingualism is at the root of the child's SLC difficulties, and that monolingualism, usually

majority language monolingualism, represents a remedy to the problem (Baker, 2000 and Döpke, 2006). Parents may, therefore, in the best interests of the child's development and academic progress, decide to abandon the minority language (the language of the home) in favour of a majority language. Baker (2006) cautions that such a decision may result in severing communication between the child and certain family or community members and impact detrimentally on the child's emotional well-being (Baker, 2006). He argues that if a sudden change of language is made from minority to majority language by a parent who loves and cares for the child, the traditional language of love and affection is lost, which may intensify the child's difficulties. In addition, Baker (2000) suggests that the child's language development may, in fact, be disadvantaged if minority language parents choose to speak a majority language which is not their native tongue, and in which they themselves may not be completely fluent. Döpke, (2006a) also cautions against switching from the minority language of the home to a majority language such as English. She suggests that 'parents who are not very proficient in English, or who are emotionally much more attached to the language of their own childhood than to English, may in fact speak less to their children when asked to speak English-only' (:3).

**2.57** Cummins' developmental interdependence hypothesis (Cummins, 1976) states that language skills do not have to be relearned as part of the second language acquisition process. If the child's language skills are strengthened in the first language (L1) these skills will be transferred to the second language (L2). It is principally for this reason that it is recommended that parents of minority language bilingual children with SLC difficulties continue to communicate with them in their first language (Baker, 2006 and Döpke, 2006).

### SLC resource materials

**2.58** For speech and language therapists operating through a majority language, for example English, there exists a wide variety of assessment resources to assist them in their work. Amongst these resources Brennan (2004) cites descriptions of, and schedules for, sound and language acquisition, standardised tools for comparing a child's development with that typically expected of their peers, and standardised tools for measuring different aspects of expressive language (Brennan, 2004). As a solution to the problems arising from a lack of appropriate speech and language assessments for minority languages, two speech therapists in Rochdale (Stow and Pert, 1998, cited in O'Hagan, 2000)) have designed a bilingual phonology assessment for Mirpuri (a dialect of Punjabi), Punjabi and Urdu-speaking children in order to assess the children's phonological systems for each language to which they are exposed. The assessment, The Rochdale Assessment of Mirpuri Phonology (RAMP), is based on the principle that children

develop separate phonological systems for each language they speak, and that each phonological system should be assessed by speech and language professionals (O'Hagan, 2000).

**2.59** Brennan (2004: iii) contrasts the situation of speech and language therapists working with monolingual English-speaking children for whom there exists a wide range of assessment resources with the situation faced by therapists working with children whose first language is Irish, for whom no normative information exists on rates and patterns of speech development. The challenge posed by the absence of speech and language assessment materials in the Irish language impacts equally on Irish-speaking children in immersion education (Brennan, 2004 and Harron *et al*, 2006). A practical example of the challenge posed by the lack of speech and language assessment materials in Irish is documented by Harron *et al*. (2006). They identified the challenge created by the lack of speech and language resources in Irish during their project to introduce a speech and language scheme into IM primary schools. Furthermore, while every effort was made to translate materials into Irish, attempts to compare children in the IM sector with their EM peers left IM pupils at a disadvantage, as the standardised tests could only be conducted in English. Similar to the situation of standardised literacy assessment materials discussed above, the standardised materials used to test phonological awareness could not be translated lest the translated material skew the results of the assessment process (Harron *et al.*, 2006).

**2.60** Research conducted by Brennan (2004: 52) into language acquisition of children with Irish as their first language identified, and reported developmental data on the children's language acquisition and phonological errors made by children in the early development of Irish. Brennan (2004) concludes that further research will be required to identify the same for Irish-speaking children in IM education. The multiagency schools' speech and language programme, as carried out and documented by Harron *et al*. (2006), has resulted in the creation of a selection of Irish language resources for use by speech and language therapists working with Irish-speaking children. Irish language speech and language resource packages *Málaí Teanga (Language Bags)* have been produced by one IM pre-school in partnership with the Down and Lisburn Health Trust.

## Dyslexia

**2.61** The definition of dyslexia endorsed by The Task Group on Dyslexia (Northern Ireland), is that of the Republic of Ireland Task Force on Dyslexia which states:

Dyslexia is manifested in a continuum of specific learning difficulties related to the acquisition of basic skills in reading, spelling, writing and/or number, such difficulties being unexpected in relation to an individual's other abilities.



Dyslexia can be characterised at the neurological, cognitive and behavioural levels. It is typically described by inefficient information processing, including difficulties in phonological processing, working memory, rapid naming and automaticity of basic skills. Difficulties in organisation, sequencing, and motor skills may also be present.

(Task Force on Dyslexia, 2002: iii)

**2.62** Furthermore, The Task Group on Dyslexia (2002: iv) recognises a range of difficulty from mild to severe dyslexia and, therefore, the need for a range of interventions to address these needs; and the importance of early and effective intervention at in-class and whole school levels; and external support from ELB services.

**2.63** The Task Group on Dyslexia (2002) report the British Dyslexia Association's (BDA) estimate (1989) that 10% of children have some degree of dyslexia. Of that 10%, the BDA estimates that 4% of children experience severe dyslexia and 6% experience mild to moderate dyslexia. Turner (2000) asserts that about 10% more of the total sample of children assessed using a *Dyslexia Index* attracted a dyslexia diagnosis than the sample of bilingual children assessed using the same. He concludes, however, that the limited available data suggest that bilingual children are no more likely to have dyslexia than their monolingual peers.

**2.64** Research emphasises the importance of early identification of difficulties, and the identification of strengths to ensure the implementation of effective support structures (Peer and Reid, 2000). The Task Group (2002) suggest that some young people may experience dyslexia to some degree, but that they may go unidentified. Failure to accurately identify dyslexia can lead to loss of self-esteem, confidence, and motivation; to anxiety, depression, frustration, and consequently, to behavioural problems (Everatt *et al.*, 2000). While much research has been done in the fields of dyslexia, and bilingualism respectively, there is a paucity of research concerning the issue of dyslexia in bilingual or multilingual children (Peer and Reid, 2000). It is possible, therefore, that some of those who go unidentified do so as a result of their bilingualism, if, for example, the assessment tools employed do not take account of the linguistic and cultural differences experienced by a bilingual child compared to his/her monolingual peers or, if dyslexia is masked by a lack of proficiency in the language used (Deponio *et al.*, 2000). Long and Clarke (2008) voice concern that children with dyslexia in the IM sector, for example, may not be identified if their dyslexia is masked by insufficient mastery of Irish and/or English.

**2.65** It is widely accepted that dyslexia poses problems internationally, but that the extent of its impact varies from country to country, depending on factors such as the perceived importance of education in the community and the availability of SEN resources (Smythe and

Everatt, 2000). Research has been carried out on dyslexia in different linguistic systems suggesting varying incidences of dyslexia in different languages (Smythe *et al.*, 2000). The NI Task Group on Dyslexia (2002) reports, however, that the same definition of dyslexia is not applied in all studies, rendering comparisons between languages difficult. Furthermore, the initial research behind this suggestion was carried out in English, known to be one of the most orthographically irregular languages. Grigorenko (2001:91-125), discussed by the Task Group on Dyslexia (2002), affirms that dyslexia is independent of race and social background, that 'phonological approaches are universal aspects of the development of literacy in many languages and understanding of the phonological structure of words is an important predictor of reading success in many languages.' The Task Group on Dyslexia (2002) reports, however, that the question is how to diagnose dyslexia in a way that is compatible with the work going on elsewhere (2002:24).

### Assessment and intervention for bilingual pupils

**2.66** The effectiveness of appropriate intervention for dyslexia depends very much on early identification (Peer and Reid, 2000). A range of assessment tools is available for the identification of dyslexia. Everatt *et al.* (2000) cite the *Aston Index* (Newton and Thompson, 1976), the *Bangor Dyslexia Test* (BDT) (Miles 1993), the *Dyslexia Screening Test* (DST) (Fawcett and Nicholson, 1996) and the *Phonological Assessment Battery* (PhAB) (Frederickson *et al.*, 1996). These tools were, however, developed for use with monolingual English-speaking children.

**2.67** While Everatt *et al.* (2000) suggest that assessment measures suitable for bilingual children may be derived from English language dyslexia tools, particularly those related to phonological processing, they also highlight the need to take into account factors influencing the education and assessment of bilingual children such as home background, cultural differences, impoverished language skills, speech and vocabulary development and inefficient memory competency (Peer, 1997, cited in Everett *et al.*, 2000), in order to suitably adapt dyslexia screening materials.

**2.68** Turner (2000) summarises a number of assessment procedures currently available for screening for dyslexia in bilingual children, whose first language is a minority language and second a majority language; in this instance, English. The new edition of the *British Ability Scales* (BAS II) as discussed in Elliott *et al.* (2000), for example, is recommended for educational psychologists as a means of differentiating between language difficulties and specific learning difficulties. The second edition of the *British Picture Vocabulary Scale*, a receptive vocabulary test, is recommended for teachers' use when working with EAL children. Thirdly, Turner suggests testing arithmetic skills, as a means of screening for dyslexia, in cases where the

assessor does not speak the child's first language. He recommends tests such as DAS, *Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC)*, BAS and the *One Minute Number Tests* which allow for the identification of underachievement in written calculation skills, particularly difficulties with division and subtraction, which may be indicators of dyslexia.

**2.69** Peer and Reid (2000) emphasise the range of skills which dyslexics are known to possess such as visual-spatial skills and verbal skills which will become more and more beneficial in a technological society, and urge that all those with dyslexia be supported, including those who speak more than one language.

### Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties

**2.70** There is no universally accepted definition of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (BELB, 2004). The UK government's *Green Paper - Excellence for All Children* (DfEE, 1997:78) defined those with SEBD as: 'a broad range of young people – preponderantly boys – with a very wide spectrum of needs, from those with short term emotional difficulties to those with extremely challenging behaviour or serious psychological difficulties'. In addition, it reported that the challenge of diagnosing those with SEBD is made more difficult by differences in the terminology employed by various agencies (DfEE, 1997). Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) (2004: 22) defined children with SEBD as 'children who are persistently unable or unwilling to trust or form healthy relationships with their peers and other adults. They may present as anxious and withdrawn or aggressive and disruptive. They are often unable or unwilling to access the curriculum or comply with reasonable school rules and routines'. Further, SEBD present in a variety of forms. In addition to the definitions cited above, SEBD include 'withdrawn, depressive or suicidal attitudes, difficulty in communicating, obsessional preoccupation with eating habits, school phobia, substance misuse, disruptive, antisocial and unco-operative behaviour, frustration, anger and a threat of violence (DE, 2005b) A Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) report supports the definition given by DE (2005b) and suggests that children and young people with a medical diagnosis such as depression, eating disorders, conduct disorders and syndromes such as Tourette's are likely to experience SEBD (DCSF, 2008).

**2.71** Current literature reports higher instances of SEBD amongst boys than girls (DCSF, 2008 and DfEE, 1997), however, research to date has not offered an explanation for this trend. The DCSF report on SEBD in England, for example, reports that boys are four times more likely to be identified as experiencing SEBD than girls. The report also highlights higher instances of SEBD in areas of social deprivation (DCSF, 2008).

**2.72** To date, literature on SEBD reports that the root causes of these difficulties are diverse and often complex (SEBDA, 2006). Some suggested contributory factors include family

disadvantage, family breakdown, poor parenting skills, poor experiences at school and emotional difficulties (DfEE, 1997). Further factors include diet and nutrition, poor attendance and truancy, alcohol and substance abuse, violence, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia and other associated learning difficulties (BELB, 2004). Other contributory factors include neglect, physical or mental illness, sensory or physical impairment, and psychological trauma (DE, 2005b).

**2.73** The review carried out by the BELB (2004:21), for example, ‘highlighted the behaviour patterns of our young people, within and beyond the school environment as a major concern for schools, parents, communities, the board and society at large.’ The review also brought to light ‘an increasing demand for provision for children experiencing SEBD at the post-primary, primary and, more recently, nursery sector’. BELB (2004:21) reported that ‘there is a close correlation between behaviour patterns and educational attainment and experience’.

**2.74** Baker (1995) reports that it is sometimes suggested that there is a link between SEBD and bilingualism. He argues, however, that there is no evidence to support that this is the case. On the contrary, he emphasises the social and emotional gains associated with being able to speak a second language. Baker (1995) explains the connection made between bilingualism and SEBD as a result of the associations made between bilingualism and ethnic minority groups who are often victims of poverty, racial harassment and social problems, and not as a direct result of being bilingual.

**2.75** Despite limited evidence on the issue of SEBD and bilingualism, it is clear that the level of SEBD cases is increasing amongst young people in modern society. Bilingual children are as likely to be affected by SEBD as monolingual children (Baker, 2007). Adequate and appropriate provision, which recognises the specific needs of bilinguals, must be made available for bilingual children and young people who experience SEBD in order to ensure that their difficulties are not compounded by service providers who are unaware of their particular needs (Lindsay *et al.*, 2006).

### **Autistic Spectrum Disorders**

**2.76** The Task Group on Autism (DENI, 2002: 11) defines an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as, ‘a complex developmental disability that essentially affects the way a person communicates and relates to people’. While the severity of ASD varies amongst individuals, it is reported that children identified as having an ASD will experience difficulties with communication, social interaction, learning, behaviour, sensory stimuli and anxiety and stress (DENI, 2002: 19).

**2.77** While acknowledging the difficulties in establishing the prevalence of ASD amongst school-age children in the north of Ireland, the Task Group Report estimates the approximate prevalence rate of ASD in school-age children to be 2,776 (DENI, 2002: 67). A study commissioned by DE into ASD amongst children aged 2-4 years reported an increasing incidence of ASD, especially amongst boys, in children of pre-school age, both in Northern Ireland and internationally (DENI, 2007a).

### **ASD and bilingualism**

**2.78** Much has been written on the subject of ASD. A comprehensive review of the relevant literature, current provision for children with ASD and recommendations for future provision is contained in the Task Group Report on Autism (DENI, 2002) and the Report of the Task Force on Autism (DES, 2001). A more recent study carried out by DE examined the level of need for early intervention support for young children with ASD in Northern Ireland (DENI, 2007a). There is, however, a dearth of research on the issue of ASD and bilingualism (Baker, 2007).

**2.79** In an international context, research is currently being undertaken in Canada by Prof. Christine Besnard, Glendon College, York University (Besnard, 2006) on the issue of Autism and bilingualism. In 2006 the Geneva Centre for Autism symposium on the issue of bilingualism and Autism examined the advantages and disadvantages of second language learning for high functioning autistic children and children with Asperger's Syndrome (Geneva Centre for Autism, 2006). Döpke (2006b) examines the issue of bilingualism amongst children with autism, in the context of children with English as a second language, and Baker (2007) reports the experiences of a parent of a bilingual child with Asperger's Syndrome.

**2.80** Döpke (2006b) reports that parents of children with English as a second or additional language who have ASD have sometimes been advised to speak English to the child at home to avoid 'burdening' their child with a language other than English at home. While it is accepted that language and communication are often difficult for children with ASD (DENI, 2002), Baker (2007: 93) argues that 'such children may understand and speak two languages of the local community at their own level' and, as a result, benefit from the social and cultural advantages of bilingualism. Döpke (2006b) suggests that access to simple words in more than one language may act as a resource for both child and speech therapist in the early stages of teaching functional language. The Geneva Symposium on Autism (2006) concluded that despite communication representing one of the greatest challenges for children with ASD, learning a second language can have a number of advantages for high functioning autistic children and children with Asperger's Syndrome. Baker (2007) reports that some children with Asperger's Syndrome may have an exceptional gift for language, and would not struggle to cope with more than one language.

## Support for bilingual children with ASD

**2.81** With regard to supporting a bilingual child with ASD, Döpke (2006b) argues that ‘there is no evidence to suggest that hearing more than one language makes the symptoms of autism worse, or that the English-only advice improves the abilities of children with autism – language-wise, conceptually or socially.’ Döpke (2006b) cautions against choosing to raise a bilingual child with ASD monolingually as a means of support, and emphasises the need to take account of how the child with ASD will interpret one language being spoken to them but another language being spoken to other members of the family, how much the child might miss if they do not speak the language being spoken around them, how comfortable parents will feel speaking a language which is not their own, and how this might impact on the sensory processing of the child. Döpke (2006b) argues that as children with ASD need to be re-taught skills in a range of environments, the re-teaching can involve words and sentences in more than one language. Furthermore, as many people with autism are visual learners, Döpke (2006b) advocates the use of visual aids to form bridges between languages.

**2.82** With regard to assistance for the parents and teachers of children with ASD in the IM sector, GESO (Gaeleagras um Shainriachtanais Oideachais), voluntary support organisation for SEN within the IM sector, provides bilingual (Irish-English) information and advice on ASD for teachers and parents (2007).

## Section 3

### Educational provision

**2.83** Current educational policy emphasises the right to, and benefits of, inclusive education (DE, 2005). International literature disagrees, to some extent, on the catalyst for the movement towards inclusive education (Mhic Aoidh, 2004). Mhic Aoidh (2004) reports that, while some scholars cite the *Salamanca Statement* (1994) as the beginning of the movement towards inclusion in England (Evans and Lunt, 2002) others trace the roots of inclusion back to the Warnock report (1978) (Clark *et al.*, 1997).

**2.84** In respect of SEN provision in the context of the IM sector, the rights of children with SEN to be educated in a mainstream setting, were strengthened by the introduction of the SENDO legislation in 2005 (DE, 2005). Mhic Aoidh (2004) reports that immersion education is sometimes erroneously regarded as a form of elitist education, which does not cater for the needs of children who require additional support with their learning. In light of the legal obligations placed on mainstream schools by the Education (NI) Order (1996) and strengthened

by SENDO (2005) to make appropriate provision for pupils with SEN, the issues relating to the provision of inclusive education are now equally relevant to IM schools (Mhic Aoidh, 2004).

**2.85** Baker (2000:139) stresses the importance of ensuring that children who require additional support with their education are not denied the benefits of bilingual education such as dual language competence, biculturalism and multiculturalism, as well as other educational, cultural, self-identity and self-esteem enhancements. Döpke (2005) highlights the importance of developing additional skills for children with SEN, not only to increase employment opportunities and, therefore, independence in society but also to increase self-esteem, all of which are of particular importance for someone already facing disadvantage.

**2.86** In respect of bilingual children with a majority language as a second, or additional, language, Baker (2007) reports that it has been argued by some that minority language children who experience learning difficulties ought to be educated solely in the majority language. Research carried out by Candelaria-Greene (1996) in Nairobi on children with Down Syndrome learning trilingually, reported that the children achieved the same gains in their third language as their monolingual peers, with similar developmental delays in the United States. The study concluded that 'proficiency in several languages is only partially influenced by cognitive ability, and very much influenced by the expectations and opportunities for using a second, third or even fourth language in the student's life.' Baker (2000) cites research carried out in Canada which found that the children's language skills developed at a slower pace, as did their mathematical and literacy skills and scientific development. The study concluded that the children's vocabulary size and grammatical accuracy were less in both languages, however, the children were able to communicate in both languages. Döpke (2005) affirms that if children with cerebral palsy can become literate in one language, they can become literate in two languages. She suggests that children with severe communication impairment may not be as cognitively impaired as their motor difficulties may suggest if, indeed, they have any cognitive impairment at all.

**2.87** Arrangements suggested by Baker (2000:138) to facilitate appropriate provision for language minority bilingual children with SEN include 'special education schools (resident and non-resident), hospital based education, residential homes, special education units attached to mainstream schools, specially resourced classes in mainstream schools, withdrawal and pull out programmes for extra speech and language help and behavioural management and special help given by teachers, paraprofessionals or support staff in 'regular' classes'.

### **Immersion education**

**2.88** In the context of an immersion education programme, it is recommended that children with learning difficulties remain within the immersion education system and receive

appropriate remedial support there. As a result, children can still develop communicative skills in the second language (Bruck, 1978, cited in Neil *et al.* 2000). It is reported that children with learning difficulties benefit from the immersion education environment when learning a second language as language acquisition through immersion does not rely on drills, memorisation of patterns and repetition (Das and Cummins, 1982, as cited in Neil *et al.*, 2000). Early research studies suggested that some children are predisposed to experience learning difficulties in early immersion education (Trites (1976), cited in Cummins (1984). This has been strongly criticised by Cummins (1979) and Stern *et al.* (1976) on conceptual, methodological, and statistical grounds (Cummins, 1984). Cummins (1984:169) supports Bruck's work for being 'considerably more convincing from a design standpoint' and which concluded that children with speech and language and learning problems make equivalent progress in the immersion education system as in monolingual programmes and should, therefore, remain in the immersion system.

### Irish Medium education

**2.89** To date, little research has been carried out in the field of SEN provision in the IM sector. The importance placed on the issue of provision for SEN has, however, been well documented (Ó Coinn, 2002; Mhic Aoidh, 2004 and Nic Annaidh, 2005). Mhic Aoidh (2004) discusses the challenges faced by IM schools in ensuring the provision of adequate and appropriate support for pupils in the IM sector experiencing SEN. She asserts that IM schools face the same challenges in relation to adequate provision for SEN and inclusion as schools in the EM sector. She reports, however, that IM schools face additional challenges regarding the most appropriate provision for pupils experiencing SEN and the role of English reading and writing for pupils experiencing learning difficulties. In her examination of the issue of SEN in the IM sector in the north of Ireland, Nig Uidhir (2001) cites international literature (Bruck, 1978, cited in Neil *et al.*, 2000; and Cummins, 1984) which advocates that pupils with additional needs remain in immersion education, but also suggests that any advantage afforded to the child by immersion education will be nullified if basic assessment and diagnostic materials are not available through the medium of the immersion language. This viewpoint is highlighted also by Neil *et al.* (2000:49) who stress that adhering to the school of thought that children experience SEN ought to remain within the immersion programme 'assumes participation in an additive bilingual environment where good remedial services are provided.'

**2.90** Mhic Aoidh (2004) points out that efforts made in IM schools to be as inclusive as possible are often thwarted by a lack of facilities and poor quality accommodation. As a result of such circumstances, it sometimes happens that parents are advised to remove their child from the IM system in favour of special education, or EM education sometimes viewed as the 'safe' option for meeting the needs of children experiencing SEN (Mhic Aoidh, 2004). Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir (2004) also make reference to the experience of parents being advised to



transfer children who are experience learning difficulties to an EM school. They refer to research carried out in Canada by Harley (1991) on reasons why children with reading difficulties left immersion education. Harley (1991) sought to identify if beginning to read in the second language (L2) had influenced the children's leaving. The research concluded that there was no evidence to suggest that beginning to read in L2 impacted negatively on the children's literacy, and that there was every chance that children who left the immersion system as a result of reading difficulties would have experienced the same difficulties had they have begun to read in their first language (L1) (Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir, 2004).

**2.91** Transferring a child from one system to another may involve a number of distinct disadvantages. Amongst the specific disadvantages of removing a child from an immersion education system, international literature on this topic cites loss of confidence; feelings of failure; loss of friends, of social network, and of sense of community; and a greater likelihood of failing to learn the second language as a subject than as a method of communication acquired like the mother tongue (Mhic Aoidh, 2004). Furthermore, Bruck (1978/79, 1980, discussed in Cummins, 1984) suggests that switching schools may also lead to tension within the new school if the teachers resent the extra work which that child may represent.

**2.92** Within the IM sector, the child who is moved from an IM school to an EM school may also be disadvantaged if the teacher is unaware that, for the most part, children in IM education do not begin formal English literacy until Year 3 or Year 4, and so uses reading tests in English to assess the child's ability (Nig Uidhir, 2001). Nig Uidhir (2001) advocates further cooperation between IM and EM sectors as a means of facilitating the transition for children who transfer from IM to EM schools.

**2.93** Despite limited research on provision for SEN in the IM sector, a number of suggestions have been put forward concerning the education of children with SEN within the IM sector. GESO, voluntary organisation for SEN in the IM sector, advocates the foundation of a university-based SEN Chair for the IM sector which would advise organisations on SEN provision for pupils in the IM sector, and undertake research in the field (Nic Annaidh, 2005). Other suggestions for meeting the needs of children in the IM sector include greater classroom-based support, specialist professionals able to provide the range of required treatments available, as well as act in a peripatetic and resource development capacity, in each of the specialist centres in the north of Ireland, and the provision of trained assistants and teachers who could go into IM schools to assist children who require additional support (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, 2006c).

## Bilingual special education

**2.94** Baker (2000) reports that, in some cases the needs of bilingual children with SEN may be best met in a bilingual special education programme. A bilingual special education programme or Integrated Bilingual Special Education (IBSE) is specifically designed for children who are learning English as a second language and who have special needs. The special education programme is provided in the students' native language and aims to combine the major components of bilingual education and special education (Maldonado, 1994).

**2.95** In respect of provision for children with additional needs in the IM sector, GESO calls for the establishment of a remedial centre with the aim of catering for the needs of children from IM schools who require additional and specialist support with their learning (Nic Annaidh, 2005).

## Parents

**2.96** Some recent publications have made a connection between pupil achievement and home-school relations (Wolfendale, 2000). Substantial literature exists in support of the proposed relationship between parental involvement in school and school achievement of the child. Some evidence also exists to suggest that parents who appear not to take an interest in their child's education transmit a negative attitude towards the child's education (Torres-Guzmán, 1995).

**2.97** Faltis (1995) recognises the educational benefits of students' parents and communities working together, but also accepts that involving parents in school life may not always be easy, particularly if the parents do not speak the language of the school. While Faltis focuses on strategies for involving the parents and communities of minority language children in North American schools, some of these strategies may be equally useful for teachers in the IM sector communicating with and involving parents who may not necessarily speak Irish themselves. Faltis recommends a multi-level approach based on the works of Pettit (1980) and Rasinki and Fredericks (1989). The approach involves four levels; teacher-parent contact, sharing information in the home about schooling, participation at home, and school and parental empowerment in curricular decisions. Suggestions relating to the various levels include home visits, meetings with community based organisations, weekly newsletters to parents, inviting parents to observe the classroom situation and to special events, and involving parents in school governing and extra-curricular schemes. Implementing such an approach requires time and effort but it is essential in order to involve all parents across cultural and linguistic barriers (Faltis, 1995).

**2.98** Parental involvement is of vital importance within the context of immersion education also, both in their contribution to the development of immersion education, and in their child's education. Ó Murchú (1987), discussed by Hickey (1998), emphasises the role of parents in immersion pre-schools, saying that it is the parents who establish and build the pre-school. This participation on behalf of parents is then extended into the primary and post-primary immersion phases as their children progress. Research carried out by Hickey (1997) on early immersion education in the south of Ireland showed that parents often feel their role is to provide political and financial support for the school, more so than educational support for the child. Yet, Hickey's research (1997) highlighted the positive effect on the child's progress in the pre-school as a result of parents' use of the language at home. Hickey (1998) cites Moll (1995) who stresses the importance of interaction between the school, family and community in order to achieve the best possible results. Hickey (1998) asserts that the educational and linguistic support of parents in immersion education is more important than that of parents whose children are not in an immersion programme. Cummins (2000b) recognises the possible challenges faced by parents who do not speak the target language of their children's education. He suggests, however, that one implication of the interdependence principle is that children who experience difficulties in the early stages of the immersion programme can benefit from a two-way transfer of skills where they develop literacy skills in the home in their stronger language and work to transfer the skills acquired to their weaker language within the school setting. Given the high level of importance placed on the role of parents in their children's education, Hickey (1998) urges that parents of children in immersion education be supported and helped to be active with regard to their children's education and language development.

**2.99** As far as linguistic support from parents is concerned, the level of support will usually be determined by the parents' own language skills. Across the IM sector, parents' Irish language skills vary greatly, from little or no Irish to highly fluent in the language. Not only can parents' language proficiency impact on their ability to support their child with their education but it may also influence their relationship with and their involvement in their child's school. For some parents, limited ability in the language of the school represents a barrier to involvement in the child's education, and so parents may feel that their role in school life and in their child's education is restricted to establishing the school or to fundraising. Anecdotal evidence, reported by Hickey (1997) suggests that some parents in the IM sector may feel obliged to become members of committees and to become involved in fundraising activities. Hickey (1997:67) notes that the majority of children attending IM pre-schools in the south of Ireland, both in Galltacht (English-speaking) areas and Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) areas, came from

English-speaking homes. This does not appear to negatively affect their satisfaction with the sector and many parents report an increased use of Irish in the home as a result of their child attending an IM pre-school. This trend has been identified within the IM sector in the north of Ireland. While there are no exact statistics for the number of parents of children in the IM sector who speak Irish, it is estimated by Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta that no more than 5% of parents within the sector are Irish speakers.

**2.100** In response to suggestions from parents of children in IM schools in the south of Ireland, Hickey (1998) lists a number of methods of support for parents. These include; a bilingual newsletter detailing suitable resources and frequently used vocabulary, 'self-taught' materials in Irish, information packages on choosing books for children, using tapes, use of Irish in the home, a video showing natural use of Irish in the home, Irish conversation groups for parents, Parent and Toddler groups, tapes of lullabies, accompanying tapes and dictionaries with books used by the children, information on newly produced materials in Irish and family trips to Gaeltacht areas to encourage communication with native Irish speakers. Differences have been reported regarding the socio-economic background of IM schools in the north of Ireland and IM schools in the south of Ireland. In the north of Ireland, a significant number of IM schools are located in socially deprived areas (DE, 1999 and Boyle, 2005), a trend which is not mirrored in IM schools in the south of Ireland. It is important that parents' social and educational experiences are taken into account in planning systems of support for parents of children in the IM sector.

**2.101** As far as the issue of SEN is concerned, the involvement of parents is of equal, if not, greater importance. Tellier Robinson (2000), in discussing the parental involvement of Portuguese-speaking parents in the education of their children with SEN, highlights the extra help and attention the child with SEN requires with their education at school and in the home.

**2.102** The 1996 Education (Northern Ireland) Order and the accompanying Code of Practice recognised parents as partners in the processes involved in making SEN provision for their child, in particular concerning the assessment and statementing processes. In light of the SENDO legislation (2005) the *Supplement to the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of SEN* (The Supplement to the Code) (DE, 2005) reaffirms the role of parents as partners in the process of identifying and meeting the needs of children with SEN, recognises the importance of parents' feelings and any pressures which they may be under and reinforces parents' rights to information and advice on the assessment process. In order to do this, the Supplement to the Code outlines the responsibilities of ELBs, schools, and other professionals to draw on parental knowledge of their child's areas of strength and areas of weakness and welcome views from parents and their children, be aware of parents' feelings, ensure parents are aware of

procedures and sources of advice and support and that information is made accessible to them, ensure any needs which parents may have are met, and recognise the need for flexibility of timing and structure of meetings. Further, the Supplement of the Code highlights the responsibility of schools to welcome parents, encourage their involvement in their children's education, and inform parents of any SEN provision which is being made for their children in school. In respect of the role of parents, the Supplement to the Code identifies the role of parents to communicate concerns regarding their children's progress to the school, and to fulfil their parental obligations to ensure that their child receives appropriate, full-time education (DE, 2005: 4-5).

**2.103** Phillips *et al.* (1999) reiterate the importance of parental involvement in their child's educational progress and recommend a variety of ways in which the school Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) can engage with parents in order to effectively contribute to the child's learning. Studies show that the majority of parents whose children experience SEN want to actively help their child but may not always know how. Parents may feel mystified by the area of SEN, they may be feeling upset, angry or incompetent and may feel that they are not being listened to, understood or properly informed. Some parents may feel that teachers do not seem competent to meet their child's needs (Phillips *et al.*, 1999). The UK government's report, *Green Paper - Excellence for All Children* (1997:25) states that 'for many parents, learning of their child's problems will be a devastating blow'. Furthermore, the report recognises that some parents will need support from a range of statutory and voluntary agencies if they are to help their children with their learning. It is evident, therefore, that the parents of children with special needs also which need to be addressed by teachers, SENCOs, educational bodies and other professionals involved with meeting the needs of children who require additional support with their learning. Phillips *et al.* (1999) outline the role of the SENCO in forging links between parents, schools and educational bodies in order to effectively involve parents. It is recommended that SENCOs hold regular meetings with parents, involve parents in the process of forming individual education plans (IEPs), involve parents in schemes such as 'Paired Reading' and arrange parents' evenings and workshops to equip parents with the skills necessary to support their child's learning in the home.

**2.104** The particular needs of parents of bilingual children experiencing SEN must also be recognised. Overall, little has been published on the needs of parents facing this situation. In Wales, 14 of the 22 Local Educational Authorities (LEAs) provide a bilingual service for parents or guardians of children beginning the assessment process, and 13 of the 22 LEAs supply all paperwork relating to the assessment process in Welsh for those who choose to receive it. It is reported that 9 out of the 22 LEAs provided support to families in their own homes (Roberts, 2001:36-37, 43).

**2.105** Wales has an intermediary model which links families of statemented children with a volunteer to act as a liaison between the family and health providers. The issue of support and information for parents of bilingual children with SEN has been identified as an area requiring further development, most particularly with regard to the provision of information in Welsh for Welsh-speaking families (MYM, 2008). At present, general information is provided on WM education and, as a result of discussion with the Welsh Language Board, charitable organisation, Autism Cymru, aims to provide bilingual information booklets for parents and professionals and to carry out research projects relating to Welsh language issues (Autism Cymru, 2007). There remains, however, a paucity of specific information on SEN within the sector (Welsh Language Board, 2004).

**2.106** In the context of the IM education sector, the GESO website provides information to parents of children in the IM system on SEN, bilingualism and immersion education through the medium of Irish and through the medium of English (GESO, 2007).

## Health

**2.107** Within the local context, a number of pieces of legislation influence public sector agencies when meeting the needs of the public. These include The Race Relations (NI) order (1997), the Northern Ireland Act (1998), and the Children (NI) Order (1995). The latter of these in particular, places an obligation on childcare agencies to consider 'the child's religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background' (HMSO, 1995). O'Hagan (2000) highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity amongst health and social care professionals in forging good relations between patient and professional, establishing trust between both parties, and putting the patient at ease in, what is likely to be, a difficult and trying time. NHS Wales, in its training manual for language awareness in healthcare, recognises the vital importance of being able to communicate in your most natural language at difficult times in life such as times of illness, and, therefore, recognises the key role of promoting language awareness and bilingual practice. In addition, the report refers to the importance attributed to the role of effective communication, understanding and empathy between the patient and healthcare provider in the success of any medical diagnosis and course treatment (NHS, Wales).

**2.108** Respondents to O'Hagan's research (2000) on cultural sensitivity and insensitivity amongst healthcare professionals identified a number of particular areas through which they experienced cultural sensitivity and cultural insensitivity. Examples of cultural sensitivity included accepting their name in Irish, making an effort to pronounce it properly, and accepting their culture. Examples of cultural insensitivity, however, included refusal to accept a name in Irish, reluctance to pronounce an Irish name, questioning a parent's decision to have their child educated in an IM school or inferring that IM education was contributing to or causing a child's SEN. Parents experiencing cultural insensitivity reported that they were left with feelings of

fear, inadequacy and anger. Responses provided by the parents also showed that the reactions of professionals greatly impacted on the feelings of their children. One parent told how her child was made feel special by the doctor who spoke Irish to them. O'Hagan (2000:184) shows how such an act can induce pride in the child and raise his/her self-esteem. On the other hand, another parent reported that their child was left feeling stupid by a hospital teacher who said 'I can do nothing with you' upon hearing that the child attended an IM school.

**2.109** The role of the health service is important in relation to provision for children with additional needs. Roberts (2001:63) asserts that 'the association between health services, early support for parents, and early years institutions is vital'. Some of the needs which may require support from health service providers include SLC difficulties, dyspraxia, SEBD, sensory problems, physical needs, medical conditions, and severe learning difficulties. Some children may experience a combination of these needs. Children with these needs require a range of health services to meet their specific needs. These services include speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, health visitors, nursing services, school doctors, psychiatrists and clinical psychologists. Roberts' research on the needs of Welsh-speaking children with SEN emphasises the need to develop bilingual SEN provision in Wales, and makes reference to difficulties for health service providers in recruiting professionals to meet the needs of these children. The report highlights examples of good practice in various aspects of SEN provision; one in particular is a health trust in North Wales in which the county paediatrician is a Welsh speaker, all specialist nurses in the Child Development Team speak Welsh, the majority of other specialist nurses (physical disability, Cystic Fibrosis) speak Welsh and work in Welsh, physiotherapists work in Welsh, the Trust advertises in Welsh to recruit Occupational Therapists and, approximately, 75% of Health Visitors can operate professionally in Welsh (Roberts, 2001:68). The report concludes that it is essential that examples of good practice are celebrated and opportunities created for the dissemination of these practices (Roberts, 2001:132).

## Conclusion

**2.110** This review draws attention to a number of key aspects on the issue of SEN provision for bilingual children. The international literature referred to clearly supports the need for appropriate, culture-fair assessment which takes into consideration a child's bilingualism or multilingualism in the assessment of SEN. The danger of mistaking possible language difficulties experienced during the acquisition of a second language with learning difficulties, and vice versa, is well documented. Furthermore, while some examples of good practice have been recognised and celebrated, the literature highlights the need for understanding amongst all

professionals working with bilingual children of the concept of bilingualism; of the specific needs of bilinguals and their parents/guardians; the need for adequate and appropriate resources; and equal access to support services for bilingual children.

**2.111** In order to ensure that adequate educational and health provision is made for bilingual children with additional needs, it is necessary to be aware of the number of children involved. Research highlights concern regarding accurate identification of SEN amongst bilingual children, both in an international and local context (Baker, 2007; Deponio *et al*, 2000, and Nic Annaidh, 2005). Moreover, when considering the issue of provision for bilingual children and their families, it is important to take into account the varying degrees of bilingualism which exist within the various bilingual communities. Linguistic variations are particularly interesting within the IM sector, in which the vast majority of children come from an English-speaking home background and are being immersed in the Irish language at school. The linguistic proficiency of parents within the IM sector is greatly varied, ranging from little or no Irish to a high level competency in the language, with some children being raised through the medium of Irish in the home. These variations must be taken into consideration during assessment procedures and when planning packages of support for children with additional needs and their families.

**2.212** Overall, the review identifies a general need for further research into the area of SEN among bilingual children. While a certain amount of research has been carried out in some areas such as dyslexia and speech and language difficulties among bilinguals, further, more in-depth research is required. In relation to other aspects of SEN, the research carried out to date is negligible. As far as the provision for SEN in the IM sector is concerned, the need for research into the area has been documented by a number of educational bodies as well as organisations and individuals associated with the IM sector. The need for a greater variety and quality of resources is evident, as is the need for further specialist training and support for teachers and professionals on the most effective ways to meet the needs of children who require additional support with their learning within an immersion education setting.



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## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Research questions

**3.1** In order to assist planning for future developments and resource allocation, and in line with the research aims, discussed earlier, a decision was taken to collect information based on a number of research questions. These included:

1. How many pupils in the IM sector have been identified as experiencing SEN?
2. What is the range of learning difficulties presenting among pupils in the IM sector?
3. What are the specific and additional requirements of pupils experiencing SEN in the IM sector?
4. What are the specific requirements of parents whose children are experiencing SEN in the IM sector?
5. What is the current range of support and provision for pupils with SEN in the IM sector?
6. What support is available to teachers in the IM sector in making provision for SEN?
7. What gaps in current provision are identified by respondents?

Questionnaire design, including interview and focus group techniques was informed by the research questions.

### Terms of reference

**3.2** As discussed above, the original research project proposed by POBAL aimed to examine the wider additional needs of bilingual, Irish-speaking children and their families, including the specific needs of Irish-speaking children who require additional support from health and educational support services.

**3.3** Under the terms of reference of the proposed project the study aimed to include:

- children in IM education at present;
- Irish-speaking children currently in EM education; and
- children under school-age whose parents intend that they will enter IM education.

In light of the amendments to the focus of the study, as discussed earlier, the present research project focuses on children aged 3 to 16 in IM educational settings who were on the SEN register in the 2006 – 2007 academic year or who were identified, by their setting, as experiencing SEN.



## Advisory structure

**3.4** The planning and implementation of the research project was overseen by two committees; a DE Steering Group consisting of representatives of the DE and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), and an Advisory Group brought together by POBAL, comprising of representatives of both education and health sectors.

**3.5** The current Advisory Group for the research reflects the group of health and education professionals which originally came together in 2000 - 2001 to discuss the issue of provision for Irish-speaking children with special educational and health needs. The original group was made up of representatives of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), educational psychology services, Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) services, the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) voluntary sector organisations and teaching practitioners from the IM sector.

**3.6** While the make-up of the Advisory Group has changed in the course of time, members of the Advisory Group continue to represent HEIs, SLT services, the ELBs, statutory agencies and voluntary sector organisations. The role of the Advisory Group was to guide, support, and advise the researcher on all aspects of the design, implementation, and write-up of the research project, as well as to provide expert advice on issues pertaining to the IM sector, and education and health-related support services.

**3.7** The principal roles of the DE Steering Group were to monitor and evaluate the progress of the research project, and to advise the researcher on issues relating to educational policy, as well as carrying out an editorial role in the completed research report.

**3.8** Over the course of the project, the research team met regularly with the DE Steering Group to clarify the focus of, and the parameters for the present research project and to update DE on the progress of the study.

## Time frame

Month	Action
September - October 2006	Methodology design
October – December 2006	Review of literature
January – April 2007	Design and distribution of quantitative questionnaire
	Interviews

	Design and distribution of qualitative questionnaire
October 2007	Focus group meetings
November 2007 – August 2008	Analysis of data and write-up of research report

Table 3.1

### Methods of data collection

**3.9** It was agreed that both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies would be employed in this research project. Consequently, the research methods included:

- qualitative and quantitative questionnaires;
- interviews;
- focus groups; and
- case studies.

**3.10** Table 3.2, below, summarises the methods of qualitative and quantitative data collection used and the target groups involved in the collection of data.

	Method of data collection				
	Quantitative questionnaire	Qualitative questionnaire	Interview	Focus group	Case study
IM pre-school leaders, primary and post-primary principals or co-ordinators	√				
IM pre-school leaders and assistants in sample		√			
IM primary principals, teachers and SENCOs in sample		√			

IM post-primary principals, teachers and SENCOs in sample		√			
Classroom assistants in IM settings in sample		√			
SENCOs and SEN teachers			√		
IM pre-school assistants and leaders and primary and post-primary teachers and principals				√	
Representatives of six IM primary settings			√		√
Educational psychologists		√	√		
Parents		√			√
Representatives of ELBs and agencies related to the IM sector			√		

Table 3.2

### Ethical considerations

**3.11** The research team was cognisant of the ethical considerations pertaining to the study. The research team endeavoured to contact all potential participants in the research by letter to inform them of the background to, and the aims of, the research project. Participants were advised that the research project was funded by DE, and that the findings of the study would be published by them. Potential participants were invited to participate in the research project and given the opportunity to withdraw from the study should they wish to do so.

**3.12** Information letters and questionnaires for parents were distributed through the class teacher to avoid the need to obtain contact details for parents. In the cases where the

researcher hoped to get further information from participants with personal or professional experience of SEN provision, respondents were given the opportunity to leave contact details on the questionnaire and to indicate their agreement to take further part in the research.

**3.13** Participants in interviews and focus groups were informed in advance of the interview questions or topics for group discussion, respectively, and permission was sought from interview and focus group participants to record data collection sessions to audio tape.

**3.14** The researcher ensured the anonymity of all participants in the analysis of the data and recording of the findings of the research.

### Quantitative research

**3.15** A quantitative questionnaire was devised to obtain statistics on the number of pupils identified as experiencing SEN in the IM sector.

The quantitative questionnaire sought to elicit:

- information on the IM setting;
- the number of pupils on the SEN register, or the number of pupils recorded by their setting as experiencing SEN;
- information on experience, knowledge and skills of the school SENCO; and
- information on support received by the school, and support provided by the school in the area of SEN.

The quantitative questionnaire assisted the research team in verifying SEN data held for IM primary and post-primary settings, and allowed for the collection of data on SEN throughout the entire IM pre-school phase, data relating to the SENCO in IM primary and post-primary settings, and obstacles faced by IM settings in relation to SEN provision which was used to inform the design of the qualitative questionnaire, discussed in paragraphs 3.27 and 3.38 of this chapter.

### Administration of quantitative questionnaire

**3.16** The quantitative questionnaire was designed by the researcher based on the proposed research questions, and was scrutinised and amended by the Advisory Group and the DE Steering Group before distribution. It was estimated that the questionnaire would take approximately thirty minutes to complete.

**3.17** All IM settings were contacted by letter informing them of the research project and of the intention of the researcher to visit the school. A copy of the letter is available in appendix 4. The letter was followed up by telephone calls to confirm participation, and to arrange a visit by

the researcher. The quantitative questionnaires were distributed to all participating settings two weeks in advance of the visit by the researcher. The quantitative questionnaire was completed by all IM school principals or IM unit co-ordinators and all IM pre-school leaders during a visit by the researcher, thus ensuring a 100% return rate for these questionnaires.

**3.18** The data gathered during the school visits were supplemented by school census data held by DE, and data relating to IM schools held by Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.

### **Distribution and collection of quantitative questionnaires**

**3.19** The distribution, completion and return of the quantitative questionnaire took place during the period January to April 2007.

### **Qualitative research**

**3.20** Qualitative questionnaires, semistructured and structured interviews, focus groups and case studies were used for the collection of qualitative data. Qualitative data were also collected during discussion with participants, when the researcher visited all IM settings in the first round of data collection.

### **Sampling frame**

**3.21** To obtain additional, more in-depth information on attitudes of provision for SEN, in-school SEN practices and factors impacting on provision for SEN in the IM sector, it was decided to devise and distribute a qualitative questionnaire to members of staff in a sample group of IM settings.

**3.22** The IM settings (IM pre-schools, primary and post-primary schools and units) were sampled according to size and location of school. Settings were categorised by size into small, medium and large, and then by location according to their location in a city, a town or a rural area as defined by the *Report of the Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group* (NISRA, 2005). Table 3.3, below, adapted from the *Report of the Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group* (NISRA, 2005:3) shows the categories used to categorise school location. For the purposes of the sampling frame, areas defined as large town, medium town, small town and intermediate settlement by NISRA (2005) were categorised under the heading town. Areas categorised by NISRA (2005) as village and small village, hamlet and open countryside were categorised as rural area.

Type of settlement	Settlement population size (2001 Census)	Category assigned for purposes of sampling
Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA)	c580,000	Urban
Derry Urban Area (DUA)	c90,000	
Large town	18,000 - 75,000	Town
Medium town	10,000 - 18,000	
Small town	4,500 - 10,000	
Intermediate settlement	2,250 - 4,500	
Village	1,000 - 2,250	Rural
Small village, hamlet and open countryside	Settlements of less than 1,000 people and open countryside	

Table 3.3

**3.23** With regard to the categorisation of IM settings according to size, settings were classified according to phase (pre-school, primary and post-primary) and then according to size of setting. The settings were categorised according to size using statistics held on the number of pupils in the setting in September 2006 (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, 2006). IM units in EM schools were categorised according to the size of the IM unit, as opposed to the size of the EM host school.

**3.24** Data collection began in the 2006-2007 academic year. At that time there were 42 IM pre-schools, 31 IM primary schools and 3 centres offering post-primary school provision through the medium of Irish. Although data collection continued into the 2007-2008 school year, IM settings established in September 2007 were not included in the research. The following sampling frame was used to select the sample group.

IM pre-school settings

	Location of school					
Size of school	City		Town		Rural	
	Pop.	Sample	Pop.	Sample	Pop.	Sample
<b>Small (1-20 pupils)</b>	7	2	11	3	6	3
<b>Medium(21-50 pupils)</b>	8	2	7	2	0	0
<b>Large (51-80 pupils)</b>	3	2	0	0	0	0

Table 3.4

IM primary schools and units

	Location of school					
Size of school	City		Town		Rural	
	Pop.	Sample	Pop.	Sample	Pop.	Sample
<b>Small (1-100 pupils)</b>	6	2	10	3	5	3
<b>Medium (101-200 pupils)</b>	6	4	3	2	0	0
<b>Large (201-300 pupils)</b>	1	1	0	0	0	0

Table 3.5

IM post-primary schools and units

	Location of school					
Size of school	City		Town		Rural	
	Pop	Sample	Pop.	Sample	Pop.	Sample
<b>Small (1-180 pupils)</b>	1	1	1	1	0	0
<b>Medium (181-360 pupils)</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Large (361-540 pupils)</b>	1	1	0	0	0	0

Table 3.6

**3.25** It was decided that 40% of the total population of IM settings would be sampled. In order to randomly draw settings from each cell of the sampling frame the settings in each cell were numbered and entered into Microsoft Excel. Using a number generation option within *Microsoft Excel* two settings were selected at random from each cell in a preliminary selection. As there were an uneven number of cells in the sampling frame the remaining cells were numbered and entered into *Microsoft Excel* to randomly generate the next cells out of which the remaining schools would be chosen. Once the cells had been selected, the same process of setting selection was employed using *Microsoft Excel* to randomly generate numbers corresponding to IM settings. Given the small number of centres offering IM post-primary provision it was decided to include all three of these post-primary schools in the sample group. A total sample of 32 (42%) was drawn from the 76 IM settings.

**3.26** Those selected as part of the sample group were contacted by letter to inform them that they had been selected, and to invite them to take part in the study. Schools were given two weeks to withdraw from the sample, should they wish. All settings selected agreed to take part in the study. A copy of the letter sent to schools is available in appendix 5.

### Reliability and validity

**3.27** Feedback received from respondents to the quantitative questionnaire, completed by principals or IM unit co-ordinators and IM pre-school leaders in all IM settings, informed the design of the qualitative questionnaires. During the collection of quantitative data, respondents from the IM pre-school sector, for example, indicated that the design of the questionnaire did not reflect the difference in structure between the IM pre-school phase and the primary and post-primary phases. As a result of this feedback from IM pre-school respondents, it was decided to design a separate qualitative questionnaire tailored to the situation and experience of each of the target groups (principals, teachers and SENCOs; pre-school staff; CAs; educational psychologists and parents) which would, therefore, better reflect the situation of each group, and allow them to report on the issues most relevant to them.

### Qualitative questionnaires

**3.28** Qualitative questionnaires were devised for:

- teachers (including school principals, class teachers and SENCOs);
- IM pre-school staff;
- CAs;
- educational psychologists; and
- parents.



**3.29** All draft questionnaires were reviewed, amended and, subsequently, agreed by the Advisory Group and the DE Steering Group. The questionnaires were made available in both Irish and English. A copy of each questionnaire is available in appendix 3.

### **Principals, teachers and SENCOs**

**3.30** The qualitative questionnaire aimed at primary and post-primary teachers contained a general section on respondents' attitudes to, and experiences of, SEN provision in the IM sector. In addition, respondents were asked to complete a further section relevant to their role in the school as principal, class teacher or SENCO. This questionnaire sought to elicit information on:

- attitudes to current provision for SEN in the IM sector;
- current in-school practice in the area of SEN;
- support for teachers in making provision for SEN; and
- professional development in the area of SEN for teachers in the IM sector.

### **IM pre-school staff**

**3.31** The qualitative questionnaire for IM pre-school staff was divided into two sections; one section for pre-school leaders and assistants, and one section for pre-school leaders only. The questionnaire for IM pre-school staff sought to obtain information on:

- attitudes to current provision for SEN in the IM system;
- current in-school practice in the area of SEN;
- support for pre-school staff in making provision for SEN; and
- training and professional development in the area of SEN for IM pre-school staff.

### **Classroom assistants**

**3.32** The questionnaire aimed at classroom assistants aimed to elicit information on:

- the role of a CA;
- SEN-related training received; and
- attitudes and experiences of respondents in relation to the support of a classroom assistant for pupils with SEN.

### **Educational psychologists**

**3.33** The qualitative questionnaire aimed at educational psychologists was also divided into two sections. The first section sought to obtain:

- attitudinal information on current assessment practices for pupils with SEN in the IM sector; and

- information on support and training for educational psychologists working with bilingual pupils with SEN.

Section two of the questionnaire was targeted at respondents with experience of working with pupils from the IM sector. Section two sought to:

- determine current practices in relation to educational psychology services; and
- obtain information on the experiences of educational psychologists working with pupils in the IM sector.

Respondents who indicated experience of working with pupils in the IM sector were given the opportunity to leave contact details, and to indicate if they were prepared to take further part in the research project.

### Parents

**3.34** The qualitative questionnaire aimed at parents was divided into two sections. Section one sought to identify the needs of parents whose children are in IM education at present, while section two of the questionnaire sought to identify the specific needs of parents whose children experience SEN and are currently in IM education. Respondents to the questionnaire for parents were given the opportunity to leave contact details and to indicate if they were prepared to take further part in the research. All parents who indicated experience of SEN issues, and supplied contact details, were contacted for a follow-up interview. The information provided during interviews was recorded in the form of case studies.

### Distribution of qualitative questionnaires

**3.35** The qualitative questionnaires aimed at IM pre-schools and IM primary and post-primary settings were distributed by post, to all principals, teachers, SENCOs, CAs and IM pre-school staff in the IM settings selected as part of the sample group.

**3.36** The qualitative questionnaire for parents was distributed to all parents in the 15 IM primary schools and units in the sample group. The principal aims of surveying parents were to investigate the needs of parents of children in the IM sector, and to identify parents of children with SEN currently in the IM sector, who would be willing to take further part in the study. It was decided that surveying the parents in the primary schools in the sample group would offer sufficient scope to make contact with parents with experience of provision for SEN. The questionnaires for parents were sent directly to schools, along with an information letter inviting parents to participate in the research. The information letters and questionnaires were distributed by the class teachers to the pupils, in order to avoid any breaches of Data Protection legislation (1998).

**3.37** Qualitative questionnaires were also distributed to all educational psychologists working in the five ELBs. Potential respondents were identified using contact information on members of staff in the educational psychology departments, provided on ELB websites. Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire for educational psychologists, potential participants were contacted by letter to inform them of the research project, and of the aims of the study. The questionnaire gave participants the opportunity to provide contact details if they were prepared to take further part in the research. Questionnaires were not distributed to principal educational psychologists in the ELBs, as they were all invited to take part in a structured interview.

**3.38** The distribution and return of the qualitative questionnaires was carried out during the period April 2007 to November 2007. Table 3.7, below, shows the breakdown of distribution and return of the qualitative questionnaires.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>April – May 2007</b>	Drawing of sample group Design and drafting of qualitative questionnaires
<b>June 2007</b>	Distribution and return of qualitative questionnaires
<b>July – August 2007</b>	Input of data from quantitative questionnaires
<b>September 2007</b>	Period of extension for return of qualitative questionnaires from IM settings Distribution of qualitative questionnaires for educational psychologists
<b>October 2007</b>	Return of qualitative questionnaires from educational psychologists
<b>November 2007</b>	Deadline for the return of all qualitative questionnaires

Table 3.7

#### **Return of qualitative questionnaires**

**3.39** The original target set for the return of all questionnaires was 50%. Some difficulties were experienced in securing the return of questionnaires. The qualitative questionnaires for teachers were distributed to schools towards the end of the academic year, a particularly busy time for teachers. The timing of the distribution of the questionnaires may, therefore, have negatively impacted on the initial return rate for the questionnaires. Some feedback from

respondents also suggested that the length of the questionnaire may have discouraged some potential respondents from completing and returning it. With regard to the questionnaire for classroom assistants, the distribution and revised return date for the questionnaire coincided with a period of industrial action by classroom assistants in the north of Ireland, which may have negatively impacted on the rate of return of questionnaires from this target group.

**3.40** Following a review of the return targets in consultation with the Advisory and Steering Groups, the target of 50% was, subsequently reduced to 30% for all questionnaires, except those distributed to parents, which was set at 10%.

**3.41** A number of strategies were implemented in order to meet the targets set for the return of questionnaires:

- the original deadline for return was extended;
- questionnaires were re-distributed to a sub-sample of settings;
- settings were contacted by telephone;
- some IM pre-schools invited the researcher to come to the school to collect the completed questionnaires; and
- support was harnessed from the management and staff of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and Altram who raised the issue of the research project and the questionnaires, in their contact with IM settings.

**3.42** The revised targets were met for all school-based qualitative questionnaires, including questionnaires from parents. A 28% return rate was secured for questionnaires for educational psychologists. Of the questionnaires returned by educational psychologists, 46% of respondents reported experience of working with pupils in the IM sector. The questionnaire data supplied by educational psychologists were, however, further supplemented by structured interviews with principal educational psychologists and educational psychologists who have experience of working with pupils in the IM sector.

Table 3.8, below, shows the return of the qualitative questionnaires.

<b>Questionnaire type</b>	<b>Number of questionnaires distributed</b>	<b>Number of questionnaires returned</b>	<b>Percentage of questionnaires returned %</b>
<b>Principals, teachers, SENCOs</b>	160	<i>77 44 primary school 33 post-primary school</i>	48
<b>Classroom assistants</b>	41	15	37
<b>IM pre-school staff</b>	48	25	52
<b>Parents</b>	1561	185	12
<b>Educational psychologists</b>	93	26	28

Table 3.8

## Case studies

**3.43** A total of eight parents with experience of SEN provision consented to take further part in the research. Given that the actual number of parents who reported experience of SEN provision in the IM sector was small, and the experiences of respondents varied, it was decided to record the experiences and viewpoints of parents in the form of a case study. Contact was made with all parents with experience of SEN provision in the IM who expressed a willingness to be contacted to take further part in the research, through the qualitative questionnaire for parents. The participants included parents whose children are being given additional support in the IM sector and the parents of children who have left the IM sector as a direct result of SEN-related issues and parents of children below pre-school age who have been identified as having SEN. The parents of eight children took part in interviews and a total of eight case studies were recorded based on these interviews.

**3.44** Over the course of the research, the identification of key emerging issues, and consultation with the DE Steering Group indicated a need for more in-depth information on current in-school practices and provision in relation to SEN in IM schools. It was decided to identify and record exemplars of best practice in relation to SEN provision in IM schools. A total of five IM primary schools and units were selected for further investigation in respect of their current practices in meeting the needs of pupils with SEN, based on the information supplied by the respondents during visits by the researcher in the first round of data collection. The five IM primary schools and units were selected from a total of twelve settings identified by the researcher for the provision of additional support to pupils who require it and the creative use of the resources available to them to provide support through the medium of English and Irish. The settings were also selected to represent a balance of urban and rural settings, stand-alone schools and IM units in EM host schools and to provide information on in-school practices for a diverse range of learning difficulties.

**3.45** Schools were contacted by letter to invite them to participate in the additional study. The letter was followed by telephone calls to arrange in-depth interviews with the principal or SENCO. The additional information gathered was recorded in the form of case studies. A total of five case studies were written-up based on the in-depth interviews in schools.

## Focus groups

**3.46** In order to probe more deeply into matters relating to the provision for SEN in the IM sector, a series of four focus groups was organised to give teachers and IM pre-school staff the opportunity to discuss current provision for SEN in the IM sector, the needs of pupils and practitioners, and to make recommendations for the improvement of provision.

Focus groups were held in Armagh, Derry, Maghera and Belfast in October 2007. In an effort to over-recruit for focus groups, a recognised aspect of good practice in focus group methodology (Wellington, 2000), all IM pre-school staff and primary and post-primary school principals and teachers were invited by letter to attend. Potential participants were advised in the letter that travel expenses would be made available for all attendees. The starting time of focus group sessions was arranged for 3.30pm to accommodate teachers finishing school.

### Attendance at focus groups

**3.47** Given that all principals, teachers and IM preschool staff from the IM system had been invited, the attendance at two of the focus groups was not as high as anticipated. Participants were asked to contact the research team in advance of the session, to advise them of their intention to attend. In relation to the focus groups planned for Armagh and Derry, a significantly higher number of participants had indicated that they would attend than the number of participants who were actually present on the day. In some cases, participants took part in focus group discussions without having informed the research team of their intention to attend. In light of these circumstances, it was, therefore, difficult to ensure a high attendance rate and a balance of representatives from the three phases; pre-school, primary school and post-primary school.

Location	Date	Expected no. of attendees	No. of attendees	Length of session
Armagh	1 October 2008	7	2	35 minutes
Derry	2 October 2008	7	2	45 minutes
Maghera	3 October 2008	12	13	38 minutes
Belfast	8 October 2008	8	10	40 minutes

Table 3.9

### Cluster group discussions

**3.48** In addition to the four focus groups, the researcher also met and spoke with teachers from IM primary schools at a number of cluster groups organised by the IM interboard CASS team as part of a programme of continuing professional development to give teachers an opportunity to exchange and disseminate good classroom practice. The researcher attended two cluster groups; one in Omagh and one in Belfast. The schools participating in the cluster group discussions were contacted by letter in advance of the cluster group to inform them that

there would be an additional item on the agenda of the cluster group meeting, the aims of the study and of the topics for discussion during the session, and to seek their consent to participate in the group discussion in relation to the research.

Furthermore, the researcher met attendants at a training course on SEN in the IM sector, to discuss the principal research questions. The training course was held in Belfast in August 2007. Participants had been made aware by the course providers that the researcher would be present, and of the structure of the session.

#### Attendance at cluster groups and SEN training course

Location	Date	No. of attendees	Length of session
Omagh	14 May 2007	5	27 minutes
Belfast	17 May 2007	6	30 minutes
Belfast	23 August 2007	5	33 minutes

Table 3.10

#### Discussion topics for focus group and cluster group sessions

**3.49** The following topics were discussed during each of the focus group and cluster group sessions:

1. current good practice in the area of SEN in the IM sector;
2. the needs of pupils experiencing SEN in the IM sector;
3. the needs of teachers and pre-school staff in the IM sector, in relation to provision for SEN;
4. gaps in current provision for SEN in the IM sector; and
5. recommendations for the development and improvement of provision for SEN in the IM sector.

#### Administration of focus group and cluster group meetings

**3.50** Three of the four focus group meetings and the two cluster group meetings were recorded on audio tape and transcribed in full, a recognised good practice in the collection of qualitative data, to capture important nuances of the discussion (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The

fourth focus group was not recorded on audio tape, at the request of the participants. Detailed notes were taken by the researcher in situ during all focus group and cluster group discussions.

**3.51** The majority of focus group and cluster group meetings were conducted through the medium of Irish. One focus group discussion was conducted bilingually (Irish - English) to facilitate the full participation of all attendees. The focus groups were transcribed in the language used by participants. The transcripts were not translated in their entirety. In cases where quotations from participants are used in this report, an English translation of the quotation has been provided alongside the original quotation in Irish. All quotations have been standardised. In an effort to ensure the reliability and validity of the translated material, the researcher's translations have been verified by the Advisory Group.

**3.52** During the transcription and analysis the tapes made during the focus group sessions, all participants are identified by a letter of the alphabet. The material was transcribed by the researcher. The transcribed material constitutes 60,922 words.

### **Semi-structured and structured interviews**

**3.53** The original draft methodology stated that a total of 12 interviews would be carried out with a range of experts representing various aspects of SEN provision in the IM sector. During the course of the research project, however, this number was increased to 27 owing to the inclusion of in-depth interviews with principals and SENCOs during the return visits to schools, and the inclusion of interviews with key informants, the importance of whose input became apparent over the course of the study. In addition, 8 semi-structured interviews were carried out with a range of informants who had first-hand experience of provision for SEN in the IM sector. Structured interviews were carried out with the following:

- 5 representatives from IM schools and special schools;
- 12 representatives from ELBs; and
- 10 representatives from agencies involved in IM sector.

The agencies represented in the structured interviews were Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, an tÁisaonad, the five ELBs, CCMS, Foras na Gaeilge, and Altram.

**3.54** Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the following:

- 6 SENCOs and SEN teachers\* in the IM sector; and



- 2 representatives of IM pre-school sector.

**3.55** Interview participants were contacted by letter, email or telephone to arrange interviews. Interview participants were given due notice of the proposed interview questions. Separate sets of interview questions were prepared for each target group to reflect their situation and experience of provision for SEN for pupils in the IM sector, and to allow them to respond on the issues most relevant to their area of expertise. A copy of the interview questions is available in appendix 3. The length of each interview was estimated to be thirty to forty-five minutes. Detailed contemporaneous notes were taken by the researcher during all interviews. All notes were transcribed by the researcher immediately after the interview. Interviews were conducted either in Irish and English, according to the preference of the interviewee.

**3.56** As discussed above, over the course of the research it was decided to return to a number of IM primary schools to investigate further current in-school practices in relation to the identification and assessment of SEN and provision for pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning. It was decided that this additional investigation would take the form of an in-depth interview with the school principal and/or the school SENCO.

**3.57** Based on the information gathered during the researcher's visits to schools during the period January to April 2007, five IM primary schools were selected for further data collection. The additional, in-depth interviews took place during April and May 2008. The interviews ranged in length from 35 minutes to 55 minutes. The additional in-depth interviews were recorded to audio tape and detailed notes taken in situ. The interviews were conducted through the medium of Irish and, were transcribed in Irish for the purposes of analysis.

## Methods of data analysis

### Analysis of questionnaire data

**3.58** All questionnaires were coded, firstly, according to questionnaire type and, secondly, by designating each questionnaire a two-digit identification number.

**3.59** A combination of computer software packages was employed to record, code and analyse the questionnaire data. The analysis package *SPSS* was used to record, code and analyse quantitative data, and *Microsoft Excel* was used to record and analyse all qualitative data.

### Analysis of quantitative data

**3.60** The quantitative data were input into the data analysis package *SPSS*. The data were checked and verified manually, as well as by running a series of test analyses in order to identify any possible anomalies.

**3.61** Quantitative data was analysed based on the initial research aims and research questions.

### Analysis of qualitative data from questionnaires

**3.62** The qualitative data from the questionnaires were recorded using *Microsoft Excel*. The responses were recorded according to question. In order to facilitate analysis, the responses were printed and colour-coded according to theme. This practice allowed the data to be categorised and quantified, where appropriate.

### Analysis of interview and focus groups data

**3.63** As previously reported, the data collected during interview and focus group discussion were transcribed by the researcher. In order to analyse the data, and facilitate the identification of themes and answers to the research questions, the transcripts were printed and colour coded thematically.

**3.64** The data supplied by focus group and interview participants were reviewed and analysed under a number of headings in order to protect the identity of participants and that of their educational setting or organisation. The headings used were derived from the research aims and on key emerging issues from initial analysis of the data.

**3.65** The following headings were used in the analysis of the interview and focus group data:

1. support for staff in the IM sector in the area of SEN;
2. resources for SEN;
3. assessment practices and assessment tools;
4. professional development of staff in the IM sector in the area of SEN;
5. external SEN support services for pupils who require additional support;
6. in-school practices and procedures in relation to provision for SEN; and
7. other issues raised by respondents.

To allow for a detailed analysis of the data within each theme, the relevant data were collated, categorised and then analysed.

### **Reporting of findings**

**3.66** When the research had been completed and written-up, it was presented to the Advisory Group in the form of a draft report. Draft reports were scrutinised and revised by the Advisory Group before submission to the DE Steering Group. The findings and a discussion of the findings can be found in chapter 3 and chapter 4 of the present research report.

## Chapter 4: Research findings

### Section 4.1: SEN in the IM Sector

**4.1.1** The following data were collected during the first round of data collection from January to April 2007. The data were obtained using a quantitative questionnaire, which was completed in all IM pre-school, primary and post-primary settings, in the north of Ireland. The data relate to the academic year 2006-2007.

#### Primary and post-primary phases

**4.1.2** Table 4.1.1, below, shows the number of pupils recorded on the SEN Register according to year group and the percentage of pupils in each year group recorded on the SEN register.

**SEN register according to year group**

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of pupils In year</i>	<i>No. of pupils on SEN register</i>	<i>Percentage of year group %</i>	<i>Percentage in primary phase %</i>	<i>Percentage in post- primary phase %</i>
<b>1</b>	471	49	10	17	
<b>2</b>	395	55	14		
<b>3</b>	384	67	17		
<b>4</b>	363	70	19		
<b>5</b>	349	72	21		
<b>6</b>	311	62	20		
<b>7</b>	269	56	21		
<b>8</b>	119	20	17	14	
<b>9</b>	136	25	18		
<b>10</b>	106	15	14		
<b>11</b>	121	16	13		
<b>12</b>	87	10	11		
<b>TOTAL</b>	3111	517	17		

Table 4.1.1

Figure 4.1.1, below, illustrates the percentage of pupils in each year group recorded on the SEN register.

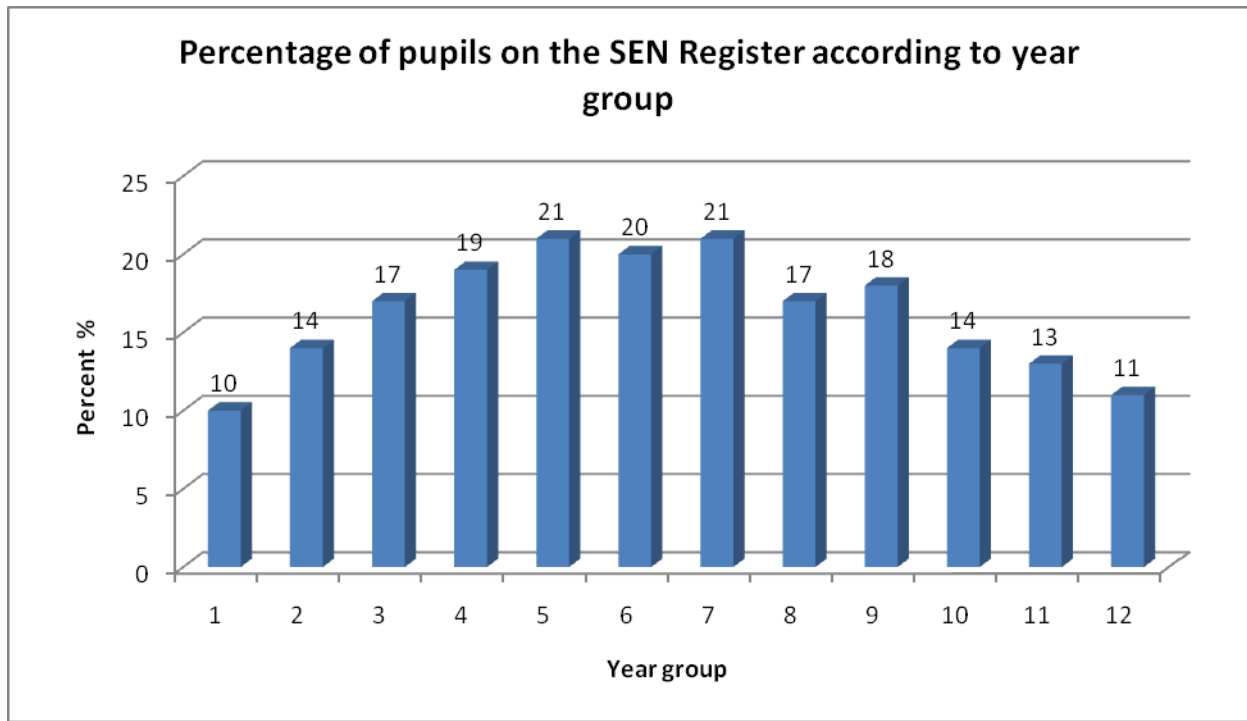


Figure 4.1.1

Figure 4.1.1 shows a steady rise in the percentage of pupils identified and recorded as experiencing SEN in the IM sector from Year 1 (10%) to Year 5 (21%). At foundation stage, the data show that 10% of pupils in Year 1 and 14% of pupils in Year 2 have been identified and recorded as experiencing SEN. The percentage rises once again at KS1 where 17% of pupils in Year 3, and 19% of pupils in Year 4 are identified and recorded as experiencing SEN. The highest percentages of pupils recorded as experiencing SEN in the IM sector are recorded in KS2; in Year 5, Year 6 and Year 7 (21%, 20%, and 21%, respectively). The percentage of pupils with SEN falls from Year 7 (21%), the last year of primary school, to Year 8 (17%), the first year of post-primary school. The percentage increases slightly in Year 8 from 17% to 18% in Year 9 and, from Year 9 to Year 12 the percentage of pupils recorded as experiencing SEN decreases from 18% to 11%.

**4.1.3** Table 4.1.2, below, shows the number of pupils recorded on the SEN register in IM primary and post-primary settings, according to stage of the Code of Practice.

### SEN register according to Stage of the Code of Practice

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Total</b>
Stage 1	160
Stage 2	205
Stage 3	107
Stage 4	15
Stage 5	30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>517</b>

Table 4.1.2

Figure 4.1.2, below, shows the percentage of pupils from the primary and post-primary phases in the IM sector on each stage of the *Code of Practice*.

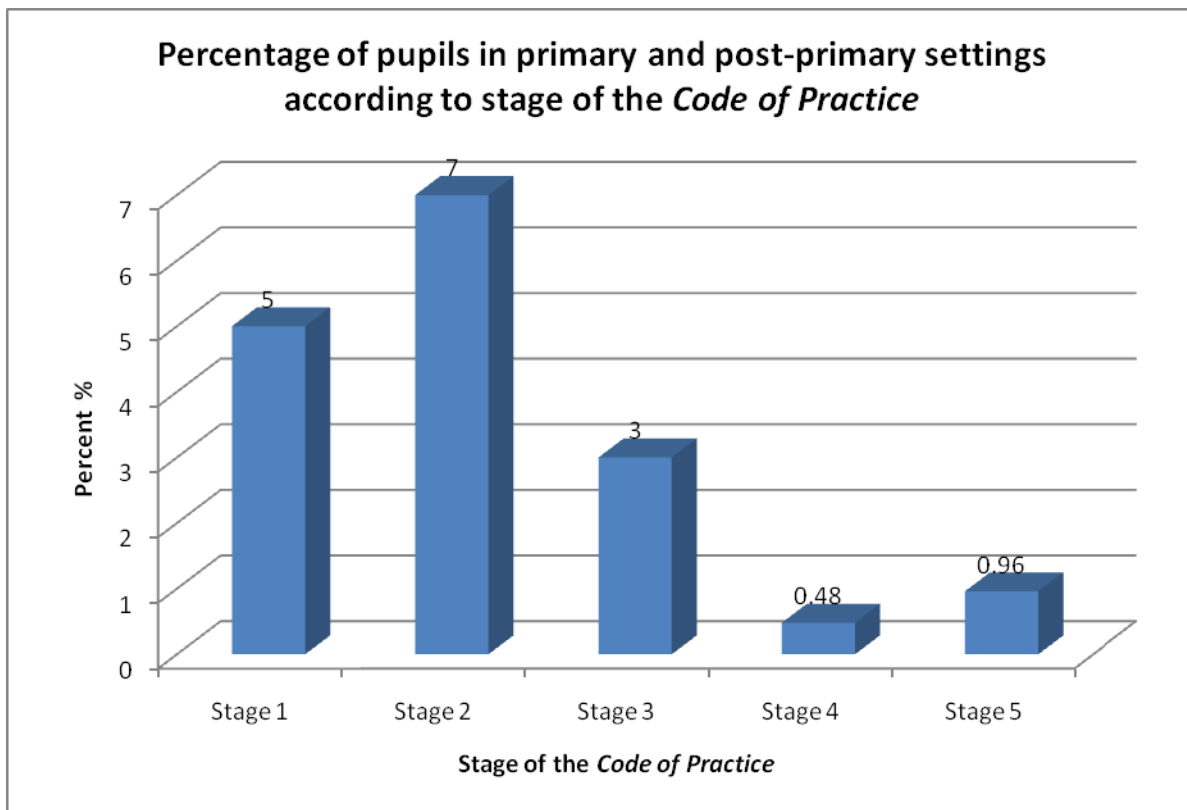


Figure 4.1.2

Of the five stages of the Code of Practice, the most frequently reported stage is stage 2. Figure 4.1.2, above, shows that 7% of pupils in IM primary and post-primary settings are recorded on stage 2 of the Code of Practice. Stage 1 is the second most frequently reported stage; 5% of pupils in the IM primary and post-primary settings are recorded on stage 1 of the Code of Practice. Figure 4.1.2 shows that 3% of pupils are recorded on stage 3 of the Code of Practice. With regard to stage 4 and stage 5, there is a marked difference in the percentage of pupils recorded on stages 1- 3 in comparison with the percentage of pupils recorded on stage 4 and stage 5. The data show that 0.48% of pupils in IM primary and post-primary settings are recorded on stage 4; 0.96% of pupils are recorded on stage 5 and therefore, have statement of SEN.

**4.1.4** Figure 4.1.3, below, shows the breakdown of pupils in IM primary and post-primary settings recorded on the SEN register according to category of SEN.

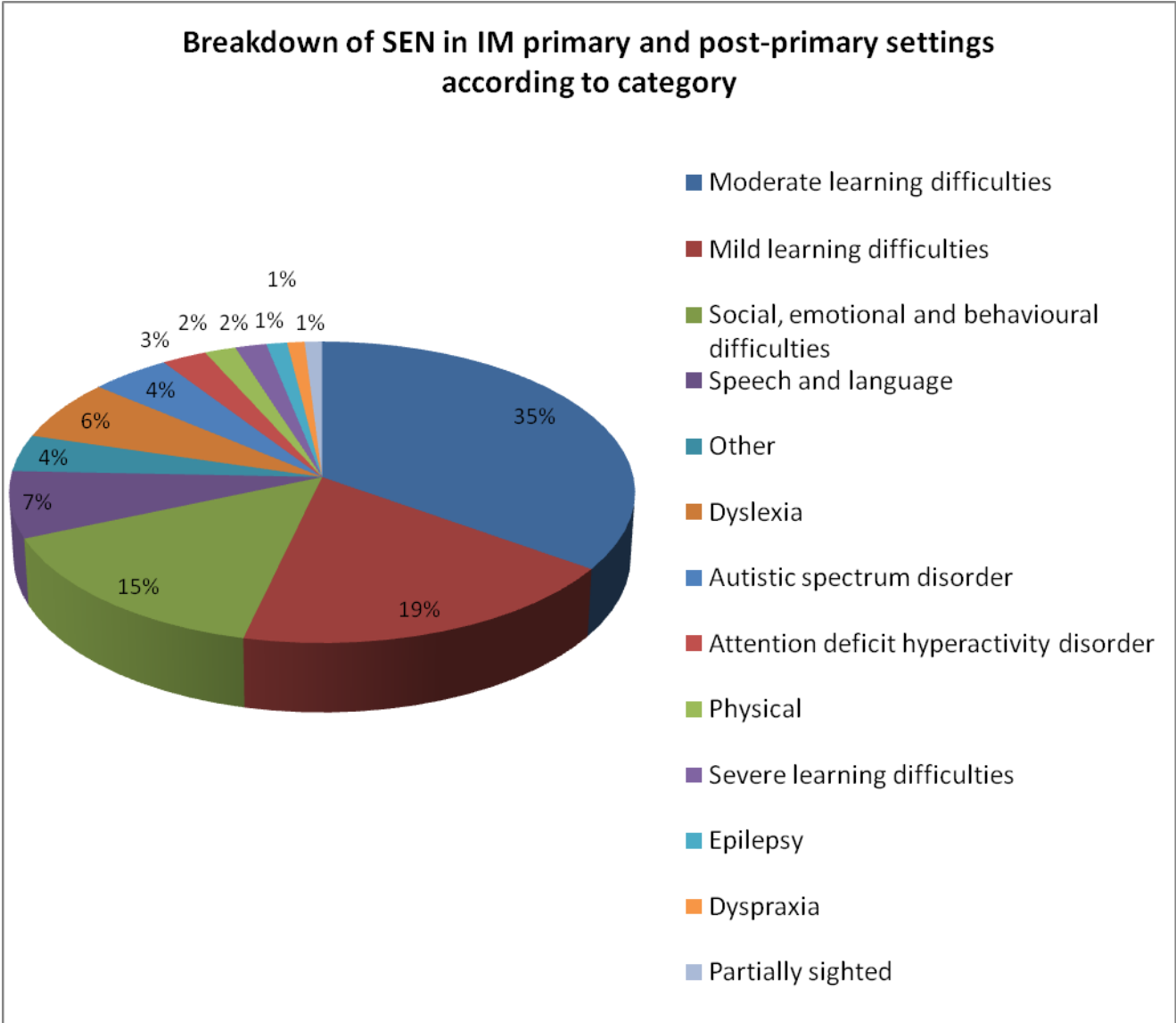


Figure 4.1.3

Figure 4.1.3, above, shows that 54% of pupils recorded on the SEN in the IM primary and post-primary phases are recorded as experiencing moderate learning difficulties (35%) or mild learning difficulties (19%). SEBD represents 15% of the total SEN recorded in the IM sector, speech and language difficulties represent 7%, dyslexia represents 6% and ASD represents 4% and other, including medical difficulties and gifted and talented pupils, represents 4%. Other categories of need recorded on SEN registers in the IM sector include ADHD (3%), physical difficulties (2%), severe learning difficulties (1%), partially sighted (1%), dyspraxia (1%) and epilepsy (1%).



**4.1.5** There are seven main areas of SEN. The main areas include Cognitive and Learning, Social, Emotional and Behavioural, Communication and Interaction, Sensory, Physical, Medical Conditions/Syndromes, and Other (DE, 2005b). In order to facilitate a comparison between SEN data from the IM sector and SEN data from all sectors, Figure 4.1.4, below, shows the breakdown of SEN in IM primary settings according to area of SEN and Figure 4.1.5 shows the breakdown of SEN in the primary phase across all sectors.

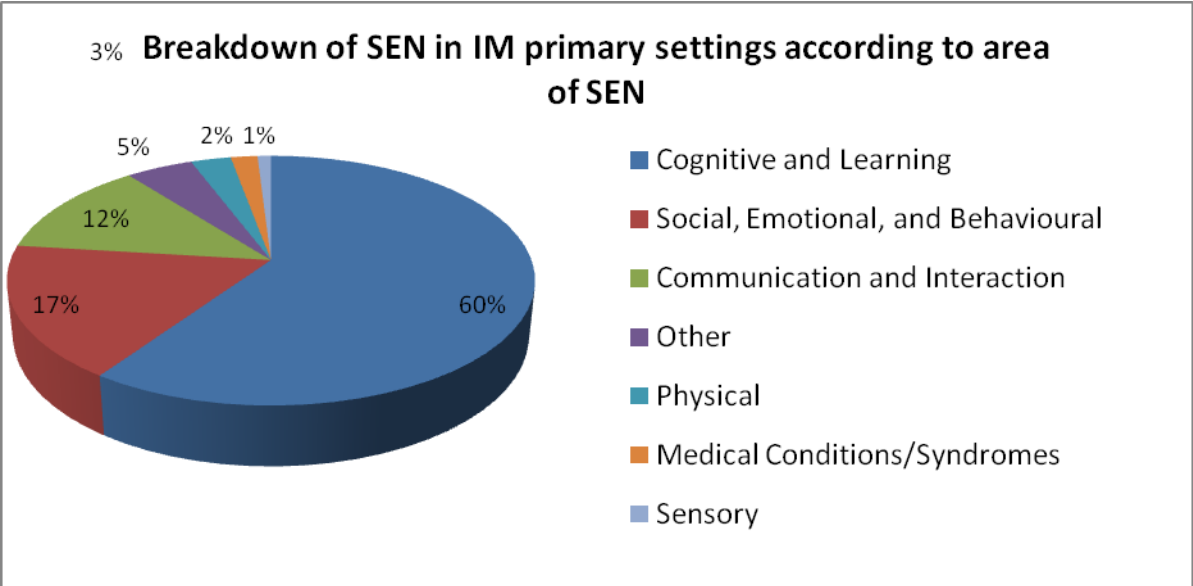


Figure 4.1.4

Figure 4.1.4, above, shows that Cognitive and Learning is the largest area of SEN in the IM primary phase and represents 60% of the total SEN reported. The second largest area of SEN is Social, Emotional, and Behavioural which represents 17% of the overall areas of need. Communication and Interaction represents 12% of SEN and is the third largest area in the IM primary phase. The remaining areas which are considerably smaller are: Other (5%), Physical (3%), Medical Conditions/Syndromes (2%), and Sensory (1%).

**4.1.6** Figure 4.1.5, below, shows the breakdown of SEN in primary schools in all sectors.

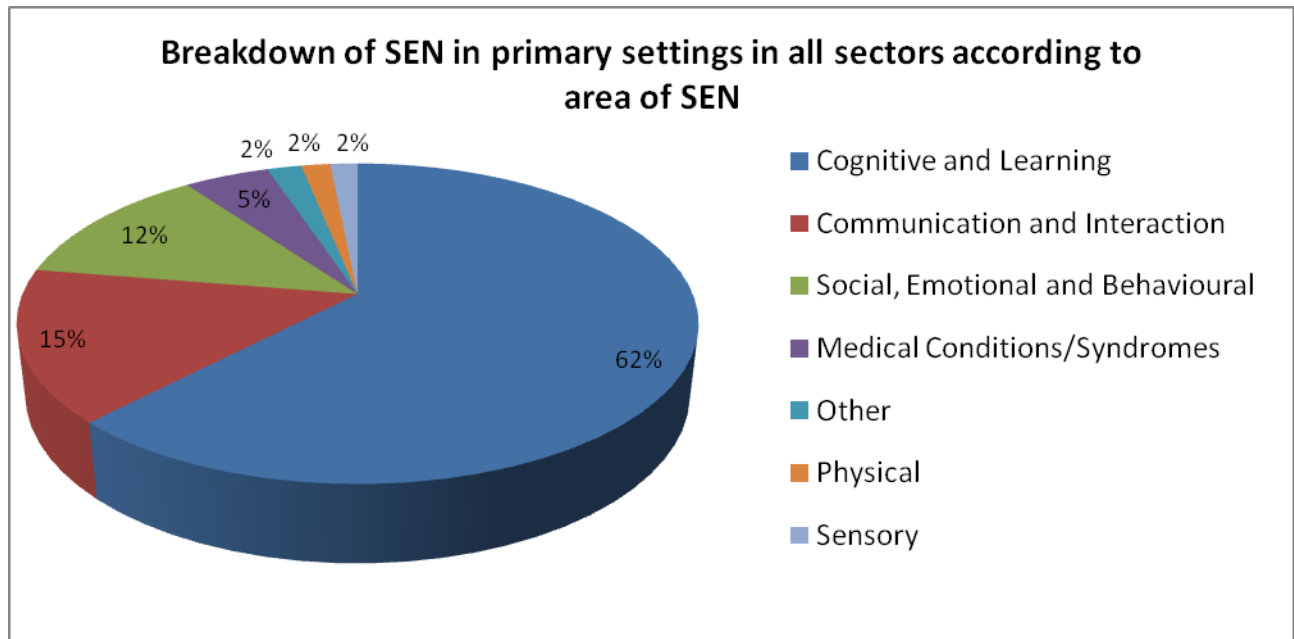


Figure 4.1.5

Figure 4.1.5, above, shows that, similar to the data for the IM primary phase Cognitive and Learning represents the greatest area of SEN across all sectors and 62% of the total SEN reported. Communication and Interaction represents 15% of the total SEN and Social, Emotional and Behavioural represents 12%. Medical Conditions/Syndromes represents 5% of the total SEN reported. The remaining areas include Other (2%), Physical (2%), and Sensory (2%). The critical discussion contained in chapter 5 of the present research report provides an in-depth comparison of the areas of SEN recorded in the IM primary sector and the areas recorded for the primary phase across all sectors (see paragraph 5.16).

**4.1.7** The data illustrated in Figure 4.1.4 and Figure 4.1.5 provide a general overview of the areas of SEN presenting in the IM sector compared with other sectors. Data collected over the course of the research allows for a more detailed breakdown of the categories of SEN currently presenting in the IM sector. Figure 4.1.6, below, shows the breakdown of SEN in IM primary settings according to category of need.

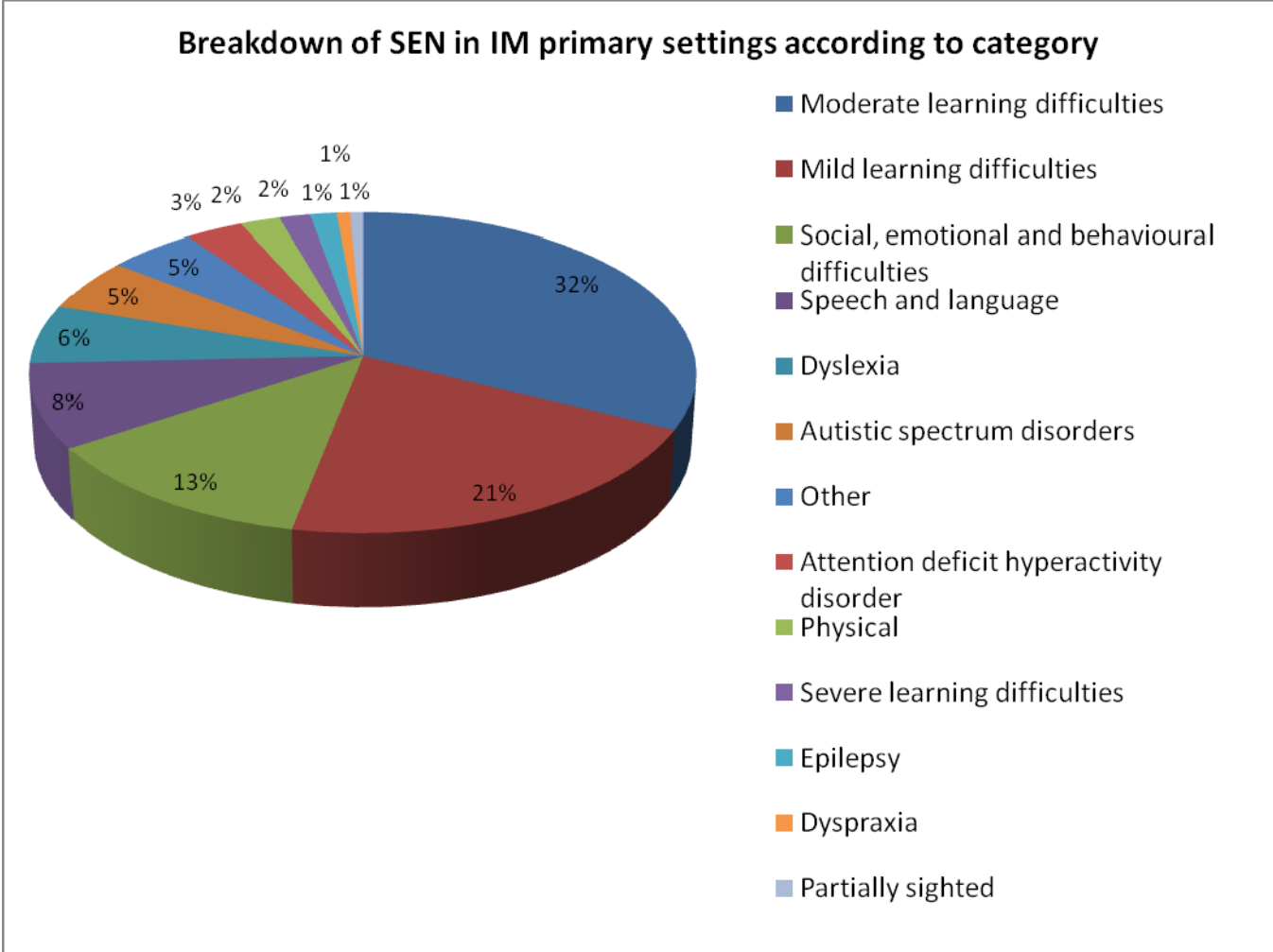


Figure 4.1.6

Figure 4.1.6, above, shows that 53% of pupils recorded on the SEN register in IM primary settings experience moderate learning difficulties (32%) or mild learning difficulties (21%), 13% of pupils experience SEBD and 8% of pupils experience speech and language difficulties. Dyslexia represents 6% of SEN recorded in the IM primary phase, ASD represents 5% and other, including medical difficulties and gifted and talented pupils, represent 5% of the total SEN. Other categories of SEN recorded include ADHD (3%), physical difficulties (2%), severe learning difficulties (2%), epilepsy (1%), dyspraxia (1%), and partially sighted (1%).

**4.1.8** Figure 4.1.7, below, shows the breakdown of SEN in IM post-primary settings according to area of SEN.

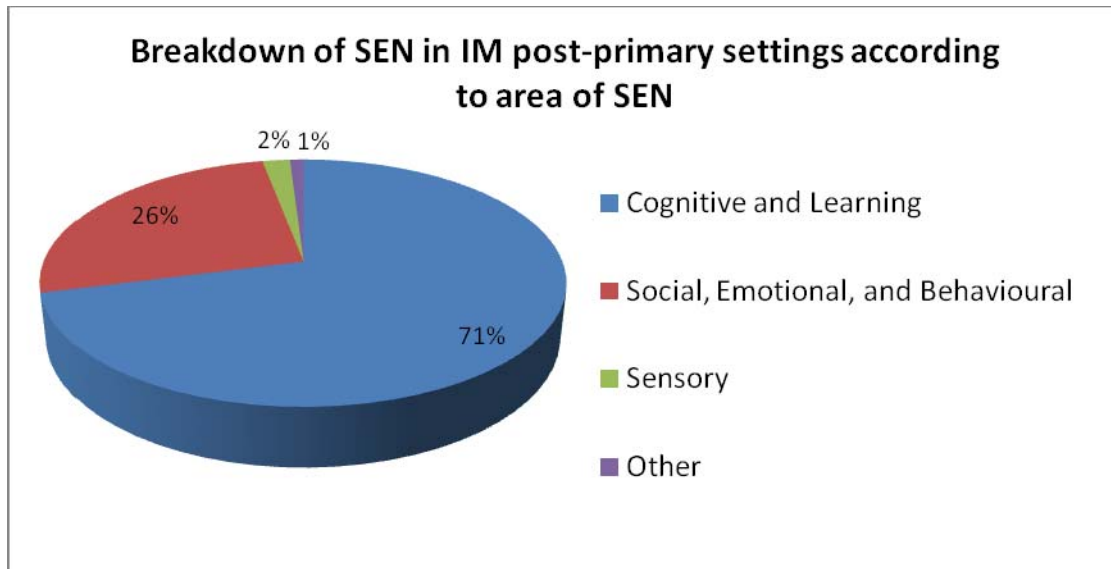


Figure 4.1.7

Figure 4.1.7, above, shows that four of a total of seven areas of SEN are recorded in the IM post-primary phase. The largest area is Cognitive and Learning which constitutes the majority of SEN at the IM post-primary level (72%). The second largest area is Social, Emotional and Behavioural which represents 26% of the total SEN at the IM post-primary level. The remaining areas include Sensory (2%) and Other (1%).

**4.1.9** Figure 4.1.8, below, shows the breakdown of SEN at the post-primary level across all sectors.

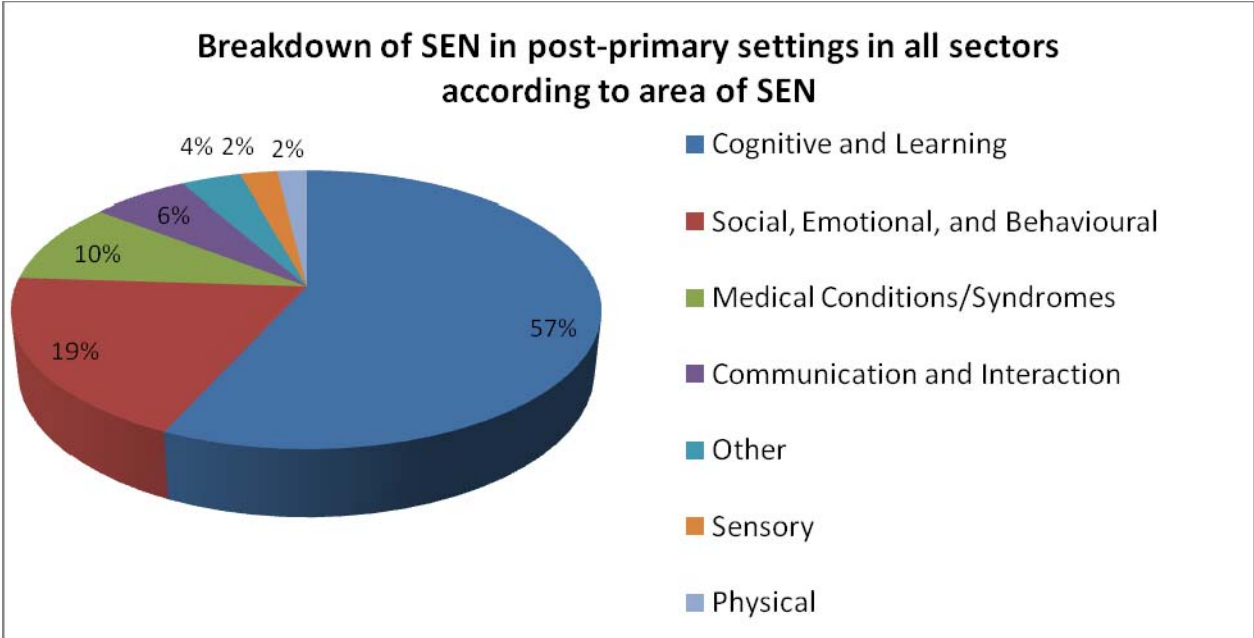


Figure 4.1.8

The breakdown of SEN for the post-primary phase across all sectors (illustrated in Figure 4.1.8, above) shows that all seven areas of SEN are represented compared with the four areas of SEN which are recorded in the IM post-primary phase. In line with the data shown in Figure 4.1.4, Figure 4.1.5 and Figure 4.1.7, Cognitive and Learning is the largest area of SEN at post-primary level (57%). Social, Emotional and Behavioural represents 19%, Medical Conditions/Syndromes represent 10%, and Communication and Interaction represent 6% of the overall SEN reported. The remaining areas of SEN include Other (4%), Sensory (2%), and Physical (2%). A discussion of the comparison between the IM sector data and the data for all sectors is contained in chapter 5 (see paragraph 5.17).

**4.1.10** Figure 4.1.9, below, shows the breakdown of SEN in IM post-primary settings according to category of SEN.

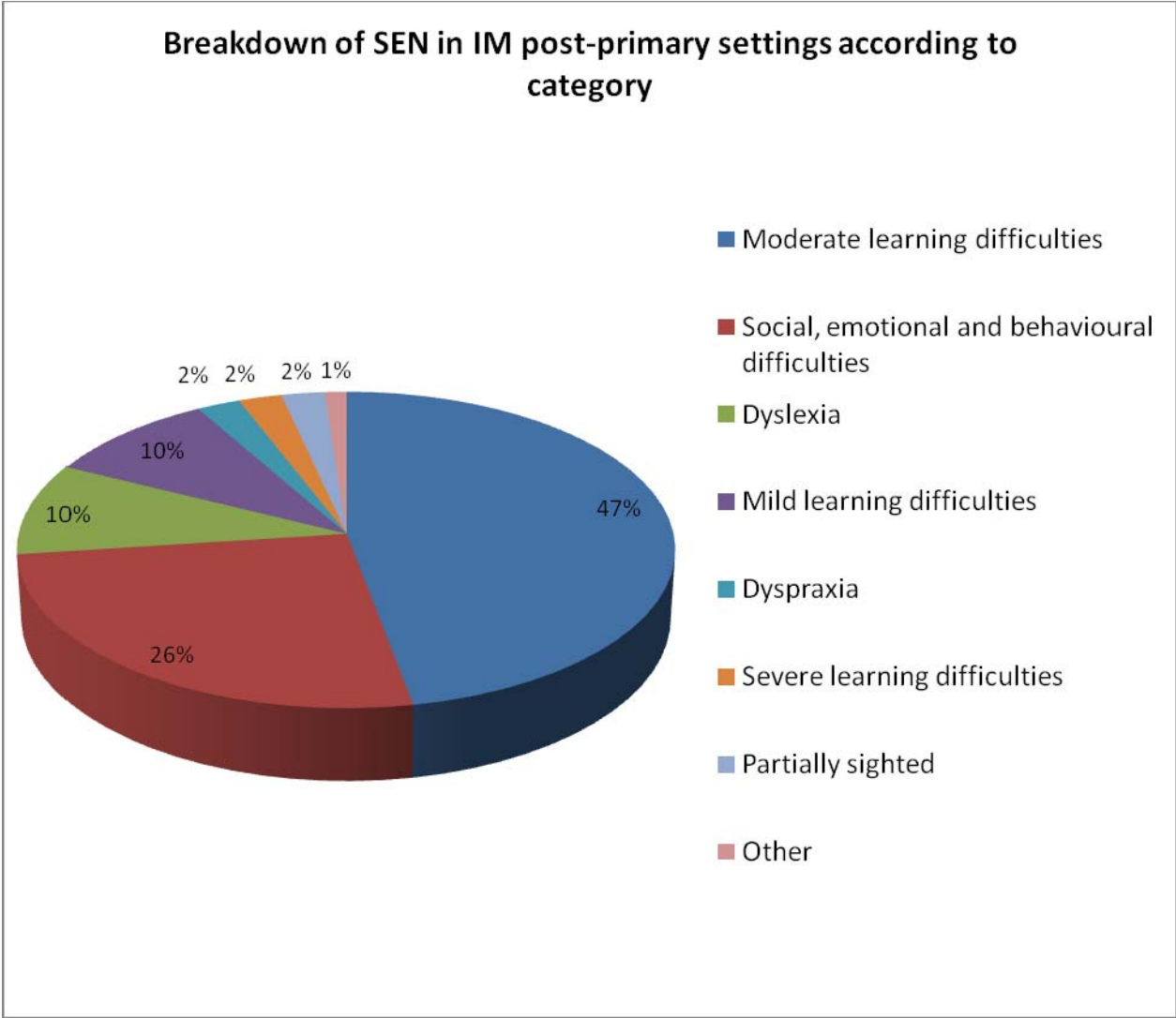


Figure 4.1.9

Figure 4.1.9, above, shows that 47% of the pupils recorded on the SEN register in the IM post-primary phase experience moderate learning difficulties. The second most frequently reported category of SEN in the post-primary phase is SEBD (26%). Dyslexia and mild learning difficulties represents 10% of SEN. Other categories of SEN reported in the IM post-primary phase include dyspraxia (2%), severe learning difficulties (2%), partially sighted (2%) and other (1%).

## IM pre-school phase

**4.1.11** Given the small number of children recorded as experiencing SEN in the IM pre-school phase, the exact numbers of pupils on each stage of the *Code of Practice* will not be reported, to ensure confidentiality. In the IM pre-school phase, 5% of children were recorded by their pre-school setting as experiencing SEN.

**4.1.12** All three statutory nurseries reported to have children with SEN in the pre-school. The data show that 12% children in IM statutory nurseries are recorded as experiencing SEN. The children in IM statutory nurseries identified as experiencing SEN are recorded on stages 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the *Code of Practice*.

**4.1.13** Of the 41 IM voluntary play groups surveyed, 17 settings reported that there are children with SEN in the pre-school. The data show that 5% of children in IM voluntary play groups are recorded as experiencing SEN. While these settings indicated that they are aware of the children with SEN and the nature of their needs, the information is not recorded according to the stages of the *Code of Practice*. The settings also reported that they did not use an SEN register to record the children's needs.

**4.1.14** The data indicate a diversity of need at the IM pre-school level. Figure 4.1.10, below, shows the percentage breakdown of the category of needs presenting in the IM pre-school sector, in both statutory pre-schools and voluntary play groups.

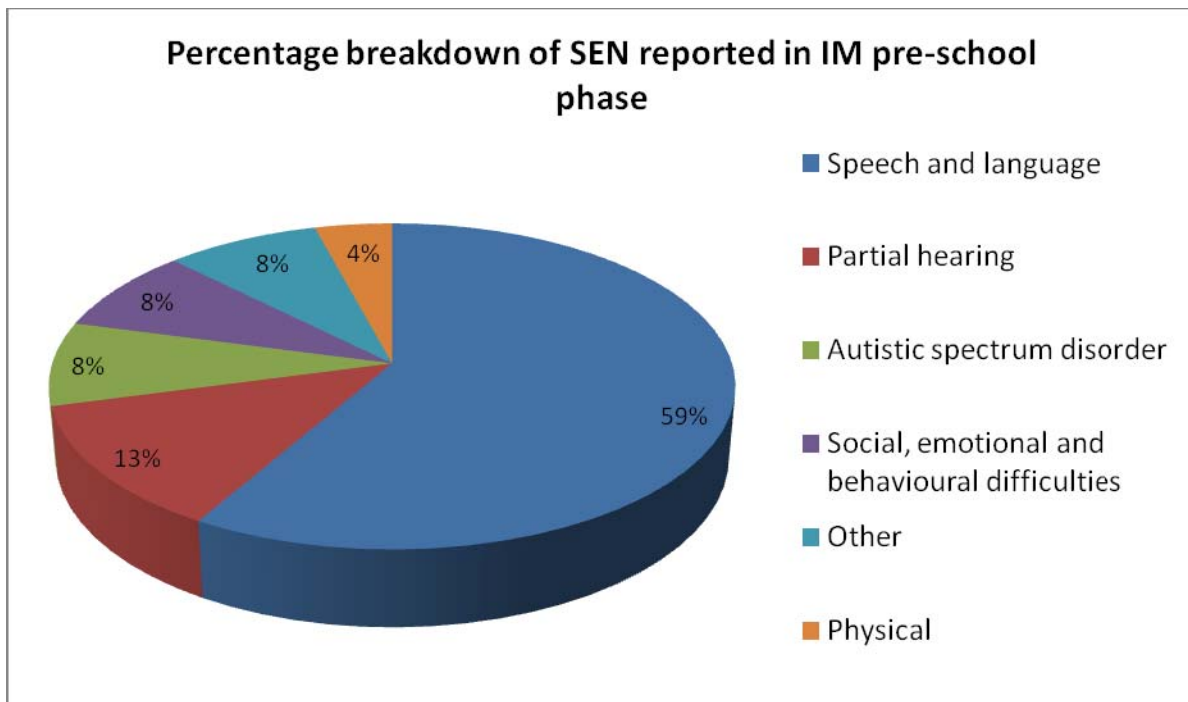


Figure 4.1.10

Figure 4.1.10, above, shows that speech and language difficulties constitute over half of the SEN recorded in the IM pre-school phase (59%). The second most frequently reported need in the IM pre-school phase was partial hearing (13%). The remaining needs reported include ASD (8%) and, physical difficulties (4%). The 'other' category represents 8% of the SEN reported in the IM pre-school phase, the categories of need recorded under this title were not made available to the researcher to ensure confidentiality.

### Statements of SEN across all phases

**4.1.15** The data show that 0.97% of pupils in the IM sector (statutory pre-school, primary and post-primary phases) have a statement of SEN. SEN census data from all sectors show that, the overall percentage of pupils with a statement of SEN is 4%.

Figure 4.1.11, below, shows the breakdown of statements in the IM sector according to gender.

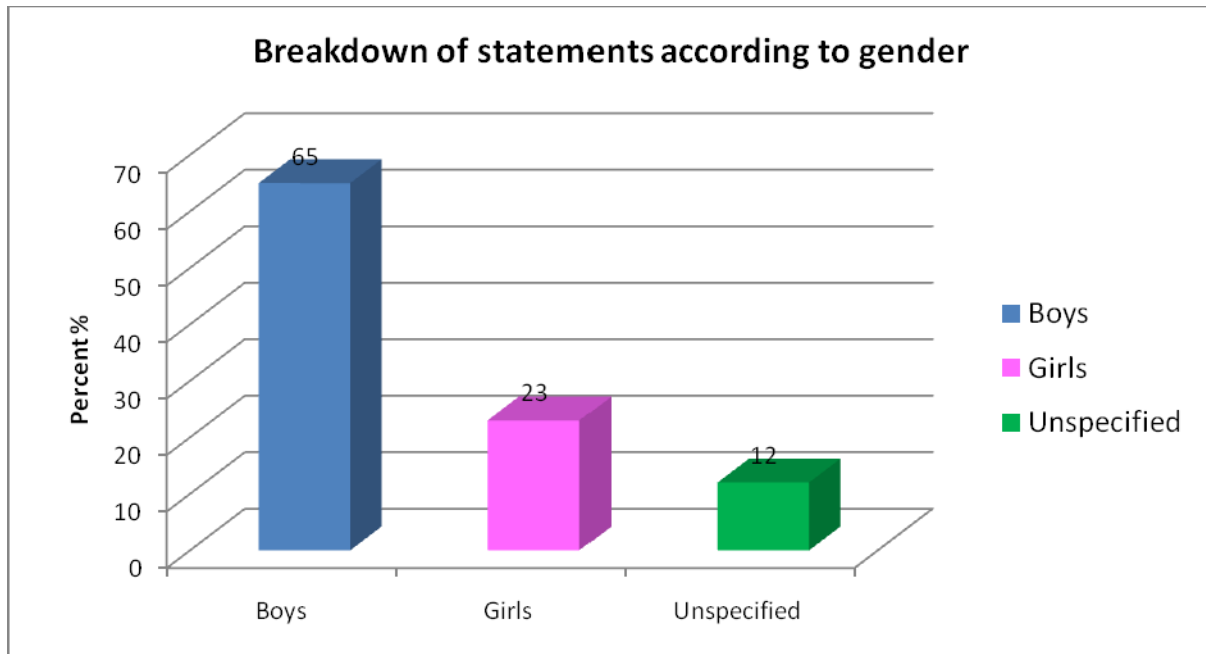


Figure 4.1.11

Figure 4.1.11, above, shows that, of the pupils in the IM sector who currently have a statement of SEN, 65% are boys and 23% are girls. In some instances, data relating to gender was not made available at the time of data collection. This accounts for the remaining 12% of pupils with a statement of SEN. In spite of the gap in the information provided, the data show that a higher percentage of boys in the IM sector have a statement of SEN.



**4.1.16** Figure 4.1.12, below, shows the percentage breakdown of statements of SEN in the IM sector according to category of SEN.

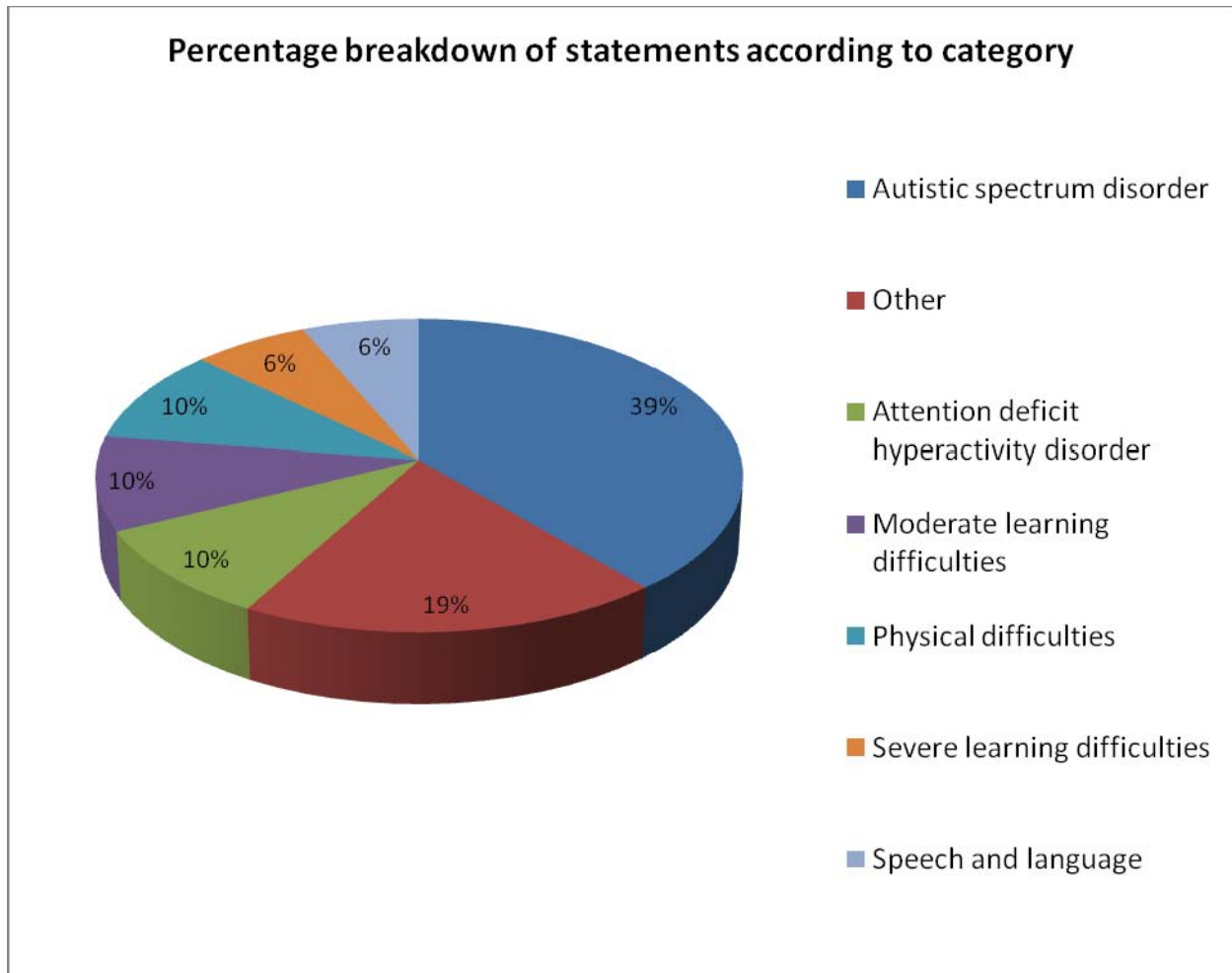


Figure 4.1.12

Figure 4.1.12, above, shows that 39% of statements of SEN in the IM sector relate to ASD, 10% of the statements relate to ADHD, 10% related to moderate learning difficulties, 10% relate to physical difficulties, 6% relate to severe learning difficulties, and 6% relate to speech and language difficulties. The remaining 19% of statements have been categorised as ‘other’. These include health problems, dyslexia and SEBD.

### Summary of main points

**4.1.17** The data show that 17% of pupils in IM primary and post-primary settings are recorded as experiencing SEN. (4.1.2)

The three most frequently reported categories of SEN in the IM primary and post-primary phases are:

- moderate learning difficulties (35%);
- mild learning difficulties (19%); and
- SEBD (15%). (4.1.4)

The data show a greater diversity of needs in the IM primary phase than the post-primary phase. (4.1.7, 10)

Overall, 0.97% of pupils in the IM sector (statutory pre-school, primary and post-primary phases) have a statement of SEN. (4.1.15)

A higher percentage of boys (almost three times as many) in the IM sector have a statement of SEN than girls. (4.1.15)

Of the statements of SEN in the IM sector, ASD represents the most frequently cited category of need (39%).(4.1.16)

Data indicate that the percentages of key stage 2 IM pupils recorded on the SEN register is closest to the norm of the percentages recorded in all sectors (4.1.2)

Data indicates that there is a lesser per-centage of IM pupils, in relation to the norm across all sectors, on the SEN register at pre-school, foundation stage and at years 10, 11 and 12 (4.1.2)

There is a marked difference in the percentage of pupils recorded on stages 1-3 (15%) of the Code of Practice in comparison with percentage of pupils recorded on stage 4 and 5 (1.44%). (4.1.3)

Just over half (54%) of SEN children recorded on the SEN register in IM primary and post-primary settings present with moderate or mild learning difficulties. (4.1.4)

53% of IM primary schildren on SEN register present with moderate or mild learning difficulties. The figure for IM post-primary is 57%. (4.1.7, 10)

Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) is the other significant category of SEN recorded in IM primary and post-primary sector at 15%. (4.1.4)

Of the seven main areas of SEN, Cognitive and Learning is the largest (60%) reported in IM primary settings which resonates strongly with the picture for primary settings for all sectors (62%) (4.1.5-6)

Areas of SEN recorded in all sectors at post-primary but not recorded in post-primary IME are Communication and Interaction, Medical Conditions/Syndromes and Physical. (4.1.8, 10)

Speech and Language difficulties constitute over half (59%) of the SEN reported in the IM pre-school phase. (4.1.14)

The percentage of IM pupils across all phases with statements of SEN (0.97%) is around a quarter of the overall percentage of pupils with a statement of SEN in all sectors (4%). (4.1.15)

## Section 4.2: Attitudes to current provision

**4.2.1** This section examines attitudes to current provision for SEN within the IM sector.

**4.2.2** The qualitative questionnaire for IM pre-school, primary and post-primary respondents asked for opinions on current provision for pupils with SEN in the IM sector. Figure 4.2.1, below, shows the percentage breakdown of responses from IM pre-school staff, primary, and post-primary teachers regarding their opinion of current SEN provision for pupils in the IM sector who require additional support.

### Responses regarding opinion of current SEN provision

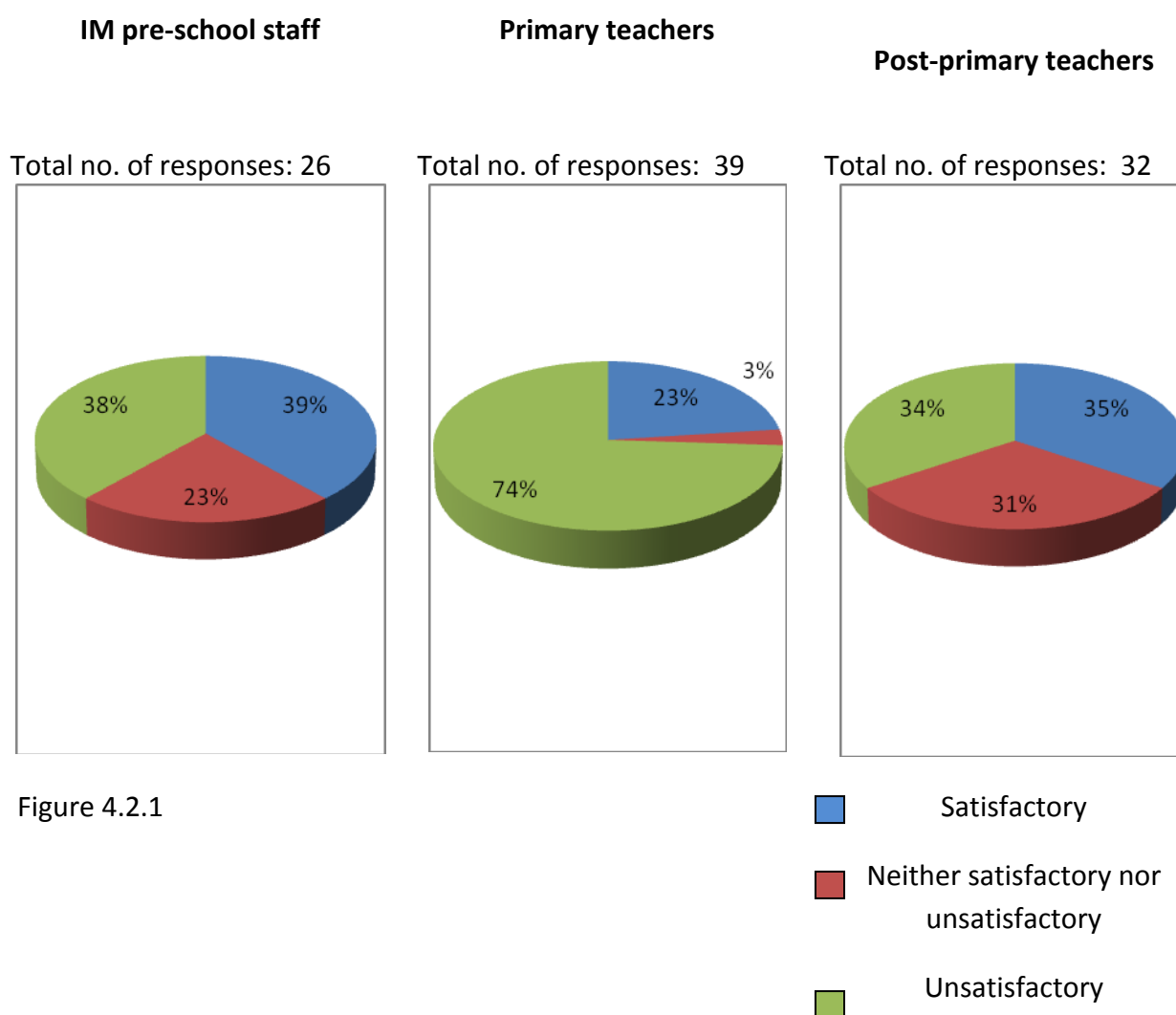


Figure 4.2.1, above, shows that 39% of IM pre-school staff, 23% of primary school teachers and 35% of post-primary school teachers, rated current provision for pupils experiencing SEN in the IM sector as satisfactory. Responses from the IM primary phase show that 74% of primary school respondents to the qualitative questionnaire rated current provision unsatisfactory. In the pre-school phase 38% of respondents rated current provision as unsatisfactory and, in the post-primary phase 34% of respondents rated current provision as unsatisfactory.

**4.2.3** Figure 4.2.2, below, shows the percentage breakdown of references to reasons supplied by respondents from the IM pre-school level to the qualitative questionnaire, as to why they rated current SEN provision in the IM sector as satisfactory.

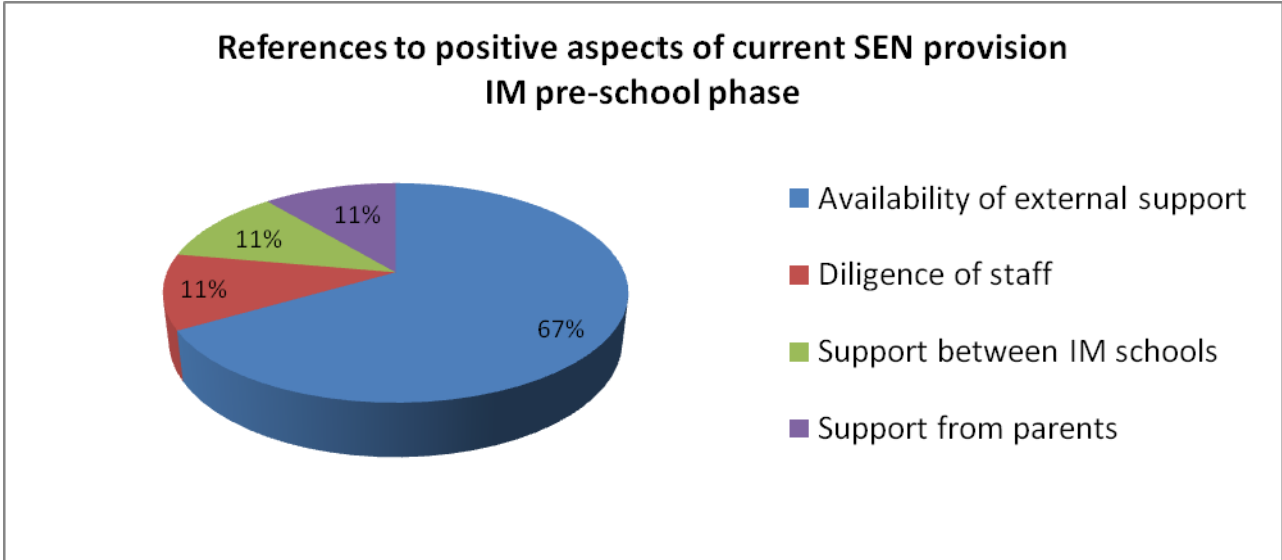


Figure 4.2.2

Figure 4.2.2, above, shows that 67% of the responses from IM pre-school respondents who rated current provision for pupils in the IM sector experiencing SEN satisfactory reported that SEN-related support services are available to pupils in the IM sector who require additional support. The remaining responses referred to the diligence of staff (11%), support from other IM settings (11%) and a high level of support from parents (11%).

**4.2.4** Figure 4.2.3, below, shows the percentage breakdown of responses from primary and post-primary school respondents as to why they rated current SEN provision for pupils in the IM sector SEN as satisfactory.

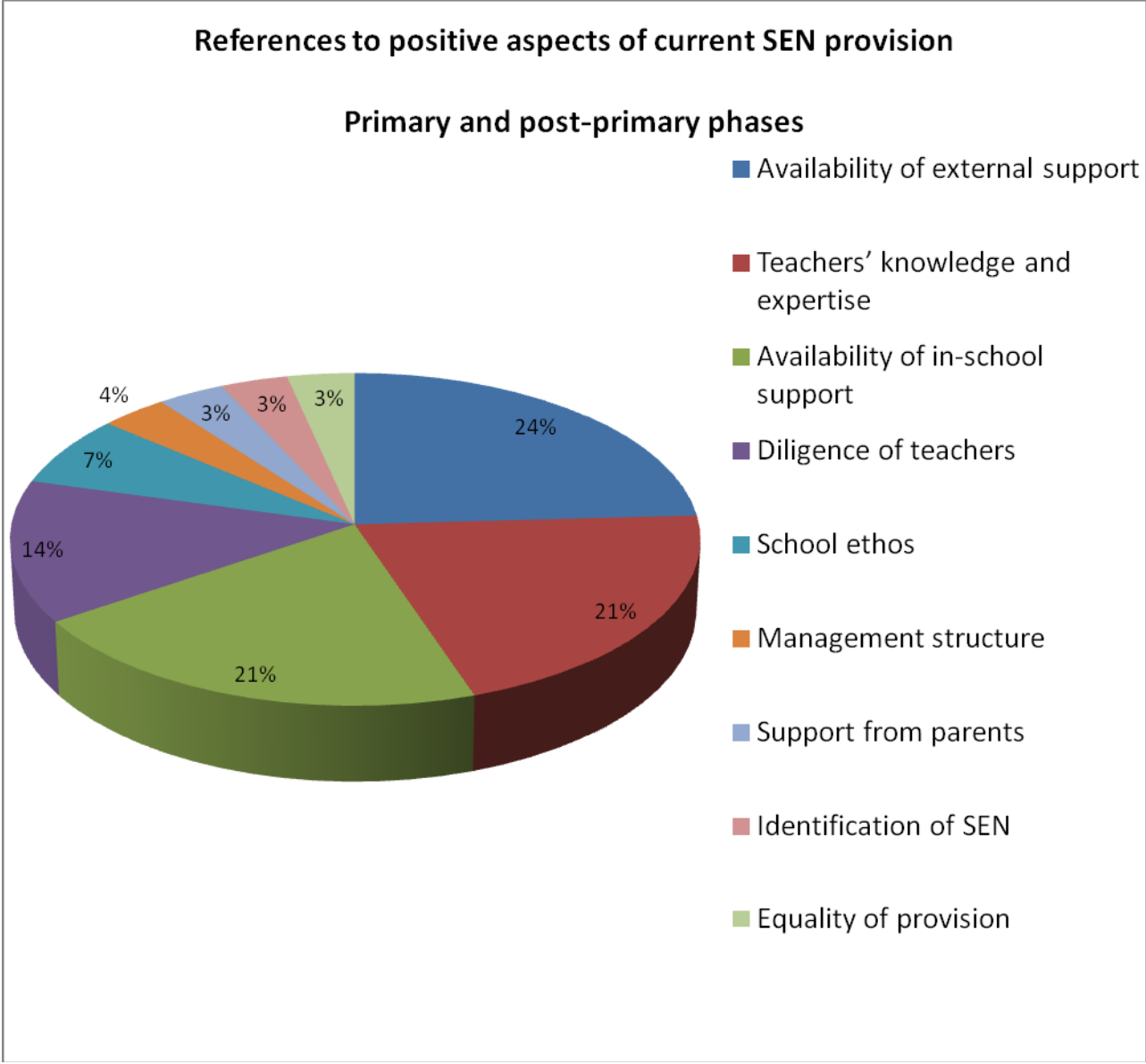


Figure 4.2.3

Figure 4.2.3, above, shows that, of the responses provided by primary and post-primary respondents, 24% of the responses reported that external support services are available for pupils who experience SEN in the IM sector, 21% of the responses referred to the knowledge and expertise of teachers in IM schools and 21% of responses referred to the availability of additional in-school support for pupils who require it. Other responses made reference to the diligence of teachers in the IM sector (14%), the ethos of IM schools (7%), the school management structure (4%), support from parents (3%), the identification of SEN (3%) and, the view that current provision for pupils experiencing SEN in the IM sector is the same as the provision made for all pupils regardless of sector (3%).

**4.2.5** Some of the comments made by respondents from primary and post-primary phases include:

<p><b><i>'Tá sé ag brath orainn ar scoil cuid mhaith. Bainimid úsáid as an saineolas agus áisíneachtaí cuí taobh amuigh den scoil.'</i></b></p>	<p><i>'It depends on us at school a lot. We make use of the appropriate expertise and agencies outside of school.'</i></p>
<p><b><i>'Bíonn múinteoirí ar leith ag plé na gcúrsaí sin; ag obair le daltaí i ngrúpaí beaga agus ag tabhairt eolais agus comhairle do na múinteoirí.'</i></b></p>	<p><i>'Certain teachers deal with these matters; working with pupils in small groups and giving advice to the teachers.'</i></p>
<p><b><i>'Ó tharla go bhfuil Gaelscoileanna mar phobail iontu féin, tá muid iontach coimheadach lenár bpáistí – tacaíocht mhaith ó na tuismitheoirí.'</i></b></p>	<p><i>'As IM schools are like communities in themselves, we are very protective of our children – good support from parents.'</i></p>

**4.2.6** Figure 4.2.4, below, shows the percentage breakdown of references made to reasons given by respondents from the pre-school phase who rated current provision for SEN in the IM sector as unsatisfactory.

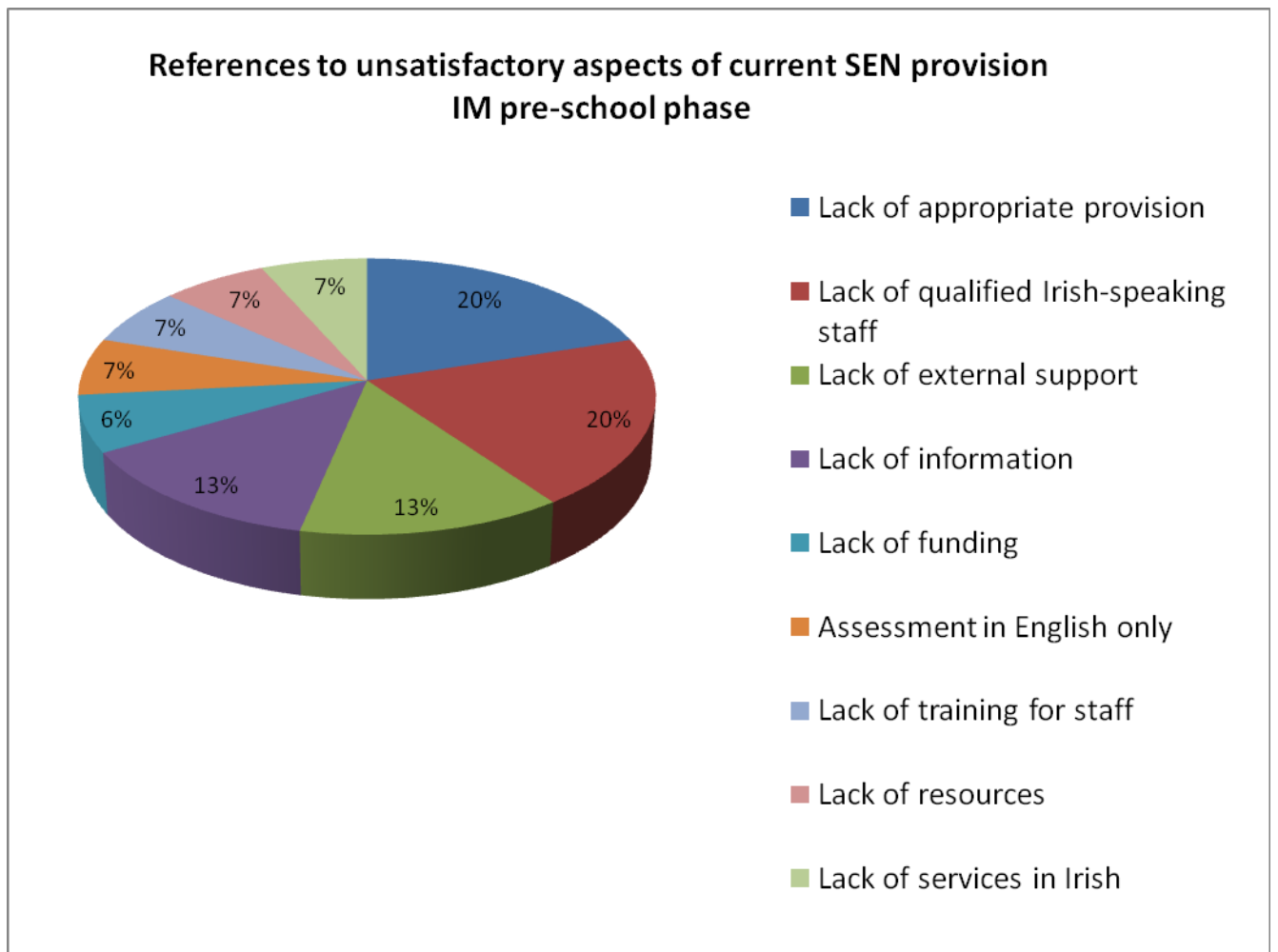


Figure 4.2.4

Of the reasons provided by respondents from the IM pre-school phase, as shown in Figure 4.2.4, above, 20% of responses made reference to a lack of appropriate provision for pupils in the IM sector, 20% of responses referred to a lack of qualified, Irish-speaking staff in IM pre-schools, 13% of responses indicated a lack of support from external support agencies in IM pre-schools and 13% of responses referred to a lack of information for IM pre-school staff in relation to making provision for children who experience SEN in the pre-school setting. Other responses reported that assessments are currently carried out through the medium of English despite pupils receiving their education through the medium of Irish (7%), a lack of training for IM pre-school staff in the area of SEN (7%), a lack of resources in Irish (7%), and a need for additional funding to assist IM pre-school settings in making provision for pupils with additional needs (6%).



**4.2.7** Figure 4.2.5, below, shows the percentage breakdown of references made to reasons why respondents from the primary and post-primary phases rated current SEN provision in the IM sector as unsatisfactory.

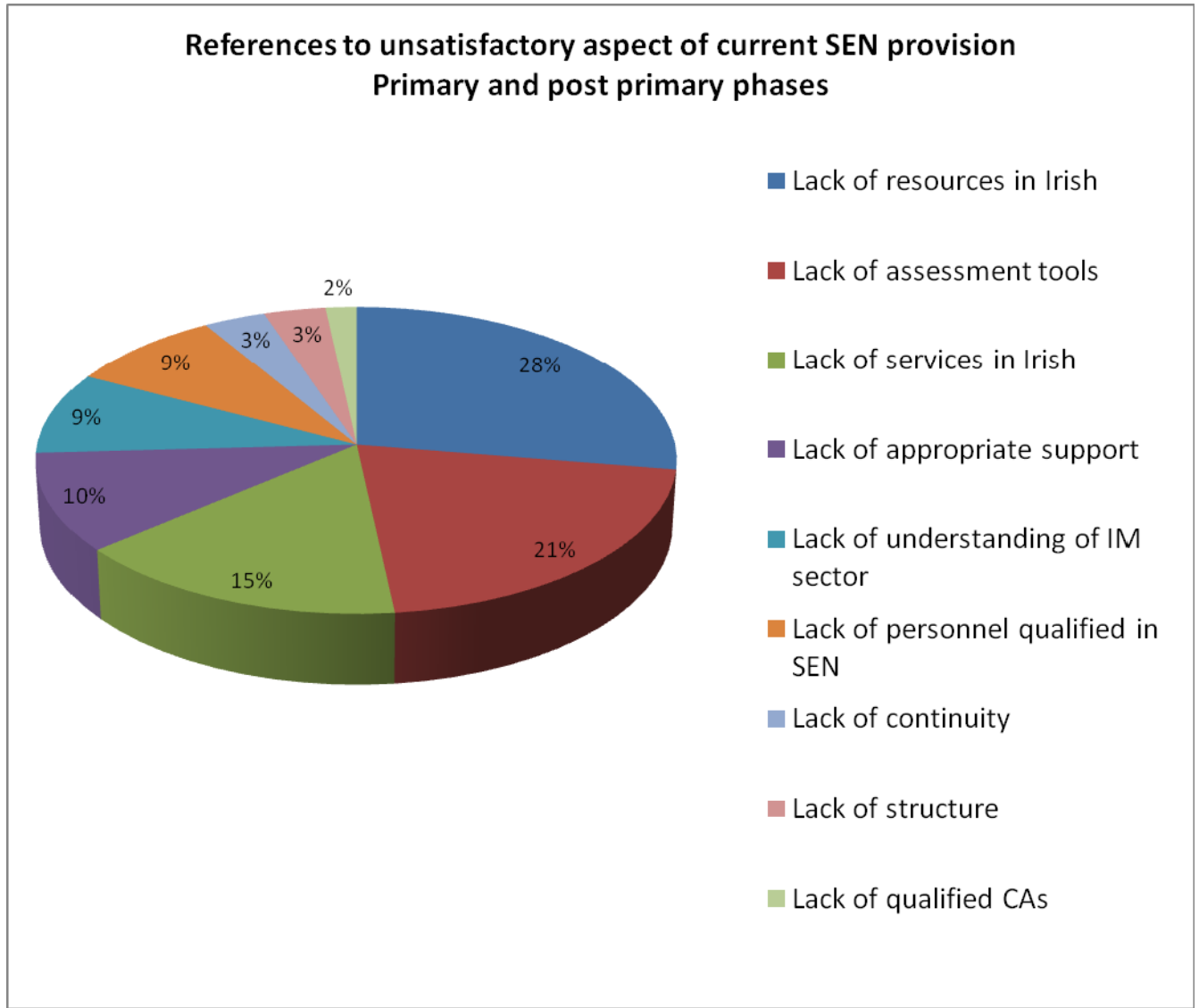


Figure 4.2.5

Figure 4.2.5, above, shows that 28% of responses from primary and post-primary respondents as to why they rated current provision for pupils experiencing SEN in the IM sector unsatisfactory make reference to a lack of resources in Irish. A further 21% of responses refer to a lack of assessment tools in Irish and 15% of responses indicate that additional external support for pupils is not available through the medium of Irish. Other reasons cited by respondents report a lack of appropriate support for pupils in IM schools who require

additional help (10%), a lack of understanding of the IM sector among SEN professionals (9%), a lack of qualified personnel in the IM sector qualified in the area of SEN (9%), a lack of structure in respect of SEN provision in the IM sector (3%), a lack of continuity in the support currently available (3%), and limited access to qualified CAs proficient in Irish (2%).

### Other issues

**4.2.8** In addition to the issues raised in response to the qualitative questionnaire for pre-school, primary and post-primary respondents in relation to current SEN provision in the IM sector, the following issues were reported by respondents from the IM sector to the qualitative questionnaire, representatives of the IM sector who participated in focus group discussion and interview, and non-teaching education professionals who took part in interview.

### Equality of provision

**4.2.9** Responses from respondents from the IM sector indicate concerns among IM practitioners regarding equality of provision for pupils in the IM sector who require additional support with their learning.

Some of the comments reported by qualitative questionnaire respondents include:

<p><i><b>'Ba chóir go mbeadh an seans céanna / tacaíocht chéanna ag páistí i ngaelscolaíocht agus atá ag gach leanbh eile i scoileanna Béarla.'</b></i></p>	<p><i>'Children in IME ought to have the same chance /same support as every other child in EM schools.'</i></p>
<p><i><b>'Uirlísí measúnaithe ar fáil i nGaeilge. Braithimid ar na háiseanna atá ann i mBéarla agus níl cothrom na féinne ann nuair nár thosaigh daltaí ar an Bhéarla go dtí Rang 4, don mhórchuid.'</b></i></p>	<p><i>'Assessment resources available in Irish. We depend on the resources which are available in English and that is not fair when pupils didn't start English until Year 4, for the most part.'</i></p>
<p><i><b>'Níl aon tacaíocht fhoirmiúil ann trí mheán na Gaeilge.'</b></i></p>	<p><i>'Formal support is not available through the medium of Irish.'</i></p>
<p><i><b>'Níl an soláthar maith go leor. Tá an oiread sin brú ar na seirbhísí uilig fiú riar'</b></i></p>	<p><i>'The provision is not good enough. There is so much pressure on all the services to meet</i></p>

<i>ar scoileanna Béarla. Níl an saineolas acu le riar mar is ceart orainn.'</i>	<i>even the needs of EM school. They don't have the expertise to meet our needs properly.'</i>
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**4.2.10** Participants in focus group discussion and interviews placed a high level of importance on equality of provision for pupils in the IM sector. Some of the comments made by focus group and interview participants include:

<i>'Tá múinteroirí gaelscoile ag iarraidh cearta na bpáistí ionas go gcuirfear go díreach an rud atá ar fáil don Bhéarla ar fáil don Ghaeilge.'</i>	<i>'IM teachers want children's rights so that exactly what is available in English will be available in Irish.'</i>
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<i>'Ní i gcónaí a bhíonn na seirbhísí atá ar fáil don earnáil Bhéarla ag fóirstean do na páistí s'againne. Ní leor iad.'</i>	<i>'The services which are available for the EM sector are not always suitable for our children. They are not enough.'</i>
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<i>'Níl na hábhair mheasúnaithe ann i nGaeilge. An bhfuil cothrom na féinne do na páistí s'againne?'</i>	<i>'The assessment materials are not available in Irish. Are our children being treated fairly?'</i>
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### Current provision

**4.2.11** Responses from qualitative questionnaire respondents and interviews with SENCOs and SEN teachers from both primary and post-primary phases indicate some concern regarding current in-school provision for pupils with SEN. Some respondents questioned if appropriate support is being made available for pupils who require additional support, and if in-class teaching is tailored to address pupils' areas of weakness. Some of the comments made by respondents include:

<i>'Measaim féin go bhfuil an fhadhb rómhor. Ní thugann údaráis na scoile tacaíocht chuí don réimse seo'</i>	<i>'I feel that the problem is too big. The school authorities do not give appropriate support to this area.'</i>
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<i>'Faigheann said a lán cuidithe ar scoil ach uaireanta níl cuid den obair scoile dírithe'</i>	<i>'They get a lot of help at school but sometimes some of the school work is not'</i>
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<b><i>ar na riachtanais s'acu féin (seans go bhfuil sé ródheacair).'</i></b>	<i>aimed at their needs (perhaps it is too difficult).</i>
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**4.2.12** A respondent from the primary phase expressed concern that pupils with SEN are expected to follow the wide range of subjects in the curriculum, through the medium of a second language. The informant reported that insufficient time and credit is given to pupils who require additional help with their learning, to take account of the fact that they have an additional subject which pupils in EM schools do not have.

**4.2.13** During focus group discussion, one post-primary participant suggested that perhaps too much is expected of pupils experiencing SEN at post-primary level, particularly in the preparation of GCSE exams. Participants reported that often pupils are expected to study a wide range of subjects through the medium of a second language, which may impact negatively on their progress.

**4.2.14** One non-teaching education professional interviewed advocated that the IM sector make clear its expectations in terms of learning outcomes and levels of Irish language competence for pupils in the sector. The informant reported that a clear definition of the expected learning outcomes, and the pedagogies and resources used by the sector, would assist support service providers in meeting the needs of pupils in the IM sector who require additional help and support with their learning.

### **Structure and planning**

**4.2.15** Respondents from the IM sector highlighted a need for structure and planning in respect of appropriate provision of appropriate support for pupils with SEN in the IM sector. The following comments were made by respondents to the qualitative questionnaire.

<b><i>'Níl sé [soláthar do shainriachtanais] forbartha ach ar dhóigh ad hoc. Struchtúr, ceannaireacht agus freagracht ar ghníomhaireacht ar leith de dhíth leis an fhreastal a fhorleathnú.'</i></b>	<i>'It [provision for SEN] has only been developed on an ad hoc basis. Structure, leadership and responsibility from a specific agency are needed in order to broaden provision.'</i>
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<b><i>'Níl soláthar struchtúrtha cuimsitheach ann do pháistí na hearnála ar chóir ar bith.'</i></b>	<i>'There is no structured, comprehensive provision for the children of the [IM] sector at</i>
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	<i>all.'</i>
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<b><i>'Tá obair stráitéiseach de dhíth go géar le tabhairt faoi na bearnaí uile.'</i></b>	<i>'There is an urgent need for strategic work to address all the gaps.'</i>
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**4.2.16** Focus group participants in four of the six focus and cluster group meetings highlighted a need for structure and planning in the provision of support for pupils. Participants expressed frustration that teachers are trying to meet the needs of pupils in their own class, based on the resources available to them at the time. One participant commented:

<b><i>'Silim gur ceann de na hábhair inní is mó atá ar mhúinteoirí nach bhfuil na struchtúir sin ann, nach mothaíonn daoine go bhfuil rudaí ag dul ar aghaidh ar bhealach struchtúrtha... go bhfuil tú ag freastal ar pháiste de réir mar a fhaigheann tú na háiseanna.'</i></b>	<i>'I think that one of the greatest areas of concern for teachers is that the structures aren't there, that people don't feel that things are moving forward in a structured way.... that you are making provision for a child as you access the resources.'</i>
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**4.2.17** Participants in another focus group, for example, advocated the implementation of an action plan for SEN provision at DE level, to ensure that a joined-up, structured approach is taken to SEN provision in the IM sector.

### Summary of main points

**4.2.18** Some respondents reported aspects of current provision to be satisfactory namely the ethos of IM schools; good relationships between pupils and teachers, between teachers and parents and between IM settings; access to support services; and the expertise, experience, and diligence of teachers in the IM sector (4.2.4).

Overall, responses from the IM sector indicate a high level of dissatisfaction with current provision for pupils in the IM sector who require additional support with their learning. The vast majority (74%) of respondents from the IM primary phase indicated their opinion of SEN provision in IME as unsatisfactory, 38% of respondents from pre-school phase and 34% from post-primary phase (4.2.2)

In the primary and post-primary phases, 24% of those who rendered SEN provision in IME as satisfactory (23% at primary and 35% at post-primary), quoted external support services

however 21% referred to knowledge and expertise of teachers in schools and 21% to the availability of in-school support for pupils. (4.2.5)

Concerns regarding current SEN provision reported by respondents from the IM sector relate to professional development for practitioners at the IM pre-school, primary and post-primary levels, the provision of appropriate assessment procedures and support services for pupils in the IM sector who require additional support with their learning; assessment materials, and the provision of sufficient financial, human, and educational resources to meet the needs of pupils receiving their education through the medium of Irish (4.2.6-7)

Respondents emphasised the importance of appropriate provision for pupils who experience SEN and who are receiving their education through the medium of Irish (4.2.6-7).

### **Pre-school respondents**

Of the 39% of them who rated SEN provision in IM sector as satisfactory 67% referred to the availability of external support as a positive aspect. (4.2.3)

Of the 38% of them who rated SEN provision in the IM sector as unsatisfactory, the main reasons (among others) they quoted involved the lack of

- appropriate provision (20%);
- qualified Irish-speaking staff (20%);
- external support (13%);
- information (13%). (4.2.6)

### **Primary and post-primary respondents**

Of the respondents who rated SEN provision in the IM sector as unsatisfactory, the main reasons (among others) they quoted involved the lack of:

- resources in Irish (28%);
- assessment tools (21%);
- services in Irish (15%);
- appropriate support (10%). (4.2.7)

**Other issues cited by respondents around SEN provision in the IM sector were:**

- equality of access to appropriate support for SEN pupils;
  - unfairness of using English language assessment when formal study of English literacy begins at year 4;
  - lack of formal support through Irish;
  - lack of expertise in the support services. (4.2.9)
- 
- parity of treatment and availability of services across both IM and EM sectors;
  - the 'one fits all' approach in support services as far as suitability for the IM sector is concerned;
  - the unfairness of the non-existence of assessment materials for IM pupils' contexts.(4.2.10)
- 
- The appropriateness of current in-school provision for SEN pupils in IM sector;
  - The tailoring of in-class teaching in addressing SEN pupils' needs;
  - Enormity of the problem (4.2.11)
- 
- SEN pupils expected to engage with a wide range of learning areas, both at primary and post-primary phases, through the medium of a second language;
  - SEN pupils with an additional learning area but without additional help. (4.2.12-13)
- 
- A planned, structured strategy is needed to bring about appropriate support system and close the gaps. (4.2.15)
  - Frustration of teachers trying to meet the needs of SEN pupils in class with the resources available to them. (4.2.16)

**4.2.19** The following sections of the research report, sections 4.3 to 4.12, provide in-depth data on current SEN provision in the IM sector.



### Section 4.3: Assessment practices and interventions

**4.3.1** This section examines current assessment practices and interventions for pupils who have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. It is divided into two main parts:

1. assessment practices; and (4.3.1-38)
2. interventions.(4.3.39-51)

**4.3.2** The section on assessment practices looks, firstly, at current in-school practices in relation to in-school assessment as reported by representatives of the five IM primary schools during in-depth interview. The information provided by the five IM settings is recorded in the form of case studies which are contained in appendix 2. Secondly, the section examines information provided by respondents from the IM sector and non-teaching education professionals on issues surrounding challenges faced by them in respect of assessment of pupils in the IM sector.

**4.3.3** The second section on interventions provides an overview of some of the current practices in IM settings to provide additional support for pupils who have been identified as requiring additional help with their learning. The data provide information on provision of additional support by SEN teachers\* and class teachers, and support provided in partnership with external SEN support services.

#### In-school assessment practices

##### Data from in-depth interviews

**4.3.4** All representatives of IM settings who took part in in-depth interviews reported using a combination of assessment strategies and materials to identify SEN. Respondents placed a high level of importance on the role of the class teacher in the identification of SEN, in the first instance. The informants reported that a combination of class teacher observation and professional judgement, consultation with the SENCO, and the results of formative and summative assessment in Irish literacy and numeracy and English literacy, where appropriate, are used in identifying SEN in their settings.

**4.3.5** All settings reported carrying out assessment in Irish using *Áis Mheasúnaithe na Luathlitearthachta* (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007) with pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 and self-produced assessment materials. One setting reported using materials provided by IM CASS team to

assess pupils. Two informants made reference to *Diagnostic Individual Assessment of Basic Reading Ability (DIABRA)* assessment materials which have been developed in Irish. One SENCO reported adapting assessment materials in English for use with pupils who have not yet begun English, by removing letters of the alphabet with which pupils are not familiar, and replacing them with accented letters of the alphabet in Irish, which the pupils have met in their early Irish literacy. All settings reported using NFER Maths (National foundation for Educational Research) and computer based adaptive assessment system, InCAs (Northern Ireland Curriculum, 2008) to assess pupils' numeracy through the medium of Irish.

**4.3.6** All settings made reference to using a combination of English and Irish literacy assessments with pupils who have begun formal English literacy. In two of the IM settings surveyed pupils begin English literacy in Year 3, and in the remaining four settings pupils begin English literacy in Year 4. Other assessment materials cited by participants include the Bury Infant Check (Pearson and Quinn, 1986), *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Clay, 2006), , non-verbal reasoning tests and assessment materials produced by GL Assessment (formally NferNelson) (GL Assessment, 2008).

**4.3.7** One setting reported that lesson planning is reviewed weekly in the school, with a focus on assessment for learning. The informant reported that the weekly review of lessons and of pupils' progress assists teachers in identifying pupils who require additional support.

## Current assessment practices

### Data from educational psychologists

**4.3.8** All respondents to the qualitative questionnaire aimed at educational psychologists were asked to provide details of what language they would use if working with a pupil from an IM school. Figure 4.3.1, below, shows the breakdown of responses from educational psychologists.

Total number of responses:

24

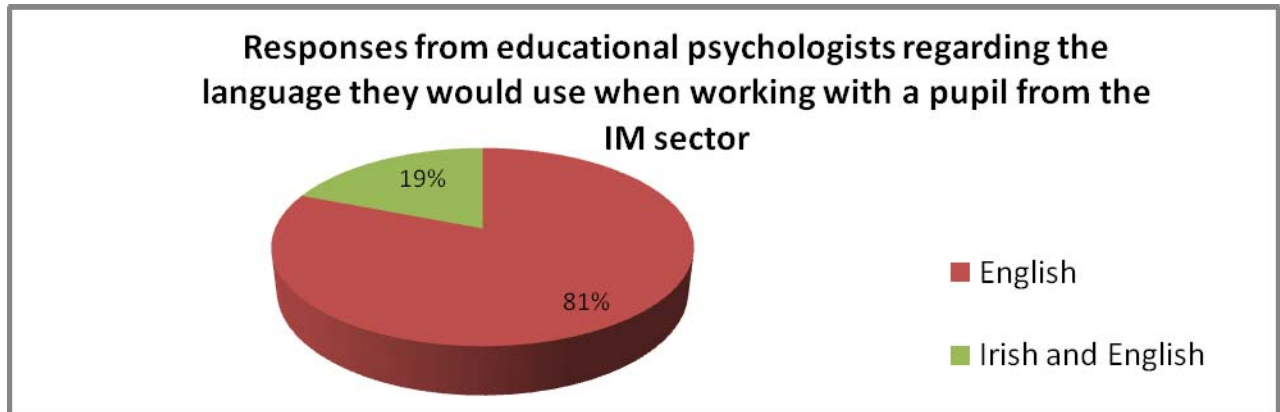


Figure 4.3.1

Figure 4.3.1 shows that 81% of respondents said that they would use English only when working with a pupil from an IM school. Almost a fifth of respondents (19%) indicated that they would use a combination of Irish and English. No respondents reported that they would use solely Irish when working with a pupil from the IM sector.

**4.3.9** All respondents to the qualitative questionnaire for educational psychologists were asked to give details of the measures they would take to meet the linguistic needs of a pupil from the IM sector. Figure 4.3.2, below, shows the breakdown of responses.

Total number of responses: 18

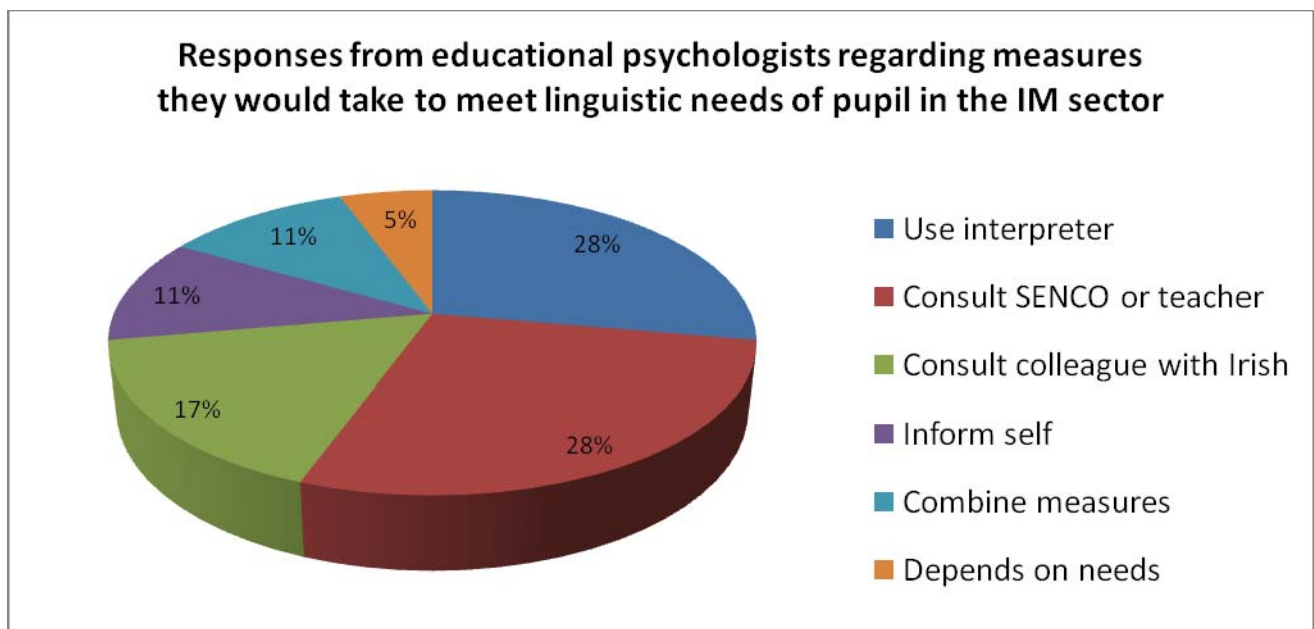


Figure 4.3.2

**4.3.10** Responses from educational psychologists regarding the measures they would take to meet the linguistic needs of pupils in the IM sector vary. Responses make reference to using an interpreter (28%), consulting the school SENCO or pupil’s teacher (28%), consulting a colleague with a knowledge of Irish (17%) and taking steps to inform oneself of the issues involved (11%). The remaining 5% of responses reported that the measures taken would depend on the pupil’s needs. Of the respondents who cited use of an interpreter as a means of meeting the linguistic needs of a pupil from the IM sector, one respondent reported using a parent or teacher as an interpreter.

**4.3.11** All respondents to the qualitative questionnaire for educational psychologists were asked to give details of the measures they would take to meet the linguistic needs of a bilingual pupil who speaks a language other than Irish. Figure 4.3.3, below, shows the percentage breakdown of references made to measures cited by respondents to the questionnaire.

Total number of responses: 21

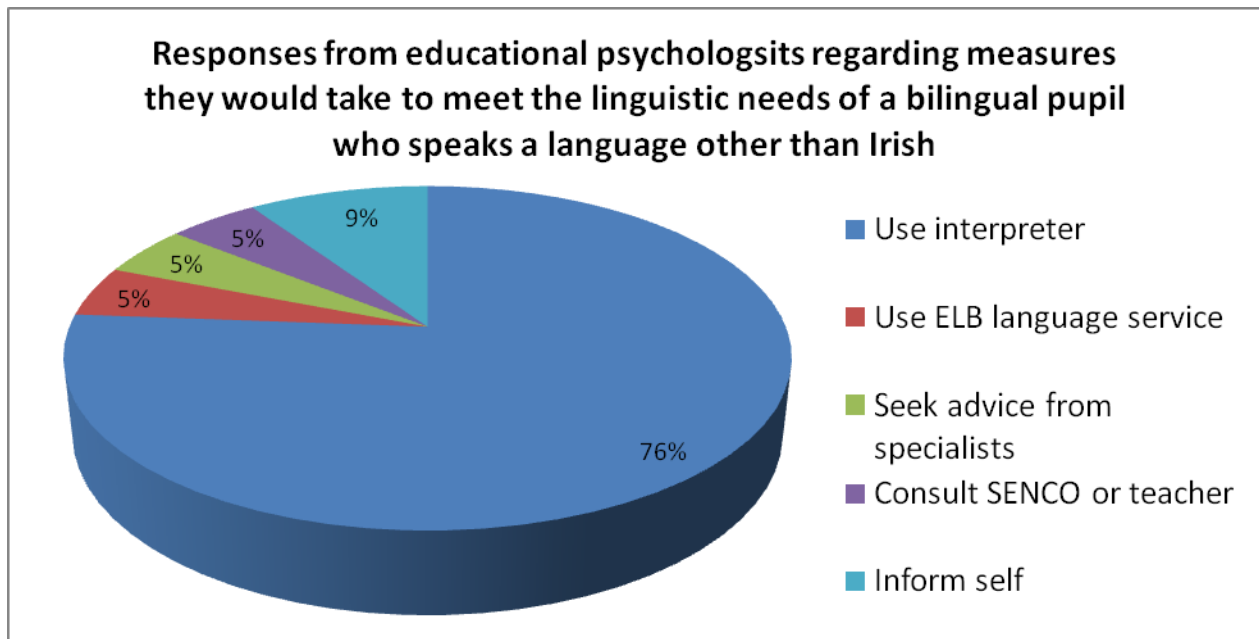


Figure 4.3.3

Figure 4.3.3, above, shows that 76% of responses referred to use of an interpreter in meeting the linguistic needs of a bilingual pupil who speaks a language other than Irish. Comparison of Figure 4.3.2 and Figure 4.3.3 shows a significant difference between the percentage of references made to use of an interpreter for Irish-speaking pupils (28%) and the percentage of

references to use of an interpreter to meet the linguistic needs of a pupil who speaks a language other than Irish. Figure 4.3.3 shows that 9% of responses made reference to taking necessary steps to inform themselves of the issues involved. The remaining responses referred to seeking advice from specialists (5%), consulting the school SENCO or the class teacher (5%), and accessing the ELB language service (5%). Comparison with Figure 4.3.2 shows a marked difference in the percentage of references to consultation with the SENCO or class teacher in order to meet the needs of Irish-speaking pupils (28%) and the percentage of references to consultation with the SENCO or class teacher to meet the needs of a pupil with a language other than Irish (5%).

### Experience of IM sector

**4.3.12** Educational psychologists were asked to provide details of any previous experience of working with pupils from the IM sector. Of the educational psychologists who responded to the qualitative questionnaire, 46% indicated experience of working with pupils from the IM sector (12 respondents). Respondents were asked to give details of the work carried out in the IM sector to date. Of the 12 respondents who had worked with pupils from the IM sector, 11 made reference to assessing pupils. One respondent reported carrying out in-class observation. Other roles reported by respondents include facilitating parental and peer-tutor projects, INSET training for teachers, providing information to parents, and therapeutic interventions.

**4.3.13** Of the respondents who indicated previous experience of working with pupils in the IM sector, most reported carrying out assessments in English. One respondent reported that only non-verbal IQ tests could be completed with the pupil at the time of assessment as the pupil had not yet begun formal English. One respondent reported that the assessment tests were carried out in English, however, some Irish was used to give instructions.

### Interviews with educational psychologists

**4.3.14** Educational psychologists who took part in interview reported that, at present, educational psychologists do not have a standardised means of assessing pupils' Irish literacy ability. They reported that, for the most part, assessment of cognitive ability and numeracy skills through the medium of English provides an accurate profile of the ability of pupils' whose first language is English. Informants reported that non-verbal IQ tests can be, and are, used to measure pupils' cognitive ability.

**4.3.15** Although statistics do not exist on the number of children in the IM education sector whose first language is Irish, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that there are currently a small number of children in IM schools whose first language is Irish. Participants indicated awareness that there are pupils in the IM sector whose first language is Irish and they reported

that assessment of such pupils would require careful consideration on the part of the educational psychologist.

**4.3.16** Interview participants emphasised the need for caution when assessing pupils in IM schools through the medium of English using assessments in English, designed for monolingual English-speaking children, with pupils who have begun English literacy in Year 3 or Year 4. Some educational psychologists made reference to assessment materials which contain vocabulary which is predominantly school-based, with which pupils may be familiar in Irish, but not necessarily familiar in English, such as weather terminology, the seasons, colours, and shapes and therefore, the need to take cognisance of pupils' learning experience during the assessment process. In addition, respondents reported that it may be Year 6 before pupils' English literacy will have caught up with that of their peers educated in monolingual EM schools. They highlighted the need for educational psychologists, working with pupils in IM schools, to exercise caution when carrying out assessments in English.

**4.3.17** Interview with one educational psychologist with experience of working in IM schools reported that, while literacy assessment cannot be carried out in Irish there are tests which can be used with pupils in IM schools. The informant, who is an Irish-speaker, reported adapting tests which assess numeric, operational and reasoning skills for use with pupils in IM schools. The informant reported that as the tests contain single words and pictures, they can be adapted and carried out through the medium of Irish. It was also reported that some diagnostic tests which assess visual memory, audio memory and visual perception can be carried out in Irish, and have been used with pupils in IM schools. The informant reported that while these methods of testing are not standardised, they provide educational psychologists with a good insight into the pupil's ability.

**4.3.18** Another educational psychologist with experience of working in IM schools reported during interview that a having a knowledge of Irish means that some of the questions in an IQ test, for example, are asked in Irish, and any answers the pupils provide in Irish are accepted. The informant reported using Irish to test pupils on areas such as the seasons, colours, numbers, with which pupils in IM schools are familiar in Irish. While standardised assessment of Irish literacy cannot be carried out, the informant reported carrying out an informal assessment of pupils' Irish literacy ability, and examining pupils' attainments in their school work as part of the assessment process.

## Irish language assessment materials

### IM pre-schools

**4.3.19** Overall, respondents from the IM pre-school phase made considerably fewer references to assessment tools. During the researcher's visits to IM pre-schools in the first round of data collection, all IM pre-schools reported carrying out regular observations and keeping records of children's progress.

### Primary and post-primary phases

**4.3.20** Respondents to the qualitative questionnaire from the primary and post-primary phases emphasised the issue of assessment materials in Irish. Primary and post-primary respondents to the qualitative questionnaire made very frequent reference to a lack of standardised assessment materials in Irish. For example, as discussed in section 4.2, 74% of respondents from the primary phase and 34% of respondents from the post-primary phase rated provision for pupils with SEN in the IM sector unsatisfactory. Of the reasons given to explain their response, 21% of the responses made referred to a lack of standardised assessment tools in Irish, second most frequently cited factor after a lack of resources in Irish (28%).

### Data from interview and focus group discussion

**4.3.21** All focus group and cluster group discussions and interviews with SENCOs and SEN teachers raised the issue of standardised tests in Irish. Participants reported that standardised literacy tests in Irish are necessary to enable teachers to assess pupils' reading age in Irish and identify learning difficulties.

**4.3.22** Participants reported a need for standardised tests which take account of pupils' bilingualism, rather than employing assessment materials which have been designed for children who are exposed to only one language, and one focus group discussion reported a need for diagnostic tests in Irish in order to diagnose the nature of the learning difficulties experienced by pupils.

**4.3.23** In-depth data on SEN practices collected in six IM primary schools show that, in order to identify pupils who require additional support, teachers in the IM sector use their professional judgement, together with a combination of formal and informal assessments through the medium of Irish, and through the medium of English, when appropriate. Responses from IM primary and post-primary respondents during interview and focus group discussion indicate,

however, that the lack of standardised assessment materials in Irish constitutes a source of unease among some practitioners in relation to the early and accurate identification of learning difficulties.

**4.3.24** In respect of external examinations, one post-primary participant in a focus group discussion reported that the type of Irish language used in public examinations does not necessarily reflect the language used in schools and therefore, is not familiar to students. The participant expressed concern that this creates a challenge for all pupils, and would prove a greater challenge to students who experience difficulties with their learning.

#### Interviews with educational psychologists

**4.3.25** Educational psychologists reported that the lack of standardised assessment materials in Irish constitutes a challenge of educational psychologists when assessing pupils in IM schools. As they are unable to assess a pupil's reading ability in Irish, they are challenged to identify if the pupil is experiencing difficulty with literacy. They reported that this is particularly true if the pupil has not yet begun formal literacy in English, as children do not generally start formal English until Year 3 or Year 4.

**4.3.26** Informants suggested that, in the event that Irish literacy assessment materials were available, there would be a requirement to provide personnel with a high level of fluency in Irish to deliver the assessments.

**4.3.27** With regard to the provision of standardised assessment materials through the medium of Irish, informants cautioned against translating assessment from English to Irish. One informant cited a pilot scheme in which some assessment materials were translated into Irish. Owing to the type of test in question, the Irish version of the test actually provided the pupil with a clue to the answer, therefore, rendering the test result invalid.

**4.3.28** Respondents reported that the creation of standardised assessment materials requires a sample population on which to standardise the materials. Informants reported that there are a number of factors to be taken into account, including level of exposure to language and socio-economic background. One informant highlighted that a high percentage of IM schools in the north of Ireland are located in socially disadvantaged areas and, therefore, the importance of ensuring that assessment materials take account of the experience of the pupils they are designed to assess.

#### Questionnaire for educational psychologists

**4.3.29** All educational psychologists who responded to the qualitative questionnaire were asked to indicate how effective resources in Irish would be in enabling them to meet the needs



of pupils in IM schools. Figure 4.3.4, below, shows the breakdown of responses from educational psychologists.

Total number of responses: 12

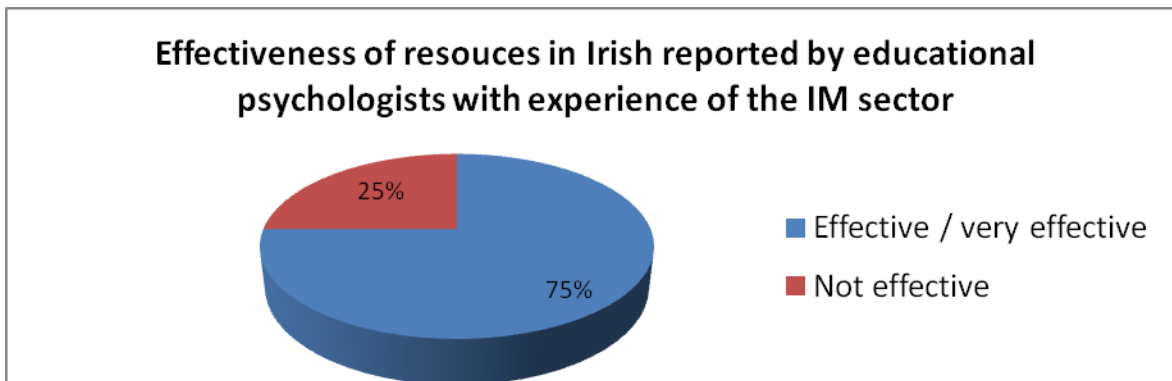


Figure 4.3.4

Figure 4.3.4, above, shows that a majority of educational psychologists who responded to the qualitative questionnaire (75%) indicated that resources in Irish would be very effective, or effective in meeting the needs of pupils in the IM sector.

**4.3.30** Educational psychologists who responded that resources in Irish would be beneficial in meeting the needs of pupils in the IM sector were asked to provide details of the type of resource materials which would be useful. The responses made reference to the provision of assessment materials in Irish in order to assess pupils' progress of Irish. The remaining SEN support resources recommended by educational psychologists are discussed in section 4.11

### Implications of lack of assessment materials in Irish

#### Data from focus group discussion and interview

**4.3.31** For the most part, focus group and interview participants expressed concern that the lack of assessment materials in Irish negatively impacts on access to SEN support services for pupils in the IM sector.

**4.3.32** Some teachers, participant in focus groups, reported that they understood that they could not access educational psychology services for pupils who had not yet started learning English, while other participants reported accessing educational psychology services prior to commencing formal English literacy, but that assessments could not be completed through the medium of English.

**4.3.33** Focus group participants and SENCOs who took part in interview expressed the view that without standardised assessment tests they are unable to provide statistical data in relation to pupils' literacy attainment in Irish in order to meet the ELB criteria when making a referral to educational psychology services. One SENCO indicated, for example, that stringent ELB criteria for statutory assessment can result in spending a considerable amount of time carrying out in-school assessment in order to provide the necessary information to make a referral. Participants expressed concern that these restrictions delay the identification of learning difficulties, and access to additional support. One SENCO reported that younger pupils are restricted from accessing peripatetic support as the peripatetic screening test is carried out through the medium of English.

**4.3.34** Post-primary participants reported that they are unable to assess pupils using a standardised test when they enter post-primary school. The participants reported that this can pose challenges to the school in obtaining an accurate profile of pupils' ability and ensuring the pupils receive the support they require from the beginning of their post-primary education.

**4.3.35** IM practitioners participant in focus group discussion and interview expressed the view that assessing pupils from IM schools through the medium of English only, restricts pupils from displaying their strengths, and risks losing some of the nuances of the assessment procedure. One SENCO expressed concern that pupils may receive additional support in areas where they do not need it but may miss out on valuable support in areas of weakness.

#### **Interview with educational psychologists**

**4.3.36** Interviews with educational psychologists indicated that teachers in the IM sector are sometimes of the opinion that educational psychology support cannot be accessed before a pupil has commenced English literacy in Year 3 or Year 4. This was supported by information supplied by teachers during focus group discussion. Educational psychologists reported that, while pupils' Irish literacy cannot be assessed, advice and support are available to teachers and pupils prior to commencing formal English literacy.

**4.3.37** Informants reported that pupils in the IM sector face certain disadvantage as a result of the lack of standardised assessment materials to assess pupils' literacy in Irish. It was reported that the lack of standardised literacy tests makes it difficult to obtain an accurate measure of pupils' ability in Irish and, therefore, makes it difficult to monitor pupils' progress. Further, informants reported that having to wait until a pupil has commenced English literacy, in order to assess pupils' literacy ability, can lead to a delay in accessing additional support.

## Summary of main points

Responses indicate that schools place a high level of importance on teachers' professional judgement in the identification of SEN in the first instance (4.3.4).

Schools reported using a combination of assessment procedures to assess pupils including assessment materials in Irish, assessment materials in English adapted for use in Irish, and standardised assessment materials in English with pupils who have begun English literacy (4.3.4).

Schools report using assessment materials in Irish available to them, for example *Áis Mheasúnaithe sa Luathlitearthacht* (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007), materials provided by IM CASS, NfER maths (National foundation for Educational Research) and InCAs in Irish (Northern Ireland Curriculum, 2008b) (4.3.5).

While teachers in the IM sector have developed strategies to identify and assess SEN, they report that the lack of standardised assessment materials restricts the statistical data they can provide in relation to pupils' Irish literacy development (4.3.20).

Teachers expressed concern that assessing pupils through the medium of English only does not provide an accurate measure of pupils' areas of strength and areas of weakness (4.3.22-3).

Educational psychologists highlighted the challenges posed to psychologists working in the IM sector. While respondents reported that standardised assessment materials in English provide an accurate profile of pupils' ability for pupils whose first language is English, they reported that psychologists are unable to assess pupils' Irish literacy which may therefore, cause a delay in accessing appropriate support (4.3.8-18).

The class teacher plays a crucial role in the identification of SEN and involves observation, professional judgement, consultation with SENCO and use of a wide-ranging set of assessment results including Irish, English and numeracy (4.3.4).

Educational psychologists working with IM pupils carry out their work in the vast majority of cases (81%) using English only, none of them use Irish only, while around one fifth (19%) use a combination of Irish and English (4.3.8, 13).

28% of the Educational Psychologists interviewed prefer courteously to maintain the Irish language dynamic of IM schools and allow IM pupils the facility of interpretation (4.3.9).

There are no means of carrying out standardised assessments of IM pupils' Irish literacy which teachers believe can negatively impact on accessing SEN support for IM pupils as it complicates the process of referral to Educational Psychologist services (4.3.14, 20, 21, 23, 31, 33).

Most Educational Psychologists who were interviewed believe that the assessment of cognitive ability and numeracy skills through the medium of English provides an accurate profile of pupils whose first language is English (4.3.14).

Educational Psychologists reported that the assessment of pupils whose first language is Irish needed careful consideration (4.3.15).

Educational Psychologists are aware that care must be taken when assessing bilingual children using assessment tools designed with monolingual English-speaking pupils in mind and the absence of standardised tests in Irish challenges them (4.3.16, 25).

Educational Psychologists indicated that having to wait until an IM pupil commenced English literacy study formally at year 3 or 4 can lead to a delay in accessing additional support (4.3.37).

Assessment materials designed for children who have been exposed to one language only, do not take account of IM pupils' bilingualism and translating them creates further difficulties (4.3.22, 27).

The majority of Educational Psychologists (75%) indicated through the qualitative questionnaire that Irish language resources would be effective or very effective in meeting the needs of IM pupils (4.3.29).

One psychologist adopted numeric, operational and reasoning skills tests to Irish which are certainly not standardised but offer insights into pupils' Irish literacy abilities (4.3.17).

IM teachers feel sometimes uneasy about making judgements about pupils using professional judgement only and not authenticated by standardised tests in Irish (4.3.23).

In external examinations the language used often does not resonate with classroom language in IM post-primary education (4.3.24).

## In-school interventions

### Data from focus group discussion and interviews

**4.3.39** Data provided during focus group discussion and interview did not provide in-depth information on in-school interventions currently used in IM schools but provided an insight into some of the current practices used in IM schools. With regard to additional literacy support, amongst the resources and strategies used, teaching practitioners participant in focus groups reported using *Fónaic na Gaeilge* (BELB, 2005), *Jolly Phonics* (Lloyd, 2005), *Oxford Reading Tree* (Oxford University Press), *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 2002) and *Áis Mheasúnaithe sa Luathlitearthacht* (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007).

**4.3.40** Interviews with SEN teachers<sup>2</sup> \* and SENCOs made reference to the same literacy support materials. One SEN teacher reported using *Emotional Literacy* (The School of Emotional Literacy, 2008), designed to assist pupils experiencing SEBD, with all pupils in the school. Pupils have a ‘feelings diary’, and have the opportunity to record their feelings in the diary on a daily basis. The informant reported *Emotional Literacy* to be a very valuable programme in assisting all pupils with their learning.

### Data from in-depth interviews

**4.3.41** The following information was collected during in-depth interview with representatives of five IM primary schools in relation to current in-school SEN practices. All data collected during these interviews is recorded in the form of case studies which are contained in appendix 1

**4.3.42** Three of the five settings currently have an SEN teacher on a full-time or part-time basis, in addition to the school SENCO who is responsible for the management and administration of SEN issues in the school. In another school, the SENCO provides additional support to pupils who are recorded on the SEN register. Another setting reported that, until recently the SENCO was not a class teacher and worked with small groups in withdrawal sessions. The setting is no longer in a position to offer this provision to the same extent, owing to budgetary restraints within the school.

**4.3.43** The SEN teachers provide support to individual pupils and small groups of pupils who require additional support with their learning through withdrawal arrangements. For the most

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<sup>2</sup> The term ‘SEN teacher’ has been used throughout this report to describe teachers from the IM sector who work with pupils who require additional support. While some ‘SEN teachers’ are class teachers, in some IM schools ‘SEN teachers’ are employed on a full-time or part-time basis to work with pupils who require additional support, usually through withdrawal arrangements.

part, the support provided is literacy based and is provided in English and/or in Irish according to the needs of the pupils. In one setting, the additional literacy support provided during withdrawal sessions is provided through the medium of English only.

**4.3.44** Four settings reported that SEN CAs provide support to particular pupils in the school. A further two settings reported that a CA is involved in the provision of additional support to pupils on a withdrawal basis, either assisting the SENCO or SEN teacher or in addition to the support provided by the SENCO or SEN teacher. Representatives of these two settings reported that CAs are involved in Reading Partnership and Paired Reading schemes and a CA in one setting is involved in leading a *Primary Movements* (Primary Movement, 2008) programme within the school.

**4.3.45** All settings reported using phonics programmes such as *Fónaic na Gaeilge* (BELB, 2005) in Irish and *Jolly Phonics* (Lloyd, 2005) in English as part of early literacy development and as a means of assisting pupils who require additional literacy support.

**4.3.46** One of the five settings reported that some pupils receive outreach support through the medium of Irish. Outreach support is provided from a special school in the BELB area to a number of IM schools in the BELB area. The outreach teacher provides additional Irish literacy support to Key Stage 1 (KS1) pupils.

**4.3.47** Two settings reported that they receive support in the area of SEN from other schools or outside agencies. One of the settings indicated that they work in partnership with community groups and, the other setting reported receiving advice and support from a neighbouring EM school.

**4.3.48** Two settings have implemented a speech and language programme. One setting, under the guidance of their visiting speech and language therapist, has provided training to all teachers in the area of speech and language. The speech and language programme is implemented through the medium of Irish in the school. The other setting reported using speech and language materials in Irish published by Blacksheep Press (Blacksheep Press, 2008) with Year 1 and Year 2 pupils.

**4.3.49** All settings reported that they create their own resources to meet the needs of pupils who require additional support including games, worksheets and assessment materials. Two settings have created a series of reading books for Year 1 / 2 pupils and one of these settings has also created resources to accompany the reading books.

## Post-primary provision for SEN

**4.3.50** In terms of provision for pupils with additional needs at post-primary level, one IM post-primary setting has established a support centre for pupils who require additional support with their learning. The support centre welcomed its first pupils in September 2008. The support centre offers differentiated support in the areas of literacy and numeracy and core subjects through one-to-one support, and additional support to pupils who experience SEN which impact on their learning through a range of strategies including an in-school mentoring scheme and support and mentoring from partners in the community. Pupils attending the centre continue to attend subject specialist classes with their peers. The centre also aims to research current methods of testing literacy, to increase number of 'teaching assistants' within classes to support teaching and learning, develop administration of SEN within the setting, and develop support systems for teaching practitioners with regard to learning and teaching strategies for children with additional learning needs.

### Summary of main points

**4.3.51** A number of IM schools are proactive in providing additional support to pupils who require it through withdrawal arrangements with the SENCO, SEN teacher and, in some cases, a CA. (4.3.42-5)

The data show that a range of strategies and resources are in use across the IM sector to support pupils including *Emotional Literacy* (The School of Emotional Literacy, 2008), speech and language programmes, *Primary Movements* (Primary Movement, 2008) as well as programmes such as *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 2002) and *Jolly Phonics* (Lloyd, 2005). (4.3.40)

Schools reported using resources available to them in Irish such as *Fónaic na Gaeilge* (BELB, 2005), *Áis Mheasúnaithe sa Luathlitearthacht* (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007), and speech and language resources (Blacksheep Press, 2008). (4.3.39)

In the absence of a wide and varied range of resources in Irish and resources which target specific areas of need, teachers in IM schools are creating their own resources in Irish including reading books and accompanying resources, worksheets and games. The data indicate that the majority of additional support focuses on literacy, through the medium of Irish, through the medium of English or both, as required. (4.3.49)

One IM post-primary setting established a SEN support centre operating in September 2008 appointing a coordinator and further staff. (4.3.50)

## Section 4.4: Classroom assistants

**4.4.1** This section examines the role of CAs in providing support for pupils experiencing SEN in the IM sector. The section is divided into two main parts:

1. opinion of the support provided by CAs; (4.4.1-25)and
2. the role of CAs. (4.4.26-27)

### Opinion of the support provided by CAs

**4.4.2** Respondents to the qualitative questionnaire for primary and post-primary teachers and classroom assistants were asked to indicate their opinion of classroom assistants as a means of support for pupils who require additional support in the IM sector. Figure 1, below, shows the breakdown of responses according to target group. The actual number of responses is shown in Table 4.4.1, below.

IM pre-school staff	Primary teachers	Post-primary teachers	Classroom assistants	SEN classroom assistants
23	37	20	8	7

Table 4.4.1

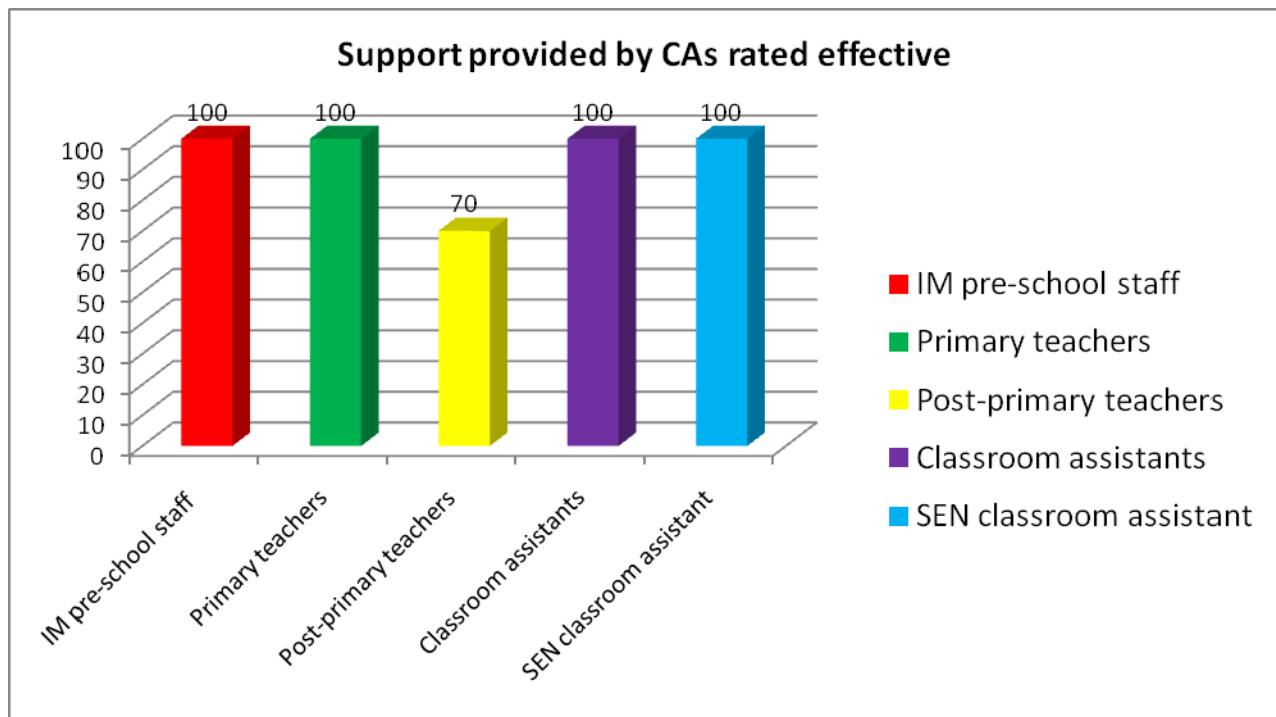


Figure 4.4.1



Figure 4.4.1, above, shows that in four of the five target groups, all respondents to the qualitative questionnaire rated the support provided by a CA as effective. In the IM pre-school and primary phases, all respondents rated the support provided by a CA effective, as did all CAs and SEN CAs who responded to the qualitative questionnaire. In the post-primary phase, 70% of respondents to the qualitative questionnaire rated the support provided by CAs as effective.

**4.4.3** Responses from parents, discussed in section 4.8, indicate a high level of appreciation among parents with regard to the help and support CAs provide to their children in the classroom situation.

#### IM pre-school phase

**4.4.4** Figure 4.4.2, below, shows the percentage breakdown of references made to the advantages of a CA for a pupil with SEN, supplied by respondents from the IM pre-school phase.

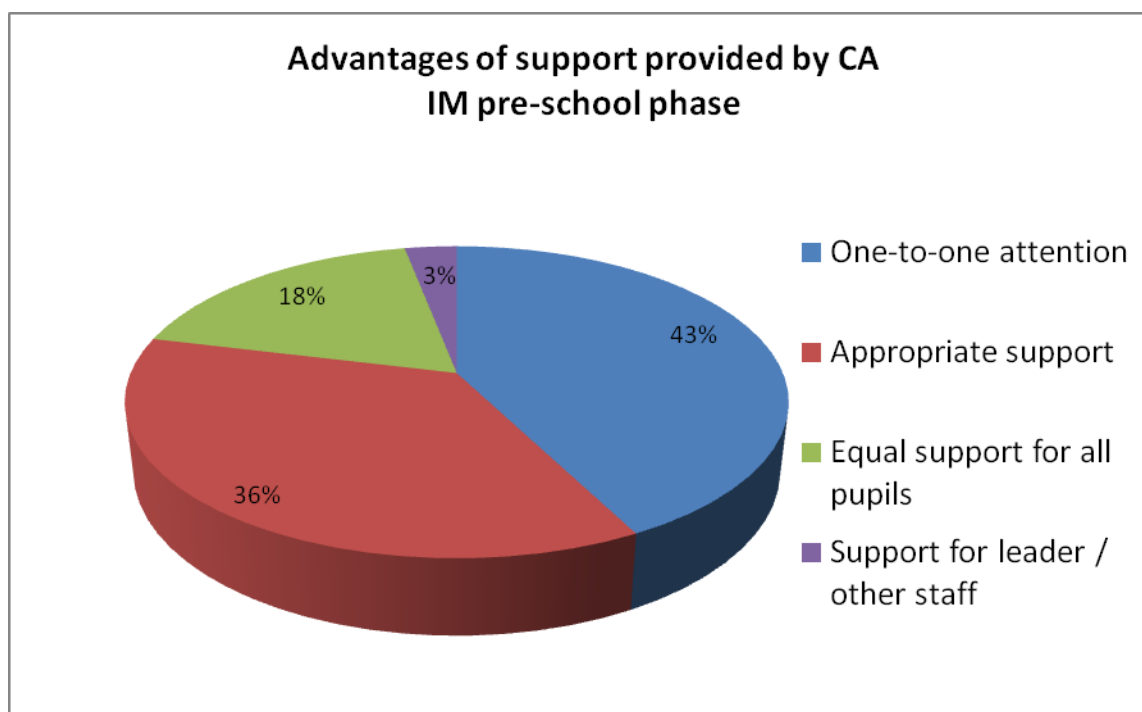


Figure 4.4.2

Figure 4.4.2, above shows that 43% of responses made reference to the provision of one to one support for a pupil, 36% referred to the provision of appropriate support to meet the pupil's needs, 18% of responses reported that all pupils can benefit from support and therefore, receive an equal amount attention, and 3% of references reported that a CA in the setting also provides additional support to the pre-school leader and other members of staff.

**4.4.5** Some of the comments made by respondents from the IM pre-school phase include:

<p><b><i>'Is féidir le cúntóirí aird na bpáistí a choinneáil ar an obair s'acu i rith an ama. Tugann siad tacaíocht don pháiste ar dhóigh phearsanta aonarach.'</i></b></p>	<p><i>'Assistants can keep the children's attention on their work all the time. They support the child in an individual, personal way.'</i></p>
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*'Giving them one to one attention. Getting to know their individual needs and provide support where needed. Having enough time to design appropriate plans and support programmes.'*

*'Able to look after that child while little or no disruption to session.'*

*'CA can identify needs which may be overlooked otherwise.'*

<p><b><i>'Ní bheadh an páiste sa náiscoil gan chúntóir ranga.'</i></b></p>	<p><i>'The child would not be in the pre-school without a classroom assistant.'</i></p>
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### Primary phase

**4.4.6** Figure 4.4.3, below, shows the breakdown of the references made to the advantages of the support provided by a CA as reported by primary school teachers.

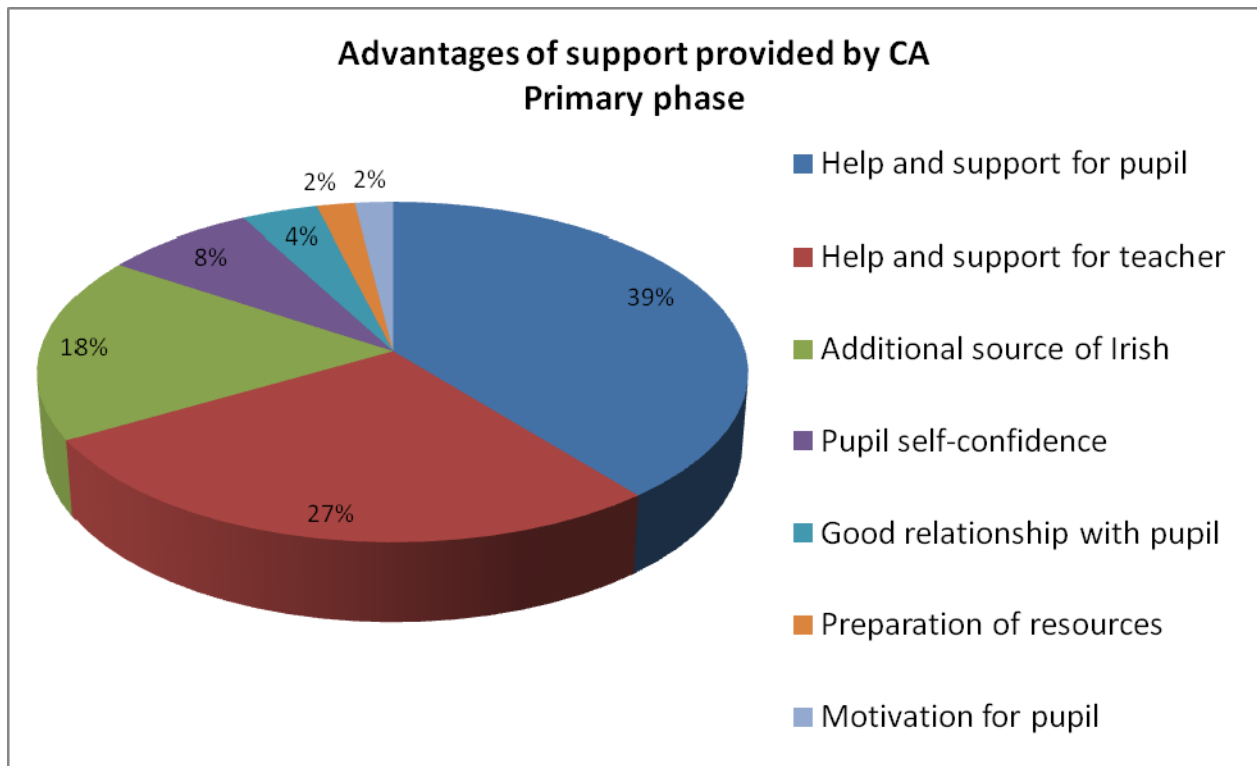


Figure 4.4.3

Figure 4.4.3, above shows that 39% of the responses regarding the advantages of the support provided by a CA made reference to the individual help and support provided to the pupil. The second most frequently cited advantage was help and support for the teacher (27%). This section included that the CA can work with the whole class allowing the teacher the opportunity to work with individual pupils, assist the teacher with behavioural difficulties in the class, and assist the teacher with record-keeping on the pupil's progress. A further 18% of responses referred to the benefits of an additional source of Irish in the classroom. The remaining responses suggested that support from a CA raises the pupil's self-confidence (8%), the CA has a good relationship with the pupil concerned (4%), the CA assists with the preparation of resources (2%), and provides a source of motivation for the pupil (2%).

### Post-primary phase

**4.4.7** Figure 4.4.4, below, shows the percentage breakdown of the references made to the advantages of the support provided by a CA for pupils who require additional help, reported by respondents from IM post-primary schools.

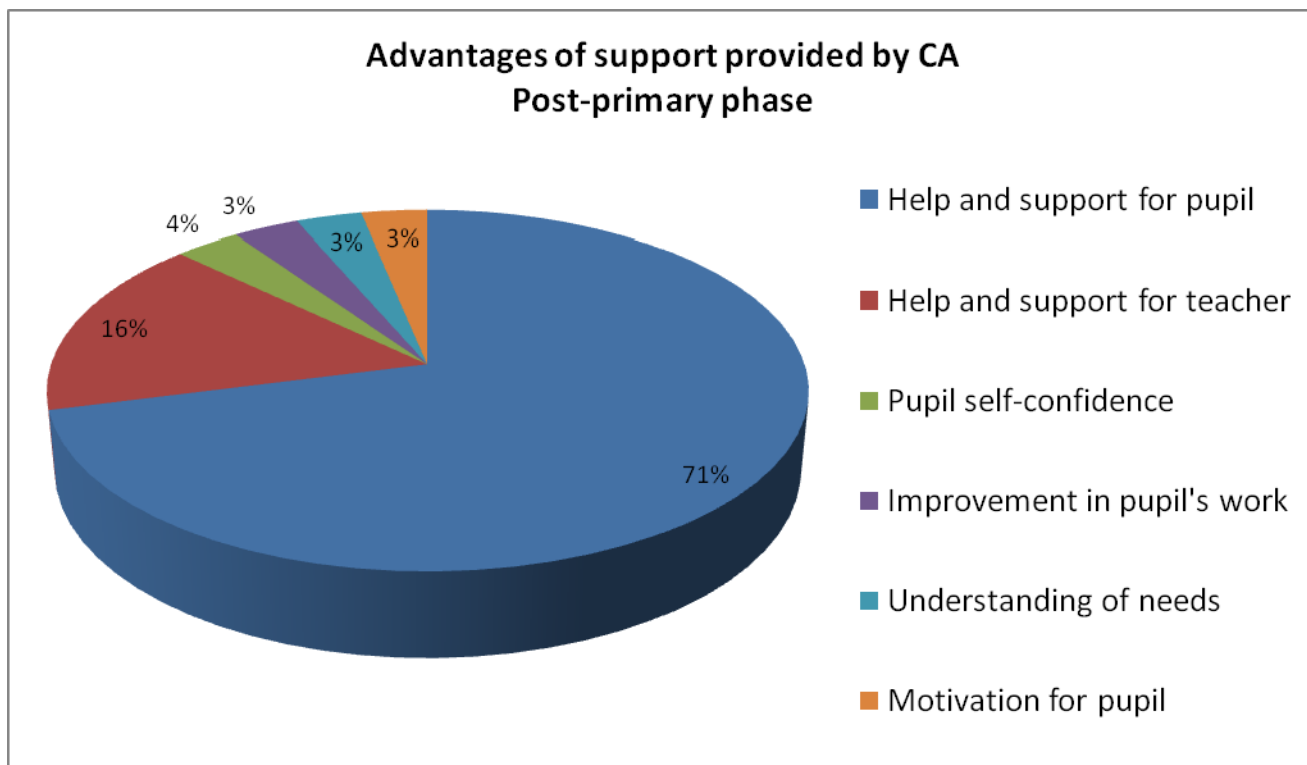


Figure 4.4.4

Figure 4.4.4, above, illustrates the advantages of the support provided by a CA as support for a pupil with SEN reported by post-primary school respondents. Help and support for the pupil concerned was the most often cited advantage of a CA reported by post-primary school respondents (71%). This category includes reference to helping to get and keep the pupil organised. The second most frequently cited category was help and support for the teacher (16%) including references to assistance with behavioural difficulties, record-keeping and identifying the pupil's day to day needs. Responses from the post-primary level also made reference to raising the pupil's self-confidence (4%), an improvement in the pupil's work as a result of additional support (3%), a greater understanding of the pupil's needs (3%), and a source of motivation for the pupil.

**4.4.8** Some of the comments made by respondents from the primary and post-primary phase include:

<i><b>'Cuidíonn siad le daltaí socrú níos gaiste; bheith níos eagraithe; bheith in am agus dul siar ar thascanna neamhspleácha tugtha.'</b></i>	<i>'They help pupils settle faster; be more organised; be in time and revise independent tasks given.'</i>
Post-primary respondent	
<i><b>Cuidíonn siad le daltaí muinín a bheith acu</b></i>	<i>'They help pupils to have confidence in</i>

<b><i>astu féin, agus tagann feabhas mór i gcúrsaí léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta.</i></b>	<i>themselves, and there is a great improvement in reading and writing.'</i>
--	--

Post-primary respondent

<b><i>Thig leis an chúntóir bheith ag obair leis an dalta go haonarach (más gá) agus tacaíocht a thabhairt dó, nach dtiocfadh leis an mhúinteoir a dhéanamh nuair atá rang iomlán le freastal air.</i></b>	<i>'The assistant can work with the pupil individually (if necessary) and provide support in a way which the teacher cannot do with a whole class to attend to.'</i>
--	--

Primary respondent

<b><i>Am breise a thabhairt don dalta. Tacaíocht bhreise don dalta. Cuidiú don mhúinteoir ranga.</i></b>	<b><i>'To give the pupil additional time. Additional support for the pupil. Help for the class teacher.'</i></b>
--	--

Primary respondent

### Classroom assistants

**4.4.9** Figure 4.4.5, below, shows the percentage breakdown of references made the advantages as listed by CAs and SEN CAs from the primary and post-primary phases.

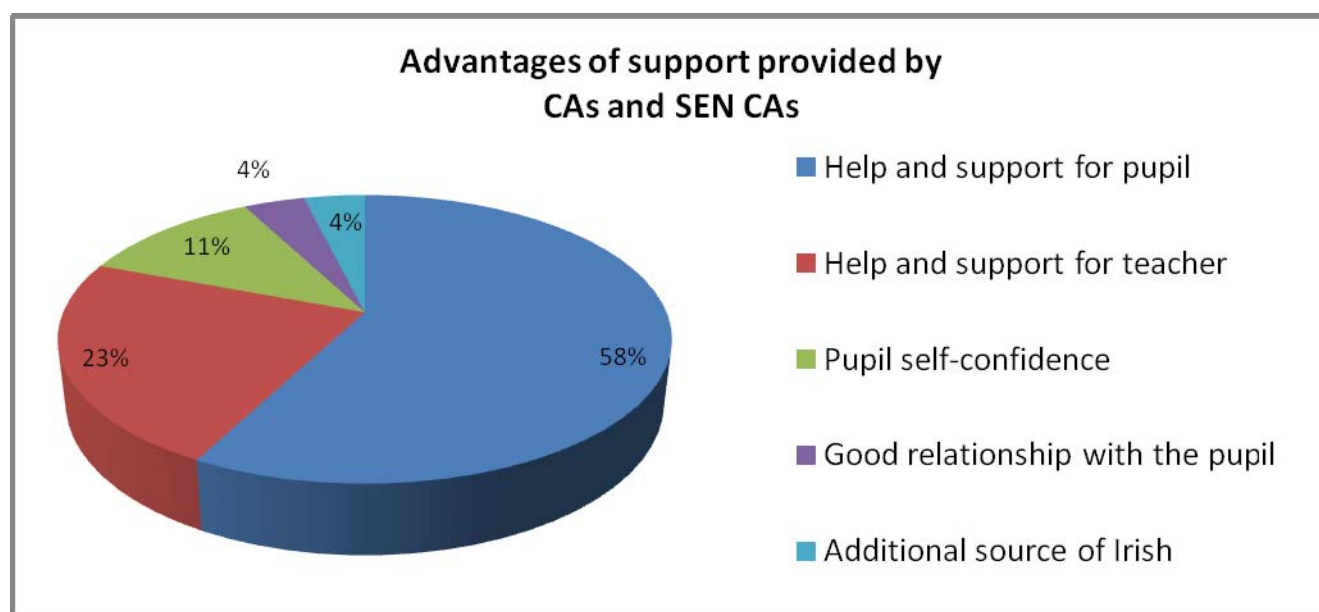


Figure 4.4.5

**4.4.10** The advantages of a classroom assistant cited by CAs and SEN CAs themselves reflect the advantages reported by primary and post-primary school teachers. The two most frequently advantages of a classroom assistant refer to the provision of help and support for the pupil, including helping the pupil to get organised (58%), and help and support for the teacher (23%) including affording the teacher the opportunity to work with individual pupils, and/or with the whole class, and identifying day to day needs the pupil may experience as a result of working closely with them. Other responses included raising pupil self-confidence (11%), forming a good relationship with the pupil they support (4%), and providing an additional source of Irish in the classroom (4%).

### Focus group discussion and interview

**4.4.11** Participants in focus groups stressed the advantages of CAs in general, and as support for pupils with SEN. Respondents from the primary phase in particular placed a high level of importance on the role of the CA in the classroom. One primary school teacher, for example, commented:

<p><i><b>'An áis is fearr, dar liomsa, gur féidir bheith agat i scoil dhátheangach ná duine eile sa seomra leat... daoine oilte is féidir leo tacú le páistí agus atá in ann an teanga a chur chun tosaigh.'</b></i></p>	<p><i>'I believe that the best resource you can possibly have in a bilingual school is another person in the room with you... trained people who can support the children and to promote the language.'</i></p>
--	---

**4.4.12** Two of the non-teaching education professionals who took part in interview highlighted the advantages of CAs. One informant emphasised the value of CAs who are aware of the pupils' needs and how to support them and can, therefore, work independently. The informant also reported the benefits of a CA who can work with the more able pupils and allow the teacher to work with the pupils with SEN, rather than creating a situation whereby the least qualified person is working with pupils who need the most support. Responses from primary school respondents and CAs to the qualitative questionnaire indicate that teachers do use the CA to allow them the opportunity to work with individual pupils or small groups (see Figure 4.4.3 and Figure 4.4.5)

**4.4.13** Another informant stressed the support opportunities offered to teachers by CAs who are trained to provide effective support to pupils who require additional support. This informant cited the benefits of CAs who can provide additional support to pupils through paired reading schemes and programmes such as *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 2002). Interviews with

representatives of five IM primary settings showed that CAs in some schools are involved in reading support through Paired Reading programmes and *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 2002).

### Other issues

**4.4.14** Respondents to the qualitative questionnaires and interview and focus group participants highlighted the benefits of the support provided by CAs to pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning. Responses indicate that teachers and IM pre-school staff clearly value the support provided by a CA as a means of support for pupils who experience SEN.

**4.4.15** Some respondents, however, made reference to possible barriers in relation to the support provided by CAs. The references made to possible barriers can be divided into two principal areas:

- impact of support provided on the pupil concerned; and
- challenges faced by CAs in the IM sector.

### IM pre-school phase

**4.4.16** As shown in Figure 4.4.1, above, all respondents from the pre-school phase rated the support of a CA effective, however, 43% of respondents made reference to possible disadvantages of a CA for a child with SEN.

**4.4.17** Responses from the IM pre-school phase indicate some concern among pre-school staff in relation to the impact of one-to-one support may have on a child, and on his/her interaction with the other pupils in the setting. The majority of responses provided made reference to possible over-reliance on the assistant or the possibility that the child will feel cut off or different from his/her peers (86%). The remaining responses from IM pre-school respondents relate to challenges faced by assistants. Of the total responses provided, 7% of responses expressed concern that sometimes other members of staff can rely on the assistant to care for, and support the pupil all the time and 7% of responses reported a need for training for assistants in the area of SEN to maximise the support provided to pupils.

### Primary and post-primary phases

**4.4.18** While all respondents from the primary phase and a majority of respondents from the post-primary phase (70%) rated support the support provided by CAs as effective (Figure 4.4.1),

almost half of the respondents from the primary phase and post-primary phase (48% and 49%, respectively) made reference to other issues which must be taken into consideration to ensure the maximum level of support is provided to pupils requiring additional support.

**4.4.19** Some of the additional issues reported by primary and post-primary respondents are common to both phases. Respondents from both phases emphasised the need for SEN training for CAs to ensure that they have a clear understanding of their role, and of the most effective means of supporting the pupil. Of the total responses provided, 52% of responses from the primary phase and 21% of responses from the post-primary phase referred to the need for training and a clear understanding of the role. Responses from both the primary and post-primary phases indicate concern among some teaching practitioners that the pupil can grow over-reliant on a CA (9% and 10%, respectively). The issue of training for CAs is discussed in greater detail in section 4.10.

**4.4.20** Responses from primary school teachers placed a high level of importance on a knowledge of Irish (13%). One respondent reported that sometimes pupils may feel that they do not have to follow class rules if they spend a lot of time working with a CA. Other respondents reported a difficulty in finding adequate time to plan with the classroom assistant and that a SEN CA can sometimes be relied on to carry out photocopying and group work with other pupils.

**4.4.21** In the post-primary phase, respondents from post-primary schools expressed concern that an SEN CA can draw attention to the pupil's needs among their peers (32%). Other issues cited by post-primary school teachers refer to possible disruption to the class while the other pupils become accustomed to another adult in the room (11%), the possibility of additional pressure on the pupil concerned (5%), the need for adequate guidance from the class teacher for the CA (5%) and, concern regarding the level of support provided to the pupil during the lesson (5%).

### **Classroom assistants**

**4.4.22** As reported in Figure 4.4.1, all CAs rated support provided by CAs as effective. In addition, 47% of respondents (7 respondents) reported other issues in relation to the support provided. The other issues cited by CAs reflect some of those reported by teachers from the primary and post-primary phases. Respondents expressed concern that a pupil may become over-reliant on the CA, and that the presence of a CA can draw attention to the needs of the pupil.



## Focus group discussion and interview

**4.4.23** During one focus group discussion, it was suggested that too many adults in a classroom may restrict rather than increase the level of support provided to pupils. The participant referred to a classroom situation where there were four adults in the room. It was reported that this rather unusual classroom situation could result in drawing unnecessary attention to the children in the class who required additional support.

**4.4.24** Two focus group meetings placed a high level of importance on appropriate training for classroom assistants in the IM sector. The issue of training for CAs is discussed in greater depth in section 4.10.

**4.4.25** One focus group participant expressed the view that the provision of CAs in itself, as a means of facilitating access to mainstream education for pupils with SEN, does not fully meet the needs of pupils who require additional, specialist support, nor does it meet the needs of teachers in their attempts to meet the needs of all pupils in the class equally. The participant reported that CAs in the IM sector are often young people with little or no training in the specific needs of the pupils they are employed to support.

***'ní réiteach cúntóir ranga san earnáil Ghaeilge..... cé go bhfuil cuidiú praicticiúil, fisiciúil, simplí ann, níl sé ag freagairt don riachtanas speisialta.'***

*'a classroom assistant is not a solution in the IM sector.... although there is practical, physical, simple help there it is not meeting the special need.'*

## Role of a classroom assistant

### Reported by primary and post-primary teachers

#### SEN CA

**4.4.26** With regard to the role of the SEN CA respondents from IM post-primary schools referred to: accompanying pupils from class to class:

- writing for pupils;
- recording homework;
- providing further explanations;
- keeping pupils on task;
- assisting the teacher with behavioural problems in class; and
- getting and keeping pupils organised.

Respondents from IM primary schools referred to:

- providing domestic assistance for pupils with physical difficulties;
- supporting class work on an individual and small group basis; and
- keeping record of work completed and progress made.

**4.4.27** Representatives of two of the five IM primary schools, who took part in in-depth interview, reported that the CA is involved in taking small groups for Reading Partnerships. One of the two settings reported that the CA provides additional numeracy support through the medium of Irish, as well as leading a *Primary Movements* programme in the school. The representatives reported that the school values the contribution made by CA to provision for pupils who require additional support.

#### Reported by CAs and SEN CAs

**4.4.28** Of the CAs who responded to the qualitative questionnaire, 47% of respondents (7 respondents) were employed to assist a pupil with SEN (SEN CA). In addition to assisting a pupil or pupils with SEN, 57% of SEN CAs made reference to other duties. Other duties reported include:

- helping teachers in the classroom;
- doing administrative work required by the teachers; and
- carrying out translation work.

**4.4.29** Of the CAs who are not employed specifically to assist pupils with SEN, 63% of respondents made reference to helping pupils who require additional support. Respondents

reported working with small groups of pupils or individual pupils who need additional help and support with their learning.

### Lesson planning

**4.4.30** CAs were asked to what extent the class teacher(s) involve them in lesson planning. Figure 4.4.6, below, shows the percentage breakdown of responses by SEN CAs and CAs regarding the extent to which they are involved in lesson planning.

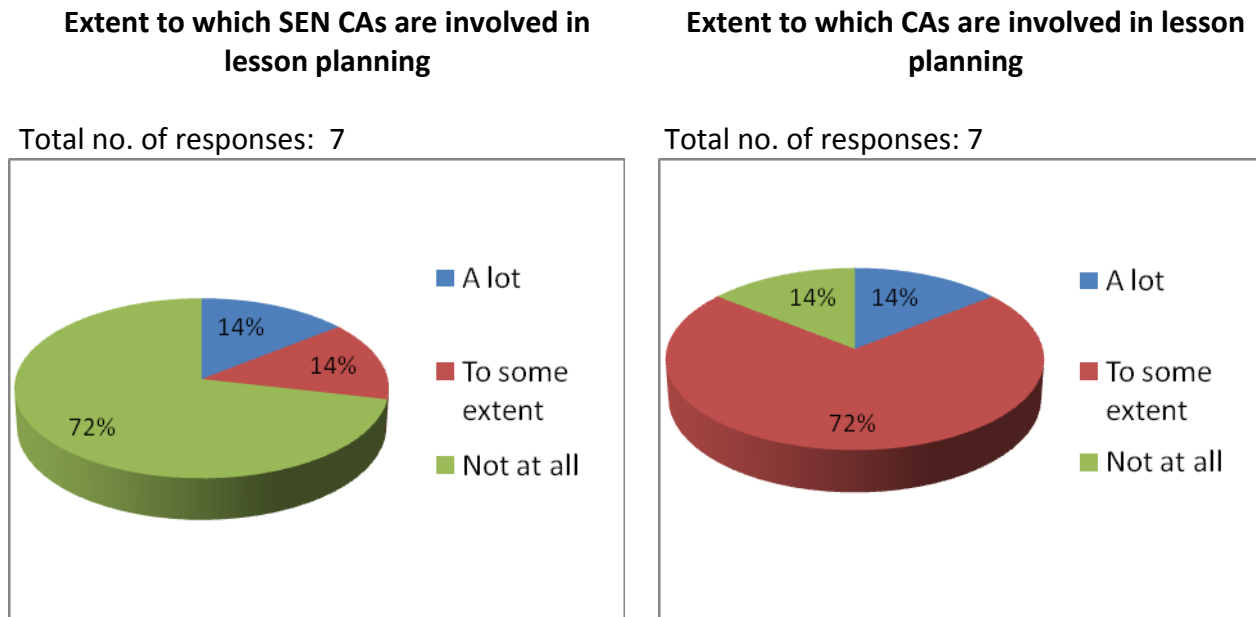


Figure 4.4.6

The responses from CAs and SEN CAs indicate that 14% of CAs and 14% of SEN CAs reported that the teacher involves them a lot in lesson planning.

There is a marked difference in the percentage of respondents who reported to be involved in lesson planning. Figure 4.4.6 shows that 14% of SEN CAs and 72% of CAs reported to be involved in lesson planning to some extent.

Similarly there is a significant difference between SEN CAs and CAs, in the case of those who reported that they are not involved in lesson planning at all. Figure 4.4.6, above, shows that 72% of SEN CAs reported that they are not involved in lesson planning compared with 14% of CAs.

**4.4.31** Responses in relation to time allocated for lesson planning with the teacher vary. Of those who indicated time spent with the class teacher planning, the amount of time reported ranged from 'very little' to 30 minutes per week to 30 minutes per day. One respondent

reported having a daily meeting with the class teacher during which they evaluate the day's lessons and plan for the following day. The respondent reported that during the meeting they have the opportunity to contribute to the plan.

Of those who said that the teacher involved them a lot of in weekly planning one respondent indicated that they spent 30 minutes per week planning with the class teacher during which they have an opportunity to contribute to the lesson planning process. The respondent commented:

<p><b><i>'Chóir a bheith leath uair an chloig gach Luan, ag léamh na pleananna. Má tá rud ar bith a rá agam, déarfaidh mé léi agus cuireann sí isteach é.'</i></b></p>	<p><i>'Nearly half an hour every Monday, reading the plans. If I have anything to say, I will tell her and she adds it in.'</i></p>
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One respondent said that they spent 30 - 60minutes a day planning with the teacher, another reported spending one to two hours per week planning with the teacher. One respondent reported that the amount of time spent on weekly planning depended on the teacher concerned.

### **Obstacles to support**

**4.4.32** CAs and SEN CAs were asked to provide details of any barriers they perceive to the support they provide to pupils. They were asked to comment under the following titles; training, experience, time and competency in Irish. Respondents were also given the opportunity to indicate other issues which they felt impact on the support they provide to pupils in IM schools. Training issues are discussed in section 4.10.

**4.4.33** With regard to experience, 21% of respondents emphasised the importance of experience in supporting pupils with SEN. One respondent reported that often the class teacher is inexperienced in respect of identification and provision for SEN. The respondent suggested that while the CA may identify a pupil's needs they cannot implement support strategies without the permission of the class teacher. Another respondent reported that experience is essential in giving classroom assistants the confidence necessary when working with pupils who require additional support.

**4.4.34** Under 'time', 14% of respondents referred to restricted or limited hours with pupils when they feel that the pupil needs additional help more for longer periods of the day. A further 29% of respondents made reference to other general roles within the school such as

bus duty and yard duty which they felt restricted time spent supporting the pupils. One respondent referred to a lack of time for planning and discussion with the class teacher.

**4.4.35** Respondents did not discuss the impact of Irish language competency on the support provided for pupils. One informant, however, reported that any Irish language training received has to be accessed in the informant's own time and at their own cost.

**4.4.36** Respondents raised a number of other issues in relation to support for pupils with additional needs. One respondent reported uncertainty in relation to the most effective way of supporting pupils in particular situations. One respondent expressed concern that pupils who do not have a statement of SEN, but who require significant support with their learning, are disadvantaged in that they do not receive the necessary support without a statement. Another respondent reported that the role of CA ought to be very specific and very clear in order to support the pupil and that an SEN CA ought not to be viewed as a general assistant in the school.

#### Issues reported by IM pre-school assistants

**4.4.37** In their responses to the qualitative questionnaire for IM pre-schools, some assistants in pre-school settings made the following points in relation to the extent to which they are included in the overall support provided to the children they care for and, the support they personally receive to enable them to support the pupils in their care.

One respondent from the IM pre-school sector made the comment:

*'I feel professionals do not involve assistants when feedback is given. We work very hard to assist these children so they can develop their true potential.'*

One IM pre-school assistant added;

*'[I] feel the system lacks in supporting classroom assistants with supporting children with Special Needs. Lack of feedback and information.'*

## Summary of the main points

**4.4.38** Respondents emphasised the benefits of the support provided by CAs to pupils who require additional support, and the benefits of the additional support provided to teachers (4.4.6-9).

A small number of responses expressed concern that the time spent supporting pupils is limited owing to other duties in the school. (4.4.28)

The responses highlight the importance of adequate training and professional development for CAs and SEN CAs in the area of SEN in order to maximise the support provided, particularly in the IM sector where CAs and SEN CAs are often young people with little experience or training in SEN support. (4.4.19;24-5)

As a means of supporting pupils requiring additional support in the IM sector, classroom assistants are reckoned to be overall effective and are valued. (4.4.2, 27)

Amongst primary teachers in the study, the three major advantages of CA support were identified as help and support for pupils (39%), help and support for teacher (27%) and an additional source of Irish (18%). (4.4.6)

Post-primary teachers involved in the study cited help and support for pupils (71%), help and support for teacher (16%) and pupils self-confidence as the three major advantages of CA support. (4.4.7)

CAs and SEN CAs involved in the study cited help and support for pupils (58%), help and support for teacher (23%) and pupils self-confidence (11%) as the three major advantages of CA support. (4.4.9-10)

Too many adults in the classroom could restrict rather than increase the level of support. (4.4.23)

CAs need SEN training in order to understand their role in supporting SEN children. (4.4.19; 4.4.24-5)

Almost two thirds of CAs involved in this study who are not specifically employed to assist SEN pupils actually do so. (4.4.29)

The majority of SEN CAs in the study (72%) are not involved at all in lesson planning and 14% are while the majority of CAs (72%) are involved to some extent in lesson planning with a further 14% involved a lot.

## Section 4.5: External SEN support services

**4.5.1** This section examines respondent experience of, and attitudes to, external SEN support services and health-related SEN support services, with regard to the support provided to pupils in the IM sector who require additional support with aspects of their learning.

**4.5.2** The quantitative questionnaire, completed in all IM pre-school, primary and post-primary settings asked IM setting representatives to indicate the SEN-related support services accessed by the setting during the academic year 2006-2007 and, SEN-related support services accessed prior to 2006-2007. Figure 4.5.1, below, shows access to SEN-related support services in the 2006-2007 academic year as reported by IM primary and post-primary settings. Figure 4.5.1 shows the actual number of IM pre-school, primary, and post-primary settings which accessed SEN-related support services. A total of 42, pre-school settings, 31 primary settings and 3 post-primary settings were surveyed.

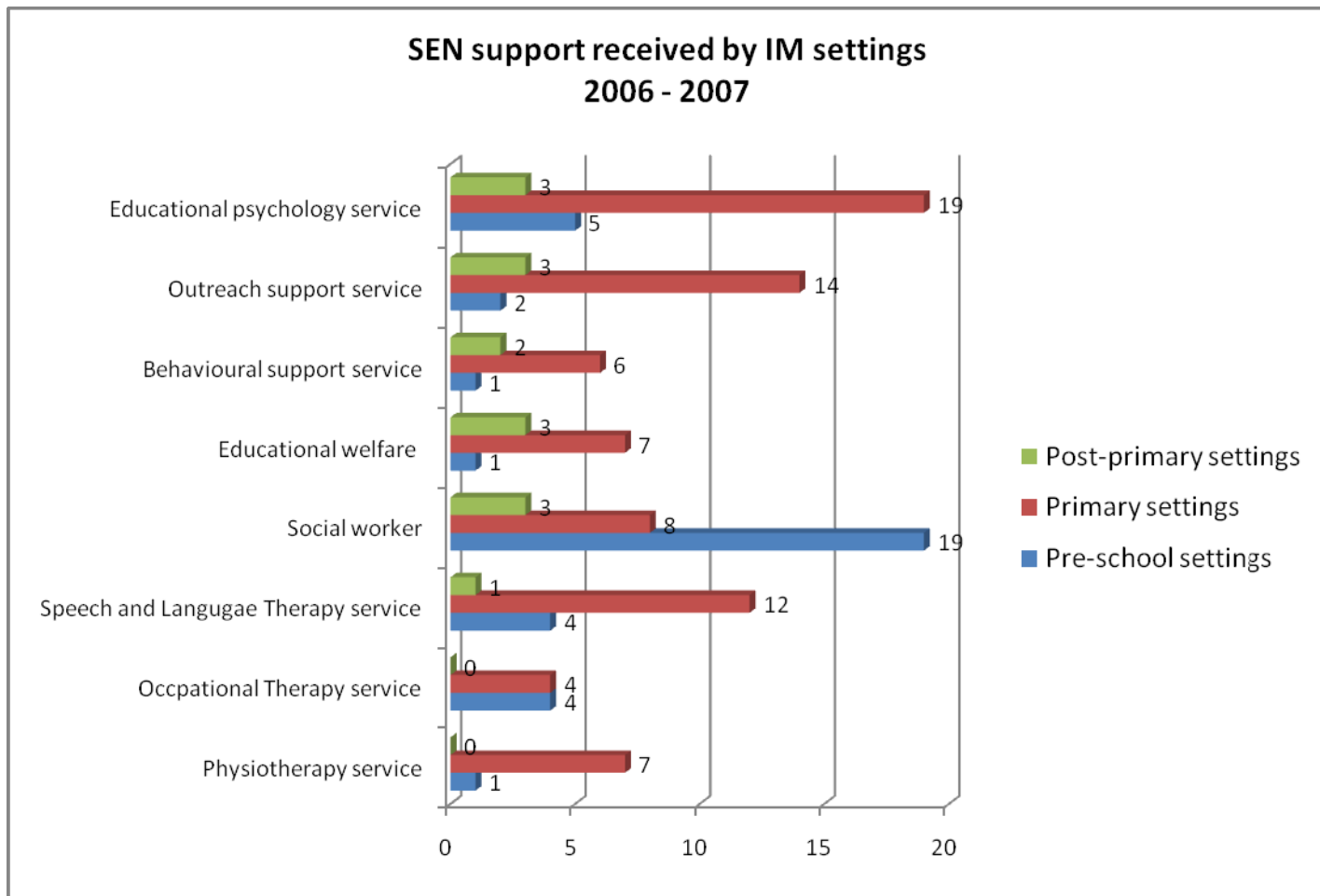


Figure 4.5.1

**4.5.3** The qualitative questionnaire completed by respondents from a sample group of IM settings asked respondents from the pre-school, primary and post-primary phases to indicate their opinion of support provided by external SEN support services for pupils in the IM sector. Figure 4.5.2, below, shows the breakdown of responses according to phase.

**Respondents' level of satisfaction with the implementation of SEN support services in the IM sector**

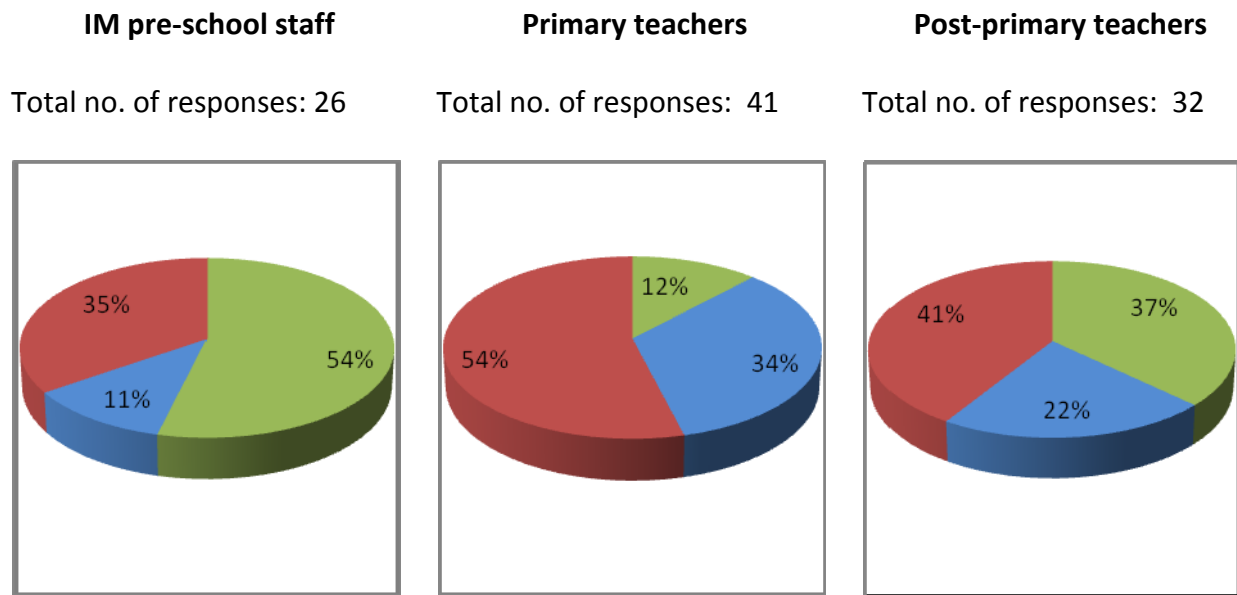


Figure 4.5.2

- No experience
- Satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory

As can be seen from Figure 4.5.2 above, some respondents reported no experience of SEN support services. The percentage of respondents with no experience of SEN support services varies across the three phases. The diagram shows that 54% of pre-school respondents, 12% of primary school respondents and 37% of post-primary school respondents indicated that they had no experience of SEN support services. Figure 4.5.2 shows that a greater percentage of respondents from all three phases reported the support provided by external SEN support services to be unsatisfactory; 35% of IM pre-school staff, 54% of primary school teachers, and 41% of post-primary school teachers rated support as unsatisfactory.



## IM pre-school phase

**4.5.4** Respondents were asked to provide details to indicate why they rated the support provided by external SEN professionals as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. As shown in Figure 4.5.2, 11% of respondents to the qualitative questionnaire from the IM pre-school phase rated support as satisfactory. Of the reasons supplied by respondents, half of the total responses made reference to the availability of support for pupils experiencing SEN, and the availability of support for pre-school staff to enable them to support pupils. The remaining responses reported that pupils in IM pre-schools are assessed, and that the provision of external support for the child experiencing additional needs benefits the other pupils in the setting as well as the pupil requiring additional support.

**4.5.5** Responses provided by respondents who rated the support provided unsatisfactory make reference to a number of issues in relation to the support provided to pupils in IM pre-schools. Of the responses provided, 60% reported little or no access to support services for pupils in IM pre-schools. A further 20% of responses reported that IM pre-schools do not have access to support services through the medium of Irish, nor are assessment procedures carried out through the medium of Irish. One respondent reported dissatisfaction with information provided to parents by professionals in relation to bilingualism and IM immersion education.

***Ag rá le tuismitheoirí nach bhfuil an dara teanga fóirsteanach má tá fadhb teanga ag páistí.***

*'Telling parents that a second language is not suitable if the child has a speech and language difficulty.'*

Some of the other comments made by respondents from the IM pre-school phase include:

*'Although I have taught children with SEN, those children have not had access to SEN professionals.'*

*'No access to SEN professionals.'*

*'Hard to get help when you need it.'*

*'Presently we are not able to access professional assistance. As 'naíscoileanna' we are not affiliated to the Department of Education. Personally, I feel that the children are being penalised.'*

**4.5.6** Figure 4.5.3, below shows the percentage breakdown of references made by respondents from the primary and post-primary phase who rated the support provided by external SEN support services as satisfactory.

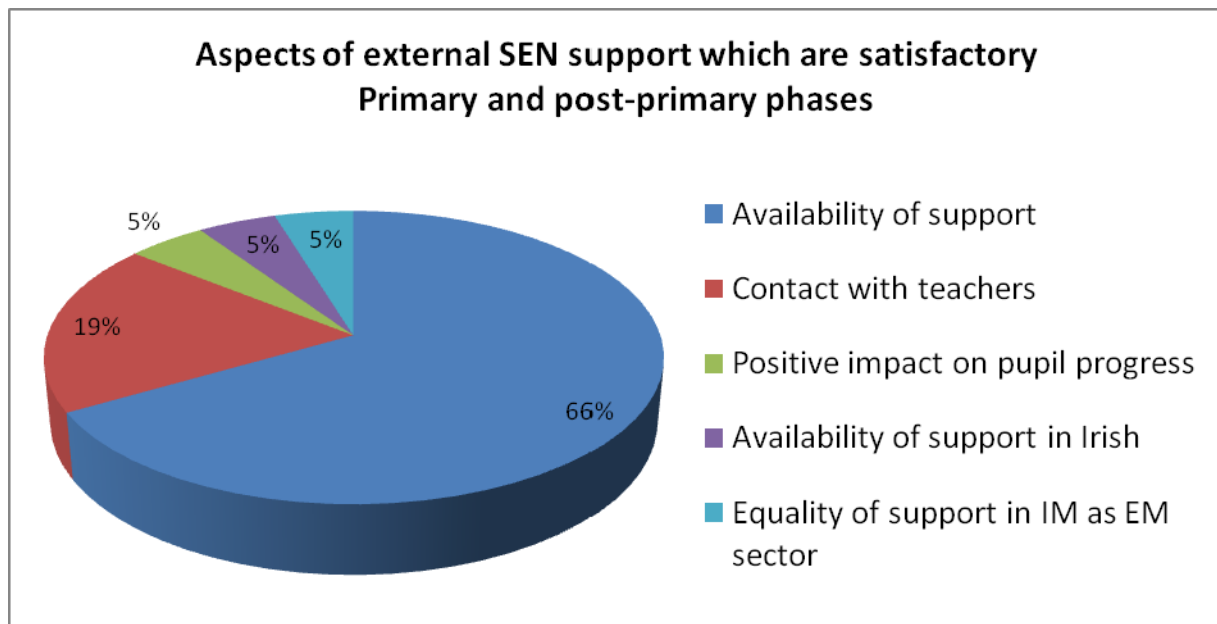


Figure 4.5.3

**4.5.7** Some of the comments made by respondents from the primary and post-primary phases include:

<i><b>'Déanann siad obair mhaith leis na daltaí agus cuidíonn siad leis na múinteoirí.'</b></i>	<i>'They do good work with the pupils and they help the teachers.'</i>
<i><b>'Tá siad ina chuidiú iontach nuair a théann páistí amach chucu. Déanann daltaí an-dul chun cinn.'</b></i>	<i>'They are a great help when the children go out to them. Pupils make great progress.'</i>

**4.5.8** While respondents rated the support provided as satisfactory, one respondent expressed the view that the support is satisfactory, even though it is provided through the medium of English for pupils who are learning through the medium of Irish.

<i><b>‘Tá an tseirbhís féin éifeachtach go leor ach go bhfuil gach rud i mBéarla.’</b></i>	<i><b>‘The service itself is effective enough but everything is in English.’</b></i>
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**4.5.9** Figure 4.5.4, below, shows the percentage breakdown of responses from respondents from the primary and post-primary phases who rated the support provided by external SEN support services as unsatisfactory.

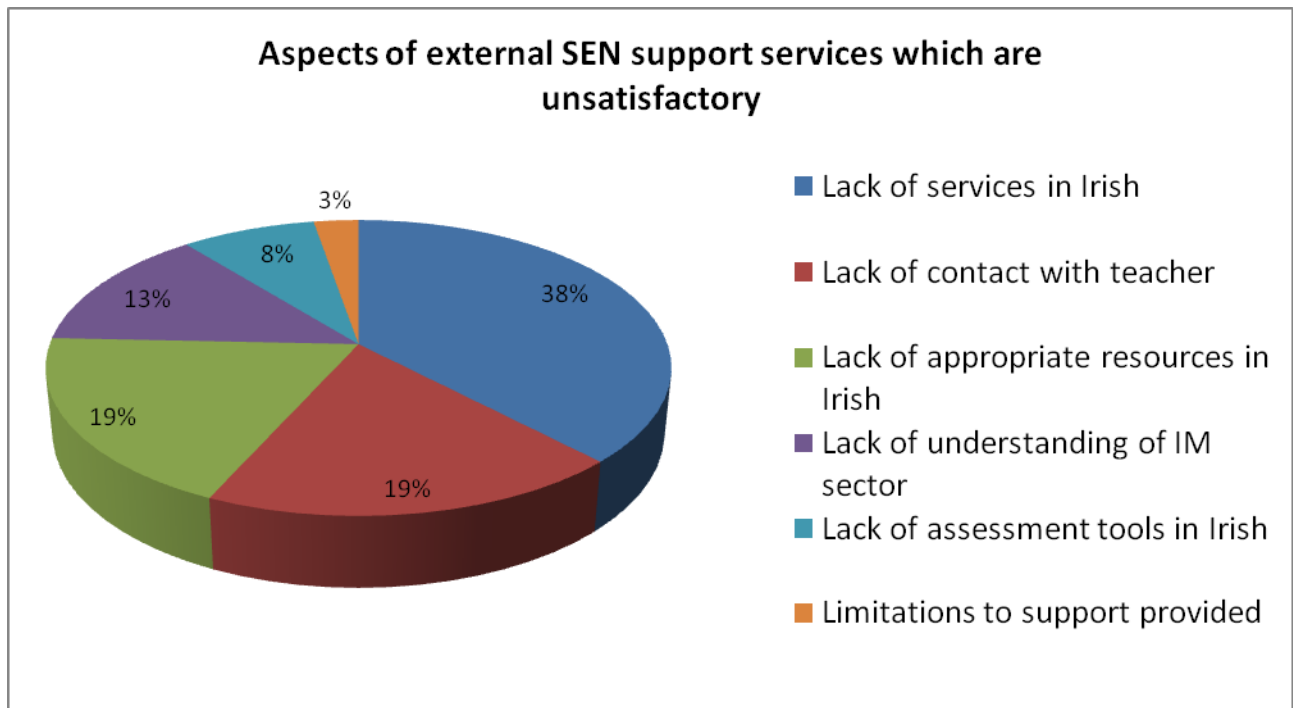


Figure 4.5.4

Figure 4.5.4, above, shows that the most frequently cited aspect of the support provided by external SEN support services which respondents reported to be unsatisfactory is the lack of support services through the medium of Irish (38%). The second most frequently cited aspects of support are lack of contact between support services and the class teacher and a lack of appropriate resources in Irish (both 19%). Other responses made reference to a lack of understanding among professionals with regard to the IM sector (13%), a lack of assessment tools in Irish (8%) and, the fact that the support provided is limited and that schools have to prioritise pupils who will receive external SEN support (3%).

**4.5.10** Some of the comments made by respondents from the primary and post primary phases include:

<p><b><i>'Glacann sé am. Bíonn a lán páipéarachais i gceist. Déantar freastal orainn, ach trí mheán an Bhéarla.'</i></b></p>	<p><i>'It takes time. There is a lot of paperwork involved. We are catered for, but through the medium of English.'</i></p>
<p><b><i>'Níl an taithí acu ar an tumoideachas ná ar an Ghaeilge.'</i></b></p>	<p><i>'They have no experience of immersion education or of the Irish language.'</i></p>
<p><b><i>'Níl seirbhísí cuimsitheacha ann dóibh [daltaí le Sainriachtanais]. Bímid ag brath ar an tseirbhís chéanna is atá ann do na scoileanna Béarla.'</i></b></p>	<p><i>'There are no comprehensive services for them [pupils with SEN]. We are dependent on the same service as is available to English schools.'</i></p>

### Focus group discussion and interview

**4.5.11** Discussion from focus groups and data provided by interview participants from the IM sector made reference to the support provided by external support services. While some participants reported that they value the support provided to pupils, they indicated that support through the medium of English is not sufficient to meet the needs of pupils who are being educated through the medium of Irish.

**4.5.12** One SENCO interviewed reported that pupils from the IM unit could not access peripatetic support as peripatetic support screening is carried out through the medium of English. Pupils in the IM unit from Year 1 to 3 would not be able to do the test, and pupils in Year 4 would be restricted from accessing additional literacy support until after Christmas when they have some foundation in formal English literacy.

**4.5.13** Interviews with principals in some IM schools expressed the view that they are restricted in the number of pupils they can refer to educational psychology services each year as a result of the hours allocated to the school by the educational psychology service in their ELB area. In some schools, principals reported that could refer more pupils but restrictions results in the school having to select which pupils will referred to the service.

## Access to health-related SEN services

**4.5.14** Respondents from the IM pre-school, primary and post-primary phases were asked to indicate their opinion regarding access to health-related SEN services. Figure 4.5.5 below, show the percentage breakdown of responses from the IM pre-school, primary and post-primary phases.

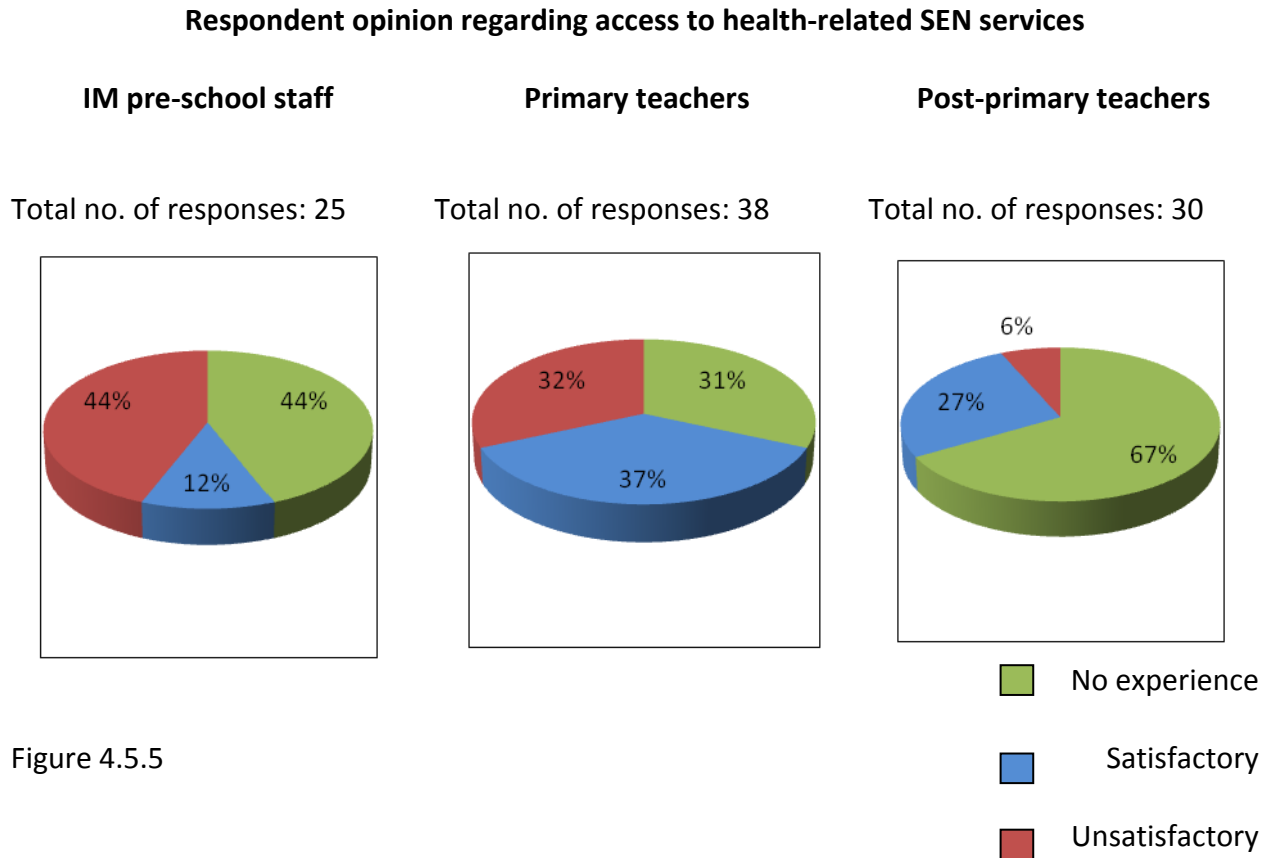


Figure 4.5.5

The diagram above, Figure 4.5.5, shows that 44% of IM pre-school respondents, 31% of primary respondents and 67% of post primary respondents reported no experience of health-related SEN services. With regard to those who rated access to SEN-related health services satisfactory, 12% of respondents from the IM pre-school phase, 37% of respondents from the primary phase, and 27% of respondents from the post-primary phase rated access satisfactory. In the pre-school phase, 44% of respondents rated access unsatisfactory, in the primary phase 32% of respondents rated access unsatisfactory, and in the post-primary phase 6% of respondents rated access unsatisfactory.

**4.5.15** Respondents from the IM pre-school phase who rated access to health-related SEN services satisfactory did not provide reasons to support their response. In the primary phase,

respondents who rated access to SEN-related health services made reference to the availability of services if they are required and regular contact with the school nurse for advice and support.

**4.5.16** Figure 4.5.6, below, shows the percentage of references made to reasons given by IM pre-school respondents, as to why they rated access to health-related SEN services unsatisfactory.

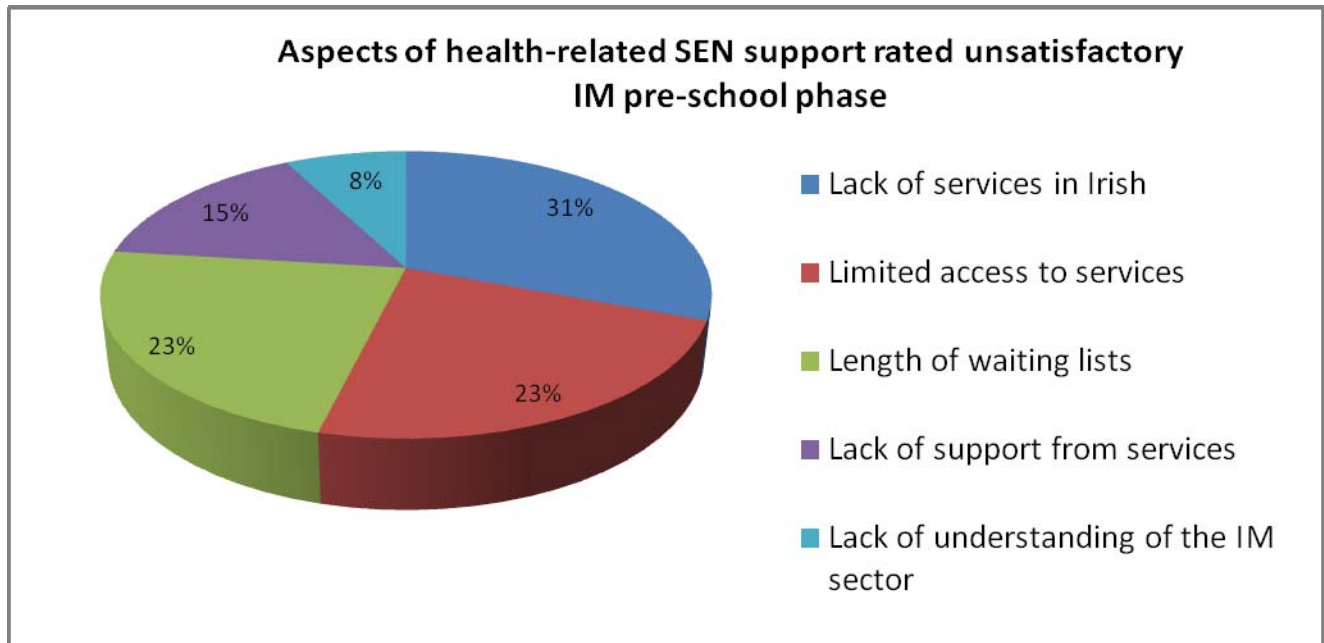


Figure 4.5.6

Figure 4.5.6, above shows that respondents made most frequent reference to a lack of health services in Irish to explain why they rated access to services unsatisfactory (31%). The second most frequently cited aspects of access to health-related SEN support services were limited access to services and the length of waiting lists for pupils who require support (both 23%). Other aspects of access to support include a lack of support from health services (15%) and a lack of understanding of the IM sector among health professionals (8%).

**4.5.17** Some of the comments made by IM pre-school respondents include:

*'We have limited access to health services and feel that we need more help in this area.'*

*'No access to these services'*

*'I find this a very slow process.'*

*'Not enough back-up from health visitors and social workers through the medium of Irish. Irish education is alien to them.'*

**4.5.18** Figure 4.5.7, below, shows the breakdown of responses from primary and post-primary respondents who rated access to health-related SEN support services as unsatisfactory.

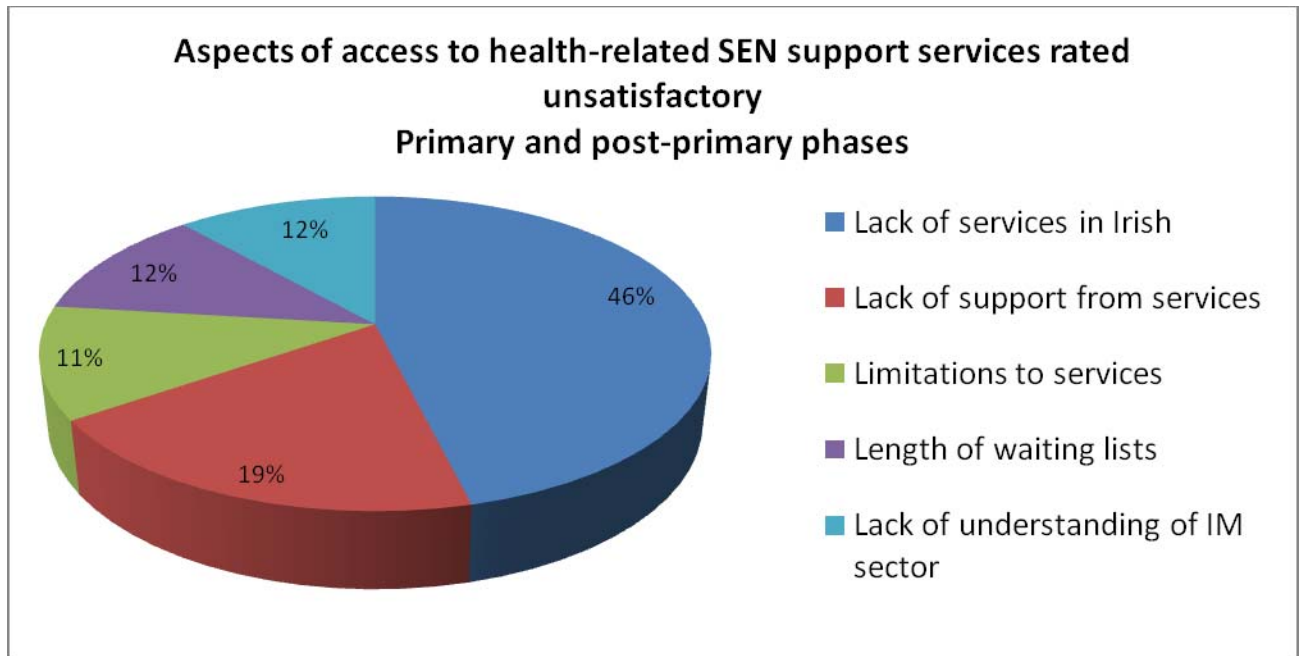


Figure 4.5.7

Figure 4.5.7, above shows that the lack of health services in Irish is the most frequently cited aspect of access to health-related SEN support services to explain why respondents rated access unsatisfactory (46%). Other responses made reference to a lack of support from health services (19%), limitations to services (11%), the length of waiting lists for pupils who require support (12%), and a lack of understanding of the IM sector among professionals (12%).

**4.5.19** Some of the comments made by respondents include:

*'Níl Gaeilge ná tuigheáil acu ar dhaltáí le Gaeilge. Cuireann siad seirbhís sásúil ar fáil i réimsí Béarla.'*

*'They don't speak Irish nor do they understand pupils with Irish. They provide a satisfactory service in English.'*

<p><b><i>'Sílím go mbíonn easpa teagmhála nuair a bhíonn na seirbhísí sláinte ag obair leis na páistí seo.'</i></b></p>	<p><i>'I think there is a lack of contact when health services are working with these children.'</i></p>
<p><b><i>'Níl an tacaíocht chéanna anseo i gcomparáid le scoileanna Béarla. Níl áiseanna srl. ullmhaithe sa Ghaeilge.'</i></b></p>	<p><i>'There is not the same support here in comparison with EM schools. Resources etc. are not prepared in Irish.'</i></p>
<p><b><i>'Ní fhaigheann siad [daltaí le sainriachtanais] an tacaíocht ba cheart dóibh a fháil.'</i></b></p>	<p><i>'They [pupils with SEN] do not get the support they ought to get.'</i></p>
<p><b><i>'Níl soláthar structúrtha cuimsitheach ann do pháistí na hearnála ar chor ar bith.'</i></b></p>	<p><i>'There is no structured, comprehensive provision for the children of the sector at all.'</i></p>



**Data provided by educational psychologists**

**4.5.20** The qualitative questionnaire for educational psychologists asked respondents to indicate their understanding of working with bilingual children and their understanding of the IM sector. Figure 4.5.8, below, illustrates the breakdown of the responses supplied by educational psychologists.

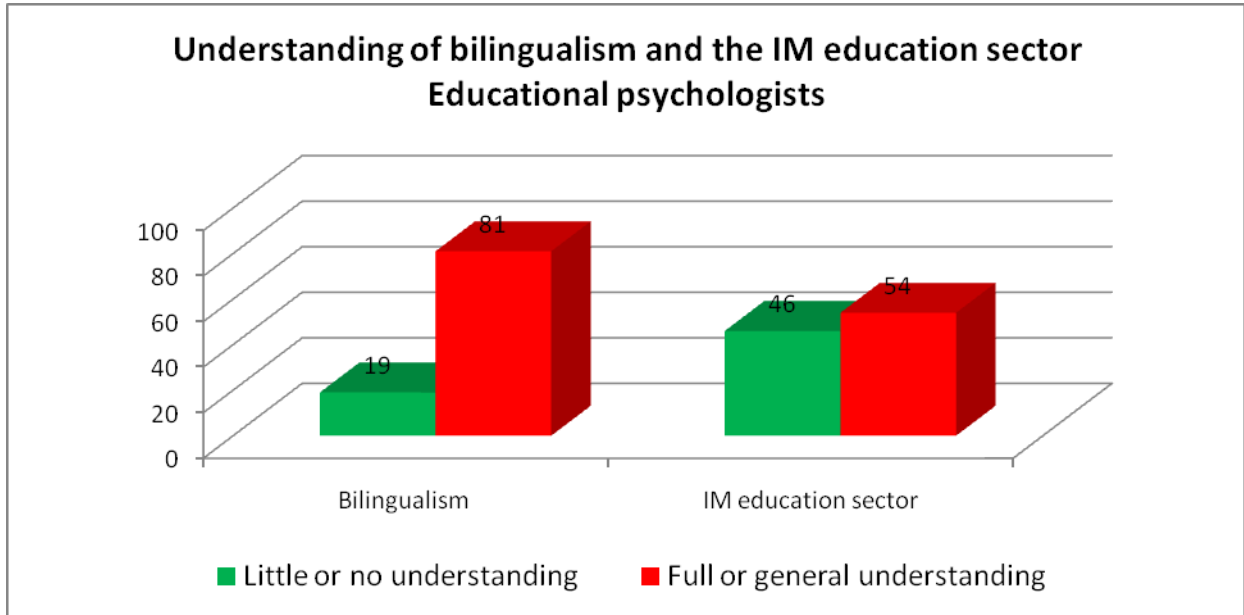


Figure 4.5.8

Figure 4.5.8 shows a significant difference between the responses supplied in relation to bilingual children and in relation to the IM sector. With regard to understanding of bilingual children, in general, 19% of respondents indicated little or no understanding and 81% of respondents indicated full or general understanding. In their response concerning understanding of the IM sector, 46% of respondents reported little or no understanding and 54% of respondents indicated full or general understanding.

**4.5.21** Figure 4.5.9, below, shows the percentage breakdown of respondents who indicated access to training on working with bilingual children and training on the IM sector.

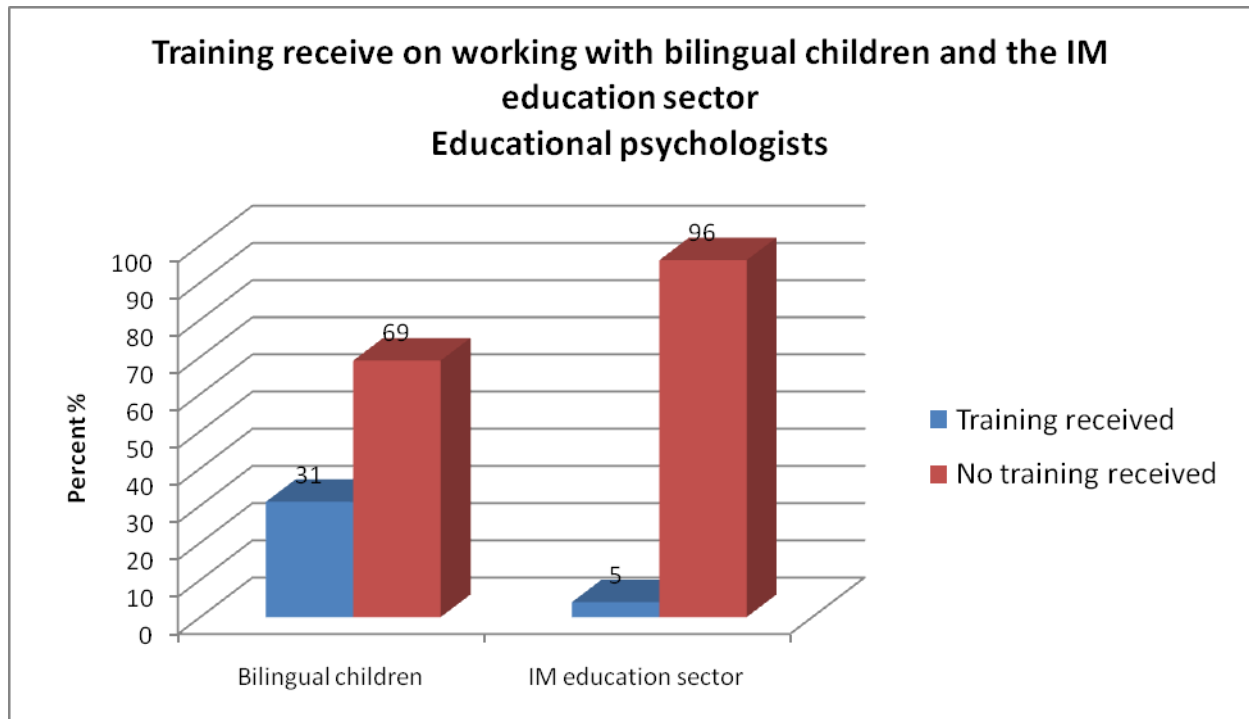


Figure 4.5.9

In respect of training received on working with bilingual children, 31% of educational psychologists reported that they had received training while 4% of respondents indicated that they had received training on the IM sector. Respondents were asked if the training received had been useful in their work. Those who indicated access to training on the IM sector described the training received as 'minimal', and reported that the training had not been useful as their work no longer involved working with IM schools.

**4.5.22** Educational psychologists were asked to indicate if training on the IM sector would be beneficial to them in their work. Overall, 72% of respondents indicated that training on the IM sector would be beneficial.

**4.5.23** Respondents who reported that training on the IM sector would be beneficial provided the following reasons for their answer. Figure 4.5.10, below, shows the percentage breakdown of references made to the perceived benefits of training on the IM sector reported by educational psychologists.

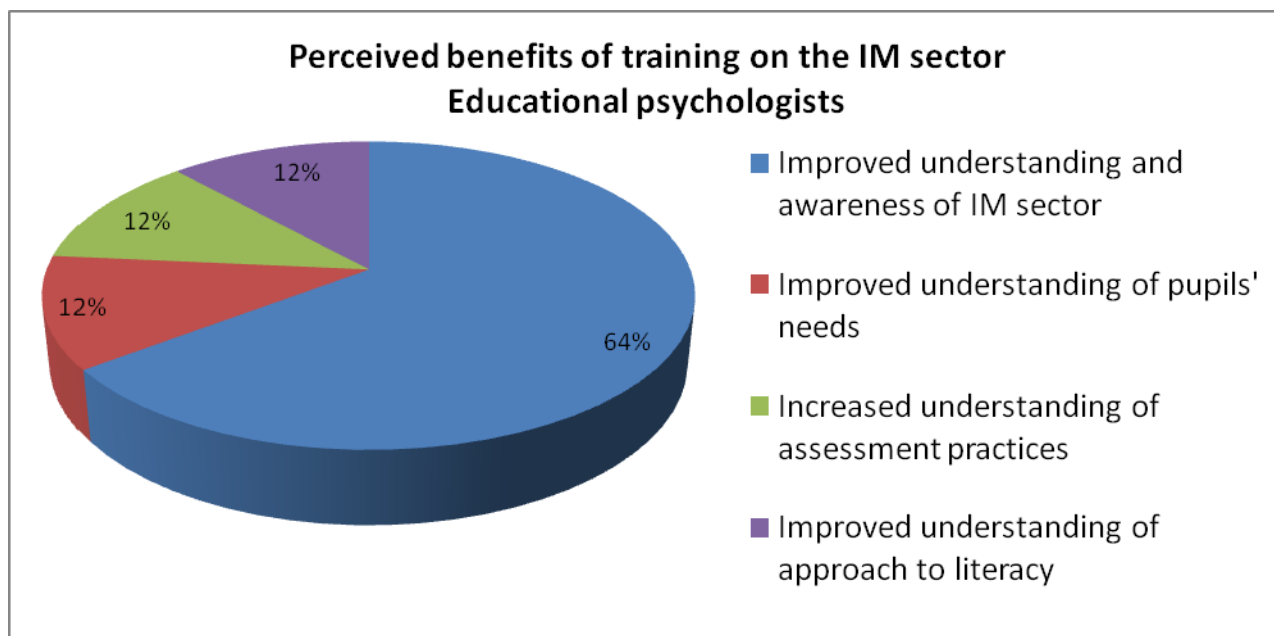


Figure 4.5.10

Figure 4.5.10 shows that the most often cited perceived benefits of training were improved understanding and awareness of the IM sector (64%). Other perceived benefits reported included an improved understanding of the needs of pupils in the IM sector (12%), additional information on in-school assessment practices in IM schools (12%) and an improved understanding of the approaches taken to literacy in English and in Irish in IM schools (12%).

**4.5.24** During interview representatives of ELBs were asked if training is currently made available for educational psychologists working with pupils in IM schools. All representatives interviewed reported that specific training is not currently provided on any particular sector. One respondent reported that the skills base acquired by educational psychologists during training enables them to work in a variety of sectors.

**4.5.25** It was reported that the Regional Strategy Group (RSG) which brings together the head of the special education department and the principal educational psychologist in the five ELBs has received some information and awareness raising regarding the IM sector and some collaboration has taken place between the principal educational psychologists in the ELBs and the National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS) in the south of Ireland. Interviews with the principal educational psychologists reported that some awareness raising may be beneficial for educational psychologists working in IM schools.

**4.5.26** Interview with educational psychologists who have experience of working in IM schools reported that information on working with pupils in IM schools has been disseminated in at least one ELB area. The respondent highlighted the importance of information and awareness

raising in respect of assessment and the introduction of English literacy in IM schools. The informant reported that children feed in and out of IM schools and, that educational psychologists and EM schools need to be aware of the educational experience pupils have had.

### Challenges faced by educational psychologists

**4.5.27** The following information is based on responses from educational psychologists who indicated experience of working with pupils in the IM sector in the qualitative questionnaire. These respondents were asked to provide details of any challenges they face in their work in the IM sector. Figure 4.5.11, shows the percentage breakdown of references made to challenges reported by educational psychologists.

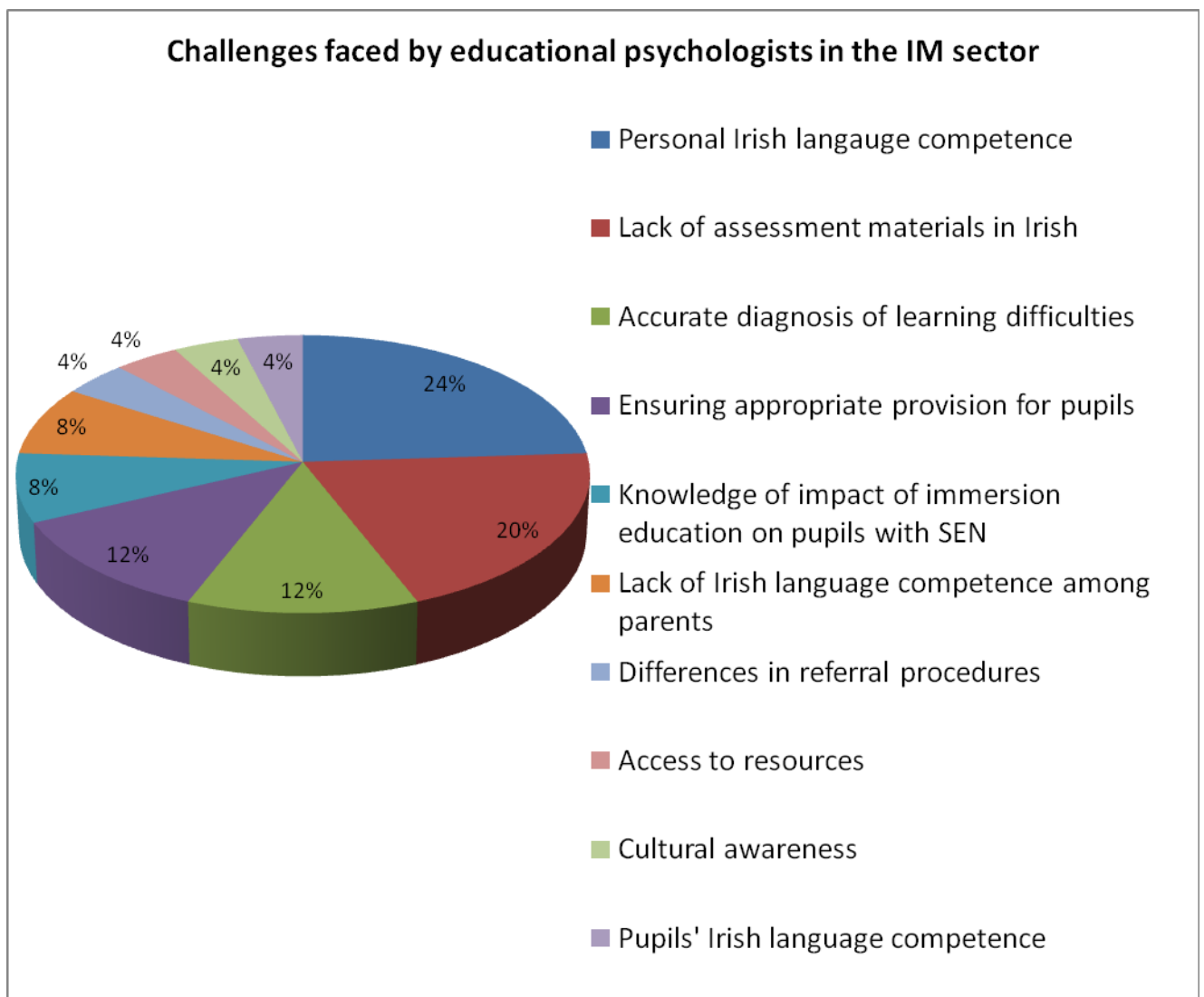


Figure 4.5.11

**4.5.28** Some of the comments made by respondents include:

*'Getting appropriate levels of their progress in written Irish.'*

*'Irish Medium in the early years - particularly if there is a dyslexia query and the pupils haven't formally been taught English yet.'*

*'To ensure that SEN are not incorrectly identified when child just getting used to another language.'*

*'Impact of becoming literate in two languages on children with mild or moderate learning difficulties.'*

*'If the pupil is only exposed to Irish in school and if they have general learning difficulties. In these circumstances pupils lack confidence in basic literacy in either language.'*

**4.5.29** Respondents were asked to indicate how challenges impact on the service provided to pupils in the IM sector with SEN. Five respondents of the twelve respondents reported that measures were taken to minimise, as far as possible, the impact of these challenges on the provision of educational psychology services for pupils in the IM sector. They cited:

- co-operation with members of staff in the IM school;
- use of non-verbal assessment instruments in some parts of the assessment process;
- efforts to translate reports and resources such as visual timetables and behaviour target charts; and
- ensuring that a thorough assessment is carried out whilst cognisant of relevant theories on bilingualism and immersion education.

**4.5.30** In the qualitative questionnaire for educational psychologists, those who indicated experience of working with pupils in the IM sector were asked to provide details of things which might assist them in their work with pupils in the IM sector. The responses provided were varied. Some of the responses relate directly to the work of the educational psychology service

and some responses relate to the support provided for pupils and teaching practitioners in the IM sector. In respect of support for educational psychologists the two most frequently cited recommendations were standardised assessments in Irish and personal Irish language skills. Other recommendations include training for educational psychologists on the pedagogies of the IM sector, a liaison officer between the IM sector and educational psychology services, increased awareness of the impact of a second language on pupils experiencing learning difficulties and increased staffing levels in the educational psychology service. The responses provided in relation to support for pupils and IM schools include afterschool support for pupils who do not have Irish in the home, additional resources in Irish, and peripatetic and outreach support services through the medium of Irish.

### Development of provision

**4.5.31** The qualitative questionnaire for educational psychologists asked respondents who indicated experience of working with pupils in IM schools to make recommendations as to how provision for pupils experiencing SEN in the IM sector might be improved, based on their experience of current provision. Some respondents reported that current provision for pupils in IM schools is equal to that made available to pupils in EM schools. Some of the comments made by respondents include:

*'In the educational psychology service there are psychologists who speak Irish. There is a willingness to buy the services of a translator if this is necessary.'*

*'I feel that access to our service is equitable for the IM sector. Assessment could be carried out in Irish (if relevant and if staff available) though our main interest would probably still be in relation to the development of literacy in English.'*

**4.5.32** The following diagram, Figure 4.5.12, shows the breakdown of references made to recommendations as to how SEN provision might be improved.

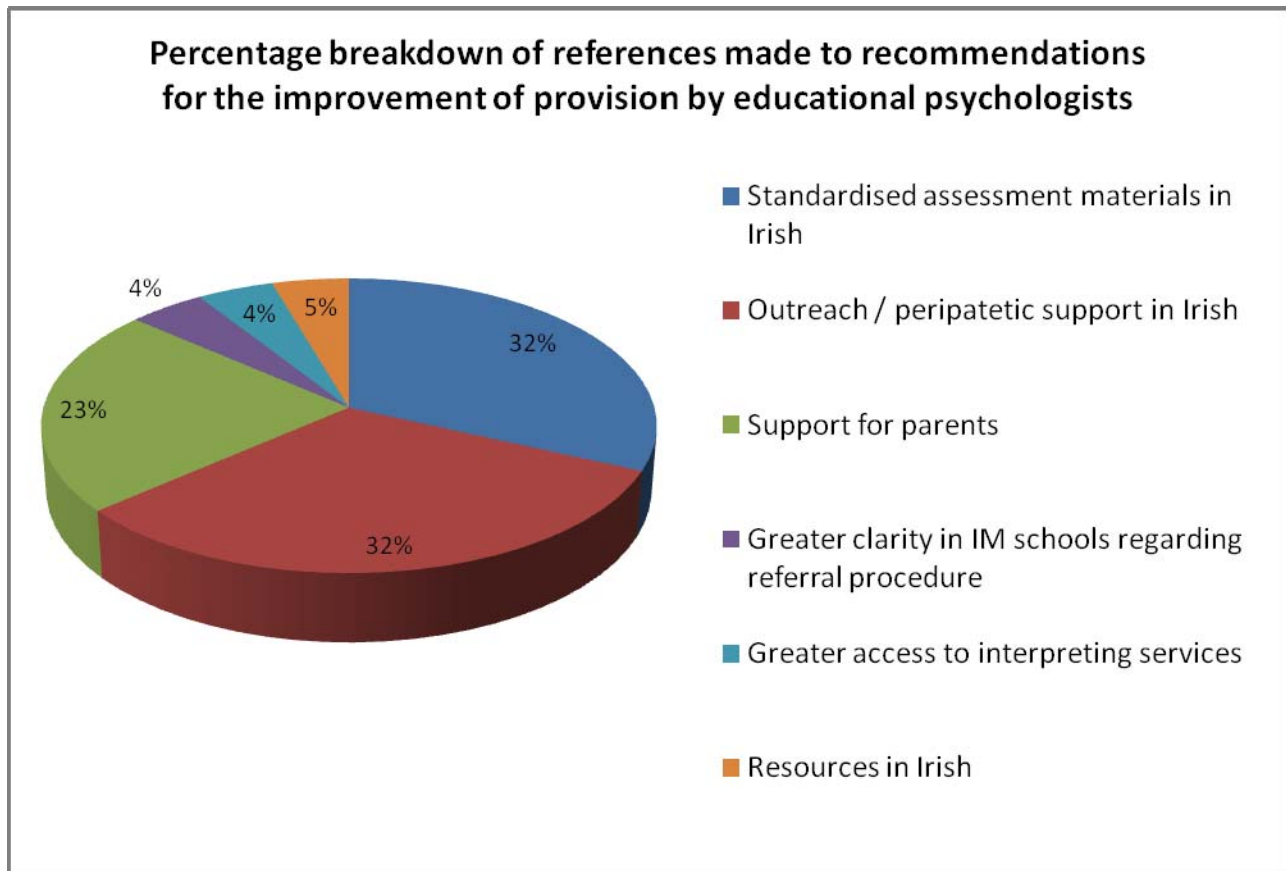


Figure 4.5.12

Figure 4.5.12, above, shows the breakdown of recommendations from educational psychologists with experience of the IM sector for the improvement of provision for pupils in the IM sector who experience SEN. Figure 4.5.12 shows that responses from educational psychologists are varied. The two most frequently cited recommendations are the provision of standardised assessment materials in Irish (32%) and the provision of outreach and peripatetic support services through the medium of Irish (32%). Other recommendations include appropriate support for parents to enable them to support their children at home (23%), greater clarity and awareness among IM practitioners in respect of referrals to the educational psychology service (4%), greater access to interpreting services for educational psychologists (4%), and the provision of SEN support resources in Irish (5%).

### Interviews with educational psychologists

**4.5.33** Interview participants reported that the principal challenge to educational psychologists working in the IM sector is that there is currently no means of assessing pupils' literacy in the Irish language.

**4.5.34** Informants from all the five ELBs reported to have, or to have recently had, Irish-speakers on the staff in the educational psychology department. Informants reported that they were unable to carry out assessment through the medium of Irish as the appropriate materials do not exist to allow them to do so.

**4.5.35** One informant reported that knowledge of Irish is beneficial to educational psychologists assigned to IM schools, and reported that those with knowledge of Irish want to use Irish with pupils and members of staff out of courtesy to them. The informant suggested, however, that psychologists have reported that discussing the technical details of assessment in Irish can be challenging, and that educational psychologists reported using English as the medium for this discussion. The informant also reported that difference in dialect can sometimes pose difficulties for Irish-speakers who want to use some Irish when working with pupils in the IM sector, if for example an educational psychologist speaks a dialect other than the Ulster dialect with which pupils in IM schools in the north of Ireland are most familiar.

**4.5.36** In relation to Irish language competence among ELB staff members, ELB representatives participant in interview reported that an audit of levels of staff language competence has been carried out in all five ELBs in order to ascertain staff levels of language fluency and to identify members of staff competent in carrying out their work through the medium of a language other than English. The results of this audit were unavailable at the time of data collection.

**4.5.37** Interview with educational psychologists reported a need for external support through the medium of Irish for pupils in IM schools such as outreach and peripatetic support. It was reported there may be some delay in the provision for outreach and peripatetic support services for pupils in the IM sector owing to the fact that often pupils are not assessed until Year 3 or Year 4 when they commence English literacy. Some respondents advocated a need for research into this area to identify if disparities exist between access to additional support for pupils in the IM sector and pupils in the EM sector.

### Summary of main points

**4.5.38** A high percentage of IM primary and post-primary settings are currently accessing SEN support for pupils who require additional help with aspects of their learning. The most accessed service in IM pre-school settings were social worker services, in primary it was the educational psychologists' service and all three post-primary settings reported using the educational psychologists', outreach, educational welfare and social worker services. (4.5.2)



Responses from the IM sector indicate a high level of dissatisfaction with the support provided by SEN-related support services in terms of the providing appropriate support for pupils in IM education. Reasons cited by respondents include the current lack of provision of support service in Irish, lack of understanding of IM sector among professionals and, lack of resources and assessment materials in Irish. While a significant majority (81%) of the educational psychologists in this study indicated that they had a full or general understanding of bilingualism, just over half of them reckoned that they had a full or general understanding of the IM sector. (4.5.20)

31% of educational psychologists in this study received training in bilingualism but only 5% had been trained on the IM sector and it was minimal. (4.5.21)

The percentages for no experience of using SEN services were: pre-school: 54%; primary: 12% and post-primary 37%. (4.5.3)

The percentages of respondents satisfied with SEN services working in the IM sector were: pre-school: 11%; primary: 34% and post-primary: 22%. (4.5.3)

Satisfaction at pre-school level stems, for half of the respondents, from the availability of support, at primary and post-primary, two thirds cited availability and one third were satisfied with contact kept with teachers. (4.5.6)

Of those who reported services as unsatisfactory, one third cited the lack of services in Irish and one fifth each cited the lack of contact with teachers and of appropriate resources in Irish. (4.5.9)

The data highlight a need for external support services in Irish for pupils in the IM sector who require additional support (4.5.3, 5, 6, 9).

Educational psychologists reported that, for the most part, current assessment practices provide an accurate profile of pupils whose first language is English (4.5.) .

Educational psychologists are unable to assess pupils' literacy progress in Irish owing to the lack of assessment materials in Irish which may result in a delay in the provision of appropriate support. Three major challenges to their work in IM sector cited by educational psychologists included a lack of personal Irish language competence (24%), the lack of assessment materials in Irish (20%) and accurate diagnosis of learning difficulties (12%) (4.5.27).

Educational psychologists generally feel that they understand IM pupils' needs. (4.5.23-4)

Educational psychologists aim to minimize challenges to their work in the IM sector by cooperating with members of staff, the use of no-verbal assessment instruments, thorough assessment while considering theories of bilingualism and immersion (4.5.29).

Responses indicate a need for further awareness raising among health and education professionals in respect of the ethos and pedagogies of the IM sector in order to improve provision for pupils in the IM sector and provision for pupils who received some part of their primary education in an IM school and are now being educated in an EM primary or post-primary setting. A large majority of educational psychologists in this study (72%) said that they would benefit from training on the IM sector: improved understanding and awareness of IM sector (64%); improved understanding of pupils' needs, increased understanding of assessment practices and improved understanding of approaches taken to literacy in Irish and English in IM sector (4.5.22-3).

Recommendations to support the work of educational psychologists in the study included standardized assessments in Irish, improving their personal Irish language skills, training on IM pedagogy, a liaison officer, afterschool support for children with no Irish at home, additional resources in Irish, and peripatetic and outreach support services through the medium of Irish. (4.5.30)

The three improvements for their provision most cited by educational psychologists were standardised assessment materials in Irish (32%), outreach/peripatetic support in Irish (32%) and support for parents (23%). (4.5.22)

### Section 4.6: SENCOs in the IM sector

**4.6.1** This section on Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) in the IM sector aims to provide information on the knowledge, training and experience of SENCOs in the IM sector.

**4.6.2** The following data were collected using the quantitative questionnaire, completed by all IM settings, during the period January to April 2007.

#### SENCOs in IM primary settings

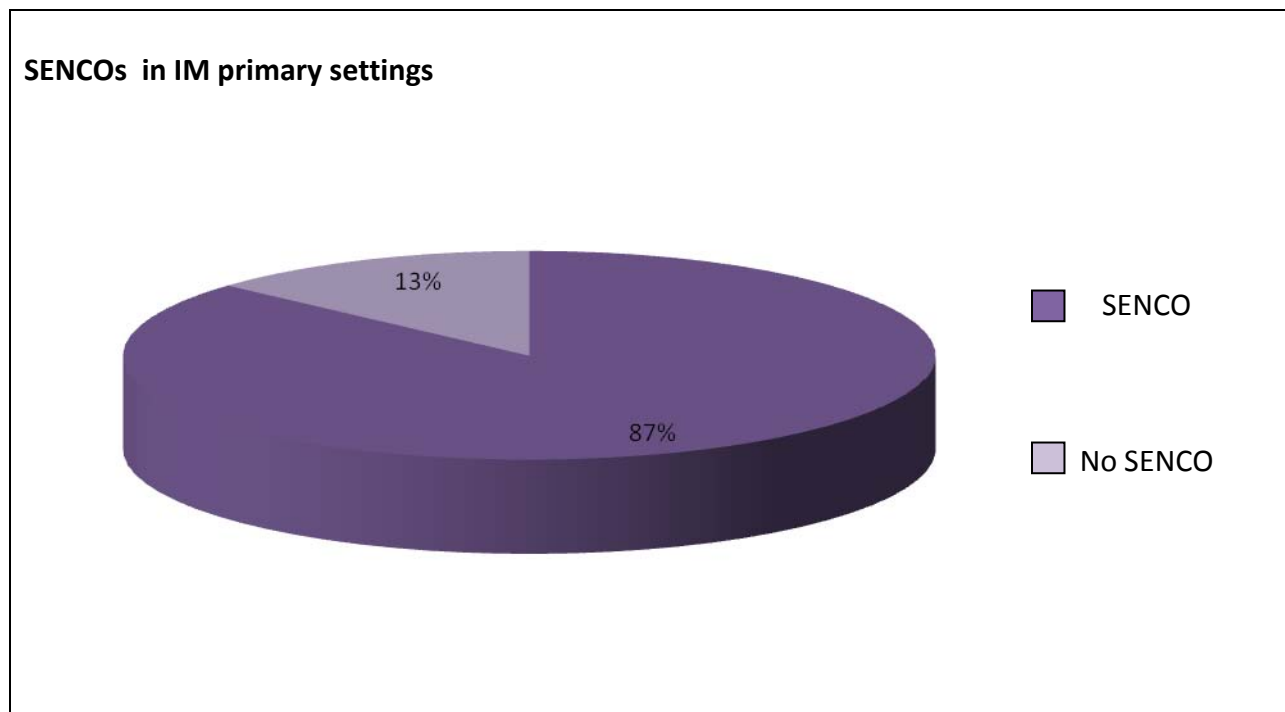


Figure 4.6.1

**4.6.3** Figure 4.6.2, below, shows the breakdown of language proficiency of SENCOs in the IM primary phase.

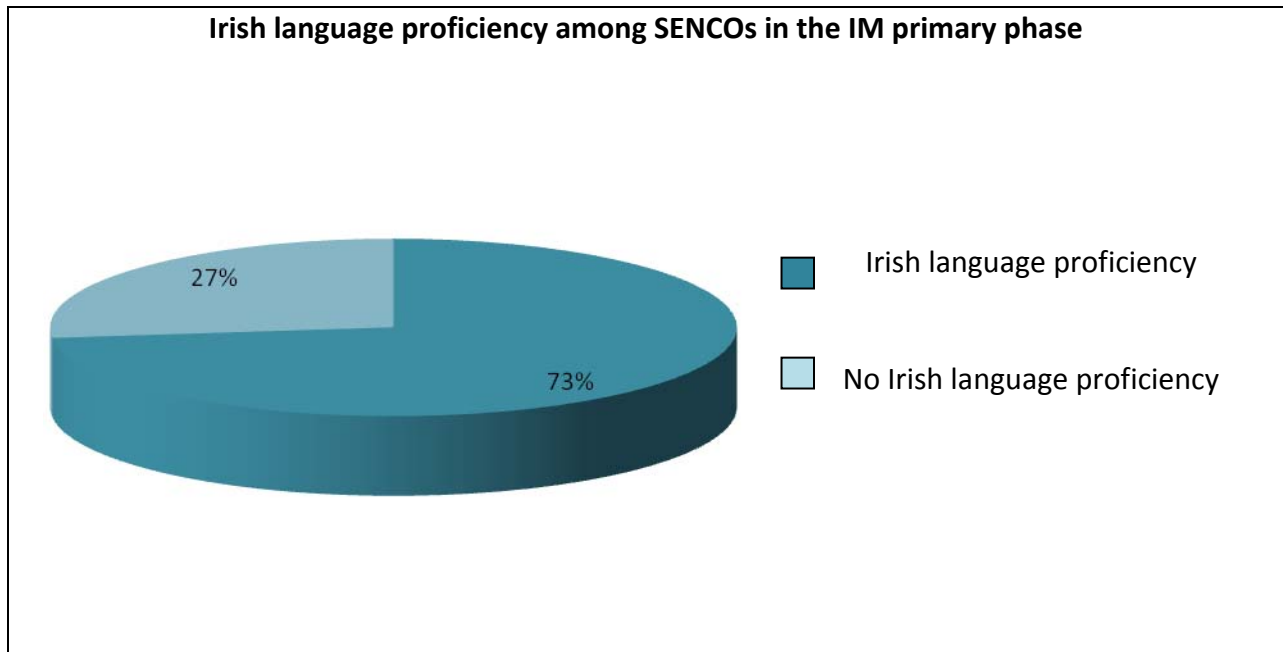


Figure 4.6.2

Figure 4.6.2, above, shows that 73% of SENCOs in the IM primary phase are fluent Irish speakers. The figure also shows, however, that just over a quarter of SENCOs (27%) do not speak Irish.

Data collected during the period January to April 2007 indicate that all of the IM primary settings in which the SENCO does not speak Irish were IM units in English Medium (EM) host schools. Two IM units reported that the school SENCO speaks Irish, and is a member of staff in the IM unit. During the collection of additional, in-depth data in schools in May 2008, it was reported that two IM units had appointed an Irish-speaking SENCO to the IM unit, in addition to the SENCO / SENCOs responsible for SEN in the EM host school.

**4.6.4** Figure 4.6.3, below, shows the breakdown of SENCOs' years of teaching experience for SENCOs in IM primary schools and IM primary units.

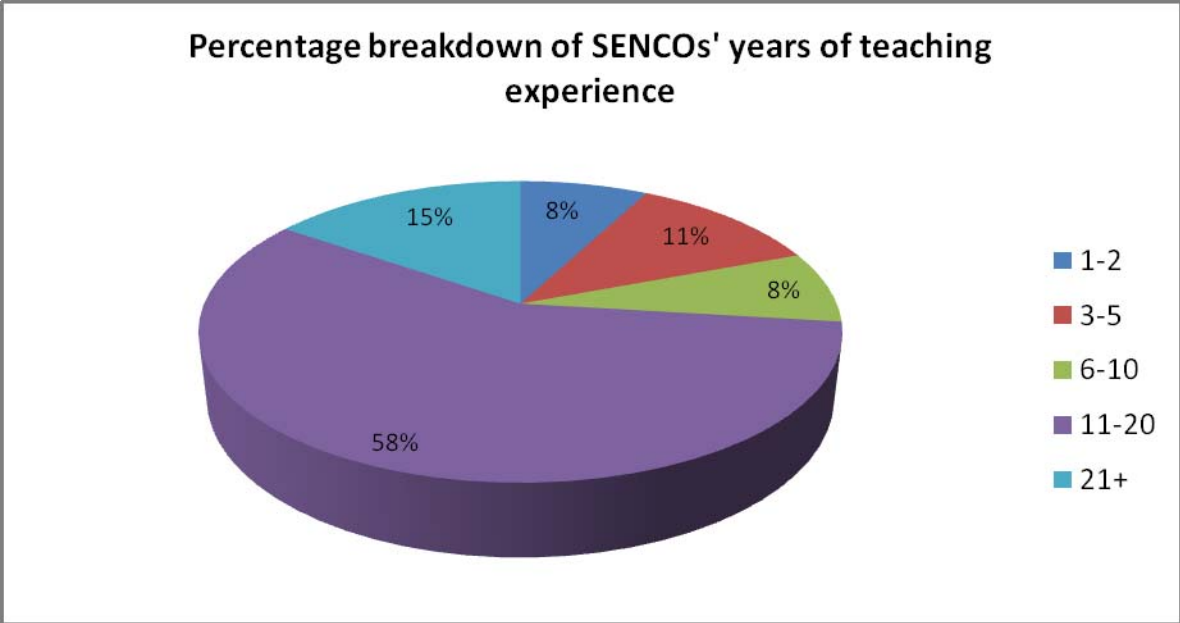


Figure 4.6.3

The diagram above, Figure 4.6.3, shows that 19% of SENCOs in IM primary schools and units reported five or fewer years of teaching experience, 8% of SENCOs reported 6-10 years of teaching experience, 58% of SENCOs have 11-20 years of experience and 15% of SENCOs have twenty-one years of experience or more.

**4.6.5** Figure 4.6.4, below, shows the breakdown of SENCOs' years of experience according to type of IM primary setting.

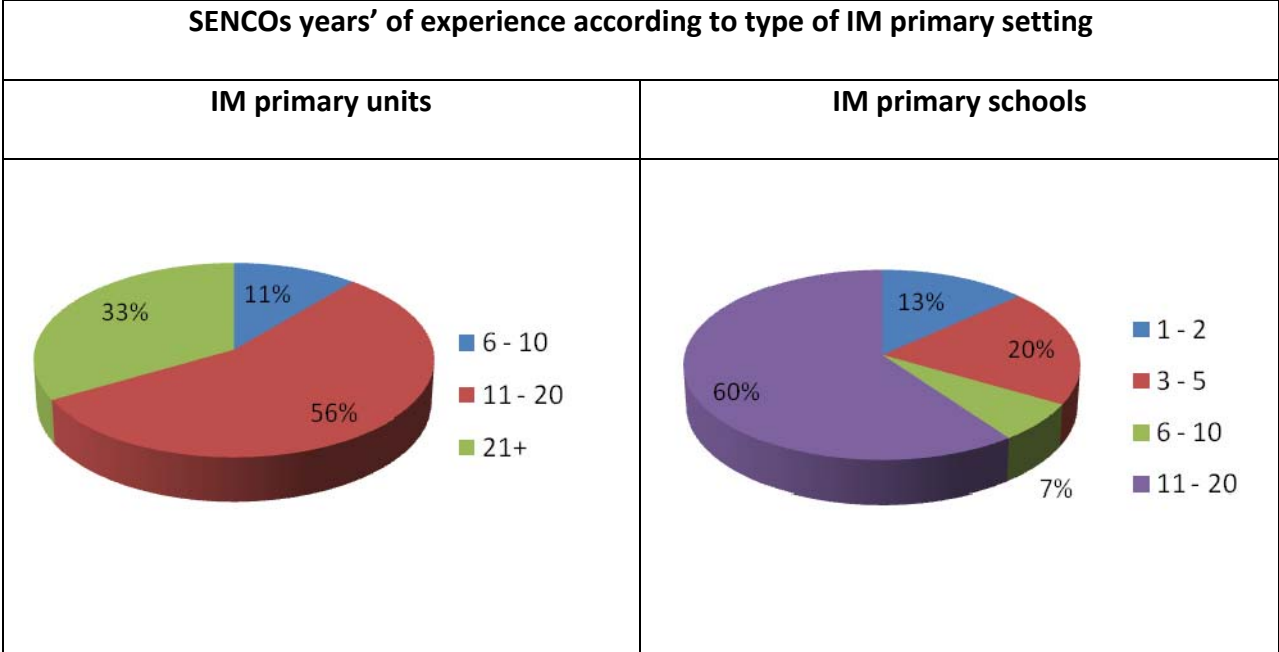


Figure 4.6.4

Figure 4.6.4, above shows a wider range of experience in IM primary schools from one year of experience to twenty years of experience compared with the IM primary units where SENCOs' years of experience range of six to twenty years of experience. In the IM primary units, all SENCOs reported that they have over six years of teaching experience. In the standalone IM primary schools 33% of SENCOs have fewer than five years of teaching experience.

**4.6.5** IM primary settings were asked to indicate if the school SENCO is a member of the School Management Team (SMT). Overall, 73% of IM primary settings indicated that the SENCO is a member of the SMT. Figure 4.6.5, below, shows the breakdown of responses from IM primary schools and IM primary units.

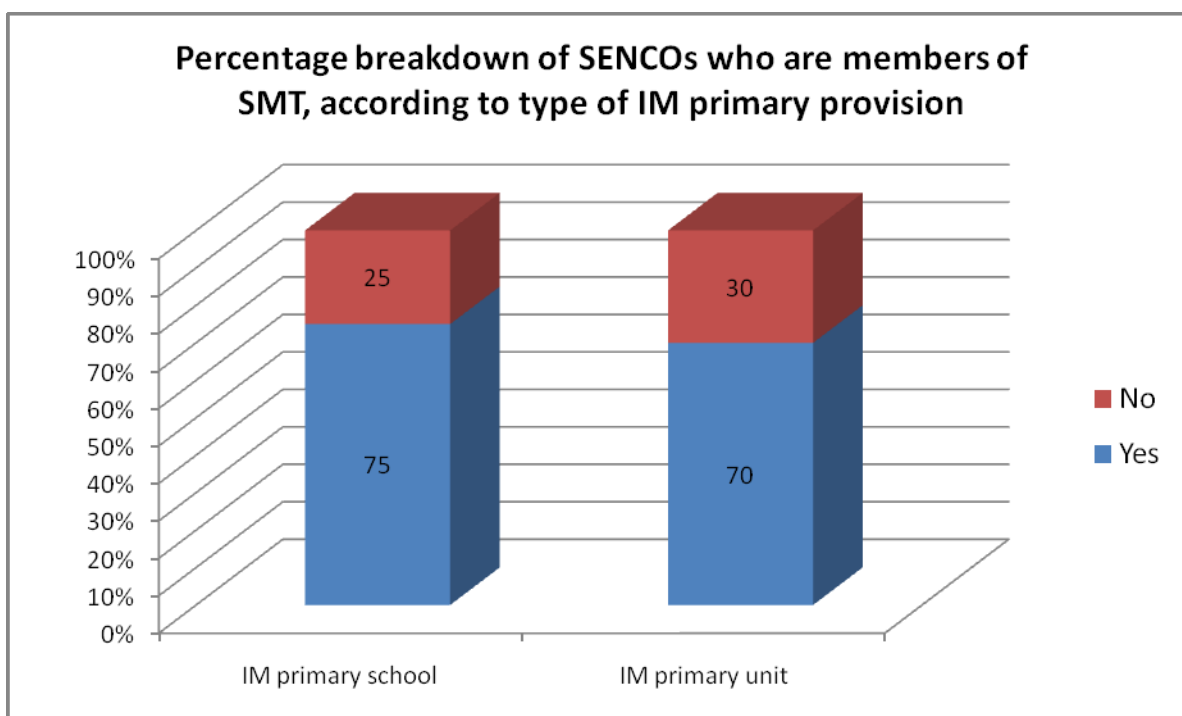


Figure 4.6.5

Figure 4.6.5, above shows that 75% of SENCOs in IM standalone primary schools are members of the SMT, and 70% of SENCOs in IM primary units are part of the SMT.

**4.6.6** In order to ascertain the percentage of full-time SENCOs in the IM primary sector, settings were asked if the SENCO is a class teacher. Overall, 69% of IM primary settings

indicated that the school SENCO is a class teacher. Figure 4.6.6, below, shows the breakdown of responses according to type of IM primary provision.

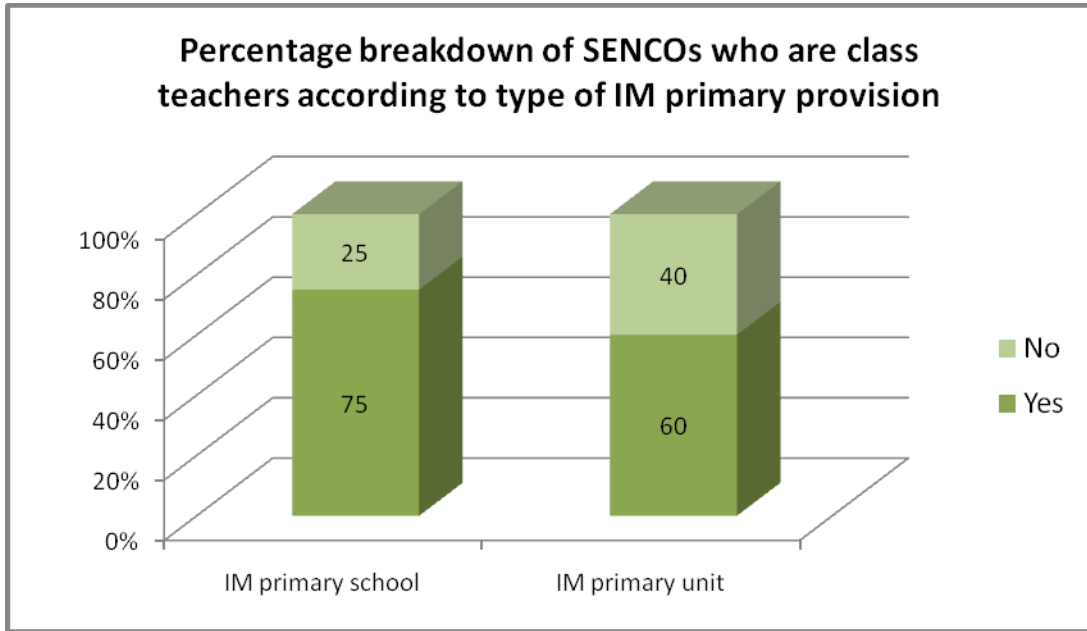


Figure 4.6.6

Figure 4.6.6 illustrates that 75% of SENCOs in IM standalone primary schools are class teachers. With regard to SENCOs in IM primary units, 60% of SENCOs are class teachers.

**4.6.7** Figure 4.6.7, below, shows the breakdown of number of hours per week the school SENCO spends on their SEN duties.

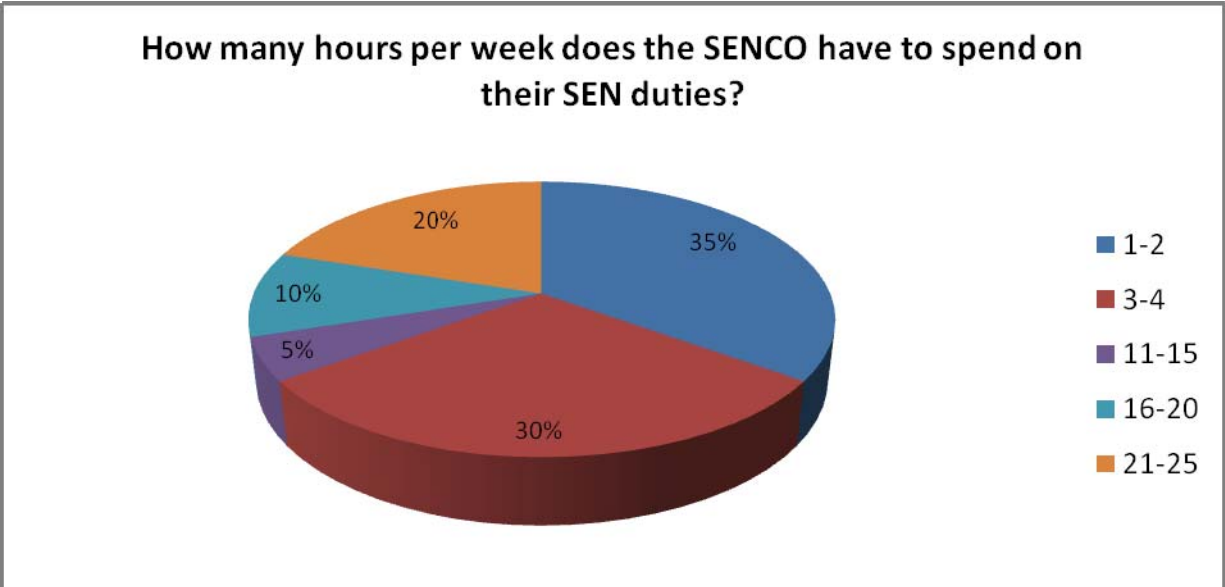


Figure 4.6.7

Figure 4.6.7, above, shows that 65% of SENCO have less than 4 hours per week to spend on their SEN duties. A further 5% of respondents indicated that they have 11 – 15 hours per week to devote to their SEN duties and 10% of respondents reported that they have 16 – 20 hours per week. A fifth of respondents reported that they have 21 – 25 hours per week to spend on their SEN duties.

**4.6.8** Figure 4.6.8, below, shows the percentage breakdown of SENCOS in IM primary schools and units who indicated receiving specific training for the post as SENCO.



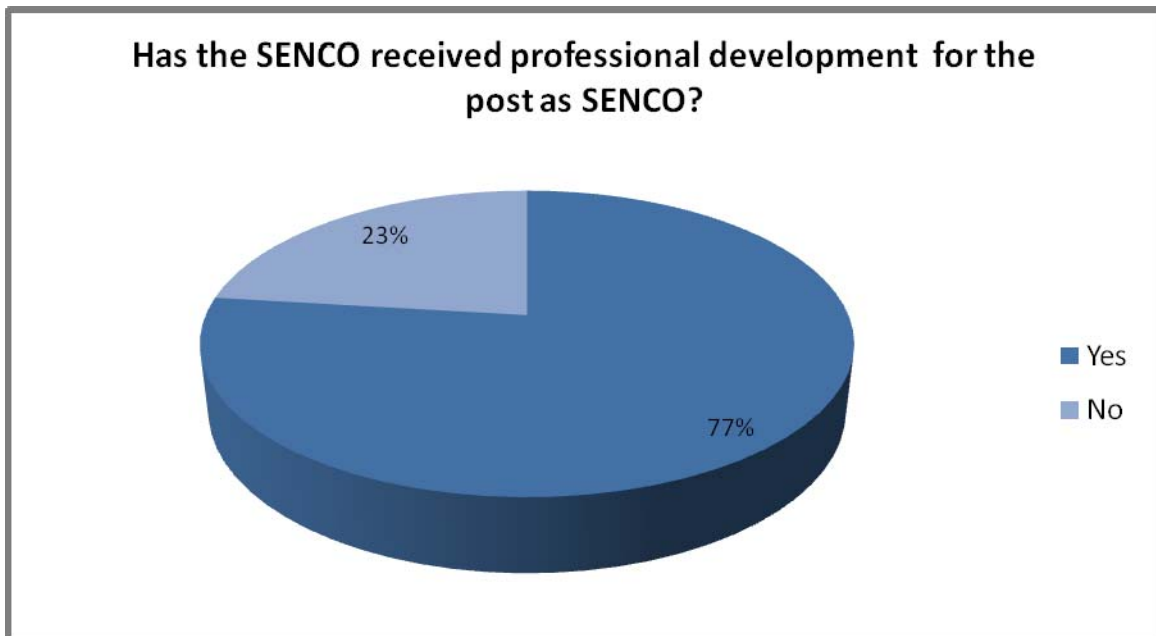


Figure 4.6.8

Figure 4.6.8, above shows that the majority of SENCOs in the IM primary phase have received specific professional development for the post as SENCO. However, the figure also shows that, almost a quarter of SENCOs (23%) in the IM primary phase indicated that they had not received professional development for the post as SENCO.

**4.6.9** As reported in paragraph 4.175, above, 77% of SENCOs in IM primary schools and units reported that they had received specific training for the post as SENCO.

IM primary settings were asked to indicate if the SENCO had obtained any additional qualifications in the area of SEN. Figure 4.7.9, below, illustrates the breakdown of responses in relation to additional qualifications on SEN.

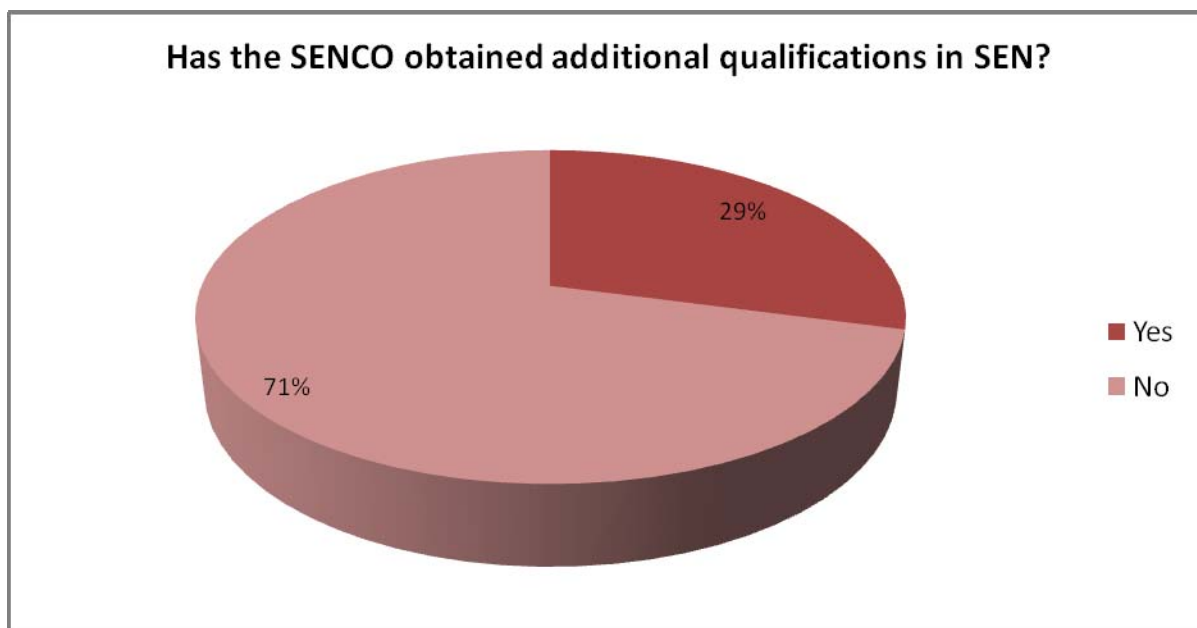


Figure 4.6.9

Figure 4.6.9, above, shows that 29% of SENCOs in IM primary schools and units have obtained additional qualifications in the area of SEN.

The additional qualifications reported by respondents include:

- Reading Recovery;
- Reading Partnerships;
- Primary Movements;
- Diploma in SEN; and
- Masters in Education (part of which involved SEN).

### SENCOs in IM primary units

**4.6.10** Figure 4.6.2, above, shows that, during the first round of data collection during January to April 2007, 27% of SENCOs in IM primary settings did not have knowledge of Irish. All settings which reported that the SENCO did not speak Irish were IM units in EM host schools. While the majority of IM units said that they work closely with the school SENCO, respondents from these IM units expressed some concern that the school SENCO was unable to provide additional literacy support to pupils from the IM unit as they do, in some cases, for pupils in the EM school. Furthermore, respondents reported that the SENCO was unable to assess pupils' Irish literacy, owing to a lack of assessment materials and lack of competence in Irish.

One respondent from an IM unit reported:

<b><i>'Is é an fhadhb is mó ná nach bhfuil múinteoir le Gaeilge mar CRSO againn.'</i></b>	<i>'The greatest problem is that we do not have a teacher with Irish as SENCO.'</i>
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Another commented:

<b><i>'Níl foireann sa bhreis ann le tacaíocht bhreise a thabhairt do pháistí a bhfuil cuidiú de dhíth orthu sa Ghaeilge. Tá an SENCO ann le cuidiú le páistí sa Bhéarla.'</i></b>	<i>'There are no extra members of staff to give additional support to children who need help in Irish. The SENCO is there to help children in English.'</i>
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## IM post-primary settings

**4.6.11** All IM post-primary settings reported that they had a SENCO. One IM post-primary settings reported that the SENCO speaks Irish. Two of the three post-primary settings reported that the SENCO is a member of the school management team. Two of the three post-primary settings reported that the SENCO is a class teacher. All IM post-primary settings reported that the SENCO has particular timetable for his / her SEN duties. One IM post-primary setting reported that the SENCO had 11-15 hours per week to spend on their SEN duties while another setting reported that the SENCO had 21-25 hours per week to spend on their SEN duties. The remaining setting did not detail hours spent on SEN duties.

**4.6.12** In relation to years of teaching experience, one IM post-primary setting reported that the SENCO had 6-10 years of teaching experience. Two post-primary settings reported that the SENCO had twenty-one years of experience or more.

**4.6.13** Two of the post-primary settings reported that the SENCO had received training for the post as SENCO. The remaining setting did not provide details in relation to training received. In respect of additional qualifications in the area of SEN, one of the three post-primary settings reported that the school SENCO had obtained additional qualifications in SEN. Details of the qualifications obtained were not provided.

### Summary

87% of IM primary settings in the study have a SENCO and 13% do not have one. (4.6.2)

27% of SENCOs in the IM primary phase have no Irish language proficiency. (4.6.3)

Almost one fifth of SENCOs in IM primary schools and units in the study have five or fewer years teaching experience. (4.6.4)

The range of teaching experience of SENCOs in IM primary units is from six to twenty years whereas in IM primary schools 33% of SENCOs have fewer than five years teaching experience (4.6.5)

75% of SENCOs in IM primary schools and 70% of SENCOs in IM primary units are members of SMT (4.6.5)

75% of SENCOs in IM primary schools and 60% of SENCOs in IM units are class teachers. (4.6.6)

65% of SENCOs in IM primary settings have less than four hours per week for SEN duties. (4.6.7)

The majority of SENCOs in the IM primary phase (77%) receive professional development for the post as SENCO. (4.6.8)

29% of SENCOs in the IM primary phase accessed additional qualifications in the area of SEN. (4.6.9)

## Section 4.7 Recording of SEN and referral procedures

**4.7.1** This section examines in-school practices in relation to recording of SEN, the Code of Practice and referral procedures. Firstly, the section reports on the data collected during in-depth interviews with representatives of five IM primary settings, on in-school practices in relation to provision for SEN within the setting. The second part of the section looks at in-school practices regarding, and attitudes to, the recording of SEN in IM settings, as reported by respondents to the qualitative questionnaire aimed at primary and post-primary teachers. The third part of the section examines respondent understanding of the Code of Practice and in-school and external referral procedures.

### Data from in-depth interviews

**4.7.2** Representatives of five IM primary settings participant in in-depth interviews were asked to give details of in-school practices regarding recording of SEN within the school. The information provided by the five settings is recorded in the form of case studies contained in appendix 2.

**4.7.3** Representatives of all five settings reported that they endeavour to identify pupils with SEN as early as possible. Responses from the five IM primary settings indicated some variation in practice in relation to recording of SEN. Two settings reported that as soon as a teacher identifies a pupil who requires additional support a record of concern is completed by the class teacher. One of the two settings reported that the record of concern is reviewed after six weeks and at that point it is decided if the pupil concerned should be recorded on stage 1 of the Code of Practice, the other setting reported that a record of concern is completed until parents have been involved in discussion and the pupil is then placed on stage 1 of the SEN register following discussion with parents. Other settings reported that pupils are recorded on stage 1 of the Code of Practice as soon as they are identified by the class teacher, and it has been discussed with parents. One setting reported that pupils are recorded on the SEN register temporarily if they have specific needs at a particular point in their lives, for example, pupils who are attending speech and language therapy.

**4.7.4** All settings reported that an Educational Plan (EP) is devised for pupils identified and that pupils' progress is measured based on the targets laid down in the EP. All settings reported that a combination of measures is used to review pupils' progress and to judge if the pupil should be moved on to the next stage of the Code of Practice, stay on the same stage or be removed from the SEN register. The measures cited include the professional judgement of class teacher and SEN teacher, and formal and informal assessment results. The assessment procedures employed by the schools are discussed in greater detail in section 4.3. They include

informal by the class teacher and formal assessment by the class teacher and/or the school SENCO.

**4.7.5** All settings reported that pupils are sometimes removed from the SEN register if they are judged to be making adequate progress based on the EP devised for them. Two respondents indicated that it is more likely that a pupil on stage 1 or stage 2 of the Code of Practice will be removed from the SEN register than pupils who have already begun to access external support.

**4.7.6** Two of the five settings reported that SIMS is used to ensure accurate record-keeping in relation to SEN. They reported that storing data relating to SEN on SIMS allows the SENCO to update information regularly and to access all the necessary data required to review EPs and judge pupils' progress.

### Data from qualitative questionnaire in relation to recording of SEN

**4.7.7** Research carried out by Nic Annaidh (2005) on attitudes to, and practices regarding, provision for SEN in the IM sector found that 'some teachers [in the IM sector] are inclined to place children at a 'sub-stage', a stage before Stage One in the Code of Practice' (:16), meaning that pupils are identified as requiring some additional support but are not yet recorded on stage 1 of the Code of Practice.

**4.7.8** The qualitative questionnaire for the primary and post-primary school levels asked respondents if they feel the need to use this practice. Figure 4.7.1, below, illustrates the breakdown of responses provided, according to phase.

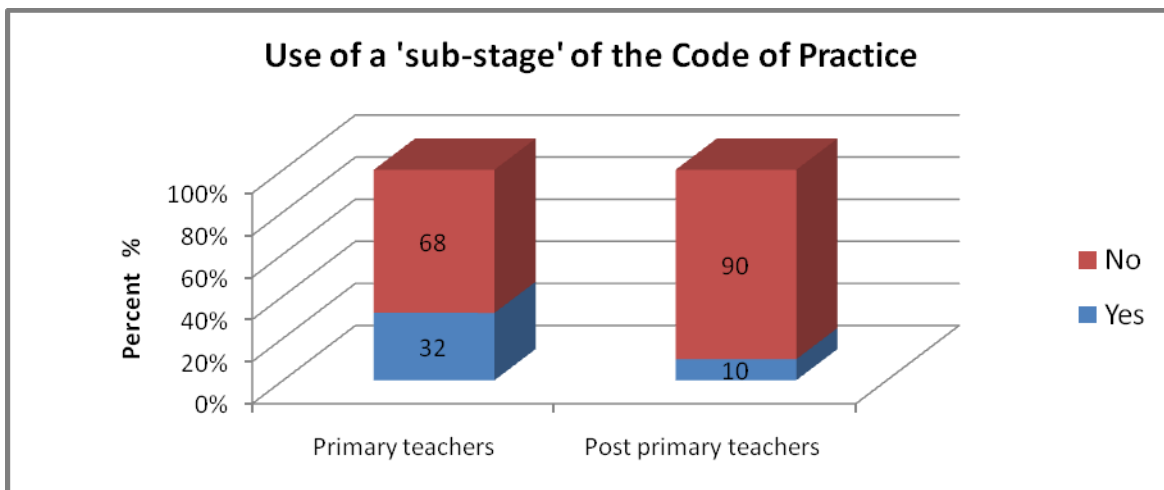


Figure 4.7.1

The reasons supplied by respondents for the implementation of a 'sub-stage' are varied. The reasons include lack of information, uncertainty on the part of the teacher, lack of support for

pupils, lack of time, lack of resources, in order to allow pupils time to settle into the immersion education setting and time to gauge the effects of additional support given to pupils, time to speak to parents, depending on the nature of the needs and if the pupils' needs involve behavioural difficulties.

Some of the comments made by respondents include:

<b><i>'Bíonn chun seans a thabhairt dóibh socrú, iad féin a chruthú agus tacaíocht ón mhúinteoir/ tuismitheoir a chur i bhfeidhm.'</i></b>	<i>'Yes, to give them a chance to settle, to prove themselves and to implement support from the teacher / parent.'</i>
--	--

<b><i>Bíonn ag brath ar an riachtanas. Má tá sé prainneach rachaidh an dalta air (an clár sainriachtanas) láithreach.</i></b>	<i>Yes, depending on the need. If it is urgent, the pupil will go on it (the SEN Register) immediately.'</i>
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<b><i>Líonaimid taifead buairimh ach cuirtear an dalta ar chéim 1 nuair a phléitear seo le tuistí.'</i></b>	<i>'We fill in a record of concern but the pupil is put on stage 1 when this has been discussed with parents.'</i>
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**4.7.9** Respondents to the qualitative questionnaire from the primary and post-primary phases were asked if there are factors which influence when a pupil is put on the SEN register, or if a pupil is moved from one stage of the Code of Practice to the next. Figure 4.7.2, below, shows the responses from primary and post-primary respondents. Table 4.7.1, below, shows the actual number of respondents to the question.

Number of respondents	
Primary teachers	Post-primary teachers
34	22

Table 4.7.1



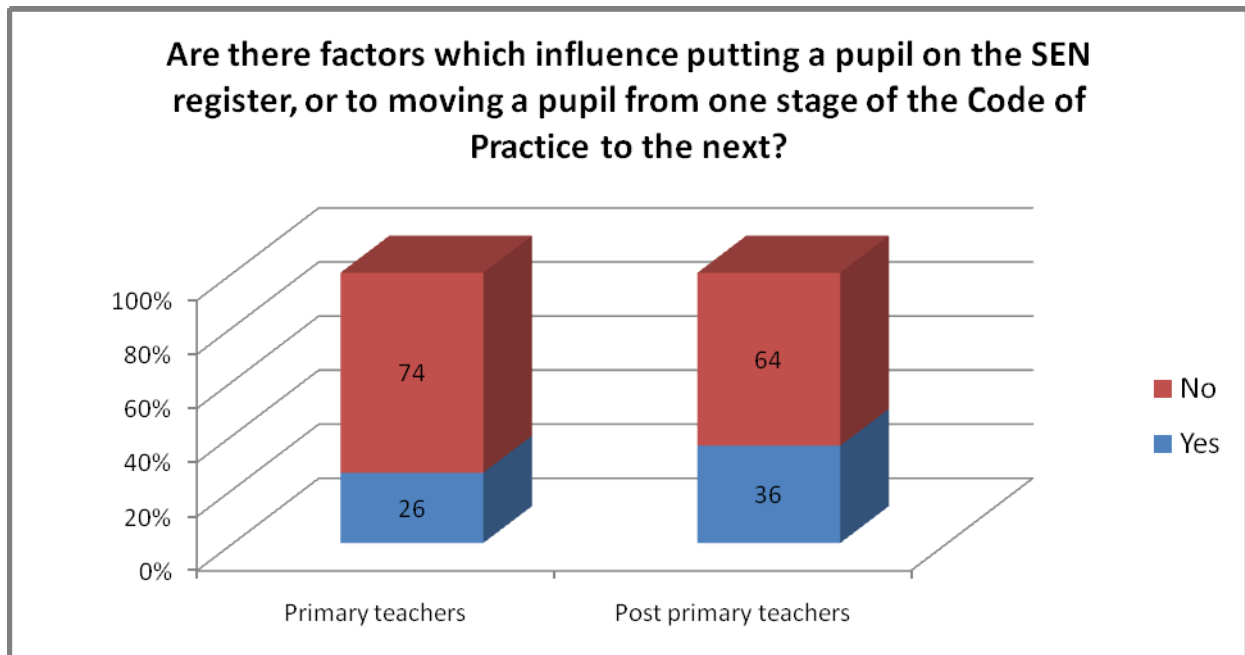


Figure 4.7.2

Figure 4.7.2, above, shows that 26% of respondents from the primary phase and 36% of respondents from the post-primary phase reported that there are factors which influence putting a pupil on the SEN register or moving him/her from one stage to the next. Table 4.7.1 shows that the actual number of respondents is quite small. Therefore the actual number of respondents who indicated that there are factors which influence when a pupil is recorded on the SEN register is small. The majority of these respondents reported that the need to give a pupil time to adapt to the immersion education setting plays a part in influencing their decision. A small number of respondents made reference to the lack of assessment materials in Irish, understanding of the Code of Practice and a lack of experience in the area of SEN, the need to consult parents, and fears of negatively impacting on a pupil’s self-esteem.

### Recording of health issues on the SEN Register

**4.7.10** Primary and post-primary respondents to the qualitative questionnaire were asked to indicate if health problems are recorded on the SEN register in their setting. Figure 4.7.3, below, show the percentage breakdown of responses from primary and post-primary phases.

**Percentage breakdown of response from primary and post-primary phases regarding recording health problems on the SEN register**

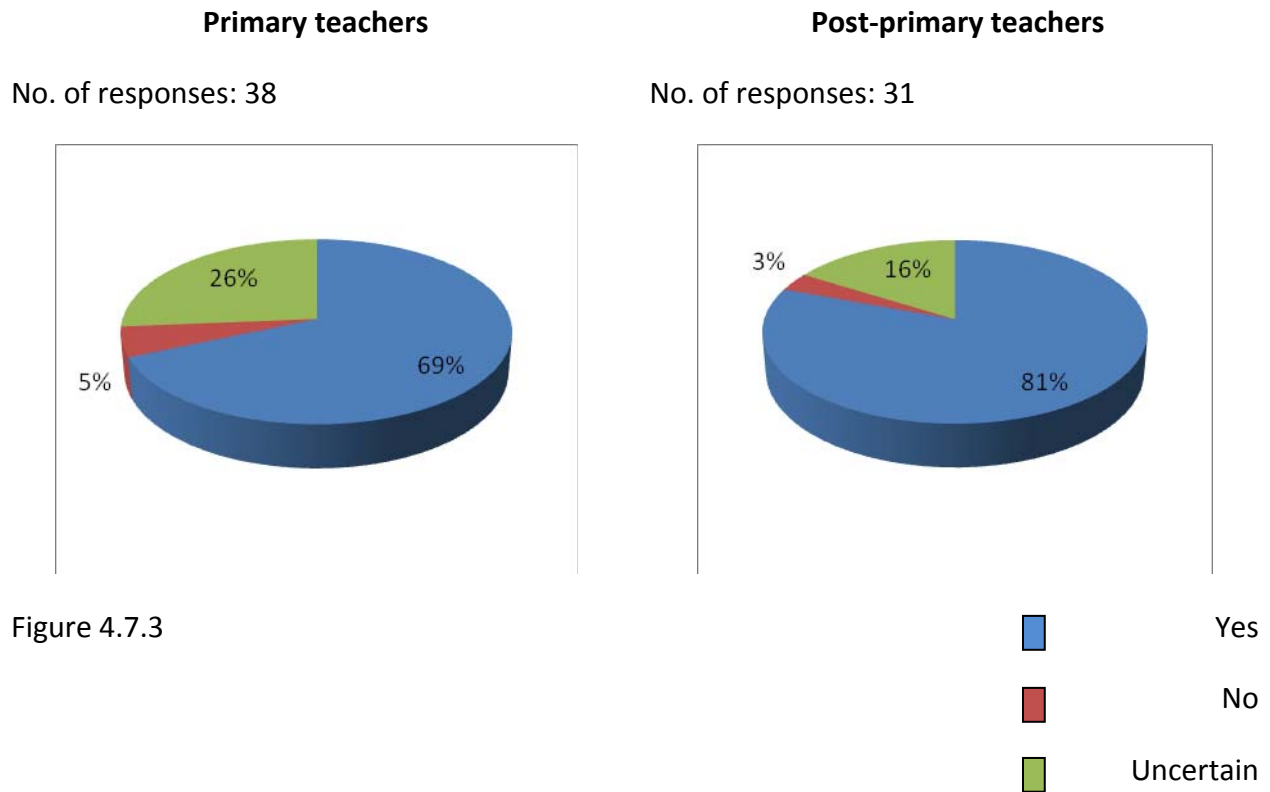


Figure 4.7.3

Figure 4.7.3, above, shows that 69% of respondents from the IM primary phase and 81% of respondents from the post-primary phase reported that health problems are recorded on the SEN register. A small percentage of respondents from the primary and post-primary phase reported that health problems are not recorded (5% and 3%, respectively). Some respondents from both the primary and post-primary phase indicated that they were unsure if health problems are recorded. The diagram shows that 26% of primary respondents and 16% of post-primary respondents reported that they uncertain regarding the recording of health problems.

**Summary of main points**

**4.7.11** The data indicate some variation in the recoding of SEN across the IM sector. Some respondents reported using a ‘sub-stage’ of the Code of Practice before officially registering pupils on stage 1 of the Code. Other respondents reported that pupils are recorded on stage 1 of the Code of Practice as soon as they are identified. 32% of IM primary teachers and 10% of

IM post-primary teachers in the study feel the need to use a stage before stage one in the Code of Practice for a range of reasons. (4.7.3-8)

Responses indicate that teachers use their professional judgement to decide if pupils ought to be registered on the Code of Practice immediately or if they require additional time to adapt to the IM immersion education environment. Responses also suggest that other factors such as the lack of assessment materials in Irish can result in teachers feeling uncertain regarding moving pupils from one stage of the Code to another. (4.7.9)

69% of respondents from the IM primary phase and 81% from post-primary claimed that health problems are recorded on the SEN register. (4.7.10)

### Respondent understanding of referral procedures

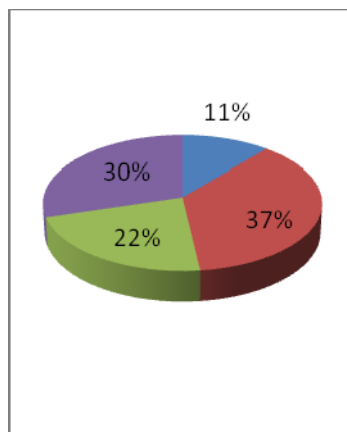
**4.7.12** This section discusses respondent knowledge and understanding of the Code of Practice and respondent knowledge and understanding of in-school and external referral processes. The qualitative questionnaire for the IM pre-school, primary and post-primary phases asked respondents to indicate their understanding of the Code of Practice.

**4.7.13** Figure 4.7.4 shows the percentage breakdown of responses from the IM pre-school, primary and post-primary levels.

#### Percentage breakdown of responses in relation to their understanding of the Code of Practice

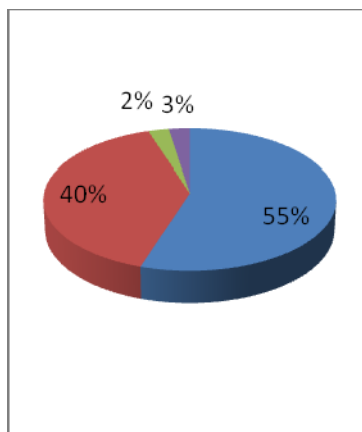
##### IM pre-school staff

No. of responses: 27



##### Primary teachers

No. of responses: 40



##### Post-primary teachers

No. of responses: 31

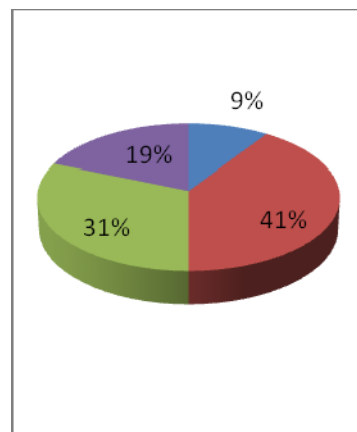


Figure 4.7.4

■ Full understanding     
 ■ General understanding     
 ■ Minimal understanding     
 ■ No understanding

In relation to those who indicated full or general understanding of the Code of Practice, 48% of IM pre-school respondents reported full or general understanding. Figure 4.7.5, above, shows a marked difference between responses from the primary and post-primary phases, in terms of understanding of the Code of Practice. In the primary school phase, 95% of respondents indicated full or general understanding, while in the post-primary phase 50% of respondents reported that they had full or general understanding of the Code of Practice.

**4.7.14** During interview three SENCOs made reference to some uncertainty among other teachers regarding the Code of Practice and the stages of the Code and to advising and supporting them in this area. One SENCO commented:

<i><b>D'aithin mé go bhfuil cúpla áit ann do thraenáil ar IEPanna agus ar an Chód Chleachtais é féin. Tá traenáil de dhíth ar na Múinteoirí mar glacann tú leis go bhfuil tuiscint mhaith ag achan duine ar an Chód agus níl. Bíonn a fhios agat ó na ceisteanna a chuirtear ort nach bhfuil an tuiscint sin ag achan duine.'</b></i>	<i>'I identified a couple of areas for training on IEPs and on the Code of Practice itself. Teachers need training because you take it that everybody has a good understanding of the Code of Practice but they don't. You know from the questions you are asked that everybody does not have that understanding.'</i>
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### IM pre-school phase

**4.7.15** Data recorded during the first round of data collection indicated that, while IM voluntary pre-schools are aware of the children with SEN and the nature of their needs, the information is not recorded according to the stages of the Code of Practice. The settings also reported that they did not use an SEN register to record the children's needs.

### Respondent understanding of referral processes

**4.7.16** Respondents to the qualitative questionnaire from the primary and post-primary phases were asked to indicate their understanding of the in-school referral process, the referral process involved in referring a pupil to an educational psychologist, and the referral process involved when making a referral for statutory assessment. Figure 4.7.5, below, shows the percentage breakdown of the responses, according to phase.

**Percentage breakdown of responses regarding respondent understanding of the in-school referral process**

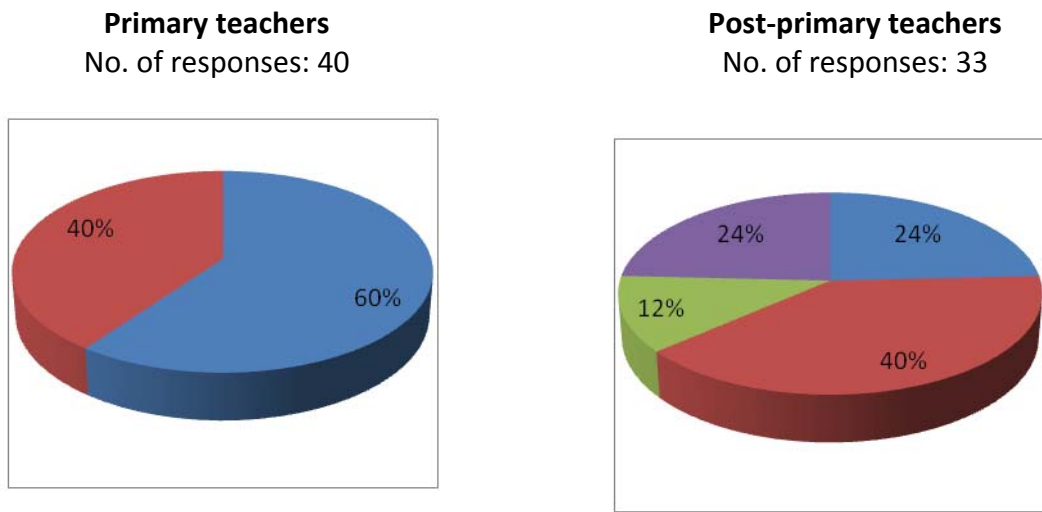


Figure 4.7.5



Figure 4.7.5, above, shows that all respondents from the primary phase reported that they had full or general understanding of the process involved in making an in-school referral regarding pupil who require additional help with their learning. In the post-primary phase, 64% of respondents indicated full or general understanding of the in-school referral process for pupils who have been identified as requiring additional support.

**4.7.17** Figure 4.7.6, below, shows the breakdown of responses from primary and post-primary respondents in respect of their understanding of the referral processes involved when making a referral to the educational psychology service.

**Percentage breakdown of responses regarding respondent understanding of the referral process involved when referring a pupil to an educational psychologist**

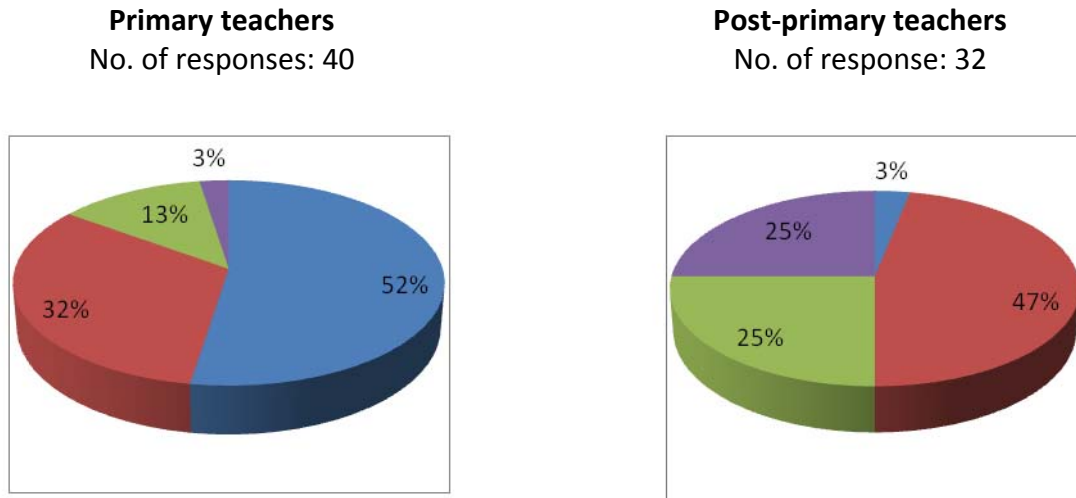


Figure 4.7.6

Full understanding
  General understanding
  Minimal understanding
  No understanding

Figure 4.7.6, above, illustrates that, of the respondents from the primary phase, 84% of respondents indicated full or general understanding of the referral process involved in referring a pupil for assessment by an educational psychologist. In the post-primary phase, 50% of respondents reported full or general understanding of the referral process involved in referring a pupil for educational psychology assessment.

**4.7.18** A small number of responses to the qualitative questionnaire for educational psychologists made some reference to current levels of identification of SEN in IM schools and the referral of pupils to educational psychology services. Some of the comments made by respondents to the questionnaire include:

*[There is at present a lack of clarity with regard to referral systems and the involvement of other agencies.]*

*'More children should be referred by the IM sector.'*

*'I would like to know where these children are being educated in this ELB area. Are their schools reluctant to refer children to the EPs?'*

## Summary of main points

**4.7.19** The data indicate that the vast majority of respondents from the IM primary phase report having full or general understanding of the Code of Practice (55% full, 40% general) and the stage of the Code, and of the in-school referral process (60% full, 40% general). There is a significant difference between reported levels of understanding in IM primary and IM post-primary phases where a significant proportion of respondents indicated little or no understanding of the Code of Practice (9% full, 41% general, 31% minimal and 19% no understanding) and in-school referral procedures (24% full, 40% general, 12% minimal and 24% no understanding) (4.7.13-6).

There is clearly a need for further professional development in the IM post-primary phase to inform post-primary practitioners of the Code of Practice and referral procedures. With regard to external referral processes, the data indicate some uncertainty among respondents in both the primary and post-primary phases. However, a much greater percentage of respondents from the post-primary phase (50%) reported having minimal or no understanding of the referral procedures involved when making a referral to educational psychology and for a statutory assessment, than those in the primary phase (16%) (4.7.17).

Responses from educational psychologists give the impression that there should be more referrals to them from the IM sector (4.7.18).



## Section 4.8: Discussion of experiences and attitudes to SEN provision reported by parents

**4.8.1** The following discussion is based on in-depth interviews carried out with the parents / guardians of eight children experiencing SEN. The experiences of the participants vary and include the experiences of parents of children in the IM sector, parents whose children have left IM schools as a result of SEN-related issues and parents of children who are below pre-school age and have been identified as having additional needs. The same interview questions were used with all parents. The responses provided by parents during the in-depth interviews form the basis of the following discussion. A case study was written on each individual case. The case studies are available in appendix 1.

### IM education

**4.8.2** All of the parents who participated in the in-depth interviews reported that they had chosen IM education, or wanted IM education for their child, to give them the advantages associated with bilingualism. One parent reported that they wanted to give their child the opportunities to acquire an additional skill, given that other skill areas would pose a challenge to him throughout his life. Some parents who participated were raising their child through the medium of Irish or bilingually (Irish / English) in the home. For them, IM education offered them the opportunity to have their child educated in the language of their home.

### Identification of SEN

**4.8.3** Three of the eight parents interviewed reported concerns regarding the identification of their child's additional needs. The parents were concerned at the length of time taken to identify difficulties, to address concerns regarding their child's academic progress and to make referrals for external assessment. One parent requested that their child be assessed by an educational psychologist as a referral had not been made by the school.

**4.8.4** Two of the parents interviewed reported that, as they do not speak Irish themselves they found it difficult to gauge their child's progress in Irish literacy, and rely on teachers to inform them of the child's academic progress. One parent reported that they identified difficulties in their child's English literacy when the child started formal English in Year 4 and only at that point were they in a position to relay their concerns to the class teacher.

**4.8.5** One of the eight parents indicated that they were satisfied with the identification of their child's needs. The parent said that they were pleased that the child's difficulties had been identified by the class teacher, and the appropriate referral to the educational psychologist made.

**4.8.6** Four of the eight parents reported that assessment procedures could not be carried out in Irish. Parents of children who had not yet begun formal English literacy, or who had only recently begun English literacy, at the time of the assessment, felt that the results of the assessment did not provide an accurate measure of the child's ability, or their academic progress to date.

### **In-school support for pupils**

**4.8.7** The majority of parents spoke appreciatively of the support provided by schools in meeting their child's needs. Parents cited support from external SEN support services, as well as additional support strategies implemented by class teachers, amongst the in-school support systems made available to their child.

**4.8.8** Three of the eight parents made reference to the valuable role carried out by classroom assistants in helping their child in a mainstream setting, in supporting them with their academic and domestic needs.

**4.8.9** Two parents, however, raised concerns regarding the continuity of provision of assistance from a classroom assistant. They made reference to situations whereby their child had to leave school earlier than the other pupils, as additional adult assistance could not be provided, for example, during the interim period when a classroom assistant had not yet been appointed, or on occasions when the classroom assistant was absent. The parents reported that having to leave school early had a negative impact on their child's self-esteem, made them feel different from the other pupils and, as a result, impacted negatively on their behaviour.

**4.8.10** Some parents placed importance of a high level of fluency in the Irish language for classroom assistants who will be working closely with a pupil / pupils in an IM school, particularly pupils for whom Irish is their first language and may not have a high level of fluency in English in the early years.

**4.8.11** Some concern was reported that the school did not take sufficient account of additional learning needs a child may have as a result of ongoing health problems, and /or long periods of absence, as a direct result of health problems.

**4.8.12** One parent reported that the IM sector is a developing sector rather than an established sector. They questioned if current challenges to SEN provision are associated with the IM sector, or if they are generic to all sectors.

**4.8.13** One parent, whose child was identified with specific learning difficulties, indicated that they were very satisfied with their decision to have their child educated in the IM sector. Additional literacy support is provided for the child through the medium of Irish from the

school SEN teacher, and through the medium of English from a peripatetic support teacher. The respondent said that their child loved being able to speak Irish and continued to read in both Irish and English. Moving the child to an EM school was not an option for this parent. They reported that the nature of the child's needs meant that their difficulties with literacy would be equally evident in an EM school as in an IM school.

### External educational and health support services for pupils in IM schools

**4.8.14** Two of the eight parents stressed the importance of home or hospital tutoring for pupils from IM schools who have to spend long periods of time in hospital, or at home, as a result of health problems. The parents reported difficulties in accessing tuition through the medium of Irish when necessary, and difficulties in accessing support resources in Irish to enable them help their child during their absence from school. Parents feared that their child may miss valuable teaching as a result of their illness and therefore, be unable to return to their original class, teacher and friends, if tutoring through Irish, the medium of their learning, is not made available.

**4.8.15** Parents also made reference to a need for education and health professionals proficient in Irish. Parents reported limited access to Irish-speaking professionals and a necessity to travel long distances to access services through the medium of Irish.

**4.8.16** One of the eight parents reported accessing Speech and Language Therapy services through the medium of Irish. They placed great value on the service available to them and their child. They reported that services in Irish made the children feel at ease and comfortable in their surroundings in the knowledge that if they use Irish that they will be understood.

**4.8.17** Parents reported, however, that professionals proficient in Irish are often limited in the work they can currently carry out with children in terms of assessment and intervention, owing to the limited availability of resources in Irish.

**4.8.18** The parents advocated a system within health and education bodies which allows professionals with knowledge of Irish to be assigned to work with IM schools and Irish-speaking children who require additional support.

**4.8.19** Some parents expressed concern in respect of contact between health and education sectors in relation to exchange of information and approach to provision.

### Access to IM education

**4.8.20** Two of the parents, whose children are not currently in the IM sector, reported feelings of frustration that they were being dissuaded by health and education professionals from pursuing IM education for their child, as a result of the child's additional needs. One parent

reported that despite emphasis being placed on the benefits of mainstream education for pupils with SEN, they felt that representatives of the ELB concerned did not support them in accessing IM education for their child. Another parent reported that professionals reacted positively to the suggestion that the child be educated in a mainstream school, but advocated special education through the medium of English on hearing that the parent wanted IM mainstream education for the child.

### The statementing process

**4.8.21** One parent made reference to the length of time taken to get a Statement of SEN. The parent reported that the child required the support of a classroom assistant but could not access this support until the child had been issued with a Statement of SEN. The interim period between the beginning of the assessment process and the issuing of the Statement was challenging for the school in providing the necessary support for the child until such times as they could appoint a classroom assistant to support the child on a full-time basis and challenging for the family in supporting the child.

### Pupils who leave IM schools

**4.8.22** The child of one parent who took part in the in-depth interviews, no longer attends an IM school as a result of their additional needs. The parent reported the difficulties for both child and parents caused by the transition from one school to another. From the point of view of the child, there were feelings of loneliness as a result of being separated from friends as well as difficulties in adapting to a new school, new teachers and the change of language. From the parents' point of view, they reported that they had chosen IM education in the best interests of their child in order to give them the benefits of IM education and bilingualism, and therefore, the decision to move their child from the education sector they had chosen to another sector was very difficult. The parents reported that the process was heartbreaking for child and parents.

### Parents as partners in meeting needs

**4.8.23** Parents were asked to detail sources of support available to them in helping them to support their child. Two of the parents cited the school principal and class teacher as good sources of support, advice and information regarding the best ways to support their child.

**4.8.24** Other parents, however, reported that they required further information on their child's difficulties and on their academic progress. One parent, for example, reported that they had not been shown an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for their child.

**4.8.25** Some of the responses indicated that parents felt a need to be more involved in supporting their child. One parent responded that they would welcome an information pack from the school or educational psychologist detailing what parents can expect when their child is diagnosed with learning difficulties and ways in which parents can support their child at home.

**4.8.26** Three of the respondents did not have knowledge of Irish. They reported that this made gauging their child's progress and supporting them at home more difficult.

**4.8.27** Four parents reported that they experienced pressure from professionals regarding their decision to raise their child through the medium of Irish and/or to have them educated in the IM sector. One parent expressed concern that negative attitudes from professionals, which may not necessarily be based on evidence, could impinge on parents' decision regarding education for their child and /or the language used by the family in the home. The parent reported that some professionals such as the health visitor and a speech and language therapist continued to persuade them to raise their child through the medium of English and, in some cases made them feel that they were doing their child an injustice by choosing Irish as the language as the language of the home. Another parent reporting feeling under pressure from an educational psychologist who made her feel that she was disadvantaging her child by wanting IM education for her child who has SEN. The parents concerned reported a need for greater understanding amongst education and health professionals of IM education and bilingualism and parents' reasons for choosing to have their child educated in an IM school.

**4.8.28** Some respondents reported that one ELB advised against making written submissions as part of the annual review procedure in Irish. For them, Irish is the most natural and comfortable medium for describing their child's progress as Irish is the language of the home.

**4.8.29** One of the parents whose child is no longer in IM education as a result of additional needs, reported feeling they had little choice in the decision to take the child out of the IM school. They indicated that they felt the decision had been made prior to consulting with parents and without taking into consideration parents' wishes for their child, and the reasons why they had chosen IM education for their child in the first place.

Parents recognise the additional skills that IM education gives SEN children but are anxious about the length of time in identifying additional needs, in addressing them and in making referrals (4.8.2-3, 5, 21).

Parents are generally happy with the in-school support for their children including class teachers, CAs (when highly fluent in Irish) and external support (4.8.7-8, 10).

Continuity in teaching children through the medium of Irish when at home or in hospital sick is desirable as children are at ease when Irish is used as a means of communication and instruction (4.8.14, 16).

Irish-speaking professionals should be assigned to IM schools and information should be shared across health and education professionals (4.8.19).

Parents with children with additional needs reported being dissuaded by professionals from speaking Irish to them or sending them to IM schools and described the anxiety for both child and parents when child leaves the sector (4.8.20, 22, 27).

Parents of SEN pupils reported the wish for greater understanding amongst health and education professionals of IM education and bilingualism (Irish-English) (4.8.27).

## Section 4.9: Support for teachers and pre-school staff

**4.9.1** This section examines support currently available to teachers and IM pre-school staff, and current support needs of staff to enable them to adequately meet the needs pupils with SEN in their IM setting. The section is divided into two parts:

1. current sources of support for IM teachers and pre-school staff; (4.9.1-23)and
2. respondent opinion in relation to their support needs in the area of SEN. (4.9.24-53)

### Current sources of support for teachers and IM pre-school staff

#### IM pre-school phase

**4.9.2** Respondents from the IM pre-school phase to the qualitative questionnaire were asked to indicate the effectiveness of the SEN support they receive from various sources of support. Respondents were given the option of rating support as ‘very effective’, ‘effective’, ‘ineffective’, ‘very ineffective’ or ‘non-applicable’ meaning that the support is not available to them or that they have no experience of accessing support from the service or organisation. Figure 4.9.1, below, shows the responses supplied by respondents from the IM pre-school phase in relation to support they receive from staff in their own pre-school settings and other IM and EM pre-school settings.

Effective	Ineffective	Unavailable/ No experience
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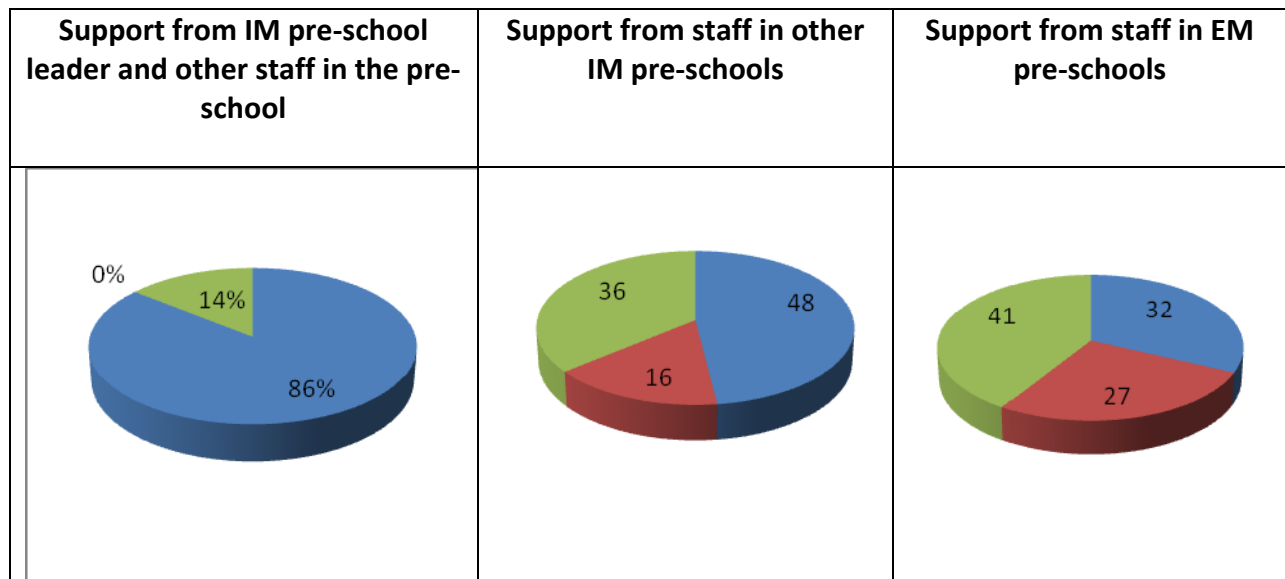





Figure 4.9.1.

Figure 4.9.1, above, shows the percentage breakdown of responses in relation to the SEN support received from other staff in the pre-school, the pre-school leader, staff in other pre IM pre-schools and staff in EM pre-schools. The diagram shows that 88% of respondents rated support from other staff in the pre-school effective, 83% of respondents rated support from the pre-school leader effective, 48% rated support from staff in other IM pre-schools as effective and 32% of respondents rated support from staff in EM effective. Of the responses regarding the pre-school leader, the 17% of respondents who indicated that this did not apply to them were pre-school leaders.

**4.9.3** Figure 4.9.2, below, illustrates the average of responses from IM pre-school staff in relation to the SEN support they receive from support agencies for the Early Years. These include Altram\*, the Early Years Organisation, and\* Sure Start\*.

 Effective	 Ineffective	 Unavailable / No experience
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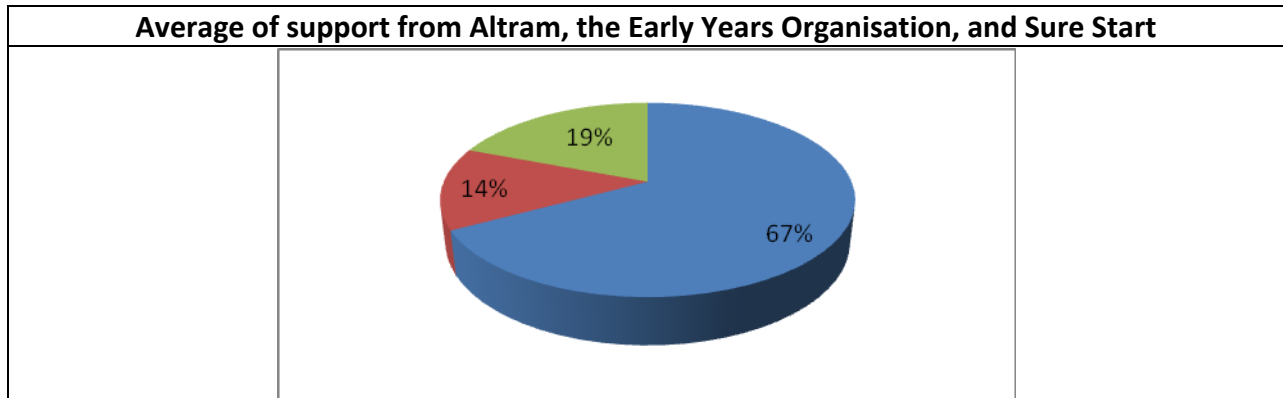





Figure 4.9.2

Figure 4.9.2 shows that, overall respondents from the IM pre-school phase rated SEN-related support from Altram, Sure Start, and the Early Years Organisation as effective. An average of 67% of respondents rated SEN support as effective. An average of 14% of respondents rated SEN-related support as ineffective, and an average of 19% of respondents indicated no experience of, or access to SEN support from these organisations. When broken down according to organisation, the percentage of respondents who rated the organisations as effective ranged from 80% to 54%.



**4.9.4** Figure 4.9.3, below, illustrates the responses in relation to SEN support from primary school teachers and primary school SENCOs.

 Effective	 Ineffective	 Unavailable / No experience
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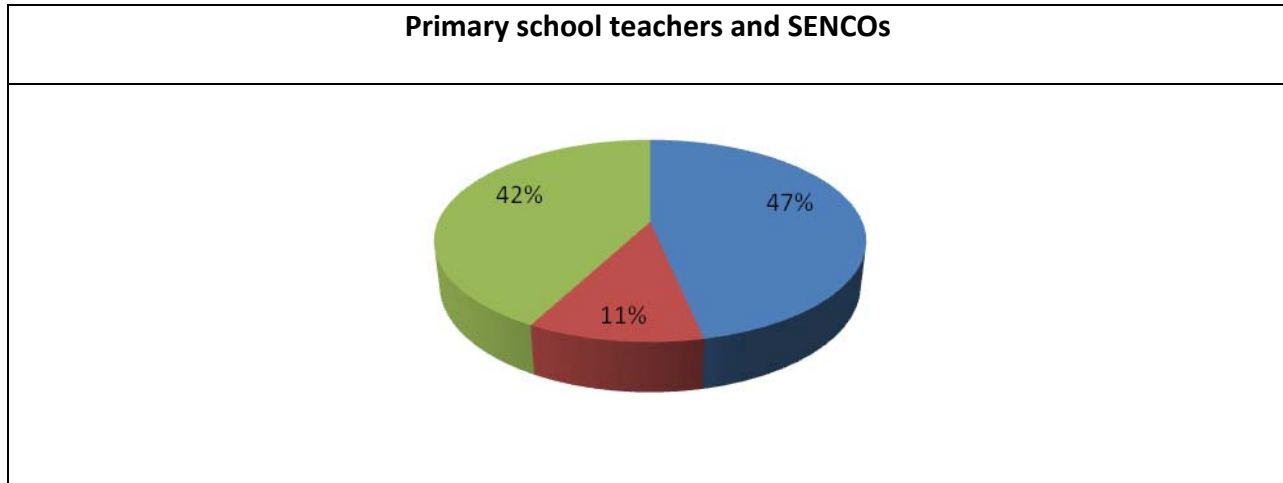



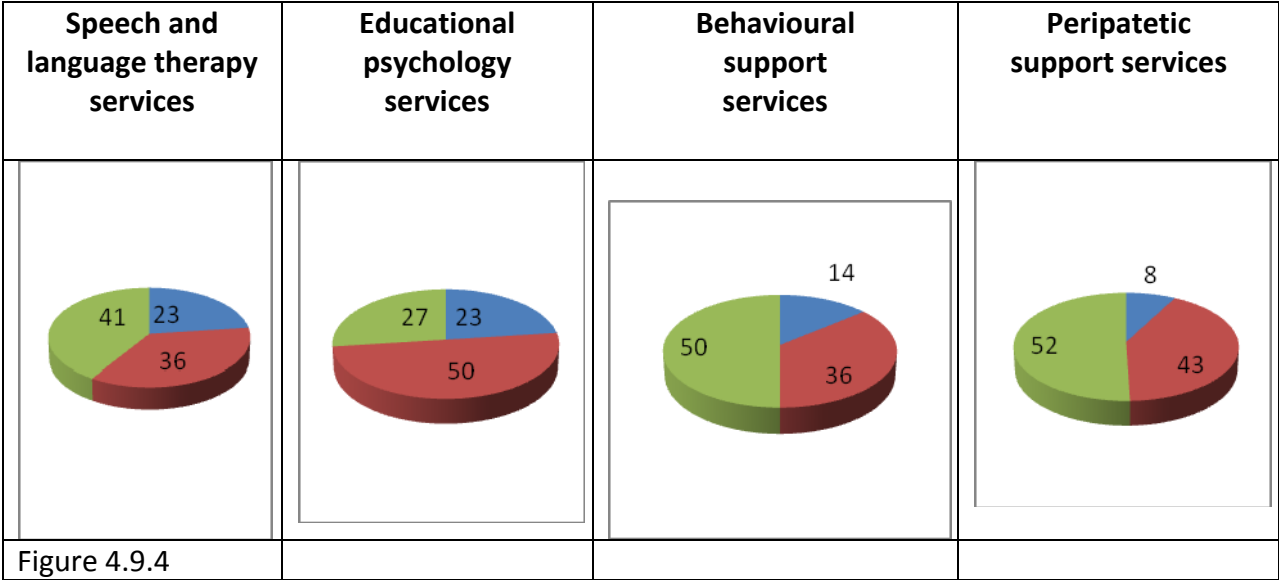


Figure 4.9.3

Figure 4.9.3, above, indicates contact between IM pre-schools and IM primary schools in the area of SEN support. The responses indicate that almost half of respondents from the IM pre-school phase (47%) rated SEN support from primary teachers and SENCOs as effective and 11% of respondents rated SEN support as ineffective. The data show that 42% of respondents indicated no experience of support from primary school teachers and SENCOs.

**4.9.5** Figure 4.9.4, below, illustrates responses with regard to respondent opinion of the effectiveness of SEN support from SLCT services, educational psychology services, peripatetic support services and behavioural support services.

 Effective	 Ineffective	 Unavailable / No experience
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Respondents from the IM pre-school phase reported in the qualitative questionnaire and during the first round of data collection, that voluntary play groups are unable to access support services from ELB-based support services. The data in Figure 4.9.4 indicate that some IM pre-schools have accessed support from educational psychology services, Peripatetic support services and behavioural support services. Of the responses provided 23% of respondents rated support from educational psychology services effective, 14% of respondents rated behavioural support services effective and 8% rated peripatetic support effective. The responses also indicate access to SLT services. The responses indicate that 23% of respondents rated SEN support for staff as effective, 36% of respondents rated support ineffective. Figure 4.9.4 shows that 41% of respondents reported that support is unavailable or that they have no access to this source of support. Respondent opinion of these support services are discussed in greater detail in section 4.5

**4.9.6** Furthermore, representatives from the voluntary pre-school sector participant in interviews and focus groups referred to access to educational psychology services either as a result of referrals made by other professionals outside of the pre-school or access to the educational psychology services provided to their local IM primary school, through the pre-school’s close contact with the IM school. In response to the quantitative questionnaire, which was completed by all IM settings, 32% of settings reported that educational psychology services were attending the pre-school in the academic year 2006-2007 during which the data was collected or that they had received educational psychology services in previous academic years.

Of the IM pre-schools who indicated access to educational psychology services only one pre-school was a statutory nursery.

### Primary and post-primary phases

**4.9.7** Respondents from the IM primary and post-primary school phases were asked to indicate the effectiveness of the support they receive from the following sources of support with regard to SEN. Respondents were given the option of rating support as ‘very effective, effective, ineffective, very ineffective or non-applicable meaning that the support is not available to them or they have no experience of support from the service or organisation.

### Primary schools

**4.9.8** The following diagrams show the responses provided by respondents from the primary school phase.

Figure 4.9.5, below, shows the percentage breakdown of responses regarding SEN support from other teachers in the school, the school principal, teachers in other IM schools and principals in other IM schools.

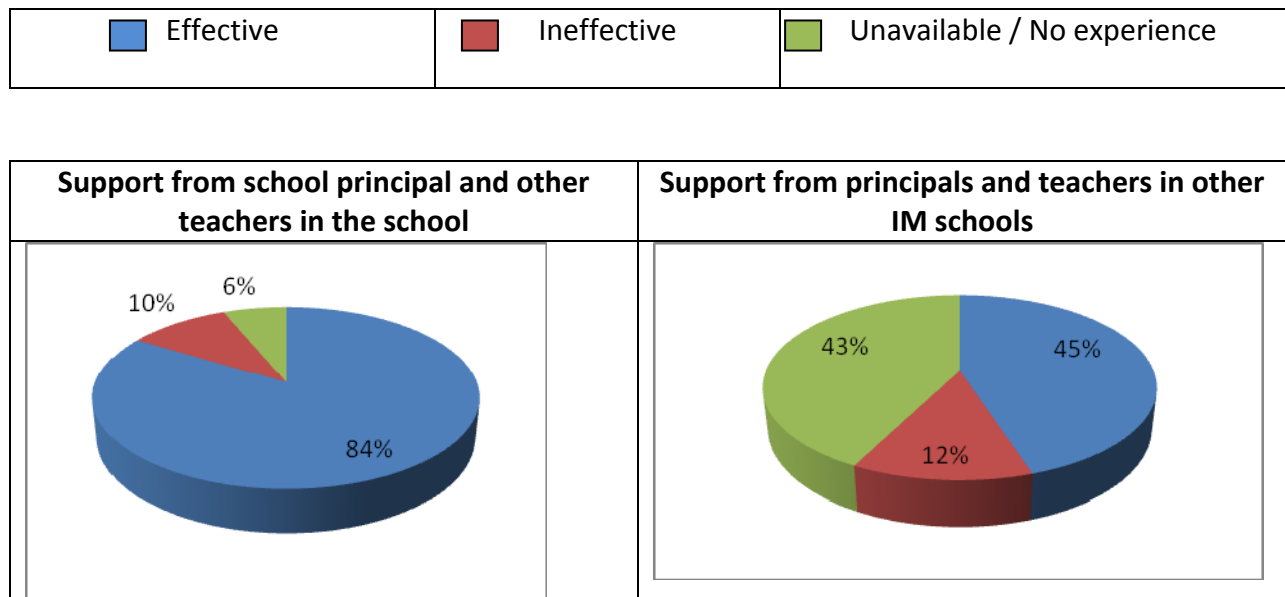


Figure 4.9.5

Figure 4.9.5, above, shows that a high percentage of primary school respondents rated support from the school principal and other teachers in the school with regard to SEN as effective (84%) compared with 45% of respondents who rated support from principals and teachers in other IM

schools. In respect of support from the school principal and other teachers in the school, 10% of respondents rated support as ineffective and 6% reported that this source of support was unavailable or they had no experience of this form of support. It is worth noting that 10% of the respondents to this question were school principals and, therefore, indicated that support from the school principal was not available to them. With regard to support from principals and teachers in other IM schools, 12% of respondents rated this type of support as ineffective while a significant percentage indicated no experience of this support (43%).

**4.9.9** Figure 4.9.6, below, shows responses from IM primary school respondents with regard to SEN support from principals and teachers in EM schools.

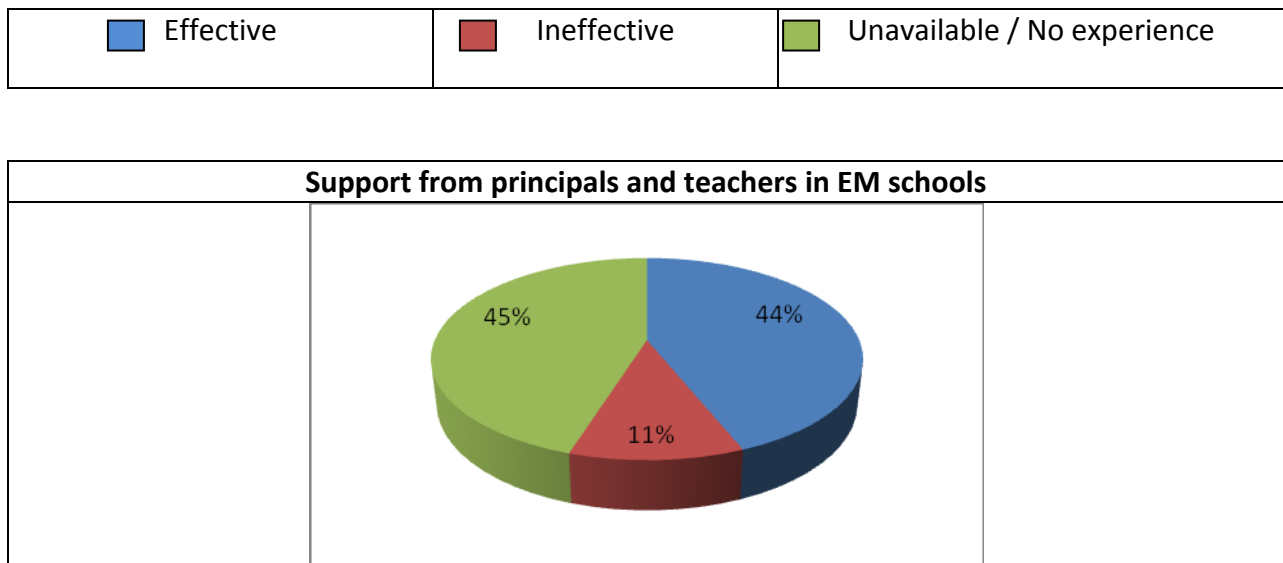
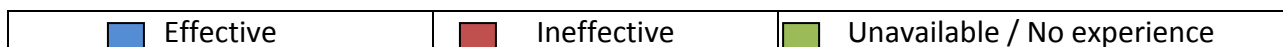


Figure 4.9.6

Figure 4.9.6, above, shows that 45% of respondents from the IM primary phase indicated no experience of support from principals and teachers in EM schools. The figure also shows that 44% of respondents rated support from principals and teachers in EM schools as effective and 11% rated support from teachers in EM schools as an ineffective source of support in the area of SEN.

**4.9.10** Figure 4.9.7, below, show the percentage breakdown of responses from IM primary school teachers in regard to support from CASS and IM CASS in the area of SEN.



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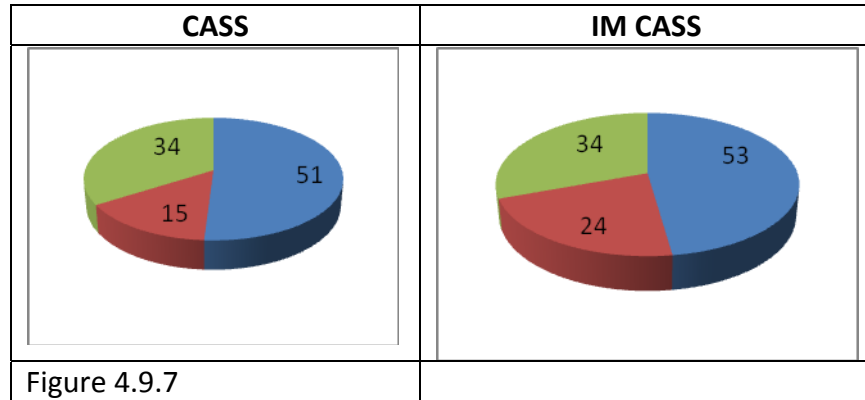





Figure 4.9.7, above, shows that over half of respondents from the primary phase rated SEN support from CASS and SEN support from IM CASS as effective (51% and 53%, respectively), 15% of respondents rated SEN support from CASS as ineffective as did 24% of respondents with regard to SEN support from IM CASS. Respondents also made reference to support provided by these services during interview and focus group discussion. These are discussed in paragraphs 4.9.18 – 23 of this section. Respondent opinion of external support services is discussed in further detail in paragraph 4.9.22 – 23 of this chapter. Just over a third of respondents, however, indicated no experience of SEN support from CASS or IM CASS or that SEN support from these services was not available to them. The provision of SEN-specific support for teachers in the IM sector is discussed in further detail in chapter 5.

**4.9.11** Figure 4.9.8, below, shows the percentage breakdown of responses from primary school respondents in relation to educational psychology services, behavioural support services and peripatetic support services.

 Effective	 Ineffective	 Unavailable / No experience
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<b>Educational Psychology services</b>	<b>Behavioural support services</b>	<b>Peripatetic support services</b>
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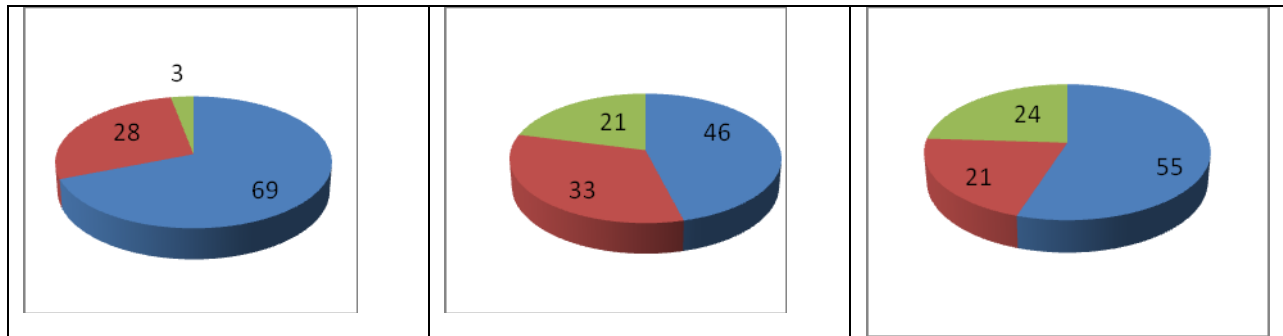


Figure 4.9.8

Figure 4.9.8, above, shows that 69% of respondents from the IM primary sector rated support from educational psychology services effective, 46% of respondents rated behavioural support services effective and 55% of respondents rated SEN support from peripatetic support services as effective. Respondent opinion of external SEN services is discussed in greater detail in section 4.5.

**4.9.12** Figure 4.9.9, below, illustrates primary phase respondent opinion of SLT services and occupational therapy services.

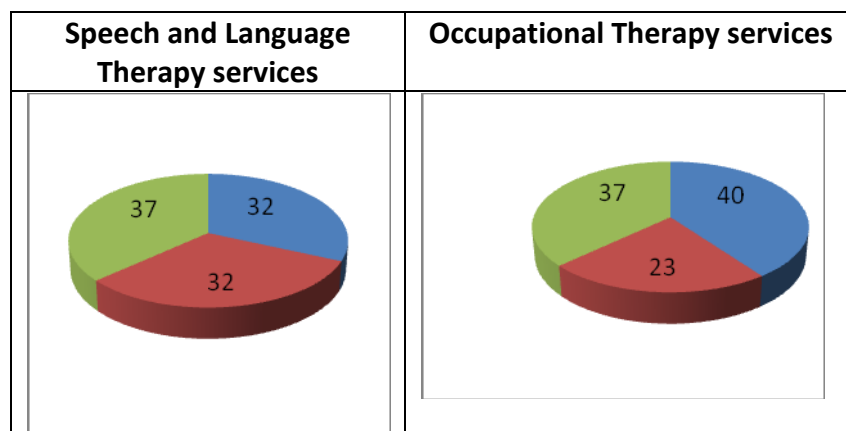
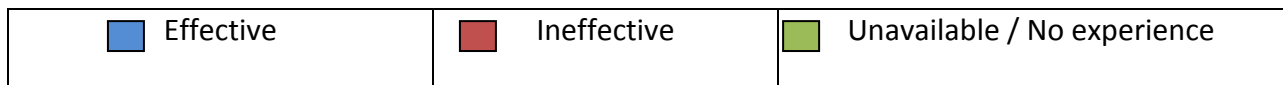


Figure 4.9.9

The diagram above, Figure 4.9.9 shows that 37% of respondents indicated no experience of SLT services or occupational therapy services. The data show that 32% of primary school respondents rated SLT services effective and 32% rated services ineffective. In respect of occupational therapy services, 40% of respondents rated occupational therapy services as effective and 23% rated services ineffective. Respondents' opinion of external support services are reported in section 4.5 and discussed in chapter 5.

### Post-primary schools

**4.9.13** The following diagrams show the percentage breakdown of responses from respondents in the post-primary phase. Figure 4.9.10, below, shows the breakdown of responses from post primary respondents in relation to SEN support from other teachers in the school, the school principal, teachers in other IM schools and principals in other IM schools.

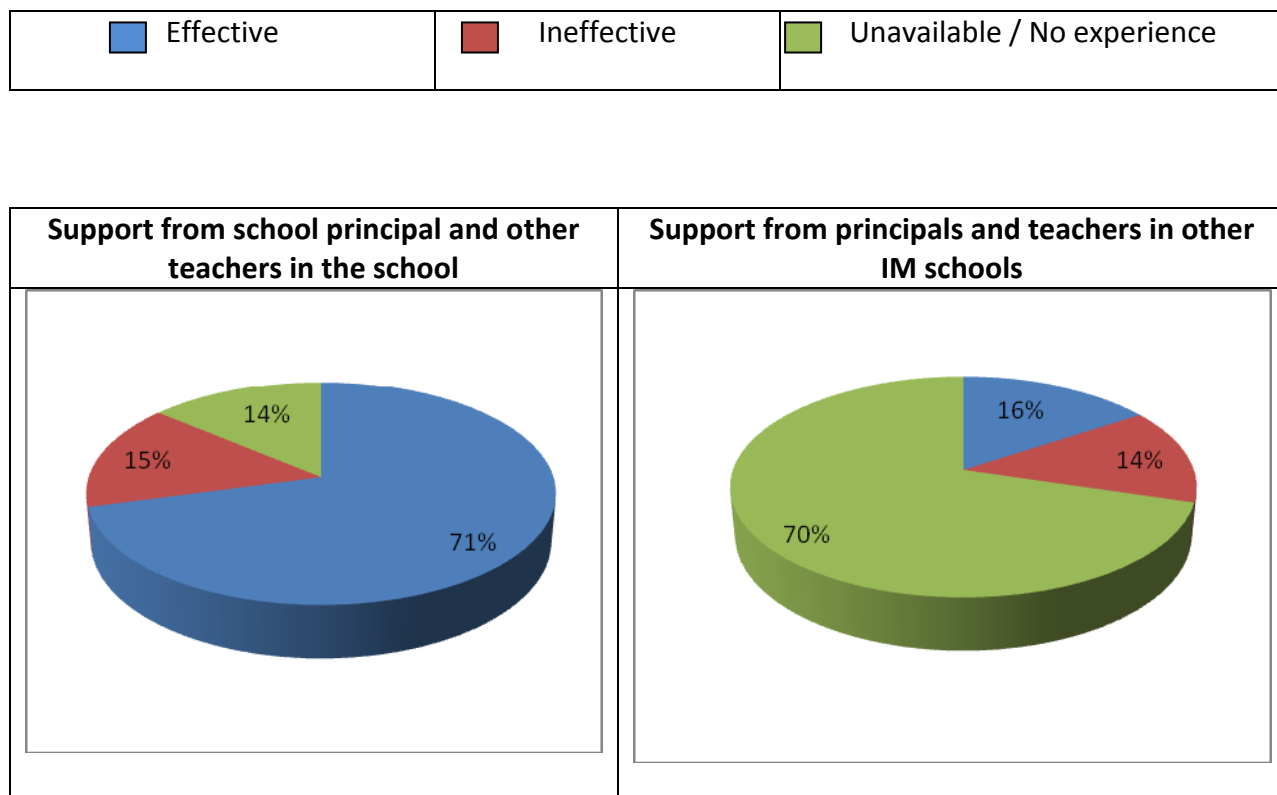





Figure 4.9.10

The diagram above, Figure 4.9.10, show that 71% of post-primary respondents rated SEN support from the school principal and other teachers in the school as effective, 15% of respondents rated support ineffective, and 14% of respondents reported no experience of this source of support or that support from the principal and other teachers is unavailable to them. There is a marked difference between responses regarding support from within respondents' own school and support from other schools. Figure 4.9.10 shows that 70% of respondents reported no experience of support from other IM schools or that such support is not available. The remainder of responses show that 16% of respondents rated support from principals and

teachers in other IM schools as effective and 14% of respondents rated SEN support from principals in other IM schools as ineffective.

**4.9.14** Figure 4.9.11, below, show the breakdown of responses from post-primary respondents in relation to SEN support from the principal and teachers in EM schools.

 Effective	 Ineffective	 Unavailable / No experience
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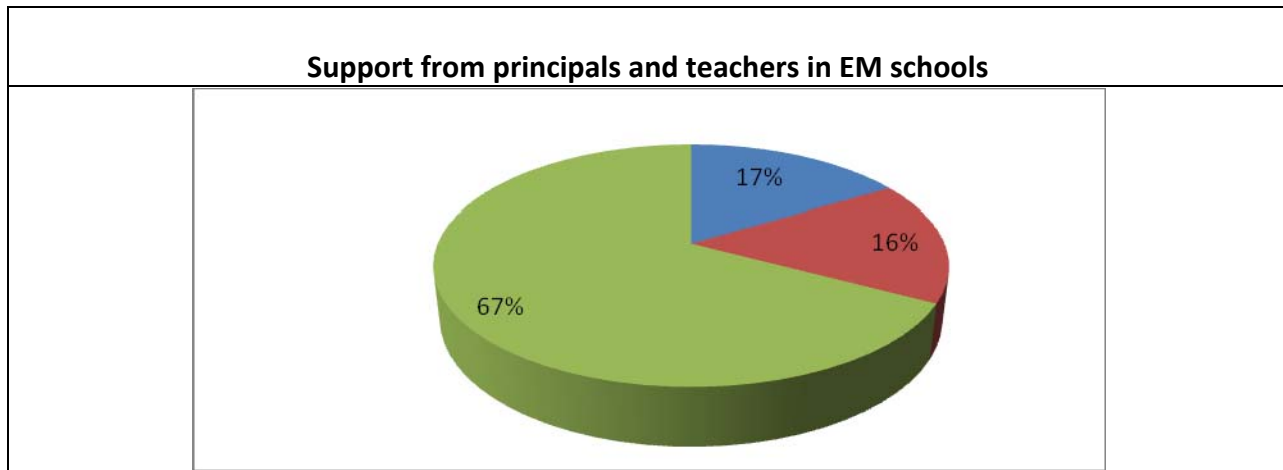





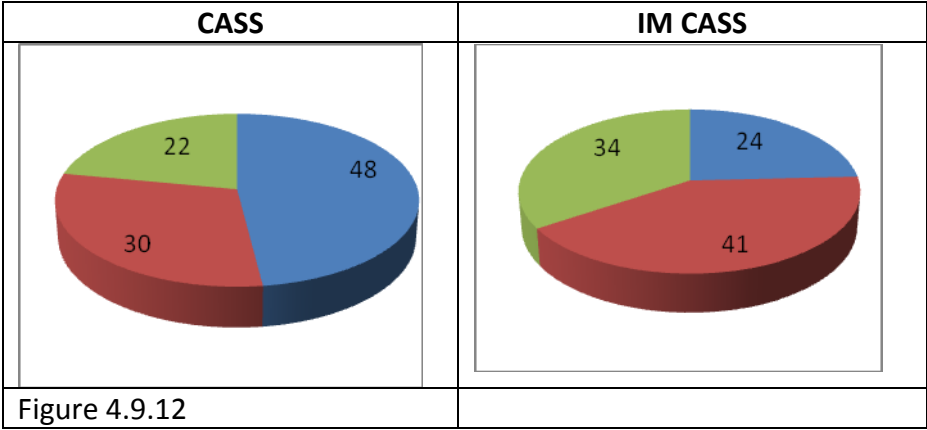
Figure 4.9.11

Figure 4.9.11 shows that 67% of respondents from the IM post-primary phase reported no experience of, or access to support from principals and teachers in EM schools in respect of SEN support. The remaining data show that 17% of respondents from the IM post-primary phase rated support from principals and teachers in EM schools as effective and 16% of respondents rated support from teachers in EM schools as ineffective. This differs from responses from the primary phase in which 45% of respondents indicated no experience of SEN-related support from principals and teachers in EM schools and 44% of respondents rated support as effective.

**4.9.15** Figure 4.9.12, below, shows the percentage breakdown of responses from post primary school respondents in relation to SEN support received from CASS and IM CASS.






 Effective	 Ineffective	 Unavailable / No experience
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Responses from the post primary phase show that 48% of respondents rated CASS services as an effective source of SEN support while 24% of respondents rated IM CASS services an effective source of SEN support. The diagrams above show that 22% of post-primary respondents indicated no experience of CASS services in relation to SEN support and 34% of respondents indicated no experience of IM CASS in the area of SEN support. While there is not a very marked difference between responses from the primary and post-primary phases in respect of experience of support, 34% of primary school respondents indicated no experience of SEN support from CASS and IM CASS services, a higher percentage of respondents from the primary phase rated support from these services effective. Figure 4.9.7 above, show that 51% of respondents from the primary phase rated SEN support from CASS effective and 53% of respondents rated SEN support from IM CASS effective.

**4.9.16** Figure 4.9.13, below, show the percentage breakdown of responses provided by post-primary school respondents in relation to behavioural support services, educational psychology services and peripatetic support services.

 Effective	 Ineffective	 Unavailable / No experience
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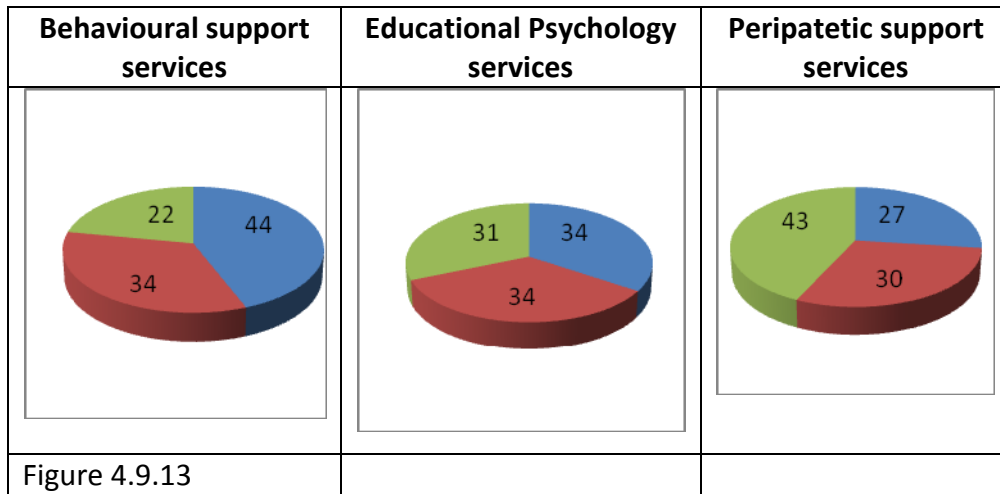


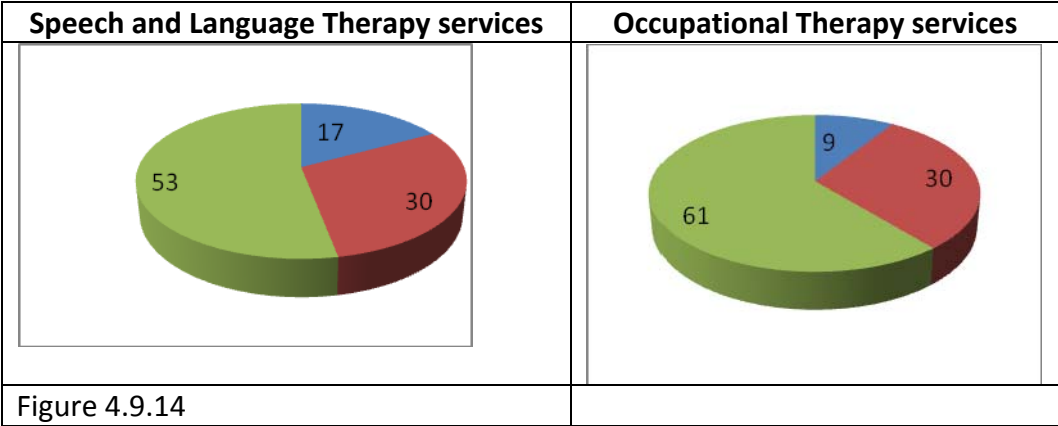


Figure 4.9.13, above, shows that 44% of post-primary school respondents rated SEN support from behavioural support services effective, 34% rated educational psychology support services effective and 27% rated support from peripatetic support services effective. There are some notable differences between the responses provided by post-primary respondents and those provided by primary respondents. While 34% of respondents from the post-primary phase rated support from educational psychology services effective, 69% of respondents from the primary phase rated support effective (Figure 4.9.8). Figure 4.9.8 shows that 55% of respondents from the primary phase rated support from peripatetic support effective while 27% of respondents from the post-primary phase rated support from peripatetic support services effective. Respondent opinion of these services is discussed in greater detail in section 4.5.

**4.9.17** Figure 4.9.14, below, illustrate responses from post-primary school phase respondents in relation to SEN support from Speech and Language Therapy services and Occupational Therapy services.

 Effective	 Ineffective	 Unavailable / No experience
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The diagram above, Figure 4.9.14, shows that 53% of post-primary respondents indicated no experience of SLT services and 61% reported no experience of occupational therapy services. Figure 4.9.14 indicates a marked difference between responses from the primary and post-primary phases in relation to respondent experience and opinion of support from these services. Figures 4.9.9, shows that 37% of respondents from the IM primary phase indicated no experience of SLT services compared with 53% of respondents from the post-primary phase. Further, Figures 4.9.9 shows that 32% of primary phase respondents rated support from SLT services effective while 17% of post-primary respondents rated support effective. Figure 4.9.9 shows that 40% of respondents from the primary phase rated support from occupational therapy services effective while 9% of post-primary respondents rated this source of support effective. Respondent opinion of services is reported in section 4.5 and discussed in depth in chapter 5.

**Issues raised in focus group discussion and interview in relation to SEN support**

**4.9.18** In addition to the sources of support mentioned in the questionnaire, focus group and interview participants from the primary and post primary school sectors made particular reference to a number of SEN support systems available to them. With regard to sources of SEN support which participants viewed to be effective and beneficial respondents referred to:

- CASS services;
- ASD outreach services;
- support from other teachers either in their own school or, in the case of small schools, from teachers in other schools;

**4.9.19** Interviews with ELB representatives emphasised that CASS services are available to all teachers, teachers in the IM sector included. There was general consensus amongst ELB representatives that teachers in the IM sector need to be aware of the services available to them and how to contact them.

**4.9.20** During focus group discussion and through responses to the qualitative questionnaire, teachers from the primary and post-primary sectors reported that, for the most part, the abovementioned services (CASS services and ASD outreach services) are available to them through the medium of English only. During interview, ELB representatives also reported that CASS services, with the exception of those provided by the inter-board IM CASS team, are provided through the medium of English. Representatives suggested that teachers from the IM sector can, however, adapt SEN-related advice and training to suit their own classroom situation.

**4.9.21** During focus group discussion on good practice in relation to the provision for SEN in the IM sector, however, teachers from both the primary and post-primary phases in one ELB area praised the services provided by an outreach centre, which currently provides appropriate SEN-related resources through the medium of Irish. Participants viewed this service to be an effective source of SEN support for teachers. They warmly welcomed practical resources in Irish, which were ready for use in the classroom and which did not require translation into Irish.

**4.9.22** Focus group participants and SENCOs and SEN teachers who participated in interviews referred to the IM CASS services and GESO\* as sources of effective IM-specific support, advice and guidance for teachers, with regard to SEN in the IM sector. Once again, respondents expressed their appreciation of the provision of practical resources in Irish and appropriate strategies for use in the IM classroom.

**4.9.23** IM specific support for teachers is provided by the inter-board IM CASS team. The team, which comprises of three members of staff, is charged with offering support to teachers in the statutory pre-school, primary and post primary phases across the IM sector in IM schools and units alike. The IM CASS team provides support to educators in the IM sector in the areas of personal, professional and whole-school development as well as subject-specific support in the areas of literacy and numeracy. The role of the advisory teachers for literacy and numeracy encompasses the provision of advice and support on policy making for literacy and numeracy respectively, INSET training, lesson modelling, team-teaching and provision of resources as well as facilitating group discussion through cluster group meetings for teachers. SEN is interwoven into the work of the IM CASS team through training sessions, team-teaching, lesson modelling and group discussion, through which teachers are given the opportunity to exchange

experiences and effective strategies. The inter-board nature of the role, and broad range of duties associated with the post, means that the service is stretched in terms of the time and human resources which can realistically be devoted to the provision of SEN-specific support, tailored to the needs of teachers and pupils in the IM sector.

## Respondent opinion in relation to support needs

### IM pre-school phase

#### Support in the area of SEN

**4.9.24** A need for support for staff in the area of provision for SEN in the pre-school setting was reported by respondents in response to the qualitative questionnaire and during focus group discussion and interview with representatives of the IM pre-school sector. Responses from participants indicated that members of staff in IM pre-schools would welcome guidance and assistance from professional SEN support in order to support them in meeting the needs of pupils in their setting.

**4.9.25** The qualitative questionnaire for the IM pre-school sector asked respondents to provide details of their support needs within the pre-school setting. The responses indicate that 35% of respondents from the pre-school sector reported a need for SEN-related support in the pre-school. Other support needs mentioned by respondents from the IM pre-school sector included:

- information regarding where to access support;
- early years support;
- management support; and
- fundraising support.

#### Access to support services and information regarding access to support services

**4.9.26** Section 4.5 of the present report indicates that some IM pre-schools are accessing support in the area of SEN, other responses to the qualitative questionnaire from the IM pre-school sector indicate a feeling of isolation amongst some pre-school staff, in terms of access to education and health-related support services and, in terms of information relating to access to support services. Some of the comments made by respondents include:

*[There is] 'no support out there at all apart from EYA.' (Early Years Adviser)*

*[There is] 'no or very little support.'*

*'We feel that we have no back-up from outside help when a child has SN. We need more support in the setting to help children with SEN.'*

**4.9.27** Some respondents to the questionnaire from the voluntary pre-school sector expressed their concern that their voluntary status impacted negatively on their access to SEN-related support services based in the ELBs, such as CASS services and educational psychology services.

**4.9.28** Data from questionnaires, focus groups and interviews with representatives of the IM pre-school sector indicate that some members of pre-school staff lack information as to the sources of support available to them, and how to access the appropriate support services, in order to assist them in making provision for children in their setting. In response to the qualitative questionnaire, 17% of respondents indicated limited knowledge of support services available.

One questionnaire respondent from the IM pre-school sector, for example, commented that,

*[It is] 'difficult to know who to contact for help and support.'*

Furthermore, during the first round of data collection, a small number of IM pre-school leaders revealed that in order to further inform themselves of the SEN of children in their care, and of the strategies necessary to meet the children's needs, they resorted to carrying out their own research on the internet, as they felt that there were no other support services available to them in their setting.

**4.9.29** During interview, representatives of the IM pre-school sector reported that the nature of the organisation of voluntary IM pre-schools can negatively impact on access to support services for staff members. For the most part, voluntary pre-schools are managed by a voluntary committee which can be susceptible to regular change. Interview participants reported that volunteer committee members are not always aware of the support services available to pre-schools, or how to access support services on behalf of pre-school staff.

**4.9.30** Respondents commented that support services for the pre-school sector are increasingly made available through Sure Start programmes. They reported that voluntary IM pre-school committees or pre-school leaders are not always aware of how to access such programmes, if indeed they are eligible for Sure Start support.

## Primary and post-primary phases

**4.9.31** The following points discuss the issues raised by respondents from the primary and post-primary phases, relating to the provision for SEN, through qualitative questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion.

The principal issues raised by respondents are:

1. advice and guidance with regard to meeting SEN in the IM sector;
2. identification of SEN;
3. support for teachers in recently established schools;
4. support for newly, and recently qualified teachers;
5. the introduction of English literacy and biliteracy for pupils with SEN;
6. communication between class teachers and SEN teachers and external SEN professionals; and
7. appropriate provision for pupils in IM settings in areas of social disadvantage.

### 1. Advice and guidance with regard to meeting SEN in IM sector

**4.9.32** Teachers in the primary and post-primary phases indicated a need for support and advice for teachers, in relation to meeting the needs of pupils with SEN. Responses to the questionnaire for primary and post-primary teachers identify a need for specific advice, guidance and support, in terms of how to make adequate and appropriate provision for pupils with SEN in an immersion education context.

Responses to the questionnaire indicated uncertainty amongst teachers as to the most appropriate pedagogies, in order to adequately support pupils with SEN within an Irish language immersion programme. Furthermore, responses from teachers indicate a need for professional advice and guidance concerning this issue. Some of the comments made by respondents included:

***‘Níl na hachmhainní daonna ná na háiseanna cuí ná an saineolas ar fáil le treoir a thabhairt do mhúinteoirí.’***

*‘Neither the human resources nor the appropriate educational resources are available to guide teachers.’*



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<b><i>'Níl tacaíocht againn ón lucht gairme le muid a threorú.'</i></b>	<i>'We have no support from professionals to guide us.'</i>
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**4.9.33** Teachers and SENCOs participant in interviews and focus group discussion reported a need for further research and information on, how, and to what extent, the presence of the second language impacts on the learning needs of pupils with SEN. Respondents from both the primary and post-primary phases made specific reference to the need for guidance, and information on making appropriate provision for pupils with needs such as dyslexia, ASD and language processing difficulties, and who are receiving education through their second language.

**4.9.34** The issue was also raised as to whether the presence of a second language presents an additional challenge to pupils with SEN. One post-primary teacher suggested that pupils with difficulties tend to struggle with the two languages.

<b><i>'Bíonn claonadh ag na daltaí laga as a bheith ag streacháilt leis an dá theanga mar sin de tá níos mó sainriachtanais ann.'</i></b>	<i>'Pupils who are weak tend to struggle with the two languages, therefore, there are more special needs.'</i>
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**4.9.35** During focus group discussion and interview some primary school teachers raised concerns concerning pupils' level of English language and co-ordination skills on entry to primary school. Teachers reported that they are seeing higher instances of children in Year 1 with poorly developed English language skills. Teachers indicated that they would welcome advice and support on the issue of meeting children's language needs in both Irish and English.

<b><i>'Tá páistí ansin a bhfuil stórfhocal (i mBéarla) iontach bocht acu.....cad é a chiallaíonn sé don duine dátheangach? Cad é a chiallaíonn sé muna bhfuil go leor Béarla acu? Cad é mar atá muidinne ag gabháil a fhreastal air sin?'</i></b>	<i>'There are children who have a poor vocabulary (in English)... what does it mean for the bilingual, what does it mean if he/she doesn't have enough English? How are we going to cater for that?'</i>
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<b><i>'Thug an múinteoir Rang 1 s'againne faoi deara ar na mallaibh nach bhfuil páistí i'</i></b>	<i>'Our Year 1 teacher noticed recently that children are not speaking English. They have</i>
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<b><i>Rang 1 ag labhairt i mBéarla. Níl an struchtúr acu sa Bhéarla. Bhí sí ag cur ceist ar na múinteoirí eile, ar cheart di iad a cheartú sa Bhéarla'</i></b>	<i>not got the structure in English. She was asking the other teachers if she should correct them in English.'</i>
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## 2. Identification of SEN

**4.9.36** The issue of early and accurate identification of SEN was raised by both primary and post-primary school teachers. Some focus group discussion participants from the IM primary school level reported that the IM immersion education allows for early identification of SEN. They reported that identification of SEN is facilitated by the processes involved in second language acquisition. Further, the respondents reported that the fact that often parents do not speak Irish and, therefore, cannot assist children with homework, can assist teachers in identifying pupils who require additional help with their learning. Some focus group participants suggested that smaller classes allowed them to get to know the children in the class well and, therefore, to identify their needs, while other participants reported that class sizes in the IM sector are increasing, and that there are fewer small classes in the sector. Overall, responses indicate a certain level of concern amongst teaching practitioners and non-teaching education professionals in relation to the identification of SEN in the IM sector.

**4.9.37** A small number of respondents to the qualitative questionnaire aimed at primary and post-primary teachers reported a difficulty in differentiating between a language problem, a learning problem and a problem with the concept being taught.

<b><i>'Ta tuilleadh oibre de dhíth leis an difear a dhéanamh amach idir daltaí atá ag streácháilt leis an Ghaeilge agus daltaí atá lag.'</i></b>	<i>'More work is needed to differentiate between pupils who are struggling with Irish and pupils who are weak.'</i>
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<b><i>....ní bhíonn a fhios againn an bhfuil fadhb le tuiscint páistí nó maidir leis an teanga.'</i></b>	<i>'... we don't know if the problem relates to the children's understanding or with the language.'</i>
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**4.9.38** Teachers and non-teaching professionals alike highlighted the importance of the acquisition of decoding skills in early literacy. Teachers reported using phonic schemes such as *Jolly Phonics* (Lloyd, 2005) and *Fónaic na Gaeilge* (BELB, 2005) to support pupils' literacy

development. One SENCO interviewed reported that the previously used method of word recognition, may have masked learning difficulties amongst older pupils who learned to read using that strategy. Another SENCO interviewed, however, reported that word recognition is a more effective strategy than linguistic phonics for some pupils, and that the strategies employed must be tailored to meet pupils' individual learning styles.

**4.9.39** One education professional interviewed referred to a possible link between behavioural problems and identification of SEN, particularly at post-primary level. The informant suggested that, in some cases, the needs of pupils who require additional support but who do not display behavioural problems may go unidentified.

**4.9.40** Interviews with school SENCOs and other education professionals emphasised the importance of the identification and recognition of pupils' particular strengths as well as areas of weakness. Respondents indicated that in some cases the identification of SEN can overshadow pupils' strengths in other subject areas.

### **3. Support for teachers in recently established schools**

**4.9.41** Responses to the qualitative questionnaire, interviews with SENCOs and focus group discussion raised the issue of support for teachers in recently established schools. Some participants in focus group discussion reported that, in some cases in the IM sector, the only teachers, or in some cases, teacher, in recently established schools are newly, or recently, qualified and, therefore, do not have the experience which comes with years of classroom practice. During focus group discussion some teachers in small, rural schools referred to telephone communication with teachers in other schools and indicated that they value the support they receive as a result of this contact.

**4.9.42** Other responses to the qualitative questionnaire, however, from teachers in small, recently established schools indicate a feeling of isolation amongst some teachers in newly established schools in relation to support regarding SEN.

**4.9.43** Some of the comments made by teachers from small recently established schools include:

<i><b>'Níl tacaíocht ann. Níl comhairle ann do na scoileanna nua. Tá tú leat féin.'</b></i>	<i><b>'There is no support. There is no advice for new schools. You are on your own.'</b></i>
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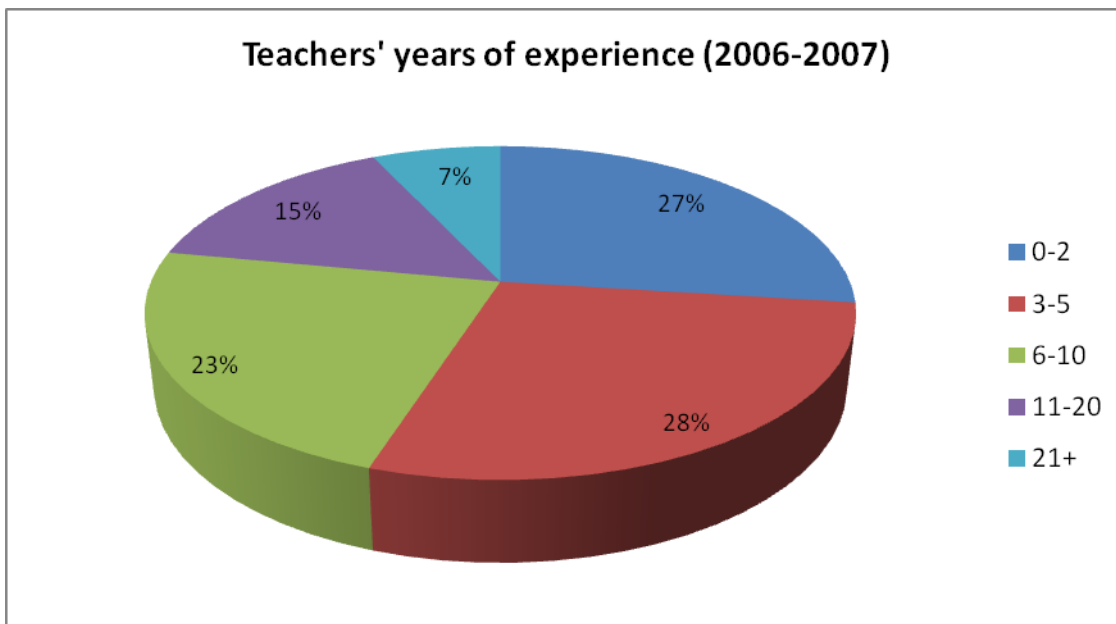
<i><b>'Ní fhaigheann tú an tacaíocht cheart'</b></i>	<i><b>'You don't get the right support when you are'</b></i>
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*nuair atá tú leat féin agus nuair atá scoil nua i gceist. Tá seo tábhachtach leis an méid oibre atá i gceist mar is iad na páistí nach bhfuil ag fáil na tacaíochta sa deireadh.'*

*on your own and in a new school. This is important with the amount of work involved because it is the children who are not getting the support in the end.'*

#### 4. Support for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs)

**4.9.44** Research has shown that the IM sector has a higher number of young and newly qualified teachers than the EM sector (Knipe et al., 2004). The following diagram shows the breakdown of teachers in the IM sector, according to teachers' years of experience for the academic year 2006 – 2007, during which the majority of the data were collected (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, 2006).



Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (2006)

Figure 4.9.15

Figure 4.9.15 shows that, during the school year 2006 – 2007, over half (55%) of teachers in the IM sector had five years of experience or fewer, 23% of teachers had 6- 10 years of experience, 15% of teachers had 11 -20 years of experience, and 7% of teachers had more than 21 years of experience.

**4.9.45** Figure 4.9.16, below, shows the breakdown of respondents to the qualitative questionnaire aimed at primary and post-primary teachers according to their years of teaching experience.

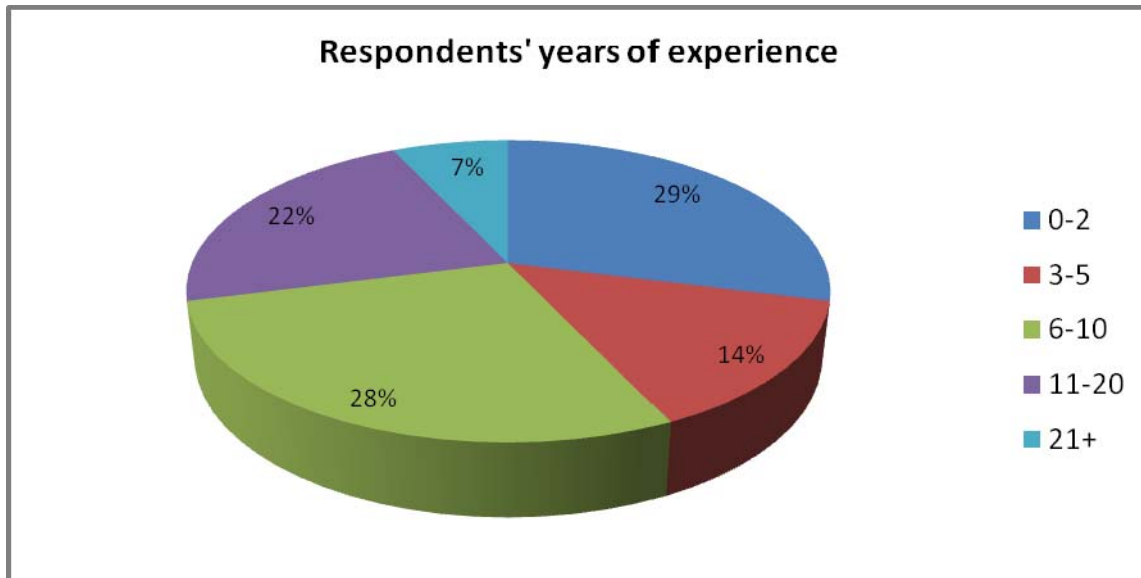


Figure 4.9.16

**4.9.46** Some recently qualified teachers participant in focus group discussions and respondents to the qualitative questionnaire commented on the advantages associated with having a significant number of new and recently qualified teachers in the sector. Some of the comments made include:

<i>'Sílím go bhfuil muid go maith, mar is foireann óg muid le traenáil úr.'</i>	<i>'I think that we are good, as we are a young staff with new training.'</i>
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<i>'Tá cuid mhaith múinteoirí óga ann agus bíonn an traenáil is déanaí acu.'</i>	<i>'There are a lot of young teachers who have the latest training.'</i>
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**4.9.47** Comments made by recently qualified teachers during focus group discussion and in the qualitative questionnaire referred to the benefits for young, newly qualified teachers of having the back-up and support of more experienced teachers, particularly in terms of identification of SEN and advice regarding appropriate provision for SEN. Some respondents reported that such

support is available to them from more experienced teachers within the school, and that they appreciate the support available to them.

<p><i>“Faigheann tú tacaíocht agus bíonn cáilíochtaí agat agus gach rud ach foghlaimíonn tú cuid mhór agus tú ar scoil ó thaithí daoine eile.”</i></p>	<p><i>You get support and you have qualifications and everything but you learn a lot at school from other people’s experience.’</i></p>
--	---

Other respondents expressed uncertainty with regard to meeting the needs of pupils with SEN in their classroom.

<p><i>‘Níl an oiread sin taithí agam bheith cinnte go bhfuil mé ag teagasc sa dóigh is go mbeadh daltaí le sainriachtanais ag foghlaim mar is ceart agus de réir an ábaltacht s’acu.’</i></p>	<p><i>‘I don’t have that much experience to know for certain that I am teaching in such a way as to allow pupils with SEN to learn properly according to their ability.’</i></p>
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During interview, SENCOs in larger, more established IM schools referred to the advice and guidance they provide to newly qualified, less experienced members of staff in their setting. They commented that newly qualified teachers in small, recently established schools miss out on this type of day to day, in-school support.

**4.9.48** Since the collation of the data Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta has established a mentoring scheme where an experienced IM teacher is employed to provide support and guidance to the most recently qualified teachers in the IM sector.

## 5. The introduction of English literacy and biliteracy for pupils with SEN

**4.9.49** During focus group discussion, some primary school teachers raised the issue of the introduction of English literacy for pupils in the IM sector who are experiencing learning difficulties. Some participants in focus group discussion reported beginning English literacy in Year 3 and other participants reported commencing English literacy in Year 4. Participants from the primary phase expressed some uncertainty regarding whether they should begin the introduction in Year 3 or Year 4 and indicated a need for further guidance for teachers. With specific reference to SEN, respondents made reference to the issue of biliteracy for pupils with SEN in the IM sector. During interview, SENCOs and non-teaching education professionals raised questions as to whether focus should be placed on English literacy for pupils who experience difficulties with literacy and highlighted a need for further guidance regarding the most effective strategies in order to meet pupils’ needs. Principals and SENCOs from IM primary

settings in areas without IM post-primary provision reported that they are conscious of the need to prepare pupils for post-primary education through the medium of English. One school reported that an emphasis is placed on English literacy for pupils experiencing learning difficulties. Pupils continue to use and develop their oral Irish skills but concentrate on reading and writing in English (see appendix 1, case study 3).

**4.9.50** Some respondents to the qualitative questionnaire from the post-primary sector (6%) made reference to a need for additional literacy and numeracy support for pupils.

<i><b>'Níos mó ama fá choinne ranganna beaga dírithe ar bhunscileanna liteartha agus uimhearthachta.'</b></i>	<i>'More time for small classes focusing on basic literacy and numeracy skills.'</i>
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<i><b>'Níos mó ranganna ar leith le bunlitearthacht agus bunuimhríocht a theagasc do na daltaí nach bhfuil seo acu.'</b></i>	<i>'More classes specifically to teach basic literacy and numeracy to pupils who have not acquired these.'</i>
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## **6. Communication between class teachers and SEN teachers and external professionals**

**4.9.51** Responses to the qualitative questionnaire highlighted a need for communication and planning between class teachers and peripatetic SEN teachers, and other SEN professionals who are working with pupils in their class. Some responses to the qualitative questionnaire by post-primary teachers, in particular, indicate a lack of communication between colleagues and also between members of staff and external SEN support agencies with regard to the additional support provided to pupils with SEN. Some of the comments made by respondents from the post-primary sector include:

<i><b>'Ní dhéantar iarracht mórán eolais a roinnt leis na gnáthmhúinteoirí ábhar.'</b></i>	<i>'Little attempt is made to share information with the subject teachers.'</i>
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<i><b>'Bíonn cuma randamach ar an dóigh a dtarraingtear daltaí as ranganna ábhar.'</b>[do thacaíocht bhreise]</i>	<i>'It seems that pupils are taken out of classes [for additional support] randomly.'</i>
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In the primary phase, interviews with primary school principals and SENCOs and SEN teachers some respondents made the point that time restrictions on behalf of both the class teacher and

the visiting outreach or peripatetic SEN teacher can hinder the amount of time teachers have to discuss pupils' progress and to plan lessons for them.

## **7. Appropriate provision for pupils in IM settings in areas of social disadvantage**

**4.9.52** During interview SENCOs, non-teaching education professionals and representatives of the IM pre-school phase indicated that a significant percentage of IM schools are situated in socially disadvantaged areas. Interview participants highlighted the need to take on board the profile of schools in the IM sector when planning, and making provision for pupils in the IM sector, and furthermore, for pupils with SEN in the IM sector. The respondents reported that practitioners need to take account of pupils' English language development, access to English literacy outside of school and the level of home-based support available to pupils, as well as the development of pupils' Irish literacy in school, when planning and implementing additional support strategies. The influence of socio-economic factors is also discussed in section 4.3 in the context of assessment practices and appropriate materials.

### **Summary of main points**

#### **4.9.53**

##### **Respondents from IM pre-school phase:**

A large majority rated the support from other staff and leader effective (4.9.2).

On average, support from Early Years agencies is deemed effective by a majority (4.9.3).

Almost half (47%) rated SEN support from IM primary schools effective and 42% reported no experience of support (4.9.4).

IM voluntary playgroups are not able to access ELB-based support services but would welcome information regarding where to access professional SEN support (4.9.5, 24-5, 27-9).

Only 23% found SLT and educational psychology services effective (4.9.5).

Half of respondents had no experience of Behavioural or Peripatetic Support Services (4.9.5).

##### **Respondents from IM primary phase**

A high percentage (84%) rated SEN support of principal and other staff effective while 45% rated SEN support from other IM schools effective (4.9.8).



44% found SEN support from principals and teachers in EM schools effective and 45% indicated no experience of support from that source (4.9.9).

Around half found SEN support from CASS (51%) and IM CASS (55%) effective (4.9.10).

Respondents in the primary phase found SEN support from the following groupings effective: educational psychology (69%), behavioural support (46%) and peripatetic support services (55%) (4.9.11).

The same percentage respondents found SLT services effective as found it ineffective (32%) and 40% found Occupational Therapy services effective (4.9.12).

Guidance is needed as to the timing of the beginning of formal study of English and the place of English in addressing the additional needs of SEN pupils (4.9.49).

### **Respondents from IM post-primary phase**

A large majority (71%) found SEN support from principal and other teachers in school effective (4.9.13).

70% of them reported that they have not experienced SEN support from other IM schools or that it was not available to them (4.9.13).

67% of them reported no experience or access to SEN support from principals and teachers in EM schools (4.9.14).

Almost half (48%) found CASS services effective in SEN support and 24% found IM CASS who interweave SEN support into their work, an effective source of SEN support (4.9.15, 23).

44% rated the support of behavioural support services effective, 34% for educational psychology and 27% for peripatetic support services (4.9.16).

Over half (53%) had no experience of SLT services and 61% of occupational therapy services which is reflected in the percentages for rating them effective: SLT (17%) and occupational therapy (9%) (4.9.17).

### **Both primary and post-primary**

IM sector teachers have issues with services only delivered in English in that they don't fully meet the needs of the children (4.9.20).

One outreach centre provides tailored, appropriate effective SEN support for the IM sector (4.9.21).

IM teachers want practical, appropriate resources in Irish which are ready for use in the classroom (4.9.22).

During data collection 55% of IM sector teachers had 5 or less years teaching experience (4.9.44).

**4.9.54**The data presented in this section show that a number of practitioners from the IM pre-school, primary, and post-primary phases are accessing the generic SEN support services available to them, for example, CASS, educational psychology, behavioural support etc. Respondents indicated their appreciation of support services which take account of the IM sector and providers who are willing to work with IM practitioners to provide resources in Irish. However, the data indicate that the most frequently cited sources of SEN support come from within respondents' own setting.

IM practitioners face challenges in accessing support, particularly in the IM pre-school phase where some respondents indicated a need for information and awareness raising in respect of SEN support for practitioners. In the primary and post-primary phases the principal issues are around:

- advice and guidance regarding SEN in the IM sector,
- the identification of SEN,
- support for teachers in recently established schools,
- support for newly and recently qualified teachers,
- communication between teachers and external professionals,
- the issue of English language and literacy and biliteracy for pupils with SEN in IM education and
- appropriate provision for pupils in IM settings in areas of social disadvantage.

Respondents indicate a need for IM-specific support which takes account of the challenges and complexities of identification and assessment of SEN and teaching the curriculum through the medium of a second language in an immersion education programme. (4.9.31-52)

## Section 4.10: Professional development in the area of SEN

### Background

**4.10.1** Knipe *et al.* (2004) provide an in-depth description of ITE, and opportunities for professional development, through INSET courses, for practitioners in the IM sector. The following provides a brief summary of ITE and INSET provision for teachers in the IM sector as reported by Knipe *et al.* (2004).

### Initial Teacher Education

**4.10.2** ITE is provided by four HEIs in the north of Ireland; St. Mary's University College, Stranmillis University College, Queen's University of Belfast, The University of Ulster and the Open University. ITE is offered at undergraduate and postgraduate level in St. Mary's University College and Stranmillis University College for primary and post-primary school phases, at postgraduate level in The University of Ulster for primary and post-primary school phases and at postgraduate level in Queen's University of Belfast for the post-primary school phase. ITE is also offered at postgraduate level through the Open University.

**4.10.3** IM specific ITE provision is offered by St. Mary's University College for both primary and post-primary school phases. ITE in IM primary education is available at undergraduate (Bachelor of Education) and postgraduate level (Postgraduate Certificate in Education/PGCE). ITE in post-primary education, a relatively recent development in IM specific ITE provision, is available through completion of a Postgraduate Certificate in Education. All three qualifications lead to a *Teastas san Oideachas Dátheangach agus sa Tumoideachas* (Certificate in Bilingual and Immersion Education).

**4.10.4** The Bachelor of Education (BEd) specific to IM mirrors, for the most part, the course structure and content of the non-IM specific programme. The four year course encompasses education studies, curriculum studies, school-based placement as well as subject specialist study to honours degree level. In addition, students have the option to follow a specialist training programme for the IM sector. The postgraduate programme is carried out over thirty-six weeks and includes study on education, literacy and numeracy, science and technology, history and geography, art, music, physical education and ICT in the context of the IM immersion education sector. Both programmes include study of provision for SEN and differentiation, the implementation of the Code of Practice, and the role of the SENCO.

## Continuing Professional Development

**4.10.5** INSET courses are provided for practitioners in the IM sector by a range of providers including the ELBs, the Regional Training Unit (RTU), HEIs and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.

### Research findings

**4.10.6** The issue of professional development in the area of SEN for IM pre-school staff and teachers was raised by respondents to the qualitative questionnaires, focus groups and interviews. The following section discusses:

- (1) the level and type of training and/or professional development received by teachers and IM pre-school staff in the area of SEN;
- (2) respondents' views on the effectiveness of training received; and
- (3) demand for, and obstacles to, professional development in the area of SEN, as reported by respondents from the IM sector.

#### (1) the level of training received

**4.10.7** Respondents to the qualitative questionnaires were asked to provide details of the SEN training received, to date. Figure 4.10.1, below, shows the percentage breakdown of respondents who indicated that they had received formal training on SEN. Table 4.10.1, below, shows the actual number of respondents to the question.

Number of responses				
IM pre-school leaders	IM pre-school assistants	Primary teachers	Post-primary teachers	Classroom assistants
12	8	40	30	14

Table 4.10.1

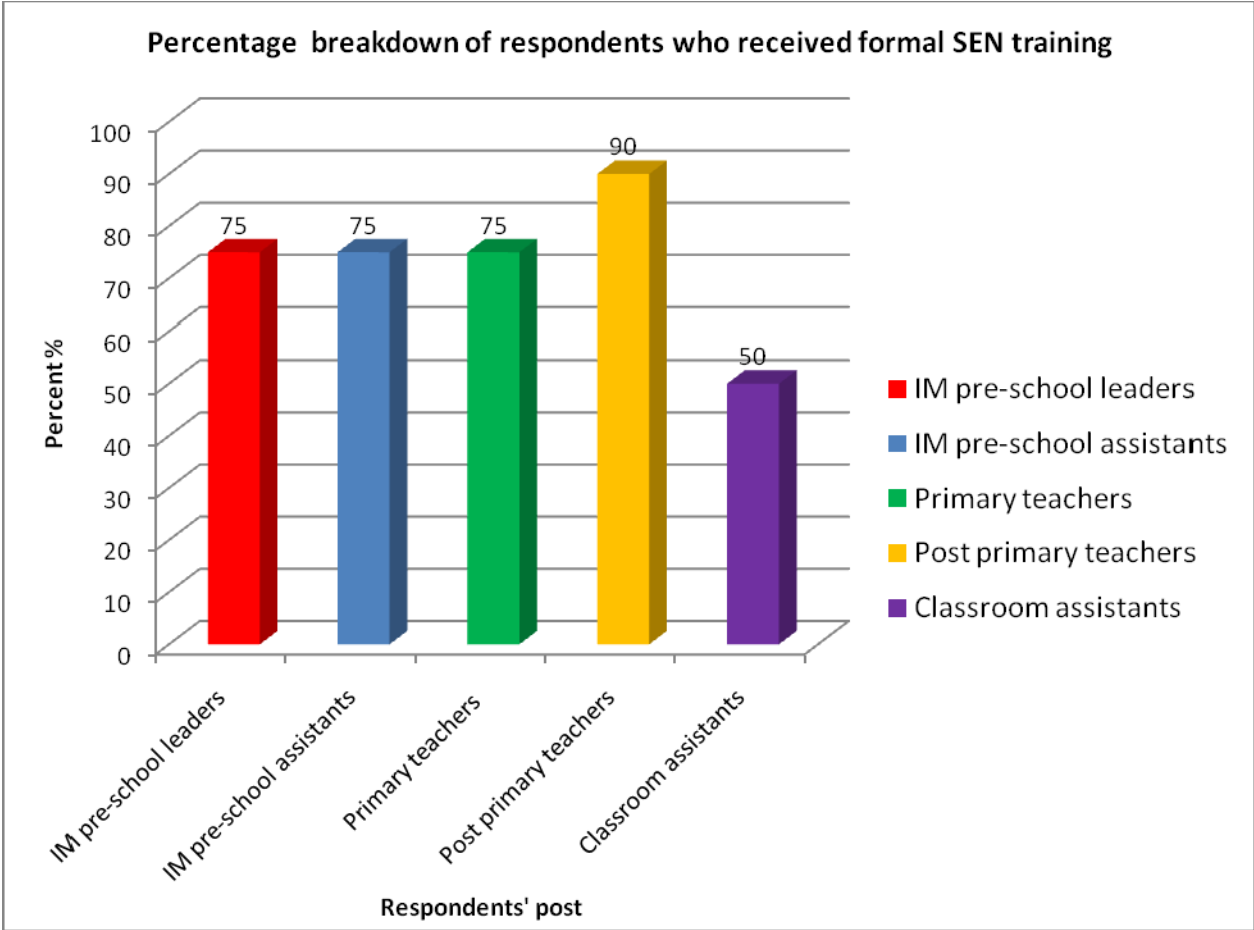


Figure: 4.10.1

Overall, the data indicate that a high percentage of respondents from the IM pre-school, primary and post-primary phases have received training on SEN, either as part of ITE, relevant early years qualification, or as part of ongoing professional development. Figure 4.10.1 shows that the percentage of CAs who reported receiving SEN training is lower than that indicated by pre-school, primary and post-primary school respondents. Responses from IM pre-school staff show that 75% of IM pre-school leaders reported to have received training on SEN. Similarly, 75% of IM pre-school assistants reported to have received training on SEN. Responses from the IM primary and post-primary levels indicate that 75% of respondents from primary school reported to have received formal training on SEN, and 90% of respondents from post-primary school reported having received formal SEN training. Responses from CAs indicate that 50% of respondents reported that they had received training on SEN.

**Training received by respondents**

**4.10.8** Figure 4.10.2, below, shows the subject of SEN training received by respondents from the IM pre-school sector:

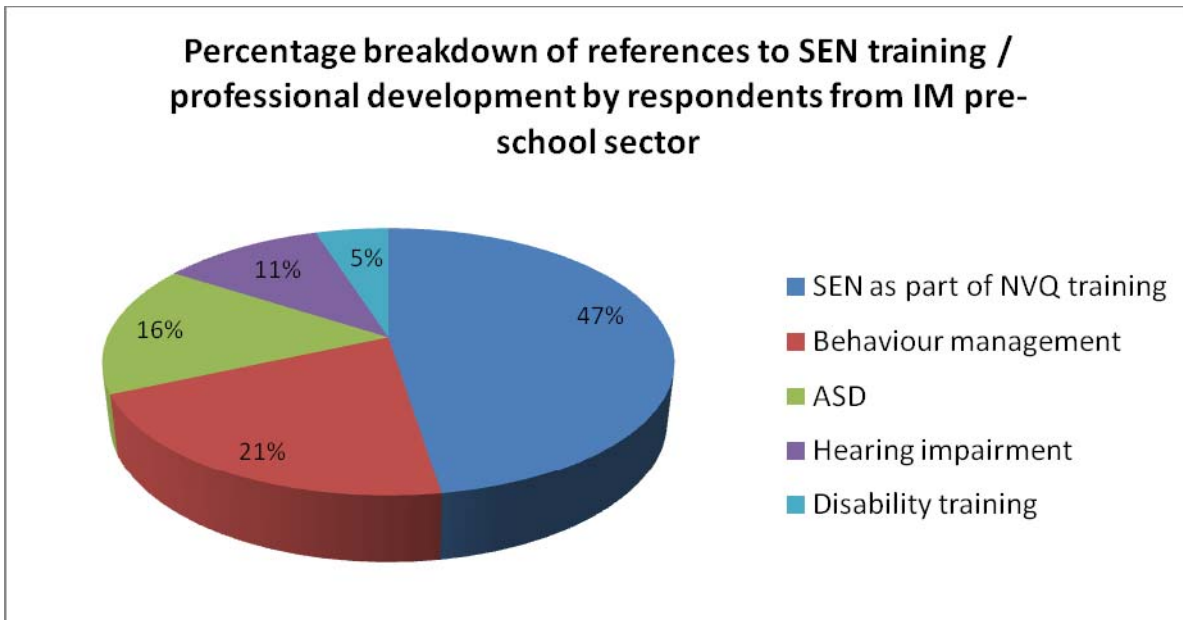


Figure: 4.10.2

The chart above, Figure 4.10.2, shows that 47% of responses made reference to training on SEN as part of NVQ. The remaining responses referred to training on specific aspects of SEN such as behaviour management training (21%), training on ASD (16%), training on hearing impairment (11%) and disability training (5%).

**4.10.9** In their responses some respondents made reference to the training provider of the SEN training they received. Figure 4.10.3, below, shows the percentage breakdown of references made by respondents from the IM pre-school phase to the training providers.

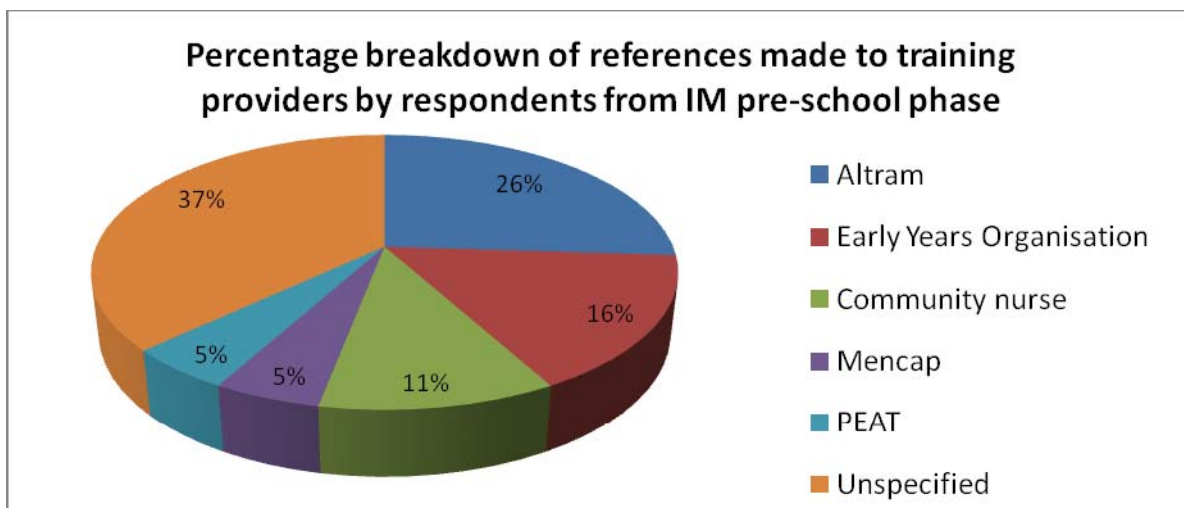


Figure: 4.10.3

While 37% of the responses supplied did not refer to a specific training provider, responses from the IM pre-school phase show that those who have accessed formal training in the area of SEN have done so from a number of different training providers. Figure 4.10.3 shows that, of those who reported the name of the training provider, the two most frequently mentioned training providers for SEN in the IM pre-school sector were the Early Years Organisation\* (16%) and Altram \* (26%). Other SEN training providers cited by respondents from the IM pre-school phase include the community nurse (11%) and SEN support organisations such as Mencap (5%) and PEAT (Parents' Education as Autism Therapists) \*(5%)

### Primary and post-primary phases

**4.10.10** Figure 4.10.4, below, shows the references made by respondents from the primary phase, to the types of formal SEN training and professional development received. Some respondents made reference to more than one type of professional development.

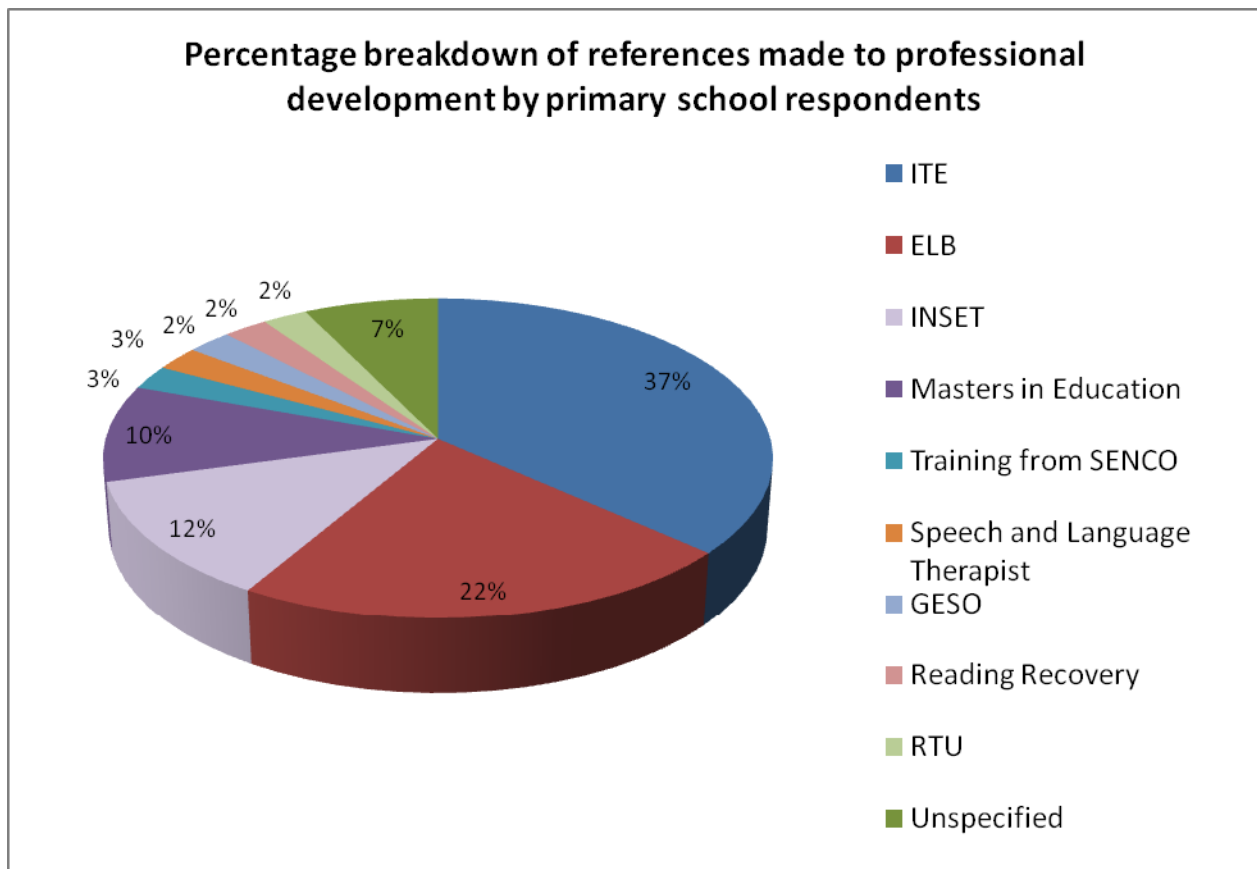


Figure 4.10.4

Figure 4.10.4, above, shows that the most frequently cited professional development in the area of SEN is that received during ITE (37%). Professional development provided by ELBs, INSET on SEN, and professional development on SEN as part of a Master of Education programme represent the three next largest types of professional development reported (22%, 12%, and 10% respectively). The remaining types of SEN-related professional development include professional development provided by a SENCO (3%), a speech and language therapist (2%), GESO (2%), the RTU (2%) and professional development on *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 2002).

**4.10.11** Figure 4.10.5, below, shows the references made, by respondents from the post-primary phase, to the types of formal SEN training and professional development received.

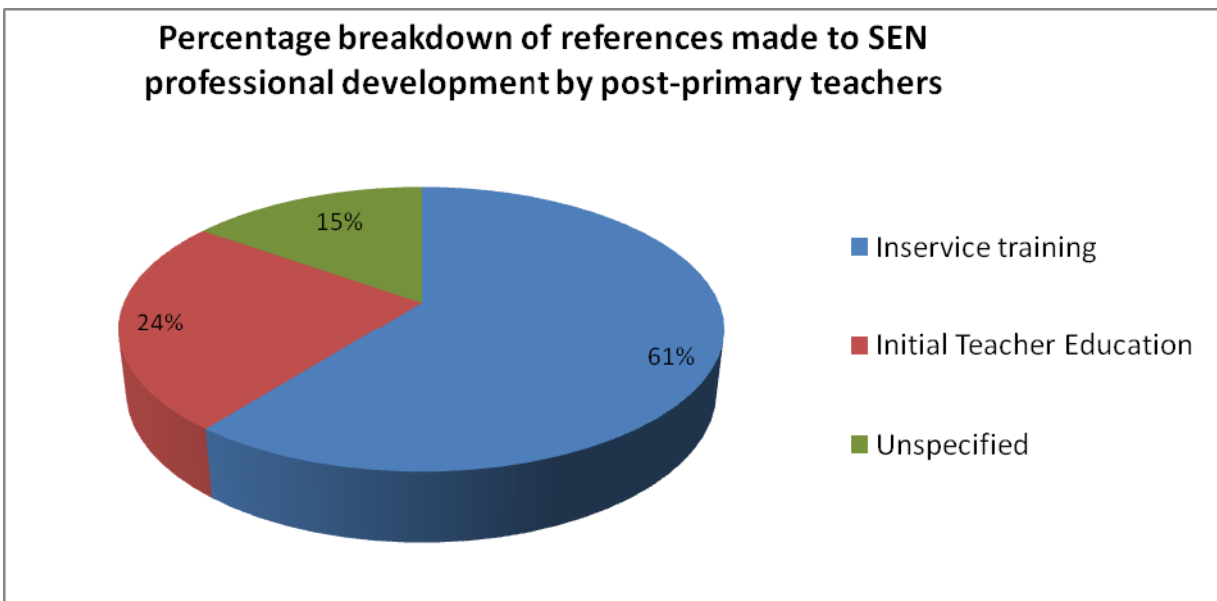


Figure: 4.10.5

Figures 4.10.4 and 4.10.5 show the range of SEN-related professional development accessed, and received by respondents from the primary and post-primary phases, respectively. The diagrams show that SEN training as part of ITE and INSET are common to both the primary and the post-primary phase. Figure 4.10.4 shows that respondents from the primary phase reported to have received professional development in the area of SEN, from a broader range of training providers than their colleagues in the post-primary phase. Respondents from the primary phase made reference to SEN training received as part of the an MEd, through training



from the school SENCO and speech and language therapists, training on *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 2002) and training provided by GESO\* and the RTU\*<sup>3</sup>.

**4.10.12** In addition to the percentage of respondents who indicated that they had received SEN training as part of ITE and/or a programme of professional development, some respondents, from both the primary and post-primary phases, made reference to informal training on SEN in the form of support and advice from colleagues, and/or SEN support organisations. Figure 4.10.6, below, shows the percentage of respondents who reported that they had received formal or informal training in SEN and those who indicated that they had not received training on SEN.

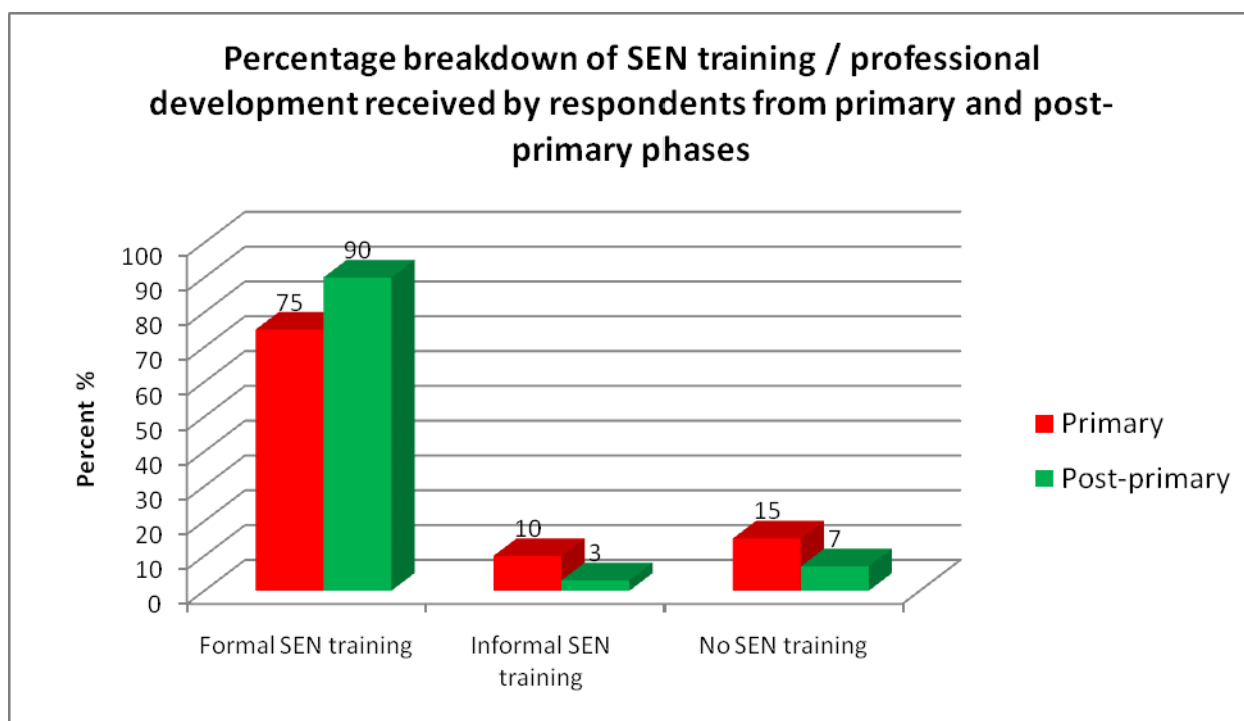


Figure: 4.10.6

The data in Figure 4.10.6, above, show that, in the primary school phase, 75% of respondents indicated that they had received formal training or professional development on SEN and 10% of respondents made reference to informal SEN training in the form of advice from school principal or SENCO, their own reading, or advice from SEN support organisations. The

<sup>3</sup> In August 2007 the RTU ran a one day training course in conjunction with Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta entitled 'Good Practice in SEN in IM schools' as part of its Summer School programme.

remaining 15% of respondents from the primary school phase reported that they had not received training on SEN. In the post-primary phase, 90% of respondents reported to have received formal training or professional development on SEN, 3% of respondents said that they had not received formal SEN training, but made reference to informal training on SEN as a result of in-school experience of SEN provision, and 7% of respondents reported that they had not received training of any kind on SEN.

**4.10.13** Some respondents from the primary and post-primary levels made reference to the subject area of their SEN training or professional development. Owing to the fact that all respondents did not supply exact details of the training received or professional development course attended, it is difficult to draw any conclusions from the information regarding the type of training accessed by respondents. The data do, however, provide an insight into the SEN-related training and professional development received by respondents to date. Of the responses given by respondents from the primary and post-primary levels, the three most frequently cited subjects of professional development in the area of SEN are ASD, generic SEN training, and dyslexia. In addition to these areas of professional development, respondents from the primary and post-primary school levels reported that they had received professional development in the areas of ADHD, phonographics, and the Code of Practice, SENDO legislation and the SEN register. Furthermore, respondents from the primary level referred to professional development in numeracy for pupils experiencing SEN, training on the *Reading Recovery* diagnostic tool in literacy achievement, *Áis Mheasúnaithe sa Luathlitearthacht\** (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007) and *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 2002), and SENCO development.

### Interviews with non-teaching educational professionals

**4.10.14** During interview with representatives of the ELBs, interviewees were asked if the ELBs provide specific services for the IM sector. All representatives interviewed reported that ELBs offer INSET training in the area of SEN and highlighted that such training is open to all teachers, including those from the IM sector. All representatives said that, with the exception of courses organised by the regional IM CASS team, all training courses on SEN are conducted through the medium of English. The interviewees expressed the view the characteristics of SEN are generic to all sectors and, that teachers from IM schools can adapt the information and strategies provided to suit their own classroom situation, and that the language through which the course is conducted ought not to prevent teachers from the IM sector from attending. One ELB representative referred to internal evidence within the ELB that teachers from the IM sector are accessing training courses provided by the ELB. This comment concurs with the responses from teachers which indicated access to professional development provided by the ELBs.

## Classroom assistants

**4.10.15** The following analysis is based on quite a small number of actual responses. There were a total 15 responses from CAs in the IM sector. Figure 4.10.7, below, illustrates the percentage of references made to SEN training received by respondents, both CAs and SEN CAs.

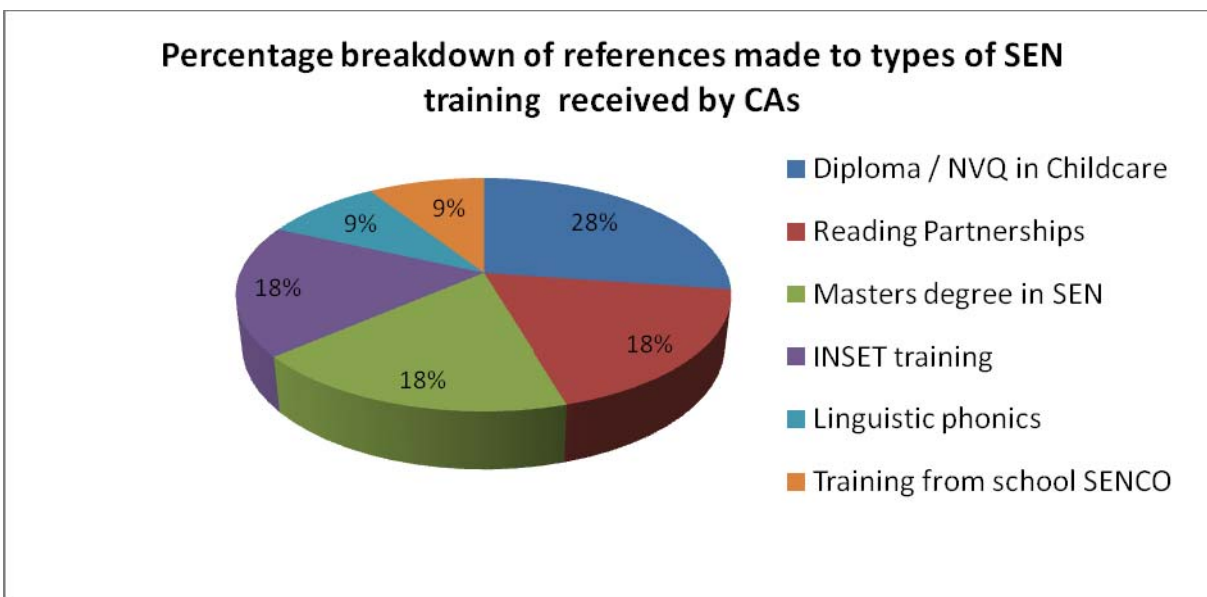


Figure 4.10.7

Responses from CAs regarding the SEN training indicate a range of training provision accessed by CAs in the IM sector. The categories of training include SEN as part of a diploma or NVQ in childcare (28%), reading partnerships (18%), a Masters degree in SEN (18%), whole-school INSET training (18%), linguistic phonics (9%), and SEN training from the school SENCO (9%).

**4.10.16** Figure 4.10.8, below, shows the percentage of CAs who reported to have received training on SEN according to their role as a CA or an SEN CA.

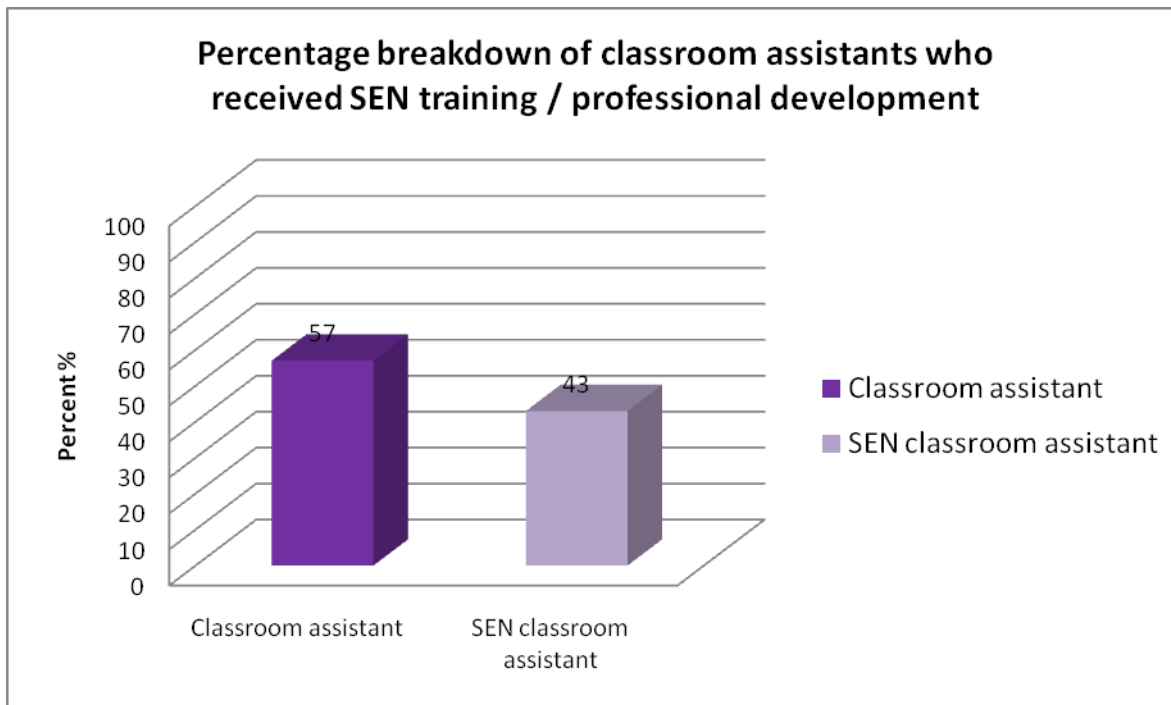


Figure 4.10.8

Figure 4.10.8, above, shows that fewer SEN CAs reported that they had received training on SEN than the CAs who are not employed to support a specific pupil or pupils who require additional help with their learning. Of responses from SEN CAs, who are specifically employed to help and support a pupil experiencing SEN with their learning, 43% of respondents indicated that they had received training on SEN. Of the CAs who are not specifically employed to assist pupils experiencing SEN, 57% of respondents indicated that they had received SEN training. Some of the responses supplied by SEN CAs in relation to training include:

<p><b><i>‘Níor fhreastail mé ar chúrsa ar bith go dtí seo, toisc gur thosaigh mé rómhall sa bhliain do chúrsa, ach shuigh mé le tuismitheoir an dalta agus le múinteoirí a bhfuil taithí acu ar an chineál seo ruda ón scoil. Phléigh siad liom na fadhbanna a bhíonn ag an dalta agus cén dóigh le cuidiú leis.’</i></b></p>	<p><i>‘I haven’t attended any course to date, as I started too late in the year for a course, but I sat with the pupil’s parent and with teachers who have experience of this from school. They discussed the problems which the pupil experiences and how to help.’</i></p>
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SEN CA

***'Rinne mé cúrsa leis an BOL ar shainriachtanais oideachais. Chlúdaigh sé na siondróim, an dóigh lena n-aithint agus le déileáil leo, fadhbanna léitheoireachta, agus na fadhbanna is coitianta agus an dóigh le cuidiú. Rinne mé cúrsa leis an SENCO ar scoil fosta leis an eolas s'agam a fhorbairt.'***

*'I did a course with the ELB on SEN. It covered the syndromes, how to identify them, how to deal with them, the most common reading problems and how to help. I also did a course with the SENCO at school to develop my own knowledge.'*

SEN CA

**(2) Respondents' views on the effectiveness of training received**

**4.10.17** Regarding the effectiveness of the training received, responses from IM pre-school staff, primary and post-primary teachers and classroom assistants indicate a consensus of opinion in respondents' evaluation of the training they received. For the most part, respondents who had received SEN training rated the training that they received to be useful in equipping them to make provision for SEN in the setting. Figure 4.10.9, below, shows the percentage of breakdown of respondents who rated the SEN training they received as useful. Table 4.10.2, below, shows the actual number of respondents to the question.

IM pre-school leaders	IM pre-school assistants	Primary teachers	Post-primary teachers	Classroom assistants
8	5	26	23	6

Table 4.10.2

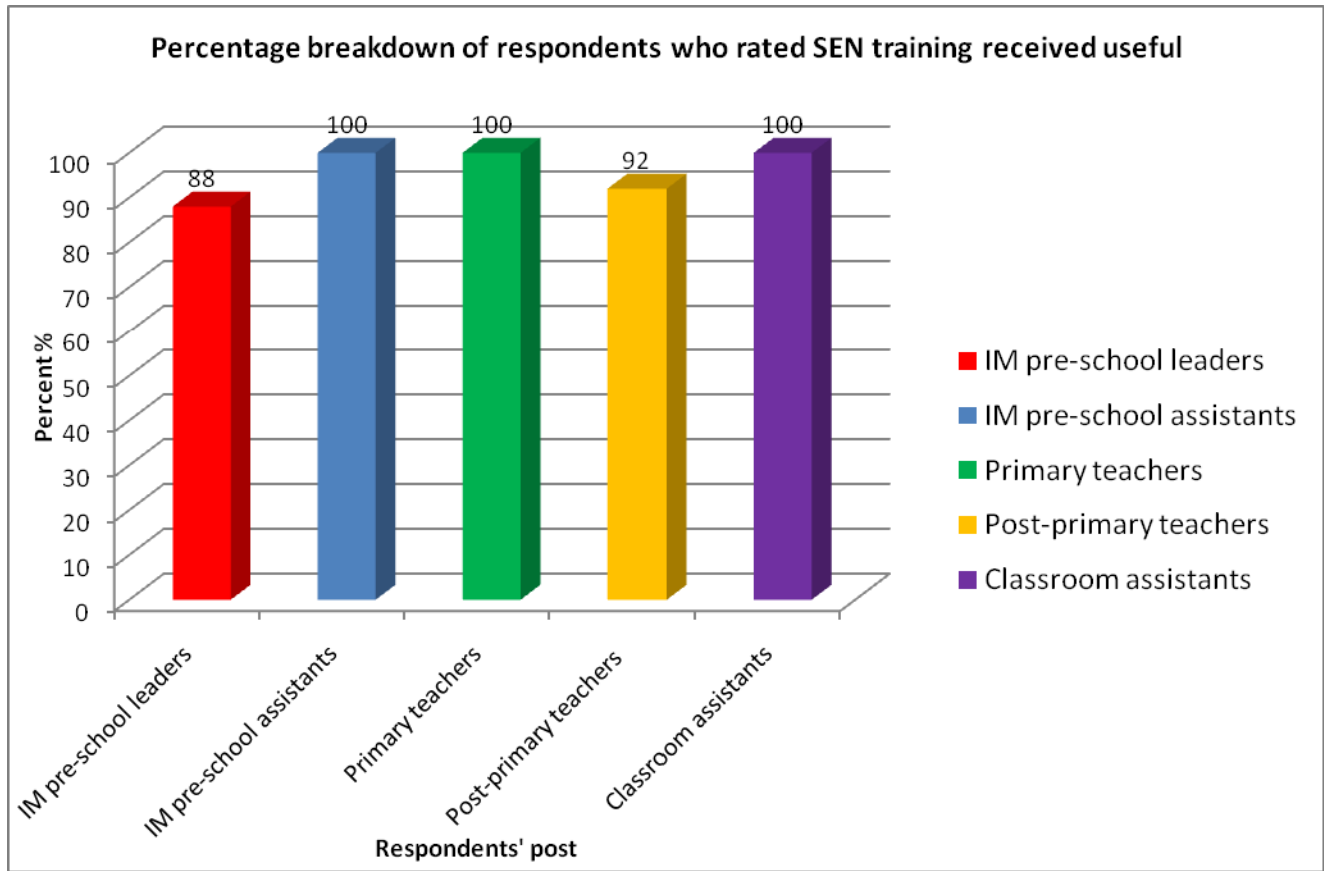


Figure 4.10.9

Figure 4.10.9, above, shows that overall respondents reported the professional development they received to be beneficial in equipping them to meet the needs of pupils in their setting. All IM pre-school assistants, primary school teachers, and CAs reported that the SEN training they received had been beneficial to them. In the IM pre-school phase, 88% of the pre-school leaders reported that the professional development was beneficial and in the IM post-primary school phase 92% of respondents reported that the SEN professional development had been beneficial.

**IM pre-school phase**

**4.10.18** Figure 4.10.10, below, illustrates the percentage breakdown of references made to the positive outcomes of SEN training reported by respondents from the IM pre-school phase.

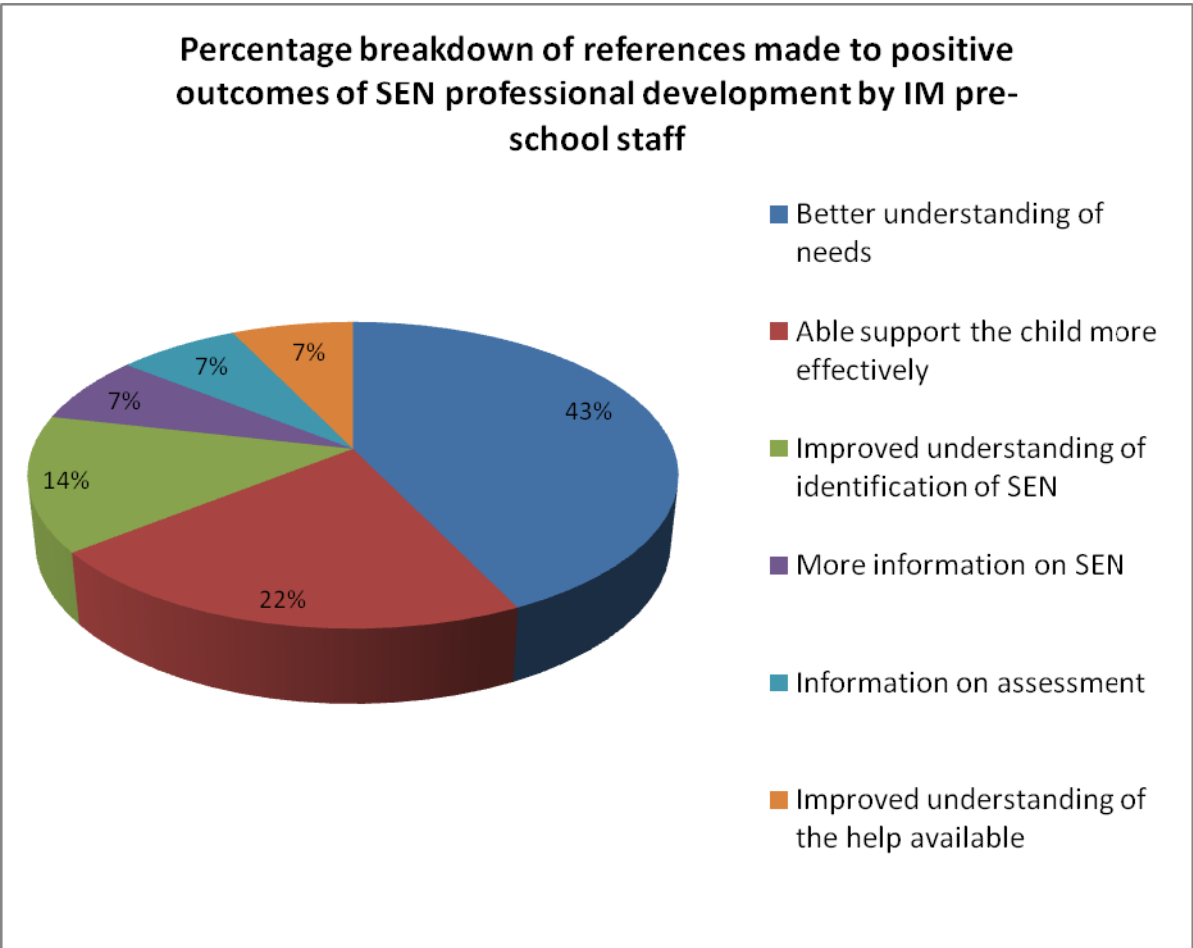


Figure: 4.10.10.

The most often cited outcome was that SEN training gave respondents a better understanding of the pupils' needs. Respondents also reported that training:

- enabled them to support pupils more effectively;
- improved understanding of identification of SEN;
- provided them with more information on the area of SEN and assessment issues; and
- improved understanding of the help available to support pupils with SEN in the setting.

While almost all respondents from the IM pre-school phase reported that the training they received was useful in equipping them to provide for SEN in their setting, almost a quarter of respondents (23%) made reference to the general nature of the training they received.

### Primary and post-primary phases

**4.10.19** Figure 4.10.11, below, illustrates the percentage breakdown of the references made to the positive outcomes of SEN training / professional development made by respondents from primary and post-primary schools phases.



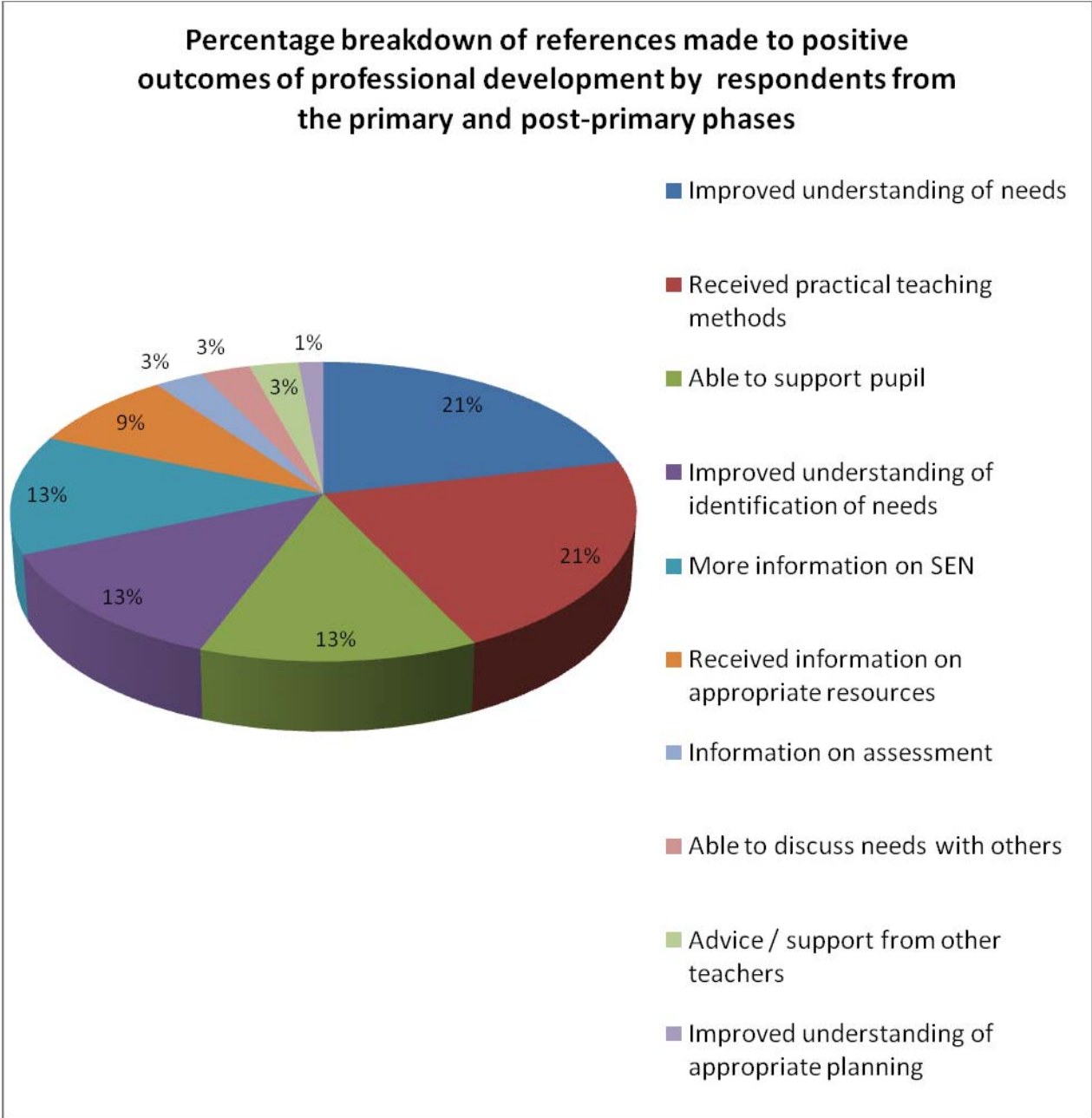


Figure: 4.10.11

The data in Figure 4.10.11, above, indicate that the principal outcomes of SEN training for respondents from the primary and post primary phases are an improved understanding of the needs of the pupils; the acquisition of practical teaching methods and strategies; an improved ability to support pupils; an increased understanding of the identification of SEN; and additional information on SEN. Respondents also referred to appropriate resources; assessment; the

opportunity to receive advice and support from other teachers; and an improved understanding of appropriate planning.

All respondents from the primary level rated the professional development they received to be useful. Of the respondents from primary phase, 12%, however, made reference to aspects of the training they received which were not useful to them in their setting. At the post-primary level, 8% of respondents reported that the training they received was not useful in equipping them to make provision for SEN in their classroom. The respondents from the primary and post-primary levels who indicated that the training / professional development they received was not useful reported that the training:

- did not take into account the situation of IM schools in respect of the language and pedagogies used, and the lack of availability of appropriate resources;
- was more theoretical than practical, focusing the *Code of Practice* rather than practical strategies for use in the classroom; and
- was not followed up or updated at a later stage.

### Classroom assistants

**4.10.20** Figure 4.10.12, below, shows the percentage breakdown of the references made to the positive outcomes of SEN training as reported by CAs and SEN CAs.

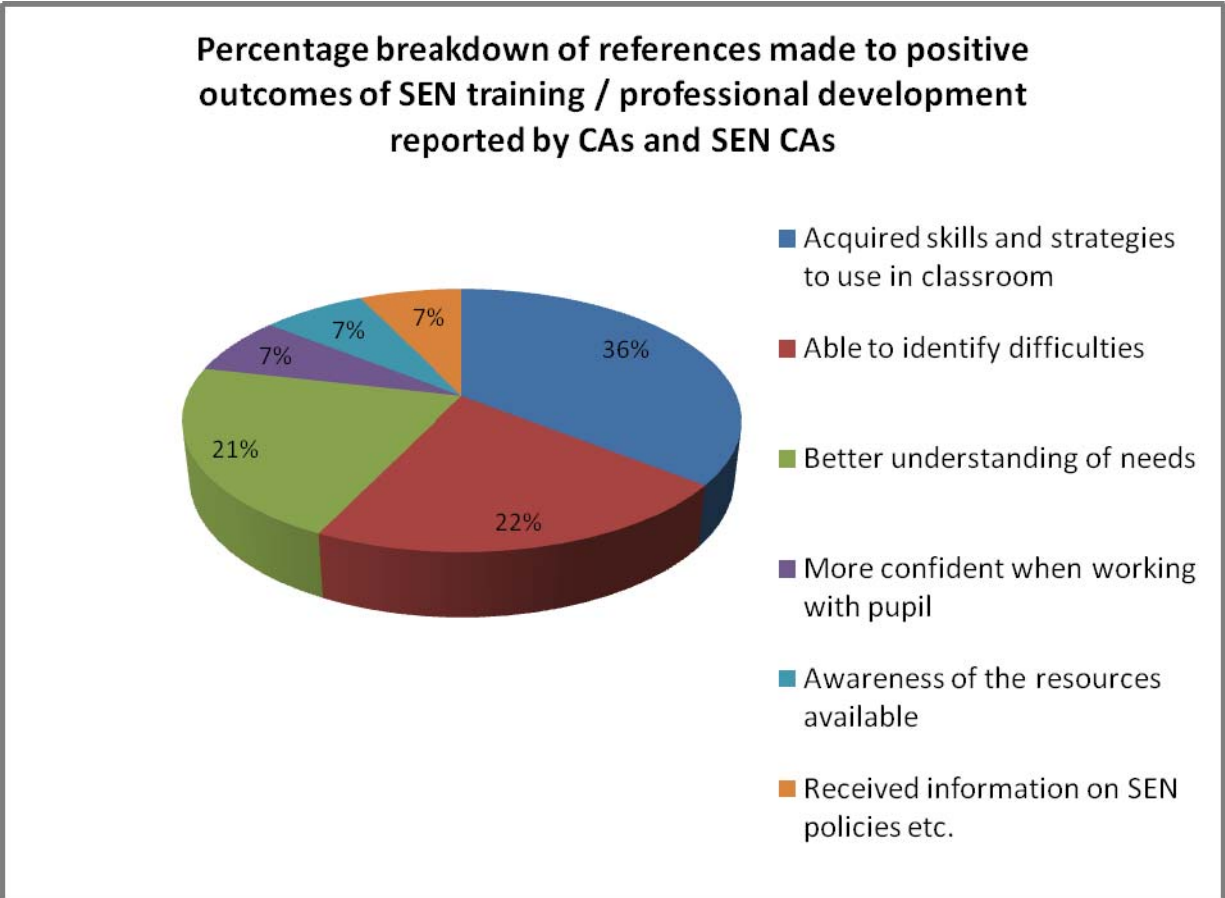


Figure 4.10.12

Figure 4.10.12, above, shows that the principal outcomes of SEN training / professional development mentioned by CAs and SEN CAs are the acquisition of skills and strategies for use in the classroom; an improved ability to identify the pupils’ needs; and an improved understanding of pupils’ needs. Other outcomes mentioned by respondents include increased confidence when working with pupils; increased awareness of the resources available; and the acquisition of information on SEN policy. All CAs reported that the training they received had been useful in equipping them to meet the needs of pupils requiring additional help and support with their learning, however, 14% of respondents reported aspects of the training which was not useful. These responses indicate that respondents would prefer more in-depth training on the specific needs of the pupils they support, and training alongside the class teachers to ensure that teachers and CAs are working together to support pupils effectively.

### (3) demand for, and obstacles to, professional development in the area of SEN

**4.10.21** Parts 1 and 2 of this section show that, for the most part, a high percentage of staff in IM educational settings have accessed some formal training in the area of SEN. Responses from participants, however, indicate a certain level of concern in relation to the provision of, and access to, appropriate, IM specific professional development. Responses from pre-school staff and, primary teachers and CAs from the post-primary phases indicate a clear demand for professional development in meeting the needs of pupils who are experiencing SEN. Issues raised by respondents in respect of training include:

1. parity of access to professional development on provision for SEN for all members of staff in the setting;
2. emphasis on identification of SEN amongst pupils at the earliest possible stage;
3. specific information and training on the range of complexities and diversities found in IM educational settings; and
4. information and training on meeting the specific requirements of pupils experiencing SEN in the context of an IM immersion education setting.

#### IM pre-school phase

**4.10.22** Responses to the questionnaire for IM pre-school staff indicate a demand for training on SEN amongst IM pre-school staff. Respondents from IM pre-schools were asked to provide details of their current training needs in the pre-school. Of those who responded, 30% of respondents made reference to a need for SEN training and 15% of respondents reported a need for training in behavioural management. Some of the comments made by IM pre-school staff include:

*'I would like more training, especially on special needs.'*

*'Some training needed in special needs area.'*

*'Training required to meet the needs of children on Autistic Spectrum.'*

Furthermore, IM pre-school leaders were asked to rate the importance of a number of challenges to the pre-school setting at present. The responses indicate that 73% of the pre-school leaders rated staff training as an important challenge to the preschool, the second most important challenge after the issue of finance (75%).

#### **Focus group discussion and interview**

**4.10.23** Focus group participants from the pre-school and primary phases expressed a need for training for IM pre-school staff on the Code of Practice, the stages of the Code of Practice and on the referral procedures for statutory assessment, to facilitate the early identification and diagnosis of the child's needs, and to ensure that the appropriate support is in place at the beginning of Year 1 of primary school.

**4.10.24** Participants stressed the importance of the transfer of information between the pre-school and the child's primary school. Participants expressed the view that adequate training for IM pre-school staff would assist in ensuring that this occurs.

**4.10.25** Representatives of the IM pre-school sector, who took part in interview, reported a need for further training for IM pre-school staff in the identification of SEN in the pre-school setting, and in meeting the needs of pupils who require additional help and support. One informant expressed the view that training for IM pre-school staff in the identification of SEN in the setting, is a priority for all IM pre-schools at present. In addition, specific support and training ought to be given to staff in settings where there are, or there will be, children who require additional support with their learning. The informant reported that the training should be specific to the needs of the child and should equip staff to meet the child's needs in the setting.

## Primary and post-primary phase

### Interview and focus group data

#### Access to professional development in SEN

**4.10.26** During focus group discussion some participants expressed the view that SEN training should be made available to all members of the teaching staff, not only the school SENCO, which they reported happens in some schools. This is supported by responses to the qualitative questionnaire in which some respondents reported that the SENCO had received professional development in SEN, but the other teachers rely on the information and training received as part of their ITE.

One informant commented:

<i><b>[Ba chóir go mbeadh] ‘Oiliúint ar fáil do mhúinteoirí uilig ó shaineolaithe CASS éagsúla, ní amháin don CRSO.’</b></i>	<i>[There ought to be] ‘Training available for all teachers from various CASS experts, not only for the SENCO.’</i>
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#### Identification of SEN

**4.10.27** Focus group and interview participants highlighted the importance of early identification of SEN. Participants from the primary and post primary phases expressed a need for training on identification of SEN for teachers, in order to help them to identify SEN at the earliest possible stage.

<i><b>‘Tá gá le traenáil do mhúinteoirí ranga sa dóigh is go dtig leo riachtanais RSO a aithint go soiléir.’</b></i>	<i>‘There is a need for training for class teachers so as they can clearly identify SEN.’</i>
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#### Professional development which is IM-specific

**4.10.28** Interviews with SENCOs and focus group discussion, involving primary and post-primary school teachers, emphasised a need for training on the range of complexities and diversities in schools, and strategies for meeting the needs of the pupils within the context of an immersion education setting. In relation to this point, respondents made particular reference to the need for information and training on making appropriate provision for pupils identified as having dyslexia, or specific learning difficulties, and ASD and who are receiving

their education through the medium of Irish, which is, for the majority of pupils in the IM sector, their second language.

<p><b><i>‘Is dócha go dtig traenáil bheith agat ar na siondróim taobh amuigh den ghaelscolaíocht agus ní rud ar leith atá i gceist, ach, áit ar leith a théann an dátheangachas i bhfeidhm, ba choir go mbeadh oiliúint ar leith bheith curtha ar fáil do mhúinteoirí.’</i></b></p>	<p><i>‘I suppose you can have training on the syndromes outside of the IM system and it does not require something specific [for the IM sector], but anywhere that bilingualism has an influence, there ought to be specific training made available for teachers.’</i></p>
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<p><b><i>‘Caithfidh fios bheith ag an fhoireann faoin tionchar atá ag an riachtanas ar an pháiste, i gcomhthéacs an tumaideachais.’</i></b></p>	<p><i>‘Staff have to be aware of the influence of the need on the child, in the context of immersion education.’</i></p>
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**4.10.29** When asked about the areas regarding provision for SEN in which teachers would welcome professional development, some of the responses from focus group participants included:

<p><b><i>‘Ar na riachtanais iad féin. Nuair a bhí mise ar an choláiste bhí cúpla léacht againn ar riachtanais ar leith. Níor labhair said ar chuidiú leis na riachtanais iad féin. Labhair said ar an pháipéarachas agus an Cód Cleachtais agus rudaí mar sin. Ní fhoghlaimíonn tú faoi na rudaí seo go dtí go bhfuil tú ar scoil.’</i></b></p>	<p><i>‘On the needs themselves. When I was at college we had a couple of lectures on SEN. They didn’t cover supporting the needs. They covered the paperwork and the Code of Practice and things like that. You don’t learn about these things until you are in a school.’</i></p>
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Another participant added:

<p><b><i>‘Tacaíocht do mhúinteoirí ar an dóigh leis na riachtanais a láimhseáil taobh istigh de do sheomra ranga féin. Labhraíonn tú le tuismitheoirí ..... agus bíonn siad ag déanamh go mbíonn na freagraí ag na múinteoirí ach níl an traenáil againne, ná na stráitéisí.’</i></b></p>	<p><i>‘Support for teachers on the way to approach the needs within your own classroom. You speak to parents ....and they think that the teachers have the answers but we don’t have the training, or the strategies.’</i></p>
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Access to training in literacy support

**4.10.30** Primary school teachers, participant in focus group discussion, who had completed training on Reading Recovery\* spoke appreciatively of the benefits of the programme for the IM sector, both for use through the medium of English and of Irish. The participants recommended that training in Reading Recovery through the medium of English and of Irish be made available for more teachers in the IM sector.

### The introduction of English literacy

**4.10.31** During focus group discussion, some primary school teachers registered concerns about the introduction of English. They expressed the view that further training and guidance ought to be made available for teachers, on the introduction of English literacy for pupils in the IM sector and on the area of biliteracy for pupils who require additional support in the area of literacy. This is discussed in greater detail in section 4.10 in relation to support for teachers in the area of SEN.

### Interviews with non-teaching education professionals

**4.10.32** Of the non-teaching education professionals interviewed, nine of the sixteen interview participants made reference to a need professional development for teachers in the IM sector in relation to identification of, and provision for SEN. Representatives of ELBs referred to the provision of in-service training by ELBs for all teachers in grant-aided schools, including teachers from the IM sectors. They reported that in-service SEN training is provided on the generic aspects of SEN provision, as well as SEN specialisms, the Code of Practice and professional development for beginning SENCOS. Respondents expressed the view that teachers in the IM sector ought to avail of in-service training offered on SEN.

**4.10.33** While some ELB representatives made reference to internal evidence within ELBs that teachers and SENCOS from the IM sector are accessing in-service professional development, other respondents indicated that newly qualified teachers in new or recently established schools may not be aware of how, and where to access ELB support and training services. They suggested that this may restrict teachers from the IM sector from accessing professional development in the area of SEN. Respondents felt that it was important that teachers from the IM sector be encouraged to access in-service training. Informants reported that training is



conducted through the medium of English, however, it was felt that the training is still relevant in equipping teachers with holistic skills in making provision for pupils who require specialised help and support. It was suggested that teachers adapt the information and material to suit their own classroom situation.

**4.10.34** Two interview participants reported a need for professional development for teachers in the identification of SEN in the IM sector and the differentiation between a language difficulty and a learning difficulty. One informant advocated professional development for teachers in order to make them aware of the differences between mainstream and special education. The respondent reported that teachers need to be aware of the strategies and pedagogies necessary to make appropriate provision for pupils in mainstream settings who require additional help and support with their learning, but do not require special education. Another informant stressed the importance of ensuring that all members of the teaching staff are very clear on the in-school and external procedures for supporting pupils at in-school level, and accessing appropriate external support. This is discussed further in section.4.10.

#### **Classroom assistants**

**4.10.35** The qualitative questionnaire for CAs asked respondents to detail ways in which provision for pupils experiencing SEN might be improved, based on their experience in the IM sector. Of the responses supplied, 36% of responses made reference to training or regular training for CAs. A small number of responses indicated that they felt that teachers receive training courses on SEN, but that CAs are sometimes forgotten about.

**4.10.36** Responses to the qualitative questionnaire for the primary and post-primary levels highlighted the importance of training for CAs. Of the responses provided by primary and post-primary respondents, 52% of the responses from primary school respondents and 21% of responses from post-primary respondents, indicated the need for training for classroom assistants to ensure that they have a clear understanding of their role and how to support the pupil concerned. This is discussed further in section 4.4.

While focus group participants reported the advantages of classroom assistants, they expressed the need for training for classroom assistants regarding SEN in the IM sector.

***‘Tá traenáil de dhíth fosta ar na cúntóirí ranga a bhíonn ag plé leis na páistí.’***

***‘The classroom assistants who are working with the children also need training.’***

*'Ach bheadh rud ar leith de dhíth do chúntóirí trí Ghaeilge fosta.'*

*'But something specific would be needed in Irish for assistants as well.'*

**4.10.37** One informant reported that it is often young people with little, or no, training in the area of SEN, who are employed as classroom assistants to support pupils in IM schools who require specialist support and assistance with their learning. The informant stressed that, if classroom assistants are to be employed to support pupils in mainstream schools, there is a need for specific training on the learning difficulties experienced by the pupil they are employed to support, and on the most appropriate strategies, so as to equip classroom assistants to effectively support pupils.

**4.10.38** One non-teaching education professional reported, during interview, that there can be an assumption that very experienced CAs will be capable of adequately supporting any pupil, no matter what the complexities of the pupil's learning difficulties or learning support requirements. The informant suggested that there can be a perception in schools that CAs with years of experience do not require training to inform them as to how to support pupils. The respondent made reference to anecdotal evidence within the ELB concerned, which indicates that experienced CAs are no more likely to know how to meet the needs of a pupil who has specific and complex learning needs, than a CA who has recently taken up post. The respondent stressed the importance of specific training in relation to the pupil's learning difficulties and support requirements for CAs who are employed to support pupils in their learning. Furthermore, the respondent stressed the need for regular updating of training, in order to adequately equip CAs to support effectively pupils as they grow and develop.

**4.10.39** One non-teaching education professional interviewed reported that, for the most part, CAs, like teachers, are non-native Irish-speakers. While the IM sector is increasing the number of CAs it has, who are competent in the Irish as a result of Irish language study, there is a need for CAs to obtain SEN qualifications alongside developing their linguistic competence.

### **Obstacles to professional development**

**4.10.40** Respondents to the qualitative questionnaire were asked to provide details of any obstacles which have hindered them from accessing professional development on SEN. Responses from pre-school, primary and post-primary phases indicate a number of recurrent factors common to all three phases. Issues common to the pre-school and primary and post-

primary phases include: finding substitute cover; the suitability of the times and days of the courses; lack of time to attend courses; and lack of suitable courses.

### IM pre-school phase

**4.10.41** The factors most often cited as restrictions to training in the pre-school sector were the suitability of times and days of training courses and finding substitute cover in the pre-school. Figure 4.10.13, below, shows the percentage breakdown of references made to factors which restricted access to training as reported by the respondents from the pre-school sector.

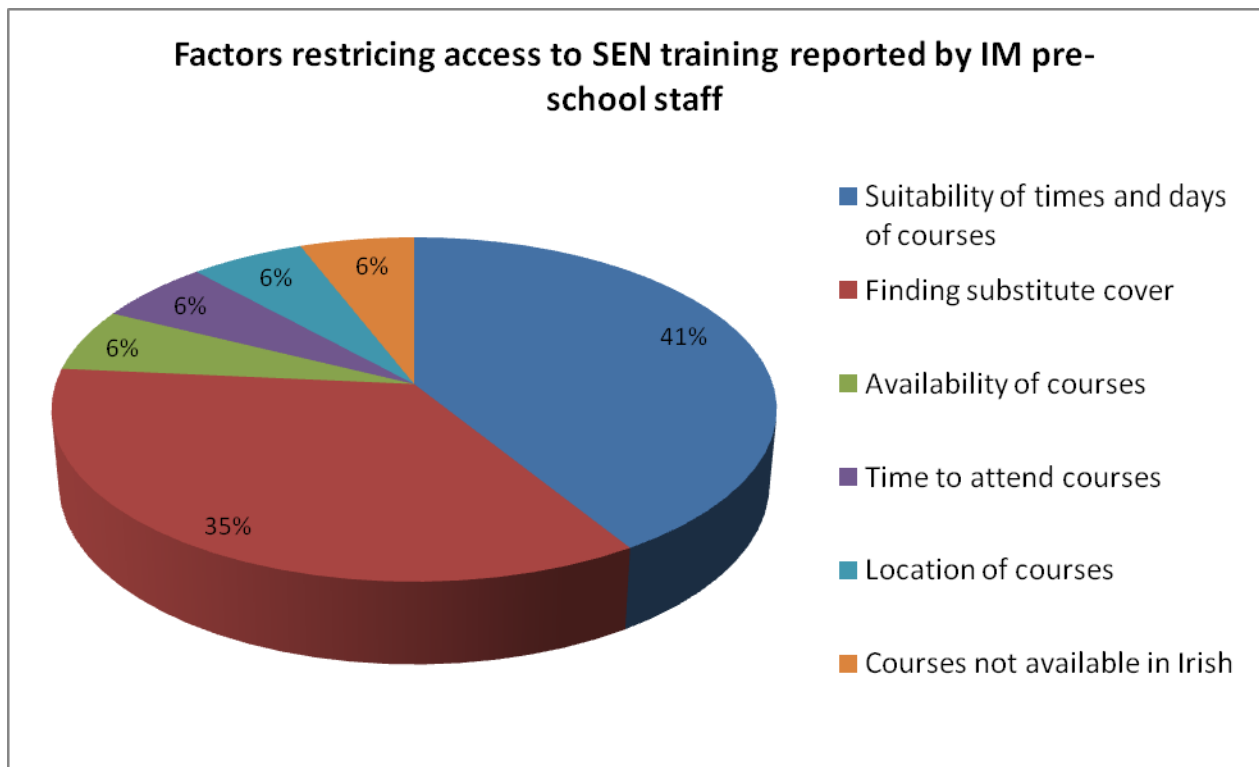


Figure 4.10.13

Figure 4.10.13, above shows that the day and time of professional development courses and finding substitute cover are the most frequently cited obstacles to professional development in the area of SEN in the IM pre-school phase (41% and 35%, respectively). Other obstacles cited by respondents include the availability of courses for the pre-school staff (6%), time to attend

courses (6%), the location of courses (6%), and a lack of professional development courses in Irish designed for the IM pre-school phase (6%).

### Primary and post-primary phases

**4.10.42** With regard to access to training on SEN, 27% of respondents from the primary and post-primary phases, including some who had indicated access to formal SEN training, made reference to factors restricting their access to professional development in SEN. The most frequently cited factors are finding substitute cover; time to attend training; and the availability of suitable courses. Figure 4.10.14, below, shows the breakdown of responses from IM primary and post-primary respondents in relation to factors which restrict their access to professional development in the area of SEN.

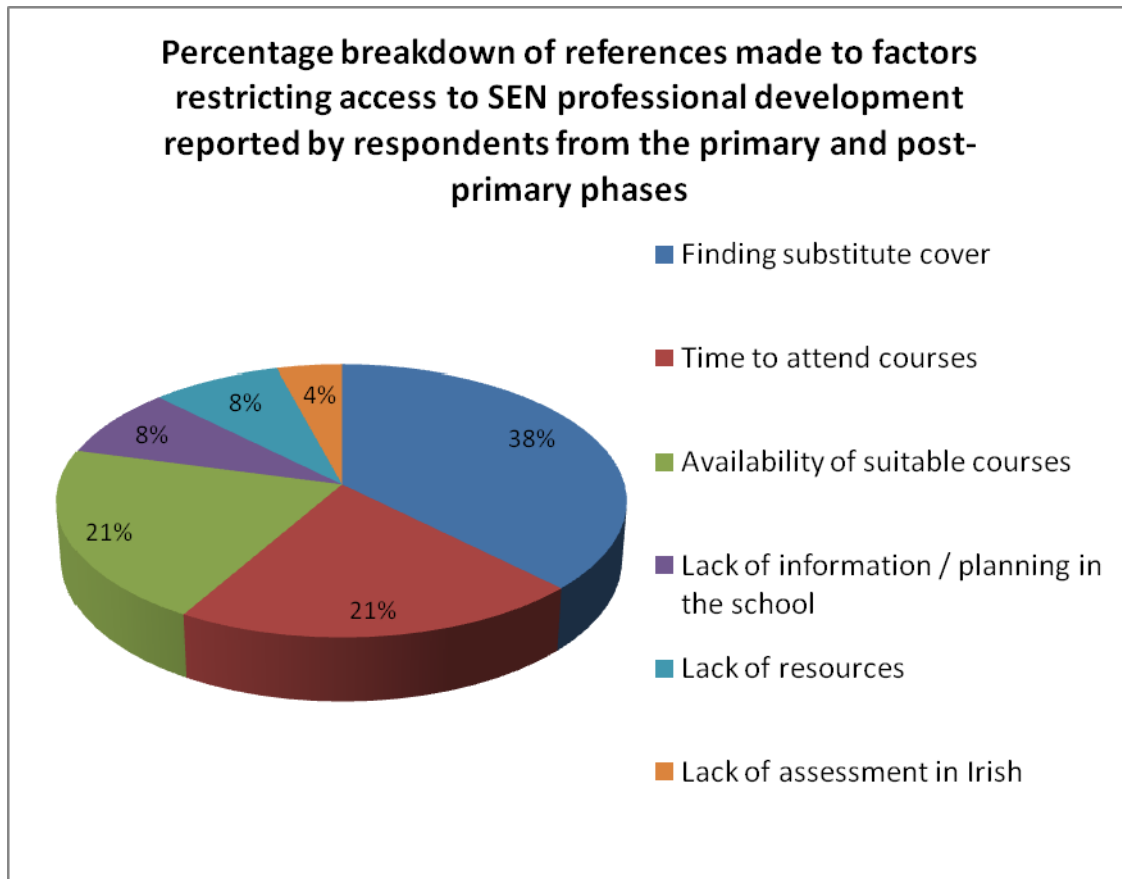


Figure 4.10.14

Figure 4.10.14, above, shows the percentage breakdown of references made to factors restricting access to training / professional development, reported by those who indicated that they had received some level of formal training and / or professional development, and those who reported that they had not received formal training / professional development on SEN. Contained in the category entitled 'availability of suitable courses' are respondents who reported receiving their ITE for the post-primary level, in which provision for SEN was not covered. Also included in this category is a response from a school principal who reported that the majority of professional development courses are designed with class teachers in mind. The respondent reported that he/she prefers to release class teachers to attend professional development courses on SEN.

### Data from interview and focus groups

**4.10.43** The issue of accessing professional development courses in the area of SEN was also discussed during focus group discussion. Some focus group participants mentioned the difficulty in finding and financing substitute teachers, particularly in small schools. Focus group participants from rural schools highlighted a difficulty in accessing professional development courses in other towns and cities, even after school hours, owing to the need to travel, sometimes long distances, to attend courses.

### Classroom assistants

**4.10.44** Figure 4.10.15, below, shows the percentage breakdown of references made to factors which have restricted access to training reported by classroom assistants.

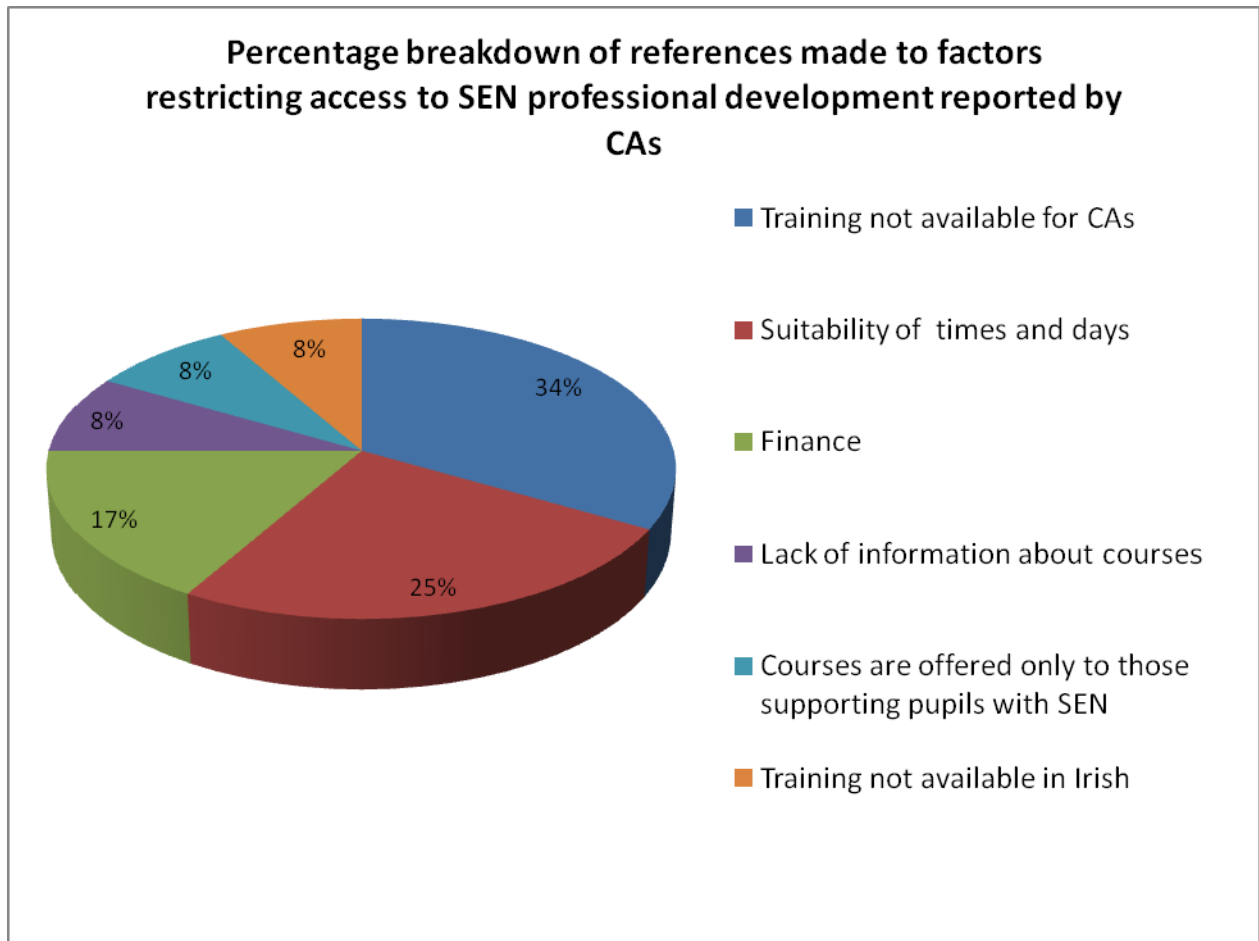


Figure 4.10.15

Figure 4.10.15, above, shows that the three most frequently cited factors which restrict access to training on SEN are lack of availability of training courses for classroom assistants, the suitability of the times and days of training courses for classroom assistants who work during school hours and finance either as a result of budgetary issues within the school or personal financial issues if the classroom assistant wishes to undergo training outside of school hours.

Some of the comments made by respondent include:

<p><b><i>‘Níor chuala mé faoi chúrsaí ar an ábhar seo, ach ba mhaith liom dul má tá siad ar fáil. Bheadh sé úsáideach dul chuig scoil eile le feiceáil cad é mar a chuidíonn daoine eile páistí le sainriachtanais oideachais.’</i></b></p>	<p><i>‘I haven’t heard about any courses on this subject, but I would like to attend if they are available. It would be useful to go to another school to see how other people help children with SEN.’</i></p>
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*‘Lack of availability of such training in the local area. Maybe the school could bring the training to us or the ELB could provide some such training.’*

*'The education board provides very little training for classroom assistants.'*

*'Money. Certain courses available part-time/full-time outside of working hours.'*

### Summary of main points

**4.10.45** The data show that a high percentage of IM pre-school staff and primary and post-primary teachers have received some form of training on SEN (4.10.7).

Very high percentages of respondents found SEN training useful (4.10.17).

While respondents reported the training received to be useful, they highlighted a need for regular, IM-specific training to equip them to identify and make appropriate provision for pupils who require additional help in the context of the IM immersion education sector (4.10.17-20).

Non-teaching educational professionals purport that the language of delivery of courses ought not to prevent IM teachers from attending courses, that courses are generic and that strategies can be adapted to the IM situation (4.10.14).

The percentage of CAs who reported that they had received SEN-related training is smaller than the percentage of IM pre-school staff and primary and post-primary teachers (4.10.7).

Responses from CAs and teachers indicate a need for SEN training for CAs, particularly SEN classrooms who are employed to provide specific support to pupils experiencing SEN. The data highlight access to SEN training as a key issue for IM pre-school staff, primary and post-primary teachers and CAs.

### Pre-school sector respondents

75% of leaders and assistants have received SEN training, almost half as part of NVQ training but also from a number of training providers (4.10.8-10).

Almost all of them found the SEN training useful (4.10.18).

They recognise that staff training is an important challenge to the pre-school (4.10.22).

The day and time of courses and finding suitable cover are the most frequently cited obstacles to SEN professional development. (4.10.41)

### Primary respondents

The most frequently cited professional development is during ITE. (4.10.10)

75% had received formal training on SEN. (4.10.12)

Training in Reading Recovery English and Irish should be available for more IM teachers. (4.10.30)

### Post-primary respondents

Primary teachers have availed of a wider range of training providers than their post-primary colleagues (4.10.11).

90% of them received professional development in SEN (4.10.12).

### Primary and post primary

The principal outcome was an improved understanding of the needs of pupils (4.10.19).

Training did not take IM situation into account, was more theoretical than practical was not followed up according to the 12% of primary and 8% of post-primary respondents who found it wanting in some way (4.10.19).

Need exists for training in early identification of SEN in IM education with the bilingual dynamic and in the range of complexities within the immersion context and in strategies for meeting the needs of pupils (4.10.27).

The biggest obstacles to professional development are finding substitute cover, time to attend training and availability of suitable courses (4.10.42).

Accessing professional development courses even after school hours is difficult due to need to travel sometimes long distances (4.10.43).

### Non-teaching professionals

IM teachers need to encouraged to avail of ELB opportunities for SEN training. (4.10.32-3)

Although training is in English, it is relevant in equipping teachers with holistic skills to help those who need specialised help (4.10.33).

### CA respondents



Responses from CAs and teachers indicate a need for SEN training for CAs, particularly SEN classrooms who are employed to provide specific support to pupils experiencing SEN. The data highlight access to SEN training as a key issue for IM pre-school staff, primary and post-primary teachers and CAs. CAs desire training in order to improve provision for SEN pupils, a point also highlighted by teachers in the sector and educational professionals (4.10.35, 36 and 38).

CAs need training in the learning difficulties of SEN IM pupils and appropriate strategies (4.10.37).

The obstacles to them developing themselves in SEN issues: availability of courses for CAs, the times and days of courses, school budget or personal financial matters (4.10.44).

## **Section 4.11: Resources for SEN**

**4.11.1** This section looks at the issue of resources for SEN in the IM sector. The responses of participants in the questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and case studies, indicate that the issue of adequate and appropriate resourcing for SEN is viewed by teachers and IM pre-school staff to be a significant priority area.

The section is divided into two main areas:

(1) financial and human resources; (4.11.1-18)and

(2) educational resources. (4.11.19-38)

### **1. Financial and human resources**

#### **Pre-school phase**

#### **Funding and financial resources for IM pre-schools**

**4.11.2** Respondents from the pre-school phase frequently raised the issue of funding and the challenges brought about by limited funding. The two main areas affected by funding, as indicated by respondents, are:

- the provision of educational resources; and
- staffing levels in the setting.

Of the responses supplied regarding resourcing needs in the IM pre-school, 28% of responses indicated a need for funding for resources.

During interview, representatives of the IM pre-school sector made reference to a lack of funding for IM pre-schools. One interviewee commented that funding for IM pre-schools is often sporadic, which impacts on the provision of resources and staffing levels in the pre-school. Furthermore, the informant reported that accessing funding from various bodies requires time and skills, which pre-school leaders and/or voluntary committees may not necessarily possess.

### Recruitment of staff in the IM pre-school setting

**4.11.3** The qualitative questionnaire for IM pre-school staff asked participants to detail their needs in relation to additional staff in the setting. Of the responses supplied by IM pre-school staff, 44% of respondents indicated that they need additional assistance in the setting. In response to the same question, 13% of respondents reported that assistance is available to them, but not through the medium of Irish.

**4.11.4** IM pre-school leaders were asked in the qualitative questionnaire to provide details on how factors such as funding, Irish language competence, contracted hours, and the qualifications impinge on the recruitment of staff in the pre-school. Responses from leaders indicated some difficulties in recruiting adequately skilled staff for the pre-school. Respondents reported that working in an IM pre-school setting requires proficiency in two distinct skill areas; relevant experience and/or qualifications in childcare and proficiency in Irish. With regard to staff Irish language competence, IM pre-school leaders stressed the importance of a high standard of Irish. Responses indicate a consensus of opinion amongst leaders that a high standard of Irish is necessary for the children's acquisition of Irish and full participation and development. Some respondents reported difficulties in finding suitably qualified candidates who fulfil both the childcare and Irish language aspects of the position. One IM pre-school leader, for example, commented,

*'[It is] very hard to find staff that have good competency in Gaeilge – staff maybe have good qualifications but no Irish or vice versa.'*

**4.11.5** Responses provided by representatives of the IM pre-school sector, during interview, support those made by IM pre-school in relation to the recruitment of staff for IM pre-schools. Informants reported that while IM pre-schools may be able to recruit additional staff, there is a much greater difficulty in recruiting staff who are adequately skilled, and are competent in the Irish language. Respondents reported that IM pre-schools can be left with no option but to employ staff with little or no knowledge of Irish.

**4.11.6** In relation to staff language competence, 14% of leaders reported that members of staff who do not have sufficient knowledge of Irish have to rely on members of staff who speak Irish, which places an additional responsibility on members of staff who have a greater proficiency in Irish. Furthermore, 14% of leaders reported that members of staff who do not have sufficient Irish are often expected to attend Irish classes in their own time, and at their own expense. With regard to adequate childcare qualifications, 7% of pre-school leaders made reference to members of staff obtaining childcare qualifications through night classes. Responses from IM pre-school leaders indicate that they felt that the financial remuneration for staff did not reflect the range of skills required to do the job.

**4.11.7** Of the responses from IM pre-school leaders, 21% of leaders made reference to a high rate of staff turnover, resulting in difficulties in making long-term plans for the pre-school and/or for individual pupils. Some of the comments made by pre-school leaders include:

*'Wages paid to staff do not encourage staff to remain in post or to fully develop their full potential.'*

*'It confuses children and disillusion parents as to why staff keeps changing.'*

One pre-school leader expressed the view that some employees regard their position in the IM pre-school as a transition post, in order to gain experience in a pre-school setting, to enable them to progress to employment in an English medium setting.

Another respondent raised the issue of the length of time taken to have new members of staff vetted. The respondent reported that the time lapse between the appointment of a new member of staff and their taking up post has, in the past, led newly appointed members of staff to return to their previous job, or find other employment.

#### **Impact on SEN provision**

**4.11.8** Responses from IM pre-schools indicate that financial and human resource difficulties can, in some instances, impact on the level of SEN provision some IM pre-schools are able to provide, at the present time.

Representatives of the IM pre-school phase, who participated in interview, commented that while IM pre-school staff may be aware of the needs of a child, and plan accordingly, it can be difficult for staff to implement these plans if they do not have the necessary practical, financial and human resources to meet the child's needs.

Some focus group participants from IM-pre-schools reported that they have identified a need to provide additional support to individual children in the setting, but that the current staff-child ratio in their setting does not allow for one to one support for individual pupils.

IM pre-school leaders were asked how recruitment difficulties influence provision for SEN in the pre-school, if at all. Some of the following comments were made by respondents.

***'Más rud é go mbíonn oibríthe ag teacht agus ag imeacht an t-am ar fad, ní thig rud ar bith fiúntach nó fadtréimhseach a dhéanamh maidir le sainriachtanais oideachais, nó rud ar bith eile!'***

*'If workers are coming and going all the time, you cannot do anything worthwhile or long-term concerning SEN, or anything else!'*

*'Children are not given enough time or quality of care, as staff are under pressure from staff shortage, due to funding or sickness.'*

*[We are] 'Constantly training staff on other areas of the curriculum i.e. policies, observations, planning evaluations, which need to be done daily, so SEN training can take a low priority which is very wrong but we have little choice.'*

## Primary and post-primary phases

**4.11.9** Respondents from the primary and post-primary phases referred to the influence of funding issues on the level of SEN provision in IM schools. The issue of adequate funding for SEN provision was raised by questionnaire respondents and interview and focus group participants. Some of the responses made by respondents to the questionnaire suggest that the provision which schools are currently able to make for pupils with SEN is restricted by school budget.

In responding to why he/she had rated current provision for SEN in the IM sector as unsatisfactory, one questionnaire respondent commented;

<b><i>‘Ó thaobh mo thaithí féin de (i nGaelscoileanna) ní raibh tacaíocht ná áiseanna curtha ar fáil do mhúinteoirí a bhí ag teagasc daltaí le sainriachtanais mar gheall ar “easpa airgid”.’</i></b>	<b><i>‘From my experience (in IM schools) neither support nor resources were made available to teachers who were teaching pupils with special needs due to “a lack of money”.’</i></b>
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Focus group discussion and interviews with principals, SENCOs and SEN teachers also raised the issue of adequate funding to enable schools to provide appropriate support for pupils who require additional help with their education.

<b><i>[Tá gá le] ‘airgeadas breise a chur ar fáil don bhuiséad scoile le cuidiú le cumas na scoile freastal ar RSO.’</i></b>	<b><i>[There is need for] ‘additional finance to be made available for the school budget.’</i></b>
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<b><i>‘Baineann soláthar seirbhísí le hairgead.’</i></b>	<b><i>‘The provision of services is linked to money.’ ‘The provision of services relies on money.’</i></b>
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<b><i>‘Tá gá le níos mó airgid le múinteoirí sainriachtanais a fhostú.’</i></b>	<b><i>‘There is a need for more money to employ SEN teachers.’</i></b>
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**4.11.10** In the qualitative questionnaire for teachers, primary and post-primary school teachers were asked to suggest the main areas of SEN provision which might be improved by additional funding. Over half of respondents to the qualitative questionnaire for teachers (56%) made recommendations as to how additional funding might improve provision for SEN in IM

schools. Figure 4.11.1, below, shows the percentage breakdown of references made to recommendations, suggested by respondents.

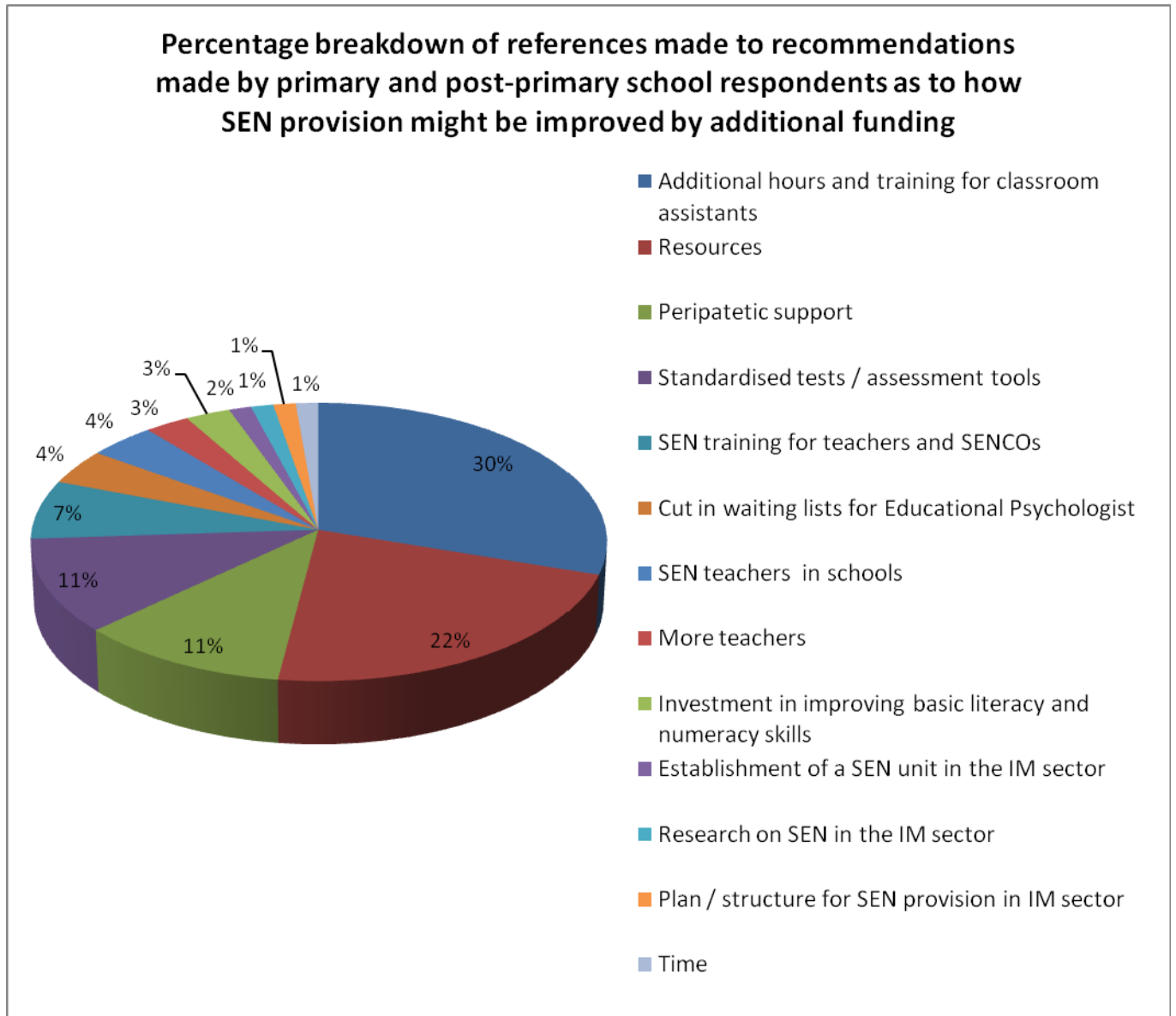


Figure 4.11.1

Figure 4.11.1, above, shows the most frequently cited area for improvement in respect of SEN should additional funding be made available is the facilitation of additional hours and further training for CAs (30%). The second largest area cited was the development and provision of resources (22%), and the third most frequently cited areas for improvement are provision of peripatetic support in Irish and the development of standardised assessment tools.

## Impact of budgetary concerns on provision of classroom assistants and SEN teachers

### Employment of classroom assistants

**4.11.11** Figure 4.11.1, above, shows that 30% of the responses supplied by primary and post-primary school teachers as to how provision for SEN in the IM sector might be improved with additional funding, refers to an increase in the contracted hours of, and SEN training for, classroom assistants. Principals and teachers, in their responses to the qualitative questionnaire, emphasised the importance of a high standard of Irish amongst CAs in the IM sector to ensure linguistic continuity in the class, to provide an additional source of spoken language in the classroom and to maintain the ethos of the school.

**4.11.12** Similar to the position of IM pre-school staff, however, it was reported that there is a dearth of qualified CAs proficient in the Irish language, and that it can, in some cases, be difficult to fill positions. One principal expressed their appreciation that their CAs were all fluent Irish speakers. Two principals of IM units expressed the view that a suitably qualified candidate with the correct skills can develop Irish language competence once in post.

**4.11.13** Principals were asked how recruitment difficulties in the school impacted on SEN provision in the school. While the majority of principals indicated that recruitment difficulties had not had negatively impinged on SEN provision in the school, one principal expressed the view that such difficulties can give the impression that the EM sector is better equipped to meet the needs of pupils with SEN.

**4.11.14** In their responses to the qualitative questionnaire, school principals reported that the provision of CAs and SEN teachers in schools is heavily reliant on funding from ELBs, or on the school budget. Some principals highlighted the challenges posed to the school in providing additional support to pupils who require it, if SEN CAs are funded for part of the day only.

**4.11.15** During in-depth interviews with representatives of six IM primary schools, one principal reported employing CAs on a full-time or on a part-time basis out of the school budget on a number of occasions, in order to meet the needs of pupils who had not been provided with a CA by the ELB, or to meet the needs of the pupil in the interim period whilst waiting for a CA to be appointed.

### Deployment of SENCOs and SEN teachers

**4.11.16** More peripatetic support (11%), SEN teachers in IM schools (4%) and more teachers in the IM sector (3%) were also reported amongst recommendations by respondents as to how provision for SEN might be improved by additional funding. Focus group participants from small, rural IM schools commented that they were unable to provide additional support,

through the medium of Irish, on a withdrawal basis for pupils who require it, owing to personnel limitations in the IM school.

**4.11.17** Interviews with principals and SENCOs provided information on the deployment of SEN teachers / SEN teachers in some IM schools, to work, on an individual or small group basis, with pupils requiring additional help and support. Four of the five settings involved in in-depth interview, for example, currently provide a SEN teacher on a full-time, or part-time, basis in addition to the school SENCO. Interview participants stressed, however, that such provision is reliant on the school budget. There is evidence from in-depth interview and interview with school SENCOs that some schools have, in the past, and been able to release the school SENCO on a full-time or part-time basis to work with pupils individually, or in small groups and to prepare appropriate resources, but that this option had to be withdrawn owing to budgetary restraints within the schools.

**4.11.18** During interview, a quarter of non-teaching education professionals interviewed raised the issue of provision of peripatetic or outreach support, through the medium of Irish, for pupils who require additional help with their learning. One informant reported that IM schools are often small and that, as a result, there are no additional teachers in the school to facilitate the release of teachers to work with pupils who require additional support with their Irish literacy, on an individual or small group basis.



## 2. Educational resources

### Pre-school phase

**4.11.19** Responses from IM pre-school respondents in relation to resources can be classified into two principal categories;

- general educational resources for IM pre-schools; (4.11.20-26) and
- SEN-specific resources (4.11.27-38)

### General educational resources

**4.11.20** Respondents from the IM pre-school phase emphasised an overall need for resources in order to implement curriculum guidance in their settings. Respondents were asked to detail their needs in the pre-school in respect of resources. Of the responses provided by IM pre-school staff, 50% of the responses provided made reference to a lack of resources, 28% referred to a need for adequate funding for resources and 17% of the responses referred to a need for appropriate accommodation. While some respondents indicated that they had the advantage of being able to share resources with their neighbouring IM primary school, others reported that they had to share their accommodation, which required packing and unpacking their resources every day.

### SLT resources

**4.11.21** Interviews and focus group discussions indicated that some IM pre-schools are accessing and using SLT resources in Irish. Some respondents made reference to using SLT resources which have been produced in, or adapted for, use in Irish by their visiting speech and language therapist, in partnership with the members of staff in the pre-school.

Respondents from one IM pre-school reported using *Málaí Teanga (Language Bags)* which the pre-school has recently produced, when working on speech and language, both in the pre-school setting and in the home with parents. The respondents also reported using Irish language SLT resources published by Black Sheep Press (Black Sheep Press, 2008) and other speech and language resources which they have translated, in partnership with the speech and language therapist. These resources are used by the visiting speech and language therapist with the support of a member of the pre-school staff.

### Creation of resources in IM pre-school setting

**4.11.22** There is, however, evidence that IM pre-school staff continue to produce their own resources to meet the needs of pupils within the setting. Representatives of the IM pre-school phase who took part in interview and focus group discussion reported that pre-school staff spend a considerable amount of time creating resources for use in the pre-school. The resources mentioned by respondents include games, books, and visual timetables in Irish.

### Educational and SEN-specific resources required

**4.11.23** For the most part, respondents from IM pre-schools reported a need for general educational resources in Irish to support the implementation of the curriculum. They cited a need for greater range of Big Books, resources to implement the 'World Around Us' theme at pre-school level, games, CDs, and outdoor equipment.

In respect of SEN-specific respondents to the qualitative questionnaire and focus group participants, reported a need for large print books and visual timetables in Irish.

### Primary and post-primary phases

**4.11.24** Participants from both the primary and post-primary levels frequently highlighted the issue of resources. While the types of resources required by the two sectors differ, the need for appropriate resources was reported by respondents from both primary and post-primary settings.

**4.11.25** A lack of resources in Irish was the most frequently mentioned reason as to why participants felt provision for SEN in the IM sector was unsatisfactory. Responses indicate that 28% of the references made to explain why provision was rated as unsatisfactory, related to a lack of resources in Irish. In relation to how SEN provision in the IM sector might be improved with additional funding, 22% of the responses recommended additional resources. Of the additional comments made by respondents to the qualitative questionnaire, 21% of respondents made reference to a need for resources for SEN. Of the responses provided to explain why services from SEN professionals were rated as unsatisfactory, 19% of the responses related to a lack of appropriate resources in Irish for professionals to use when working with pupils who require additional support.

### Current resources

**4.11.26** Primary and post-primary teachers, participant in focus group discussion and interviews, indicated that they are, for the most part, satisfied with the generic resources in Irish available to them at the present time. Participants in the focus groups made reference to *Céim ar Chéim (An tÁisaonad)*, *National foundation for Educational Research (NfER) Maths* (National foundation for Educational Research) and the Irish phonics scheme, *Fónaic na Gaeilge* (BELB, 2005) and *Áis Mheasúnaithe sa Luathlitearthacht* (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007) as good examples of the resources available in Irish.

### SEN specific resources

**4.11.27** Participants, however, expressed a need for a greater range and variety of resources to meet the needs of pupils who are working at differing levels. Teachers raised concerns about the appropriateness of the currently available resources for pupils with learning difficulties.

In some cases, teachers who are currently using resources in Irish, such as *Fónaic na Gaeilge* (BELB, 2005) and *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 2002), said that they felt the schemes were not quite as effective, nor as enjoyable, for the pupils, as there was not the same range and variety of support materials available to them in Irish. One SEN teacher reported working with pupils in

English more often, owing to the lack of resources for SEN in Irish. Another respondent from the primary sector made the comment that,

<i>'Tá i bhfad níos mó áiseanna i mBéarla do na fónaic. Baineann na páistí níos mó suilt as na rudaí seo ná na rudaí Gaeilge mar tá siad ag an chaighdeán ceart.'</i>	<i>'There are far more resources in English for the phonics. The children enjoy these things more than the Irish ones because they are at the correct standard.'</i>
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**4.11.28** Some teachers highlighted dialectal differences in vocabulary and grammatical structure in the reading material available to them at present, and reported that such differences place an additional burden on pupils who are experiencing difficulties with Irish literacy. Participants in focus group and interview stressed the importance of the language used in resources, both at primary and post primary level. Respondents reported that difficult or complex language and/or language with which pupils are not familiar, can create difficulties for able pupils, and that such difficulties will, therefore, be magnified amongst pupils who are experiencing learning difficulties. Teachers and non-teaching education professionals pointed out that, for this reason, graded reading books in English cannot simply be translated into Irish, in order to create a graded reading scheme in Irish. They stressed the importance of adapting resources for use in the IM sector, as opposed to being translating material from English into Irish.

#### Data supplied by educational psychologists

**4.11.29** As reported in section 4.3, 75% of educational psychologists reported that the provision of resources in Irish would be beneficial in order to support pupils from the IM sector who require additional support. In addition to the development of standardised assessment materials in Irish (reported in section 4.5.12), the following resources were cited by respondents in response to the type of resources in Irish would be beneficial in meeting the needs of pupils in IM schools:

- Visual timetables;
- Target charts;
- Visual cue cards;
- Posters of expected noise levels;
- Self-esteem and behaviour checklists;
- Boardmaker®;
- Translation software;
- Key words;

- IQ tests; and
- Computer software.

With regard to visual timetables, posters of expected noise levels, target charts and self-esteem and behaviour checklists, one educational psychologist suggested that examples of the resources be supplied by educational psychology services and others, for example, resources providers or translators could translate or adapt the resources into Irish.

### Irish literacy resources

**4.11.30** Respondents to the questionnaires, focus groups and interviews made frequent reference to a need for a graded reading scheme in Irish. Respondents reported a need for a reading scheme which would be used to support children in acquiring the necessary decoding skills, focus on high frequency words and provide opportunities for word repetition. Focus group discussion involving primary school teachers, interviews with SENCOs and SEN teachers and interviews with non-teaching education professionals reported a need for a reading scheme in Irish. In addition to equipping pupils with decoding skills in Irish, respondents made reference to a need for continuity of reading material in Irish. Respondents reported that a reading scheme in Irish would provide learners with continuity in their literacy development.

<p><i><b>‘an rud is mó atá de dhíth ar dhaoine ná scéim struchtúrtha don léitheoireacht; scéim a thugann aird ar fhocail simplí a éiríonn níos deacra de réir a chéile. Credimse féin go gcaithfidh níos mó bheith i gceist ná athrá. Caithfidh an páiste bheith ábalta an focal a dhíchódú chomh maith, go bhfuil an tuiscint sin ann, go dtig leo féin focal a fheiceáil nach bhfaca siad riamh roimhe, ach go bhfuil siad ábalta é a bhriseadh síos agus é a rá iad féin gan chuidiú. Sin an sprioc. Ba mhaith linn léitheoirí neamhspleácha a dhéanamh de pháistí in áit liostaí focal a thabhairt daofa le foghlaim de ghlan mheoir.’</b></i></p>	<p><i>‘the thing which people need most is a structured scheme for reading; a scheme which focuses on simple words which gradually get more difficult. I believe that there has to be more involved than repetition. The child has to be able to decode the word as well, that they have that understanding, that they can see a word they have never seen before, but they are able to break it down and say it themselves without help. That is the goal. We would like to make independent readers of children instead of giving them lists of words to learn off by heart.’</i></p>
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**4.11.31** Both primary and post-primary teachers participant in interviews and focus groups highlighted the need for suitable reading material for older pupils experiencing difficulties with reading. During focus group discussion, some teachers of KS2 and post-primary school pupils

reported having to resort to using reading books which were designed with younger pupils in mind, as they do not have access to books in Irish designed to support older pupils with reading difficulties, in a way which is motivating and relevant to their learning outcomes.

## Spelling

**4.11.32** During focus groups, teachers in primary and post-primary schools highlighted a need for a spelling scheme for IM schools. Representatives of the post-primary sector felt that a spelling scheme introduced in IM primary schools would benefit pupils' literacy development when they reach the post-primary school phase.

## Other recommended resources

**4.11.33** Other resources suggested during focus groups and interviews with SENCOs, SEN teachers and non-teaching education professionals include:

- A wider and more varied range of Big Books;
- Support resources for the Revised Curriculum; and
- ICT software including software for interactive whiteboards.

Teachers at four of the focus group meetings reported that the computer was an excellent motivator for pupils. With regard to pupils requiring additional support, they reported that the use of ICT in the classroom allowed pupils to work independently, offered pupils the opportunity to re-enforce classwork at their own pace, and provided instant correction and praise.

## Creation of resources

**4.11.34** There was a general consensus from SENCOs, SEN teachers interviewed and primary and post-primary teachers who participated in focus group discussions that teachers in both the primary and the post-primary phase spend a significant amount of time preparing and adapting resources. All of the IM primary school representatives, who participated in in-depth interview, reported that teachers in the school create resources in Irish. Some of the resources cited include language and literacy board games, worksheets and a compilation of first, second and third one hundred words in Irish.

**4.11.35** Two of the schools concerned have created their own series of high quality, attractive graded reading books in Irish, to support children in their early literacy development, as well as supplementary resources to accompany the books. One interview participant also reported

that some IM schools have recently created their own programmes for use on the interactive whiteboard by composing text and recording sound.

**4.11.36** The informants reported the creation of handmade resources is very time-consuming for teachers and classroom assistants. One informant reported that instructions for the resources must be bilingual to enable parents to support their children at home, which adds to the workload involved in the creation of resources.

#### Data provided by resource providers

**4.11.37** Educational resources in Irish for the IM primary and post-primary phase are adapted and produced by An tÁisaonad (the Irish Medium Resource Unit), located in the ground of St Mary's University College, Belfast. An tÁisaonad is funded by the all-island Irish language body Foras na Gaeilge and has of a team of five members of staff. Information supplied during interview with a representative of An tÁisaonad indicated the challenges of providing resources for the primary and post-primary phases, and that the provision of resources to support the implementation of the Revised Curriculum with a limited staff, influences the provision of SEN-specific resources in Irish for pupils in the IM sector who require specialised resources to meet their needs.

#### Current provision of resources in Irish

**4.11.38** During focus group discussions, teachers familiar with the support services of one outreach centre indicated their appreciation of the resources provided by them. Teachers welcomed resources which they did not have to translate. Although some resources still have to be translated, teachers appreciated the centre's willingness to provide resources in Irish, where possible, and to work with schools in providing further material for future use in IM schools.

#### Summary

Adequate and appropriate resourcing for SEN is seen as a significant need in the IM sector. (4.11.1)

#### Pre-school respondents

Almost half indicated that additional assistance in the setting was needed. (4.11.3)

Respondents generally see their greatest needs as resources to support their work, funding for resources and appropriate accommodation. (4.11.20; 4.11.23)

They are challenged in recruiting suitably qualified staff with childcare qualifications and Irish language proficiency. (4.11.4-5)

Those who are recruited with a less than desirable level of Irish proficiency can burden other staff. (4.11.6)

High rate of turnover in staff militates against long-term plans concerning SEN. (4.11.7-8)

### Primary and post-primary respondents

Budgetary issues and funding influence the type and quality of provision that schools can make for SEN pupils. (4.11.9)

Additional hours and training for CAs (30%), resources (22%), peripatetic support (11%) and standardised tests/assessment tools (11%) are cited as the four major areas for improvement in respect of SEN. (4.11.10)

For the most part, satisfaction with generic resources in Irish was indicated however, the significant need for Irish language resources in SEN provision specifically and in terms of use in classroom and by professionals working with IM pupils who require additional help is highlighted. (4.11.24-5; 4.11.27)

Access to materials designed to support older pupils who experience difficulties in the acquisition of literacy skills was highlighted. (4.11.31)

There remains a need for a graded reading scheme in Irish which would promote decoding, recognition of high-frequency words and would involve word repetition. (4.11.30; 4.11.32)

Those experiencing difficulties in their learning need to be considered in the type of language used in resources for the IM sector. (4.11.28)

The computer was widely highlighted as a great motivator for SEN children in the IM sector. (4.11.33)

There still are significantly less support materials available in Irish for SEN than there are available in English. (4.11.27)

Few qualified CAs with Irish language proficiency are available. (4.11.12)

Often adequate provision for SEN is heavily reliant on school budget. (4.11.17)



Teachers still spend a significant amount of time and energy in creating resources including SEN resources. (4.11.34)

### **Education professionals**

A quarter raised the issue of peripatetic or outreach support, through the medium of Irish, for pupils who require additional help with their learning. (4.11.18)

## Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

### Conclusion

**5.1** This research project aims to provide data on current provision for pupils in the IM sector who require additional support with their learning. It seeks to identify the specific needs of children and young people in the IM sector who experience SEN and to identify the needs of their parents, to make recommendations concerning support structures within the relevant education and other agencies which impinge on the quality of learning and provision for SEN pupils in the IM sector, to inform future planning in the area of SEN, to raise awareness among professionals regarding the needs of Irish-speaking children and young people, and provide a benchmark for them in their efforts to meet the needs of children and young people who require additional support.

**5.2** The findings of the study, presented in chapter 4, provide data on the areas of SEN provision outlined in the research aims including the number of pupils in the IM sector who have been identified as experiencing SEN; current in-school practices and provision of external support services for pupils who require additional support; and, training and support for teachers and pre-school staff in the IM sector in meeting the needs of pupils in their setting.

This conclusion contains a summary of the salient points raised in each section of the research findings.

### Summary of main findings

#### SEN in IM sector

**5.3** Incidence of SEN in the IM primary and post-primary phases reflect the overall incidence from other sectors in the north of Ireland (17%). The data indicate an under-representation and under-reporting of pupils at pre-school and post-primary school levels (5% and 14%, respectively). In respect of statements of SEN in the IM sector (almost 1%), the percentage of pupils with a statement of SEN is approximately four times smaller than the overall percentage of statements of SEN across all sectors (4%). The data, therefore, raise questions regarding identification and referral of pupils in the IM sector who experience needs requiring more specific, long-term support, and therefore, a statement of SEN.

**5.4** The most frequently reported categories of SEN in the IM primary and post-primary phases are moderate and mild learning difficulties (35% and 19%, respectively) and SEBD (15%). In the IM pre-school phase the most frequently reported category of SEN is speech and

language difficulties (59%). The data show that ASD is the most frequently reported category of SEN for which pupils have received a statement. ASD represents 39% of the statements of SEN in the IM sector. The current trends in instances of SEN in the IM sector identified in the present research report will have implications for the provision of professional development for IM practitioners and for the provision of external support services to meet the needs of pupils in the IM sector who require additional support with their learning.

**5.5** The data indicate a higher percentage of pupils identified and recorded as experiencing SEN and a greater diversity of SEN in the IM primary phase than in the IM post-primary phase. There is a need for collaboration and communication between IM post-primary schools and their feeder primary schools and indeed EM post-primary schools and to ensure future SEN provision at post-primary level is made based on the trends of SEN currently presenting in the IM primary phase.

### **Professional development for IM practitioners**

**5.6** The research findings highlight the high level of importance of the role of teachers and pre-school staff in the identification of SEN and appropriate provision of in-class support for pupils who require additional help with their learning. The need for support and professional development for staff is therefore key in the provision of appropriate support for pupils.

**5.7** While a high percentage of IM pre-school staff and primary and post-primary teachers have accessed formal training on SEN. The research findings highlight a need for further professional development for staff to build capacity within the IM sector to identify, assess, record, and report SEN and, to make adequate and appropriate provision for pupils who require additional help with aspects of their learning.

**5.8** The findings indicate that practitioners in the IM sector, particularly in small, recently established settings face obstacles in accessing regular, up to date professional development. Access to, and financing of substitute staff represent the greatest obstacles to professional development in the IM sector. Given that teachers and pre-school staff are central to the identification of SEN in the first instance and day to day provision of help and support it is vital that all barriers to professional development such as accessing and financing substitute staff to facilitate professional development are surmounted.

**5.9** Current programmes of professional development are not IM-specific in terms of equipping practitioners to provide appropriate support to pupils who experience SEN in the context of the IM immersion education sector. The research findings highlight a need for IM-specific professional development for staff in all phases in the area of SEN, which takes account of the learning experience of the pupil, the immersion education environment, the current challenges faced by practitioners in the IM sector regarding resourcing, assessment,

accommodation and personnel, and which provides practitioners with the appropriate skills and strategies to support pupils with learning difficulties, dyslexia, ASD, SEBD, and ADHD etc. in an immersion education programme.

### External support services for pupils

**5.10** The data show that, for the most part, IM primary and post-primary settings currently are accessing the generic SEN support services provided by ELBs. The vast majority of support services are made available through the medium of English.

**5.11** Respondents from the IM sector highlighted a lack of services in Irish, and a lack of understanding among service providers regarding the ethos and pedagogies of the IM sector.

**5.12** Providers themselves indicate some awareness of the potential benefits of improved awareness and understanding of the IM sector, its ethos and its pedagogies. Responses from educational psychologists, for example, highlight a willingness to avail of training on the IM sector should training be made available. There is clearly a need for professional development and awareness raising among support service providers in relation to IM immersion education and a need for support services which reflect pupils' learning experience.

### Support for IM practitioners

**5.13** Literature on the IM sector and the present research findings demonstrate that the IM sector has a higher percentage of newly and recently qualified teachers. The research findings highlight some of the uncertainties felt by young and newly qualified teachers in relation to provision for pupils experiencing SEN. While the findings identified support systems created by the sector to help and support new and recently qualified teachers on a formal basis through a mentoring scheme established by Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, and on an informal basis where teachers have the opportunity to contact more experienced teachers in their own school or, in another school when they require advice and support, there is clearly a need for guidance and support for newly and recently qualified teachers in IM schools.

**5.14** The research findings support data from literature that the IM sector has a high proportion of newly and recently qualified teachers, some of whom are working in small, recently established IM settings where they have little on-site support. Some practitioners in the IM sector are accessing professional support in respect of SEN; there is, therefore, a need for dissemination of information and awareness raising with regard to the generic sources of support available. For the most part, SEN-related advisory and support services are not IM-specific. IM-specific advice and support is available from the interboard, three-person IM CASS team and internally among IM settings both formally and informally. The findings show that IM practitioners are accessing support from the IM CASS team, particularly in the primary phase.

The IM CASS team's remit is, however, much broader than SEN support. There is, therefore, need for a greater level of IM-specific support for teachers and IM pre-school staff to assist them in the identification and assessment of, and provision for pupils who require additional support in the context of the IM immersion education programme.

### Support for parents

**5.15** The experience of parents whose children experience SEN demonstrate a need for support for parents during what is, a very difficult time. Parents who do not speak Irish reported that lack of proficiency in Irish can leave them feeling that they cannot support their children with their learning at home. Some parents indicated that they felt they were/are not sufficiently involved in provision for their children. Some parents reported that their decision to raise their children with Irish has, led to negative reactions from education and health professionals. They reported a need for greater understanding among professionals in relation to the advantages of bilingualism, immersion education programmes, and the reasons parents decide to raise their children with Irish in the home, or through the IM immersion education programme. There is clearly a need for a system of support to enable parents to help their children in the home and become more actively involved in their children's education and in the provision made to meet their needs. Respondents from the IM sector reported a need for greater understanding among education and health professionals with regard to the benefits of bilingualism, immersion education and the specific needs of Irish-speaking children who experience SEN. It is important that any work carried out to raise awareness of immersion education and bilingualism among professionals who provide external services to the IM sector takes account of the feelings and experiences of parents, the reasons they choose to raise their children with Irish either in the home and/or through IM immersion education.

### Assessment practices and materials

**5.16** There is evidence that IM primary and post-primary settings are employing the literacy and numeracy assessment materials available to them in Irish, and, in some cases, adapting assessment materials in English to assess pupils' progress.

**5.17** There currently exists no standardised means by which educational psychologists can assess pupils' Irish literacy development. The lack of assessment materials in Irish means that pupils from the IM sector are, for the most part, assessed through the medium of English using assessment materials which have been designed for monolingual English-speaking children.

**5.18** While educational psychologists reported that assessment of cognitive ability in English provides an accurate profile of pupils' ability for pupils whose first language is English, they highlighted the challenges posed to psychologists by the lack of materials by which to assess pupils' literacy development in Irish, the use of assessment materials which contain vocabulary

and instructions with which pupils may only be familiar in Irish, and the assessment of those pupils whose first language is Irish.

**5.19** Current assessment practices where pupils are assessed through the medium of English do not take account of pupils' bilingualism and risk failing to profile pupils' strengths as well as areas of weakness. The research findings indicate concerns among teaching practitioners and educational psychologists that the lack of assessment materials in Irish hinders teachers in providing statistical data on pupils' attainment to enable them to monitor progress and to make accurate, evidence-based referrals to the educational psychology service

**5.20** While teachers currently have access to some assessment materials in Irish to assess early Irish literacy development, there is clearly a need for ongoing development of assessment materials in Irish for all pupils including KS2 and post-primary level pupils. Teachers require standardised means of assessing pupils' Irish ability to enable them to monitor pupils' progress, to plan realistic targets, and to provide statistical data on pupils' progress as they progress through primary school to post-primary level.

### Resources for SEN

**5.21** The research findings indicate that teachers and pre-school staff invest a considerable amount of time creating resources for use on a whole-class basis, and resources designed to meet the specific needs of individual pupils. While the resources produced by schools highlight the diligence and creativity of practitioners in the IM sector, there is a need for further development of resources in order to remove some of the additional workload placed on practitioners by the need to design and create resources. IM settings are producing high-quality resources and the dissemination of school-produced resources throughout the sector may go some way in adding to the SEN resources currently available however previous attempts to encourage IM practitioners to pool resources have been largely unsuccessful,. In addition the findings identify a need for the further development of Irish literacy resources. However, there remains a need for a wider range of appropriate, professional, motivating, age-appropriate resources SEN support resources to meet the diverse spectrum of need in the IM sector including ASD, SEBD, ADHD, and partially sighted.

### Current provision

**5.22** The data indicate that current provision for pupils in the IM sector is commensurate with the financial and human resources available to a particular setting at a particular time. While IM settings are making great efforts to provide additional support and resources for pupils who require help with their learning and a small number of services in ELBs and health trusts available through the medium of Irish, there is no joined-up approach to SEN provision across the IM sector. There is a need for cross-sector and interdepartmental collaboration in order to

co-ordinate future provision for pupils in the IM sector who experience SEN. The provision of appropriate fit for purpose services will require a joined-up collaborative approach involving all key stakeholders. Recommendations for the development of a co-ordinated, collaborative approach to provision for pupils in the IM sector who experience SEN, to ensure the implementation of a high quality programme of appropriate support, are made in the section which follows.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### IRISH-MEDIUM SECTOR'S CAPACITY IN PROVIDING FOR SEN CHILDREN

#### **Recommendation 1: Awareness of Code of Practice Procedures**

SEN should be given an even higher priority across all phases in the IM sector. (4.1.2, 5-6, 8, 10)

#### **Recommendation 2: Placing pupils on SEN Register**

In consultation with SENCOs, IM teachers should ensure pupils are placed on Stage 1 of the Code of Practice at the point of concern, to ensure additional help, and a faster referral process to external support and in moving those pupils on who should move to Stages 4 and 5. (4.7-3, 15, 18; 4.7.18)

#### **Recommendation 3: Cross-phase/sector collaboration in IM sector**

There should be greater cross-phase and sector collaboration, liaison and sharing of information: for example in terms of expertise, approaches, strategies, planning, pooling of SEN resources, exploiting ICT as an excellent motivator in SEN pupils' learning and evaluating, on SEN issues on a cross-phase basis, among classroom assistants, CAs and SENCOs, teachers, SENCOs, heads of departments and principals in the IM sector. (4.1.2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10; 4.9.13; 4.11.33, 35)

#### **Recommendation 4: SENCOs in IM settings**

SENCOs should ensure effective dissemination of information on SEN issues and offer support to all staff. School structures should be established to ensure that SEN support in Irish is available in every IM setting, including the possibility of sharing SENCOs and SEN teachers. In those IM schools where the SENCO is not a member of the SMT, the SENCO should ensure, in cooperation with the principal, that SEN is given an appropriately high priority in the school (4.10.26; 4.6.2, 3, 4, 5).

## EXTERNAL PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY IN PROVIDING FOR THE IM SECTOR

### **Recommendation 5: DE policies on SEN in IM schools**

DE should ensure SEN-related policies are fit-for-purpose for the Irish medium sector. These SEN policies should be informed by SEN research and practices in immersion education internationally, utilise best practice, ensure support for parents of IM SEN children and promote informed decisions about IM SEN pupils' education. (4.2.9-16; 4.5.9; 4.8.20, 22, 19, 26).

### **Recommendation 6: The Review of SEN and Inclusion and further research**

DE should ensure that the needs of the IM sector are reflected, and taken account of in DE's ongoing Review of SEN and Inclusion.

### **Recommendation 7: Ensuring informed decisions about IM pupils**

DE should cooperate and collaborate on IM SEN issues with other governmental departments and service providers which influence the quality of IM pupils' learning and whose workers make or contribute to decisions on pupils with SEN, to ensure that those decisions are made on an informed basis. (4.8.14, 16, 19, 20, 22,).

### **Recommendation 8: Building capacity in support services**

DE should encourage and collaborate with ESA, to conduct audits on Irish language proficiency and knowledge of bilingual education among all SEN service providers to IM settings. They should ensure their services are fit-for-purpose and should take action to ensure they have sufficient capacity and have regard for children taught through the medium of Irish. (4.5.9, 20-23, 30).

### **Recommendation 9: Dissemination of best practice across phases in IM sector**

DE should encourage and collaborate with ESA to facilitate research-led CPD, communication and dissemination of best practice relating to identification and recording of SEN, referral and assessment procedures, among others, at all phases, through C2K and LNI including the utilisation of new media. (4.2.9, 10, 15; 4.5; 4.9.13-15; 4.10.).

### **Recommendation 10: Ensuring informed decisions in assessing SEN pupils in IM settings**

DE should encourage and collaborate with ESA in ensuring that decisions made about IM pupils who present with SEN are informed using a broad profile of assessment, to ensure equity of response between IM and EM sectors (4.2; 4.5; 4.3.15-16).

### **Recommendation 11: SEN in Teacher Education and in Classroom Assistant Training**



DE policy should collaborate with DEL in order to encourage HEIs to further develop ‘SEN studies on IM pathways’ in ITE programmes and in early teacher professional development.

There should be development of accredited development programmes for bilingual ancillary staff, to allow them to work alongside such providers as speech and language therapists and educational psychologists in IM settings; and for CAs to provide them with the necessary training in childcare, SEN, and the Irish language. (4.6.6, 8, 9; 4.3.39, 40, 49; 4.4.6-9, 19, 24-5; 4.10.16; 4.11.10,11,12; 4.3.33, 37, 50; 4.9.33, 35, 49; 4.10.31)

## PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

### **Recommendation 12: Coordinating IM teachers’ CPD with availability of Irish language SEN resources**

ESA should facilitate and coordinate the development of professional resources in Irish for EPD and CPD for IM teachers. ESA should ensure that resource providers are appropriately equipped, through ring-fenced resourcing, to adapt and create fit-for-purpose SEN support resources in Irish. (4.11.9, 20, 23, 24-5, 27)

### **Recommendation 13: Providing Irish language assessment tools**

DE should encourage resource providers to gather, assess and disseminate assessment materials currently in use in IM schools and should commission research into: producing standardised Irish language literacy assessment and diagnostic tools, perhaps on an all island basis, to meet pupils’ needs. These should include:

- a. curricular resources, including further development of a graded reading scheme in Irish and a spelling scheme in Irish;
  - b. specialized SEN resources to support pupils with ASD, SEBD, ADHD, partial sight , SLT resources; and
  - c. literacy and numeracy tools for the assessment of Irish language and literacy.
- (4.11.10,32; 4.3.5, 49; 4.2.7-18; 4.3.20, 25)

### **Recommendation 14: Creating SEN support materials for IM schools**

Resource providers should ensure they respond to the needs of the IM sector, including for SEN resources.(4.11.1, 10, 20, 23, 27, 31,34)

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## Appendix 1: Case study 1

My child had already begun her education through the medium of Irish when she was diagnosed with a health condition. The treatment resulted in her missing quite a lot of school. Her consultant recommended that she receive home tutoring in Irish in keeping with her education to date. After a number of visits and numerous phone calls, I was told that a teacher with Irish could not be provided for my daughter and was asked if a teacher without Irish be acceptable. I was getting concerned about finding a teacher for my daughter as well as worried about my daughter's health.

It was at this point that I suggested a friend of mine who is a qualified teacher. This suggestion was accepted by the home tutoring office and they agreed to pay for the teacher but not for travelling expenses. My friend accepted. As a result, my daughter received the five hours of tuition a week to which she was entitled.

My daughter did not attend school during the remainder of that school year. However, owing to the great work done by her teacher at home she was able to rejoin her classmates the following September. Since then the school has arranged home tutoring in Irish for my daughter on occasions when she has needed it.

I would like to highlight the issue of home tutoring for children in IM schools. I feel that this issue needs to be addressed for other children in IM schools who may need home tutoring as a result of illness. It is important that children, can continue their education in Irish at home so they can return to school when they are ready.

## Appendix 1: Case study 2

I became concerned about my daughter's reading quite early on. While school reports made reference to her difficulties in reading, I felt that she was not receiving enough support in school. Although I do not speak Irish, I attended a class one evening a week to help me to support my daughter at home. The time of the class was changed, however, and I was no longer able to attend. I discussed my concerns with the class teacher on a good number of occasions from Year 1 to Year 3 but I felt that my concerns were not addressed. I became really concerned when she began formal English in Year 4.

In Year 6, I asked to see the SEN teacher and asked for some tests to be done. I was told that tests had been done and that there was nothing wrong. I trusted that this was the case.

By Year 7, I was still concerned about my daughter's progress. I spoke to the principal about my concerns. The principal agreed that my daughter should be tested by an educational psychologist. The educational psychologist could not assess her ability in Irish, which would have been helpful. The assessment was carried out in English and her reading age in English was well below her actual age.

I feel really disappointed and frustrated that it took so long to have my daughter properly tested and her difficulties properly identified. I feel that my concerns were not listened to when I first raised them with the class teacher. As I do not speak Irish I was unable to help my daughter with her reading in Irish. I would have needed more support, as a parent, to allow me to support my daughter with her education.

### Appendix 1: Case study 3

My daughter began reading in English in Year 4. The class teacher informed me that she was having some difficulties and that they would keep an eye on her. In Year 5, after consultation with the class teacher it was decided that my daughter would receive additional help from the school SEN teacher. My daughter was assessed by an educational psychologist and was diagnosed with dyslexia. She was assessed in English only as the educational psychologist was unable to assess her in Irish. My daughter receives additional help from a peripatetic teacher, as well help from the school SEN teacher. She remains with the rest of her class for other subjects.

I am very happy with the school's ability to identify and deal with my daughter's needs. The school acted as soon as I expressed my concerns to them, and had an education plan in place for her from very early on. The school is well established and has an SEN teacher who works with small groups of pupils outside of the classroom.

The educational psychologist made the point that she would use English more, but my daughter has a real love of Irish and uses it because she wants to; she continues to read in both English and Irish. I did not consider moving her from this school to another because she would still have dyslexia, and I am very pleased with the work her own school has done for her. As well as that, her siblings and friends are at that school.

One difficulty I have is finding suitable resources to use with my daughter at home. The SEN teacher gave me a list of games and books and things that we could do at home but I have some difficulty in accessing these resources.

I also would recommend that educational psychologists provide an information pack for parents when their child is diagnosed with dyslexia so that they have a starting point to work from when supporting their child at home.

## Appendix 1: Case study 4

Our son has had some health problems since he was born. Despite these difficulties, he was able to attend IM pre-school for two years. When the time came for him to transfer to primary school, we had decided that we would like him to attend the local gaelscoil. At the time, also, there was an advertising campaign running on the television which was encouraging mainstream education over special schools. We wanted our son to go to a mainstream school as we wanted him to lead a normal a life as possible. It was at this stage that problems began to arise.

As our son has special needs the education board wanted to consult with us to discuss our son's education. At the meeting were representatives from a number of different bodies. We felt that it was quite intimidating as there were more of them than there were of us. With us were the school principal and a member of the school committee. We felt that we had little support. The risk assessor assessed the school and the playground and said that it would be unsuitable for our son. They did not take into account the changes that the school were willing to make to accommodate our son. We felt that that pressure was being put on us to send our child to a special school.

As it happened the decision was taken out of our hands when our son's health problems changed and he required a greater level of support, which could only provided by a special school.

Our son now attends a special school. We were under the understanding that he would receive one to one support in a special school and that was why the ELB were pushing for the special school, but even with his increased needs he has not received his own classroom assistant, but that he shares a classroom assistant with six other children in the class.

We felt that the television campaign to encourage people to send their children to mainstream schools was completely hollow. We wanted to do what was being suggested but were met with opposition. At the time, we felt that the IM school could have catered for our son's needs and offered him the same opportunities as other children.

## Appendix 1: Case study 5

Irish is my son's first language so it was a natural decision to send him to the local IM school. When he started school, he had a couple of behavioural difficulties but not serious problems. There was a teacher and a classroom assistant in the class and the class was small which helped him. The behavioural problems began when he went into Year 3. He experienced some difficulties in focusing on his work. A reward system was put in place for him and that system worked well.

In Year 4, it became clear that he was not able to cope with the work. He was assessed by an educational psychologist. The educational psychologist recommended a special school. The school principal felt that the school did not have the resources to meet my son's needs. The educational psychologist began working on a statement of SEN. I was told that he needed a classroom assistant and that a classroom assistant could not be got without a statement. At that point, my son was only attending school from 9.00 – 1.00 and that was not good for him either. I felt I had no choice.

It took 7 months to get the statement of SEN. When he got the statement he went to a special school. It is difficult for parents and for children when a child moves schools. I was heartbroken. I chose the gaelscoil as I wanted to give him the advantages of a gaelscoil education. Moving schools was very difficult for my son as all his friends were in the gaelscoil.

There are smaller classes in the special school and a greater level of adult support. The teachers have had more training. My son continues to speak Irish at home and can speak Irish really well. He is much happier now that he does a full day at school. He felt left out when he was leaving school at 1.00 and the other children were staying, maybe to play football or something like that. He is on the same level as the other children in the school he attends now.

It is not fair on the children if the people doing the assessment do not speak Irish. When the assessment was carried out my son could not read or write in English. He had only been doing English for three or four months when he was assessed by the educational psychologist.

In my opinion, teachers in IM schools ought to have more training on special needs. The teachers did not pick up on my son's problem until Year 4. I also think there is a greater understanding needed amongst educational psychologists. The educational psychologist made the decision that my son would need a special school. I felt that this decision was made without consulting me. I feel that sometimes parents don't have a voice. Greater understanding is needed. They tell you that you have a choice; that your child can stay in the gaelscoil but.....



The educational psychologist said that my son would not be literate in either Irish or English, and that you have to think of the child. I felt that I had been put into a corner.

## Appendix 1: Case study 6

We knew from early on that learning difficulties could be part of our child's health condition. It seems that her main difficulty is that she has difficulty concentrating. She tries very hard at school but has difficulty in concentrating on her work. I am concerned that this is not addressed in the classroom.

She has difficulty in copying things down from the board. If she copies things down incorrectly she then learns them incorrectly. It is difficult for me as a parent to help her as I don't speak Irish myself. While the IM school does make the children independent, as a parent, I find it difficult not being able to support them at home.

I first became concerned in Year 2 and I spoke to the class teacher. In Year 3 the class size increased quite considerably. I was concerned by the size of the class. As a result of her condition I had had her assessed by an educational psychologist. I wanted her in the system early as I was aware that it could take a long time to get a result. In Year 3, I asked the educational psychologist to see her again, this time in school. The educational psychologist was surprised that she was not on stage 1 or even stage 2 of the statementing process. The teacher and the educational psychologist worked together to assess her. However, I did not feel that the result gave me an accurate measure of her ability. It is difficult to know how she is progressing. In addition, I have never been shown an IEP for my daughter, for example.

A short while later my daughter underwent major surgery. During her time in hospital she received tutoring from the hospital teacher but the tutoring was in English. I bought her some additional resources in Irish to help her maintain her Irish.

I am pleased that there is an excellent classroom assistant in the classroom who can assist her with her domestic needs, if necessary. As far as her academic needs are concerned, I would like that she achieves her potential but I find that it is difficult to assess the progress she is making.

## Appendix 1: Case study 7

Irish is our son's first language therefore it makes sense that he attends an IM school.

Our son has physical difficulties, however, he didn't experience any difficulties in the naíscoil as the staff gave him additional support. When he started primary school, however, he did not have a statement of SEN. The school said that they could not employ a classroom assistant for him without a statement. As a result, he had to leave school earlier than the other children in his class for the first week of Year 1. A classroom assistant was provided, however, the person appointed did not speak Irish. This created difficulties as our son did not speak much English at the time. The following year a classroom assistant with proficiency in Irish was appointed.

There are, however, still some issues in terms of provision of a classroom assistant. If, for example, the assistant is off sick there is no one else to provide additional support to our son. He had to leave school early a couple of days as a classroom assistant was not available. Having to leave school early affected our son in that he felt different from the other children. It impacted on his mindset and on his behaviour. It's not right that a child should be made to feel like that.

As part of the review of our son's statement, we were asked to provide a report of his progress at home. We wrote the report in Irish. We were advised not to submit reports in Irish. We were not trying to make a language point, but as Irish is the language of our home it was natural for us to describe the home situation in the language of the home.

We have had some negative reactions from health and education professionals to our decision to raise our son with Irish. We got the impression that they felt that we were doing our son an injustice by raising him with Irish. We feel that some professionals are always trying to push us towards using English. We know that it is important that our son speaks English, but he will acquire English more easily if he has a good foundation in his first language (Irish).

At present our child attends a speech and language therapist who speaks Irish. Using Irish puts our son at ease. The speech and language therapist is, however, restricted owing to the lack of speech and language resources available in Irish. Furthermore, access to this service requires us to travel long distances.

Many of the professionals who work with our son are very good and very helpful. In our view, the greatest problem is a lack of communication in education and health agencies in relation to language competence. There are people with Irish in these sectors but the authorities do not know who these people are, or where they are. If there was a database containing information

on the languages education and health professionals speak, it would assist authorities in assigning professionals with knowledge of the child's language to children who speak a language other than English.

## Appendix 1: Case study 8

My son is 16 months old and has been identified as requiring additional support. I went to a gaelscoil myself and, therefore, would like my son to go to a gaelscoil when he reaches school age. When I mentioned to my son's doctors that I would like him to go to a mainstream school they said they would look into the possibility of that. When I said that I had a gaelscoil in mind they recommended a special nursery school.

At present, I feel that people are pushing me in the direction of the special school. The speech and language therapist is pushing English and is steering me towards using English with my son. The health professionals are always telling me that he has to develop all the skills he will need to be able to live independently in society. I think that they do not see Irish as part of living independently in society. I would like my son to speak Irish so that he will have another skill, and so that he can be proud of his Irish. Maybe he won't be able to move very well, but he will be able to speak two or three languages. As well as that, I believe that having and using two languages exercises your brain.

I think that it makes a difference to you if you attend the gaelscoil. It opens doors for you if you have two languages. You have more opportunities with Irish than you have without it.

## Appendix 2: Case study 1

### Provision of support

School 1 is stand-alone school located in an urban area. Approximately 33% of the pupils have been identified and recorded as experiencing SEN. The school has a SENCO who takes care of the administration associated with SEN provision in the school, and a part-time SEN teacher\* who works with pupils who require additional support in withdrawal groups. Additional withdrawal support for pupils is provided for English literacy for pupils from Year 2 to Year 7. Classroom assistants provide additional reading support in English for small groups of pupils through Reading Partnerships.

### Identification and assessment of SEN

Every effort is made to record pupils on the SEN register as soon as they are identified. A high level of importance is placed on teachers' professional judgement in the identification of SEN in the classroom. The teacher's in-depth knowledge of the pupils' class work provides an overall picture of the pupil's areas of strength and areas of weakness. After a pupil has been identified by their class teacher as requiring additional support, assessment tests are used to supplement the teacher's judgement, and to diagnose specific difficulties.

Once a pupil has been identified by the class teacher, parents are consulted and an EP is created. The school aims to have identified pupils, consulted with parents and created an EP by the end of October. The EP is reviewed and discussed with parents at the end of the period of time specified in the plan. At that point it is decided if pupils should remain on stage 1 of the Code of Practice, or if they should be moved to stage 2. It is also decided if pupils' needs are being met in the classroom or if they should receive additional support from the SEN teacher.

A range of factors are taken into account in the decision-making process; the professional judgement of the class teacher and baseline assessment conducted in the school. The baseline assessment is carried out before pupils receive support from the SEN teacher. The same assessment is carried out at the end of the specified period of support in order to assess pupils' progress. The results of these assessments are taken into account when deciding if pupils should be put on the next stage of the Code of Practice, or if pupils should be removed from the SEN register. The assessments used depend on the pupils' age. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 are assessed using strategies in Irish developed by the school. The school has also recently begun using *Áis Mheasúnaithe sa Luathlitearthacht* (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007) with pupils in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3. Pupils in Year 3 to Year 7, who have begun English literacy, are also assessed using standardised English assessments.

The school has been working with the same educational psychologist for some time now and has established a good working relationship. The school feels that the educational psychologist has a good understanding of the needs of the pupils in an IM education setting. Members of staff in the school work with the educational psychologist to implement the strategies and to employ the resources recommended.

### **Resources**

The SEN teacher uses resources in English when working with pupils including phonics and other English language resources. Teachers working with pupils at foundation and KS1 level make a lot of their own resources including games in Irish. *Fónaic na Gaeilge* (de Brún, 2005) are used by all teachers from Year 1 to Year 7. The school is also involved in a speech and language scheme with a visiting speech and language therapist. The speech and language therapist is supported by the class teacher and the programme is carried out through the medium of Irish.

### **Staff training**

All teachers in the school have received training on SEN-related issues through INSET courses and some members of the teaching staff have received training to raise awareness of speech and language development and possible difficulties.

## **Appendix 2: Case study 2**

### **Provision of support**

School 2 is an IM unit in an EM host school and is situated in a rural area. Approximately 14% of pupils in the IM unit have been identified and recorded as experiencing SEN. Until this year, the school SENCO was not a class teacher and was afforded the time to work with individual pupils and small groups in withdrawal sessions.

For the most part, additional support is provided through the medium of Irish. The classroom assistants are fluent Irish speakers and use Irish with the pupils. The language used, however, will depend on the needs of the pupil concerned. If a pupil requires additional literacy support in English, support is provided in English.

### **Identification and assessment of SEN**

Identification of SEN relies greatly on the class teacher. Pupils are formally assessed in towards the end of the school year in Irish and Maths through the medium of Irish. Pupils who have begun English literacy are assessed in English. Pupils are also assessed using a combination of standardised English language assessment materials and non-verbal reasoning tests. If difficulties are noted at that point a record of concern is completed. If the pupil is still experiencing difficulties after a short period of time, parents are consulted and the pupil will be recorded on the SEN register. An EP is designed for all pupils identified as requiring additional support. Pupils are removed from the SEN register if they are judged to be making sufficient progress. Pupils are recorded on the SEN register temporarily; if, for example, they are attending sessions of speech and language therapy.

The school has a good working relationship with the educational psychologist, and the school SENCO and educational psychologist have, in the past, worked together in order to carry out assessment procedures.

### **Resources**

The school uses a combination of SEN resources in English and their own self-produced resources in Irish to assist pupils who require additional support. The self-produced resources include language games, worksheets,

### **Staff training**

The SENCO provides support and training to other members of staff in the IM unit.

The teachers have received some professional development on ASD and the SENCO has received professional development and additional qualifications in the area of SEN.



## Appendix 2: Case study 3

### Provision of support

School 3 is a stand-alone school located in a rural area. Approximately 26% of pupils are on the SEN register. The school currently has a part-time SEN teacher\* who works with small groups of pupils in withdrawal sessions. The SEN teacher works in English with pupils from Year 4 to Year 7 who have begun English literacy. In Year 3 pupils receive additional support with analytical phonics, concentrating on blends and clusters which are common to both Irish and English, in preparation for commencing English literacy in Year 4. Some pupils receive support from a peripatetic support teacher through the medium of English.

The school implements a policy of total immersion in KS1. In KS2, the pupils work towards parallel bilingualism. Pupils, therefore, study some subjects through the medium of English; maths, science, and preparation for the transfer exam. For pupils identified as experiencing learning difficulties, the school focuses on reading and writing in English. By Year 5 pupils experiencing difficulties have the opportunity to focus on reading and writing in English, and they study maths and science through the medium of English along with their peers. By Year 5 pupils have developed their spoken Irish proficiency and all pupils continue to use their oral Irish skills in school.

### Identification and assessment of SEN

A range of assessment strategies and materials is used in the school to identify SEN. The school places a high level of importance on the professional judgement of the teacher in the identification of SEN in the classroom situation. The judgement of classroom assistants is also taken into account. The school works closely with the local IM pre-school in order to identify difficulties and implement support from the earliest possible stage. The school also works closely with parents to take account of their opinion when making decisions regarding their child's education, and when making and implementing EPs.

With regard to assessment materials the school employs a combination of standardised assessment materials in English and assessment materials in Irish. The school has created its own assessment materials in Irish which have been standardised to a certain degree within the school. While there are some restrictions associated with this form of standardisation, the results of the assessments allow teachers to track pupils' progress from one year to the next, and to identify pupils who require additional support.

Pupils are put on the SEN register based on a combination of assessment scores and the class teacher's professional judgement, as well as discussion with staff, discussion between the principal and SEN teacher\* and discussion between the principal and the class teacher.

## **Resources**

The SEN teacher uses resources in English as well as resources in Irish which have been created by members of staff in the school. The school has created lists of words for each year group from Year 1 to Year 5. The school programme is based on these lists of words. Teachers in the school have created word games in Irish. One teacher in the school has created a reading scheme in Irish for Year 1 and accompanying resources. The school are currently working on creating a series of reading books for Year 2 and Year 3. All resources produced in school are based on the Literacy Strategy in the ELB.

## **Staff training**

The school are keen to facilitate staff training on SEN. To date members of staff have received training on dyslexia, linguistic phonics, ASD, and SENCO development training.

## Appendix 2: Case study 4

### Provision of support

School 4 is a stand-alone IM school located in an urban area. Approximately 22% of pupils are recorded on the SEN register. The school has a full-time SENCO and a full-time SEN teacher\*. The SEN teacher works with pupils in small groups in a withdrawal setting. Classroom assistants provide additional support to pupils who require it. Some pupils currently receive outreach support through the medium of Irish provided by an outreach teacher from a special school in the ELB. The school also works with a family liaison officer, local community groups, and the school educational welfare officer (EWO) as part of the support they provide to pupils with additional needs.

### Identification and assessment of SEN

The identification of SEN relies heavily on the skill of the class teacher to identify and support SEN from pre-school level onwards. The school works closely with the local pre-school in the identification of additional needs.

The school released two teachers to assess pupils' Irish literacy attainment in two classes using *Áis Mheasúnaithe sa Luathlitearthacht* (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007). This practice is carried out within the school twice a year.

Assessments carried out in the school include end of key stage assessment, numeracy assessment using NfER in Irish (National foundation for Educational Research )and INCAs (Northern Ireland Curriculum, 2008b) in English. The school uses standardised assessment materials in English to assess reading and writing with pupils from Year 5 to Year 7. Pupils at KS1 level are assessed through the medium of Irish using ongoing in-class assessment. Teachers evaluate their lessons on a weekly basis based on Assessment for Learning. The results of these evaluations and the results of ongoing formative assessment are used to inform lesson planning and, to assist teachers in the identification of pupils who require additional support.

### Recording of SEN

The school uses the SIMs system to record information on pupils experiencing difficulties, EPs and information relating to EP reviews. An EP is prepared for every pupil identified as requiring additional support. As soon as the EP is written the pupil is put on stage 1 of the Code of Practice. At the end of the period specified in the EP, the pupil's progress is reviewed and following discussion with the class teacher it is decided if the pupil will be moved to stage 2, or if the pupil's needs are being met at stage 1.

### Staff training

Both the school SENCO and the SEN teacher have received training on *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 2002). Two teachers have received comprehensive training on *Assessment for Learning* (Northern Ireland Curriculum, 2008a). Teachers, CAs, and pre-school staff have received ASD 1 training and two members of the teaching staff have completed ASD 2.

## Appendix 2: Case study 5

### Provision of support

School 5 is an IM unit in an EM host school located in an urban area. Approximately 7% of pupils are on the SEN register. The IM unit has a SENCO as does the EM host school. The classroom assistant has received training in *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 2002) and provides *Reading Recovery* (ibid.) support to pupils on the SEN register and other pupils from Year 3 to Year 7 twice a week. The SENCO provides additional withdrawal support to pupils on the SEN register who experience learning difficulties twice a week in addition to the support provided by the classroom assistant. The IM unit is involved in a *Primary Movements* (Primary Movement, 2008) scheme in the school.

For the most part, additional support is provided through the medium of Irish. In some cases, class teachers indicate that pupils require additional English literacy support. In such cases, additional support is provided through the medium of English.

### Identification and assessment of SEN

Identification of SEN relies heavily on teachers' professional judgement, for the most part. Teachers also use their own self-produced assessment materials, *Áis Mheasúnaithe sa Luathlitearthacht* (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007), an English screening test which has been adapted by the SENCO, tests provided by IM CASS, and standardised assessment materials in English. Pupils on the SEN register are reviewed once a term and pupils' progress assessed.

### Recording of SEN

Each class teacher has an SEN file in their classroom. Teachers can register concerns about pupils at any time during the school year by completing a record of concern. The record of concern is reviewed after six weeks, at that point it is decided if the pupils will be recorded on the SEN register.

### Resources

Pupils receive additional support with reading and phonics in English (*Jolly Phonics*: Lloyd, 2005) and in Irish (*Fónaic na Gaeilge*: de Brún, 2005). Many of the Irish resources used have been created by staff in the school. Teachers in the school have created a series of reading books to support pupils in early Irish literacy.

### Staff training

All members of staff have received training on *Fónaic na Gaeilge* (de Brún, 2005) and *Jolly Phonics* (Lloyd, 2005).

# School Questionnaire

## Section 1 - Basic school information

**1. Name of school** .....

**2. Type of school** .....

**3. Number of teachers:** Full time: .....

Part-time:.....

Full Time Equivalent (FTE): .....

Total:.....

**4. Number of classroom** Full time:.....

**assistants:**

Part-time:.....

Full Time Equivalent (FTE): .....

Total:.....

**5. This question relates to pre-schools only.**

**No. of leaders:** Full time: .....

Part-time:.....

Full Time Equivalent (FTE):.....

Total: .....

**6. Number of students:**

**Fill in the following grid.**

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of girls</i>	<i>No. of boys</i>	<i>Total</i>		<i>No. of classes in the year group</i>
<i>Rang 1 / Year 8</i>					
<i>Rang 2 / Year 9</i>					
<i>Rang 3 / Year 10</i>					
<i>Rang 4 / Year 11</i>					
<i>Rang 5 / Year 12</i>					
<i>Rang 6 / Year 13</i>					
<i>Rang 7 / Year 14</i>					
<b><i>Total</i></b>					

7. How many students have transferred from the IM school / unit in the past five years.....

.....to attend an English Medium mainstream school?	
.....to attend a special school?	
.....to attend a special unit in an English medium school?	
.....to attend another IM school?	
<b>Total</b>	

8. If there are more than one class in one year group, how are the students divided into each class in the year group?

Tick the appropriate boxes.

According to age

According to ability

According to alphabetical order

Randomly

Other



## Section 2 - Official Figures

### 9. Number of students with special needs according to type of need.

Fill in the grid below for the number of students on stages 1 – 5 according to the Code of Practice (1998).

BL = Blind	DY = Dyslexia	EBD = Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties	ADHD = Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
PS = Partially Sighted	PY = Physical	MLD = Moderate Learning Difficulties	DP = Dyspraxia
DF = Deaf	.....	SLD = Severe Learning Difficulties	OT = Other or undefined
PH = Partial Hearing	AU = Autism	EP = Epilepsy	
SL = Speech and Language	AS = Asperger's Syndrome		

Year	Stage	No. of girls	No. of boys																
				BL	PS	DF	PH	SL	DY	PY	AU	AS	EBD	MLD	SLD	EP	ADHD	DP	OT
P1	Stage 1																		
Yr 8	Stage 2																		

	Stage 3																		
	Stage 4																		
	Stage 5																		
	Subtotal																		

Year	Stage	No. of girls	No. of boys	Type of special need															
				BL	PS	DF	PH	SL	DY	PY	AU	AS	EBD	MLD	SLD	EP	ADHD	DP	OT
P2	Stage 1																		
Yr 9	Stage 2																		
	Stage 3																		
	Stage 4																		
	Stage 5																		
	Subtotal																		

Year	Stage	No. of girls	No. of boys	Type of special need															
				BL	PS	DF	PH	SL	DY	PY	AU	AS	EBD	MLD	SLD	EP	ADHD	DP	OT
P3 Yr 10	Stage 1																		
	Stage 2																		
	Stage 3																		
	Stage 4																		
	Stage 5																		
	Subtotal																		
P4 Yr 11	Stage 1																		
	Stage 2																		
	Stage 3																		
	Stage 4																		
	Stage 5																		
	Subtotal																		

P5 Yr 12	Stage 1																		
	Stage 2																		
	Stage 3																		
	Stage 4																		

	Stage 5																		
	Subtotal																		
P6 Yr 13	Stage 1																		
	Stage 2																		
	Stage 3																		
	Stage 4																		
	Stage 5																		
	Subtotal																		
P7 Yr 14	Stage 1																		
	Stage 2																		
	Stage 3																		
	Stage 4																		
	Stage 5																		
	Subtotal																		
	<b>TOTAL</b>																		

10. Are there classroom assistants employed to assist a particular student / particular students?

Yes

No

If No, go to **Q13** If Yes, continue.

11. How many of these classroom assistants are there?

.....

12. How many students do they assist?

.....

13. Does every child who has a classroom assistant or additional adult support stipulated in their Statement have a classroom assistant?

Yes

No

N/A

**Section 3 – Additional information on special needs**

14. Are there barriers preventing appropriate provision for special needs in the school?

Yes

No

If No, go to Q16. If Yes, continue.

15. Please identify the barriers to effective special needs provision in the school in the following areas as appropriate.

Teacher training

.....  
.....  
.....

Resources.....

.....  
.....  
.....

Assessment

tools.....

.....  
.....

Identification of special needs

.....  
.....  
.....

External support from ELB

.....  
.....  
.....

External support from Health and Social Services Trust

.....  
.....  
.....

Accommodation

.....  
.....  
.....

Classroom

assistance.....

.....  
.....

Parental

involvement.....

.....  
.....  
.....

Guidance.....  
.....

.....  
.....

Other  
.....  
.....

.....  
.....

16. Does the school have a special needs policy?

Yes           

No            

17. Does the school have procedures in place to identify special needs?

Yes           

No



## The *SENCO*

18. Is there a SENCO in the school?

Yes

No

19. Name of the SENCO: .....

20. Does the SENCO speak Irish?

Yes

No

21. Is the SENCO a member of the school management team?

Yes

No

22. Is the SENCO a class teacher?

Yes

No

23. Does the SENCO have a particular timetable to allow him/her to attend to his/her special needs duties?

Yes

No

24. How much time does the SENCO have for his/her duties per week?

1 – 2hrs

3 – 4hrs

5 – 10hrs

11 – 15hrs

16 – 20hrs

21 - 25hrs

25. How many years teaching experience does the SENCO have?

0 - 2

3 - 5

6 - 10

11 - 20

21 +

26. Did the SENCO receive particular training for the post over and above that of class teachers?

Yes

No

If yes, please give details.

.....

...

.....  
...  
.....  
...  
.....  
...  
.....  
...

27. Does the SENCO have additional qualifications in special needs?

Yes

No

If Yes, please give details.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

## **External support**

28. Say which of the following professionals **attend / have attended** to the special needs of pupils in the school and if they speak / spoke Irish.

In the last column, please indicate if the support of the professional **is / has been** required in the school but **is / was** unavailable.

Tick the appropriate boxes.

<b>Professional</b>	<b>Attends at present</b>	<b>Has attended in the past</b>	<b>Do / did they carry out their work in Irish?</b>	<b>Support needed but unavailable</b>
Educational Psychologist	?	?	?	?
Clinical Psychologist	?	?	?	?
Speech&Language Therapist	?	?	?	?
Occupational Therapist	?	?	?	?
Physiotherapist	?	?	?	?
Play Therapist	?	?	?	?
Outreach SEN Teacher	?	?	?	?
Educational Welfare Officer	?	?	?	?
Behavioural Support	?	?	?	?
School Medical Officer	?	?	?	?
Nurse	?	?	?	?
Doctor	?	?	?	?
Psychiatrist	?	?	?	?
Counsellor	?	?	?	?
Social Worker	?	?	?	?
Other (Please specify)	?	?	?	?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

29. Does the school have links with other groups or schools from the following list in order to exchange resources and expertise

**(A) in general?**

**(B) with regard to special needs?**

**A – in general**

Special school	?
Another IM school	?
English Medium school	?
Community groups	?
Other	? .....
	.....
	.....

**B – with regard to special needs**

Special school	?
Another IM school	?
English Medium school	?
Community groups	?
Other	? .....
	.....
	.....

**Section 4 - Support for parents**

30. What services does the school provide  
  
needs?

**(A) for parents generally?**

**(B) for parents whose children have special**

Tick the appropriate boxes. Give details, please, if possible.

Service	A	B	Details
Irish classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	..... ..... .....
Support network	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	..... ..... .....
Lending of resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	..... ..... .....
Curriculum Days/Nights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	..... ..... .....
Information about special needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	..... ..... .....
Reading Club	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	..... ..... .....
Family Days	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	..... ..... .....
Social events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	..... ..... .....
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	..... ..... .....

**Thank you for your time and co-operation.**

# Qualitative Questionnaire (Schools)



## Section 1 All respondents

### A. Background information

1. DE reference number.....
  
2. Your position in the school (e.g. principal, class teacher, SENCO, particular responsibility for literacy or numeracy, for example) .....
  
3. Number of years spent as a teacher .....
  
4. Number of years spent as a teacher in the IM sector .....
  
5. Training level (Induction, EPD 1, EPD 2) .....
  
6. (a) Have you taught in an English Medium school? Please circle your answer.

Yes	No
-----	----

6. (b) Did that experience influence, positively or negatively, your work in an IM school with regard to Special Educational Needs? Please give details.

**7. (a)** Do you teach in an Irish-medium (IM) unit in an English medium school? Please circle your answer.

Yes

No

If No, go to **Q.8**. If Yes, please continue.

**7. (b)** Does working in an IM unit in an English Medium school have an influence, positive or negative on the provision for Special Educational Needs, for example, with regard to resources, teacher training, exchange of expertise etc.? Please list any influences, whether positive or negative:

## B. General Information

### **Support for teachers and teacher training**

8. How effective is the support you receive from the following people / groups with regard to Special Educational Needs. Tick the appropriate boxes.



	<b>Very effective</b>	<b>Effective</b>	<b>Ineffective</b>	<b>Very ineffective</b>	<b>Non-applicable</b>
School principal					
Principals in other IM schools					
Principals in English medium schools					
School SENCO					
Other teachers in the school					
Teachers in other IM schools					
Teachers in EM schools					
CASS team in ELB					
Inter-board CASS team for IME					
Department of Education					
Educational psychologists					

Behavioural Support Team					
Speech and Language Therapy services					
SEN-related Peripatetic services					
Occupational therapy services					
Other (Please specify) .....					

**C. Information on Special Educational Needs**

**9. (a)** What is your opinion of provision for special educational needs within the IM sector in general? Circle your answer.

Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Neither satisfactory nor unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Very unsatisfactory
-------------------	--------------	---	----------------	---------------------

**9. (b)** If you answered either **Satisfactory** or **Unsatisfactory** to Q9(a) please give details about what you feel is satisfactory or unsatisfactory about the provision.

<b>Satisfactory</b>
---------------------

<b>Unsatisfactory</b>

**10. (a)** In your professional experience, how effective are services from external SEN professionals for pupils with Special Educational Needs in IM education? Please circle your answer.

I have no experience	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective	Very ineffective
----------------------	----------------	-----------	-------------	------------------

**10. (b)** If you answered **Effective** or **Ineffective** to Q10(a) please give details about what is satisfactory or unsatisfactory about these services.

<b>Effective</b>
<b>Ineffective</b>

--

**11. (a)** What is your opinion of access to health-related services delivered in an educational setting for pupils in the IM sector who have Special Educational Needs? Please circle your answer.

I have no experience	Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Very unsatisfactory
----------------------	-------------------	--------------	----------------	---------------------

**11. (b)** If you answered either **Satisfactory** or **Unsatisfactory** to Q11(a) please give details about what you feel is satisfactory or unsatisfactory about access.

<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>

**12.** How competent do you feel to provide for special educational needs in your class? Please circle your answer.

Very competent	Competent	Incompetent	Very incompetent	I am not sure
----------------	-----------	-------------	------------------	---------------

**13.** What is your understanding of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs, the Supplement to the Code of Practice and the Stages of the Code? Please circle your answer.

Full understanding	General understanding	Minimal understanding	No understanding
--------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	------------------

**14.** What is your understanding of the in-school referral process? Please circle your answer.

Full understanding	General understanding	Minimal understanding	No understanding
--------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	------------------

**15.** What is your understanding of the referral process when referring a pupil to an Educational Psychologist?

Full understanding	General understanding	Minimal understanding	No understanding
--------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	------------------

**16.** What is your understanding of the referral process for statutory assessment to the ELB?  
Please circle your answer?

Full understanding	General understanding	Minimal understanding	No understanding
--------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	------------------

**17. (a)** Are there factors which make you reluctant to put a pupil on the Special Educational Needs Register or to move a pupil from one stage to another?

Please circle your answer.

Yes	No	Non-applicable
-----	----	----------------

If **No**, go to **Q.18**. If Yes, please continue.

**17. (b)** Which of the following factors make you reluctant to put a pupil on the Special Educational Needs Register or to move him/her from one Stage to another?

Give a mark to each factor according to their importance with **1 representing very unimportant** and **5 representing very important**.

Please circle your answer.

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Very unimportant</b>				<b>Very important</b>
To give pupil time to settle in the language	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding of definition of Stages of the Code of Practice	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of appropriate assessment materials	1	2	3	4	5
Unsure if health problems should be taken into account	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of experience	1	2	3	4	5
Fear the pupil will be removed from the school	1	2	3	4	5
Administration	1	2	3	4	5
Other (Please specify)	1	2	3	4	5
Other (Please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

**18.** Are health problems which may impact on access to the curriculum included when a pupil is put on the Special Educational Needs Register?

Please circle your answer.

Yes	No	I am not sure
-----	----	---------------

**19. (a)** According to recent research,(Nic Annaidh, 2005) some teachers put pupils on a pre-stage of the Special Needs Register before placing them on Stage 1 of the Register officially.

Do you ever find need to use this practice in your classroom? Please circle your answer.

Yes	No	I am not sure
-----	----	---------------

**19. (b)** Under what circumstances do find need to use this practice?

Training for teachers on Special Educational Needs

**20. (a)** List any training you received to date to address the needs of children with Special educational Needs.



If you have **not received** training, go to **Q.21**. If you **have received** training, please go to **Q.22**.

**21.** What factors have restricted your access to training in Special Educational Needs?

--

Please proceed to Q.25.

**22.** If you have received training, how useful was that training in equipping you to attend to children with Special Educational Needs? Please circle your answer.

Very useful	Useful	It was not useful
-------------	--------	-------------------

If you found the training **very useful** or **useful** go to **Q23**. If you found the training **not useful** go to **Q24**.

**23.** Please say how the training has helped you in your work in the classroom.

--

24. If you found the training was not useful, please say why not.

Classroom Assistants – Classroom Assistants and Special Educational Needs Classroom Assistants

If there are **no Classroom Assistants** in your classroom, please proceed to **Q28**.

25. Please give brief details of role and hours spent in the classroom of Special Educational Needs Classroom Assistants who assist in your class.

26. Please give brief details of role and hours spent in the classroom of Classroom Assistants who are not employed specifically to assist with Special Educational Needs.

--

27. How much time do you spend weekly planning with the CA? .....

28. In your opinion, how effective is the help of a classroom assistant for pupils who have special educational needs?

Very effective	Effective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Ineffective
----------------	-----------	--------------------------------------	-------------

29. Mention any advantages and/or disadvantages of a classroom assistant for pupils with special educational needs.

<b>Advantages</b>
<b>Disadvantages</b>

--

**30.** Look at the areas below. State their importance in order to improve provision for pupils with special educational needs in the IM sector. Please tick the appropriate boxes.

	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Unimportant</b>
Training / further training for teachers			
Training / further training for SENCOs			
Resources in Irish aimed at the age of the pupil			
Graded schemes			
Assessment materials in Irish			
Appropriate work space			
More classroom assistants with Irish			
Support from the CASS team in the ELBs			

	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Unimportant</b>
Support from the Health and Social Services Trusts			
Other (Please specify) .....			
Other (Please specify) .....			

**31.** What areas of Special Educational Needs provision, if any, might be improved by additional funding?

**32.** Is there anything else you would like to say about Special Educational Needs in the IM sector?

## **Section 2 – Principals**

### **A. Background Information**

1. Number of years spent as principal .....

2. Number of years spent as principal in the Irish Medium sector .....

3. Are you a teaching principal? Please circle your answer.

Yes

No

If No, proceed to **Q.7**. If Yes, please continue.

4. Which class(es) do you teach? .....

### **B. General Information**

5. What are the greatest needs of that age group /those age groups within the IM sector with regard to the following areas?

<b>Curriculum</b>
<b>Language acquisition and enrichment</b>

<p><b>Resources</b></p>
<p><b>Other</b></p>

6. Are there pupils in your class who are on the Special Educational Needs Register? Please circle your answer.

Yes

No

I am not sure

7. What are the greatest challenges facing the school at the moment?

Give a mark between 1 and 5 to the following factors according to their importance with **1 representing very unimportant** and **5 representing very important**.

Please circle your answer.

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Very unimportant</b>				<b>Very important</b>
To obtain 'aitheantas'	1	2	3	4	5
Resources	1	2	3	4	5
School accommodation	1	2	3	4	5
Temporary teachers	1	2	3	4	5
Young teachers	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher training	1	2	3	4	5
Assessment tools	1	2	3	4	5
Employment of classroom assistants	1	2	3	4	5
Access to professional services for pupils with special needs	1	2	3	4	5
Enrolment	1	2	3	4	5
Finance / budget	1	2	3	4	5
Finding substitute teachers	1	2	3	4	5
Special Needs Budget	1	2	3	4	5
Other (Please specify)	1	2	3	4	5
Other (Please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

### Teacher training

8. What are the factors, if any, which influence staff training?



--

Classroom assistants

9. How, if at all, do the following factors influence the employment of classroom assistants?

<b>Funding</b>
<b>Contracted hours available</b>
<b>Irish language competence</b>

<b>Qualifications / experience of applicants</b>
<b>Other</b>

**10.** How do recruitment difficulties affect provision for Special Educational Needs in the school?

--

## **Section 3 – Primary school teachers**

### **A. Background Information**

1. Which year group(s) do you teach?

.....

2. Are there pupils in your class who are on the Special Needs Register? Please circle your answer.

Yes

No

I am not sure

### **B. General Information**

3. What are the greatest needs of that age group /those age groups within the IM sector with regard to the following areas?

<b>Curriculum</b>
<b>Language acquisition and enrichment</b>
<b>Resources</b>

<b>Other (Please specify)</b>

Needs of the teachers

4. What are your greatest needs, at present, as a teacher in the IM sector with regard to the following areas?

<b>Training</b>
<b>Resources</b>
<b>Assistance in the classroom</b>

**Support**

**Other ( Please specify)**

## **Section 4 – Post-primary school teacher**

### **A. Background Information**

1. What year groups do you teach? .....

2.(a) What subject / subjects that you teach? .....

2. (b) Are these subjects taught though English or Irish in your school?

.....

3. Do you teach pupils who are on the Special Needs Register? Please circle your answer.

Yes	No	I am not sure
-----	----	---------------

### **B. General Information**

4. What are the greatest needs of that age group / those age groups within the IM sector with regard to the following areas?

<b>Curriculum</b>
-------------------

<b>Language acquisition and enrichment</b>
<b>Resources</b>
<b>Other (Please specify)</b>

Needs of Teachers

5. What are your greatest needs, at present, as a teacher in the IM sector with regard to the following areas?

<b>Training</b>
<b>Resources</b>

<b>Assistance in the classroom</b>
<b>Support</b>
<b>Other (Please specify)</b>



## Section 5 – Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)

### A. Background Information

1. Number of years spent as SENCO .....

2. Number of years spent as a SENCO in the IM sector .....

3. Is there a particular allowance with your position? Please circle your answer.

Yes	No
-----	----

4. How many hours are allocated to you per week to attend to your SENCO duties?  
.....

5. Out of the time you devote to your SENCO duties per week, how much time is spent on the following areas?

Area	Time in hours per week
Working with pupils	
Preparation of resources	
Administration	
Management of Classroom Assistants' time	

Staff training	
Other (Please specify)	
Other (Please specify)	
<b>TOTAL</b>	

**6. (a)** Are there any factors which restrict the work you do with pupils who have Special Needs?  
Please circle your answer.

Yes	No
-----	----

If No, go to **Q. 7**. If Yes, please continue.

**6. (b)** To what extent do the following factors restrict your work with pupils who have special educational needs? Please tick the appropriate boxes.

	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>To some extent</b>	<b>A lot</b>
Administration			
Preparation of resources			
Proper working facilities			
Restricted time			
Class Duties			
Staff training			

	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>To some extent</b>	<b>A lot</b>
Management of Classroom Assistants' time			
Training for the position as SENCO			
Experience of Special Needs			
Irish language competence			
Other (Please specify)			

**7. (a)** For the most part, which language do you use when working with pupils who have Special Educational Needs? Please circle your answer.

Irish only	English only	Irish and English
------------	--------------	-------------------

**7. (b)** Why?

**8. (a)** For the most part, through which language do you carry out assessments on pupils with Special Educational Needs? Please circle your answer.

Irish only	English only	Irish and English
------------	--------------	-------------------

**8. (b)** Why?

--

**9.** For the most part, which language do you use when dealing with parents? Please circle your answer.

Irish only	English only	Irish and English
------------	--------------	-------------------

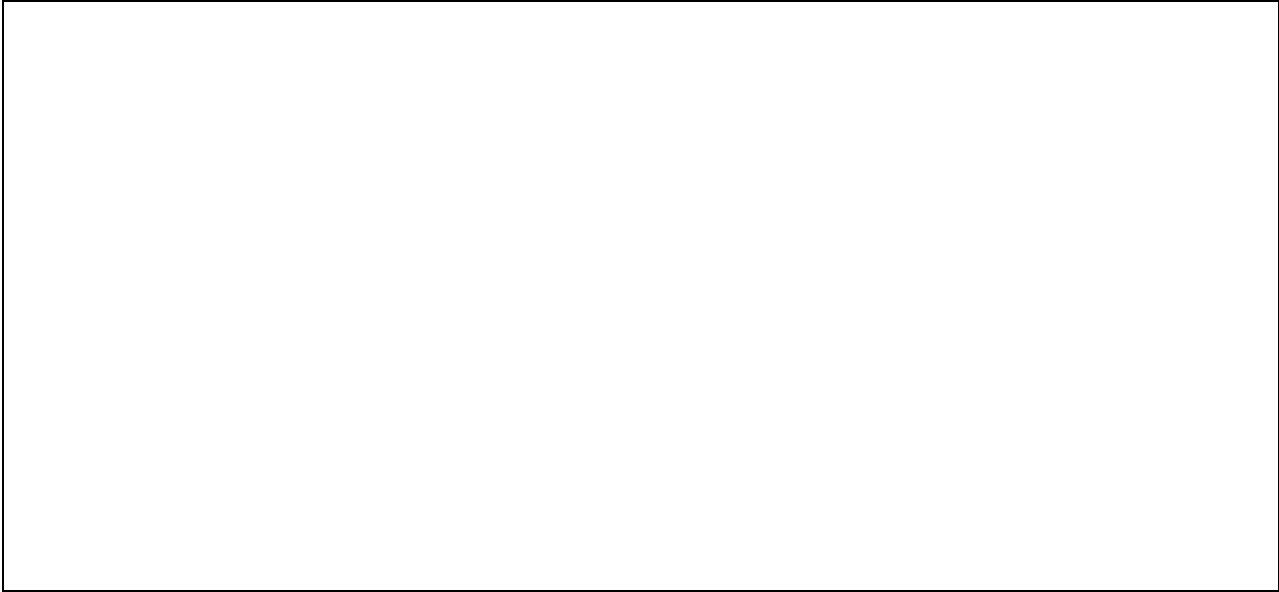
Support for the SENCO

10. How effective is the support you receive from the following people / organisations in your position as SENCO?

	<b>Very effective</b>	<b>Effective</b>	<b>Ineffective</b>	<b>Very ineffective</b>	<b>Non-applicable</b>
School principal					
Principals in other IM schools					
Principals in English medium schools					
School SENCO					
Other teachers in the school					
Teachers in other IM schools					
Teachers in EM schools					
IM Adviser					
Advisory teachers					
CASS team in ELB					

	<b>Very effective</b>	<b>Effective</b>	<b>Ineffective</b>	<b>Very ineffective</b>	<b>Non-applicable</b>
Department of Education					
Educational psychologists					
Behavioural Support Team					
Speech and Language Therapy services					
SEN-related Peripatetic services					
Occupational therapy services					
Other (Please specify) ..... .....					

**11.** Is there anything else you would like to say about Special Educational Needs in the IM sector based on your experience as a SENCO?



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Gabhaim buíochas leat as ucht do chuid ama agus do chomhoibriú.

Thank you for your time and co-operation.



# Questionnaire for Assistants

Classroom Assistants, Special Needs Assistants

## **A. Background information**

1. (a) Name of the school .....

1. (b) DE reference number .....

2. Number of years experience as a Classroom Assistant .....

3. Number of years experience as a Classroom Assistant in the IM sector .....

## **Qualifications**

4. Please list any qualifications you may possess which are relevant to your post as a Classroom Assistant in the IM sector.

## **B. General Information**

### **Role in the classroom**

5. Describe briefly your role as Classroom Assistant.



--

Role in lesson planning

6. To what extent are you involved by the class teacher in the lesson planning process?  
Please circle your answer.

Not at all	To some extent	A lot
------------	----------------	-------

7. How much time does the classroom teacher spend with you on weekly planning?.....

**C. Information on Special Educational Needs.**

Assisting pupils with special educational needs

8. Are you employed to assist a particular pupil / particular pupils with Special Educational Needs? Circle your answer.

Yes	No
-----	----

If **No**, proceed to **Q.10** If **Yes**, please **continue**.

**9. (a)** Are there any factors which restrict the support you give to those pupils with Special Educational Needs whom you are employed to assist? Circle your answer.

Yes	No
-----	----

If **No**, proceed to **Q10**. If **Yes**, please **continue**.

**9. (b)** Please mention how support for pupils is restricted under the following titles, as appropriate.

<b>Training</b>
<b>Experience</b>
<b>Time</b>

<b>Irish language competence</b>
<b>Other (Please specify)</b>

Effectiveness of Classroom Assistant

10. In your opinion, how effective is help from a Classroom Assistant as a means of support for pupils with Special Educational Needs? Please circle your answer.

Very effective	Effective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Ineffective
----------------	-----------	-----------------------------------	-------------

11. Mention any advantages and/or disadvantages of having a classroom assistant for pupils with special educational needs.

<b>Advantages</b>
-------------------

<b>Disadvantages</b>

Training

12. What training have you received on Special Educational Needs to date?

--

If you have **not** received any training please proceed to **Q16**. If you **have** received training, please **continue**.

13. How useful was the training you received for your work as a Classroom Assistant? Circle your answer.

Very useful	Useful	Not useful at all
-------------	--------	-------------------

If you found the training **very useful** or **useful** go to **Q14**. If you found the training **not useful at all** go to **Q15**.

**14.** Please say how the training has helped you in your work in the classroom.

**15.** If you found the training was not useful, please say why not.

**16.** What factors, if any, have restricted your access to training in Special Educational Needs?

17. Based on your experience as a classroom assistant in the IM sector, please mention any ways in which you feel support for pupils with Special Educational Needs in the IM sector might be improved.

---

Gabhaim buíochas leat as ucht do chuid ama agus do chomhoibriú.

Thank you for your time and co-operation.



# Questionnaire for IM pre-schools / naíscoileanna

## Section 1 All respondents

### A. Background Information

1. (a) Name of IM naíscoil .....
1. (b) DE reference number .....
2. Your position in the naíscoil .....
3. Number of years experience working in a pre-school (English medium and/or Irish medium)  
.....
4. Number of years experience working in an IM naíscoil .....
5. Training level (NVQ level 3, degree, certificate in education etc) .....

### B. General Information

6. What are the greatest needs of pupils in the naíscoil with regard to the following areas?

<b>Curriculum</b>
-------------------

<b>Language acquisition and enrichment</b>
<b>Resources</b>
<b>Other (Please specify)</b>

7. What are your greatest needs as a member of the naiscoil staff, at present, with regard to the following areas?

<b>Training</b>
<b>Resources</b>



<b>Assistance in the naíscoil</b>
<b>Support</b>
<b>Other (Please specify)</b>

**C. Information on Special Educational Needs**

**8. (a)** What is your opinion of provision for Special Educational Needs in the IM sector in general? Circle your answer.

Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Neither satisfactory nor unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Very unsatisfactory
-------------------	--------------	---	----------------	---------------------

**8. (b)** If you answered either **Satisfactory** or **Unsatisfactory** to Question 8 (a) please give details about what is satisfactory / unsatisfactory about the provision.

<b>Satisfactory</b>
---------------------

<b>Unsatisfactory</b>

**9. (a)** In your professional experience, how effective are the services given by external SEN professionals to pupils with Special Educational Needs in IM education? Please circle your answer.

I have no experience	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective	Very ineffective
-------------------------	----------------	-----------	-------------	------------------

**9. (b)** if you answered either **Satisfactory** or **Unsatisfactory** to Question 9 (a) please give details about what is satisfactory / unsatisfactory about these services.

<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>

--

**10. (a)** What is your opinion of access to Special Educational Needs – related health services for pupils with special educational needs in the IM sector who have SEN, in general? Please circle your answer.

I have no experience	Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Very unsatisfactory
----------------------	-------------------	--------------	----------------	---------------------

**10. (b)** if you answered either **Satisfactory** or **Unsatisfactory** to Q10(a) please give details about what is satisfactory / unsatisfactory about access to health services.

<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>

**11.** How competent do you feel in providing for Special Educational Needs in the naíscóil? Please circle your answer.

Very Competent	Competent	Incompetent	Very incompetent	I am not sure
----------------	-----------	-------------	------------------	---------------

**The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs/ Supplement to the Code of Practice**

**12.** What is your understanding of the Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of Special Educational Needs, the Supplement to the Code of Practice and the Stages of the Code? Please circle your answer.

Full understanding	General understanding	Minimal understanding	No understanding
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**This question relates to statutory nurseries only.**

**13.** What is your understanding of the in-school referral process? Please circle your answer.

Full understanding	General understanding	Minimal understanding	No understanding
--------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	------------------

**14.** What is your understanding of the referral process when referring a pupil to an Educational Psychologist? Please circle your answer.

Full understanding	General understanding	Minimal understanding	No understanding
--------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	------------------

15. What is your understanding of the referral process for statutory assessment to the ELB?  
Please circle your answer.

Full understanding	General understanding	Minimal understanding	No understanding
-----------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------

**Support for naíscoil staff**

16. How effective is the support you receive from the following people / groups with regard to Special Educational Needs. Tick the appropriate boxes.

	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective	Very ineffective	Non- applicable
Naíscoil leader					
Other staff in the naíscoil					
Staff in other IM naíscoileanna					
Staff in English medium pre-schools					
Early years specialist					
Primary school teacher(s)					
SENCO in primary school					
Altram					
Sure Start					
NIPPA					

	Very effective	Effective	Ineffective	Very ineffective	Non-applicable
Childcare Partnership					
Department of Education					
Educational Psychologists					
Behavioural Support					
Peripatetic Services					
Speech and Language Therapy Services					
Health and Social Services Trust					
Other (Please specify) .....					
Other (Please specify) ..... .....					

**Training for naíscoil staff on Special Educational Needs**

17. Detail any training you received to date to attend to Special Educational Needs.

If you have not received training go to Q.17. If you have received training, please continue.

If you **have not received** training go to **Q.21**. If you **have received** training, please **continue**.

**18.** How useful was that training in equipping you to attend to Special Educational Needs?  
Please circle your answer.

Very useful	Useful	It was not useful
-------------	--------	-------------------

If you found the training **Very useful** or **Useful** go to **Q 19** if you found the training **not useful** at all go to **Q 20**.

**19.** Please say how the training has helped you in your work in the classroom.

**20.** If you have found the training was not useful, please say why not.

**21.** What factors, if any, have restricted your access to training in Special Educational Needs?

**Assistants and Special Educational Needs Assistants**

**22. (a)** In your opinion, how effective is the help of a Classroom Assistant for pupils who have Special Educational Needs?

Very effective	Effective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Ineffective
----------------	-----------	--------------------------------------	-------------

**22. (b)** Mention any advantages and/or disadvantages of a Classroom Assistant for pupils with Special Educational Needs.

<b>Advantages</b>
<b>Disadvantages</b>



## Section 2 Naíscoil leaders only

1. What are the greatest challenges facing the naíscoil at present?

Give a mark between 1 and 5 to the following factors according to their importance with **1 representing very unimportant** and **5 representing very important**.

Please circle your answer.

<b>Challenge</b>	Very unimportant				Very important
Resources	1	2	3	4	5
Naíscoil accommodation	1	2	3	4	5
Staff training	1	2	3	4	5
Assessment tools	1	2	3	4	5
Recruitment of staff	1	2	3	4	5
Access to professional services for pupils with Special Educational Needs	1	2	3	4	5
Enrolment	1	2	3	4	5
Finance / budget	1	2	3	4	5
Finding substitute staff	1	2	3	4	5
Other (Please specify)	1	2	3	4	5
Other (Please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

2. Are there factors which restrict the recruitment of staff in the naiscoil? Please circle your answer.

Yes	No	I don't know
-----	----	--------------

3. How do the following factors influence staff recruitment in the naíscoil?

<b>Funding</b>
<b>Hours of the position</b>
<b>Irish language competence</b>
<b>Qualifications / experience of applicants</b>
<b>Other (Please specify)</b>

4. How do recruitment difficulties influence the provision for Special Educational Needs in the naíscoil?

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Gabhaim buíochas leat as ucht do chuid ama agus do chomhoibriú.

Thank you for your time and co-operation.



**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS**

**All information provided in this questionnaire will be treated in the strictest of confidence**

**This questionnaire uses the definition of Special Educational Needs laid down in the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (1998) which defines ‘special educational needs’ ‘as a learning disability which calls for special educational provision to be made’. The term ‘Special Health Needs’ refers to health problems which may impact on the child’s education.**

**A. Background information**

1. What year groups are your children in?

2. Do you speak Irish?      No       A few words       Fairly fluent       Fluent     

3. Does your partner speak Irish      No       A few words       Fairly fluent       Fluent     

4. Are you and/or your partner attending Irish classes at present?

You	Your partner
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

5. What languages are used in the home? .....

**B. Needs of parents in the Irish Medium Sector**

6. What are the **three** main challenges which you face as a parent of children in an Irish Medium School with regard to your children’s education?

1.
2.
3.

7. (a) What support services related to your children’s education are available to you, as a parent of children in an Irish Medium school?

7. (b) Who provides these services?

(a) Support service	(b) Provider
---------------------	--------------

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

8. Please mention **three** ways by which support for parents in the Irish Medium Education sector might be improved, if at all.

1.
2.
3.

**C. Special Educational and/or Health Needs**

9. Have you a child in an Irish Medium school who has Special Educational and/or Health Needs?

Yes  No

**10.** What challenges do your child's Special Needs create for you in supporting them in their education in an Irish Medium school?

**11.** Have you a child who does not attend an Irish Medium school as a result of his/her Special Educational and/or Health Needs?

Yes  No

**12.** If you answered 'Yes' to Q11, in what ways was an Irish Medium school unable to meet your child's needs?



**13.** What services or arrangements might have enabled your child to attend or to stay in an Irish Medium setting?

**D. Other issues**

**14.** Are there any other issues which you wish to relate, with regard to the needs of parents in the Irish Medium sector or Special Educational Needs in the Irish Medium sector?

**If you would like to have a greater input into this research project or share your experience please supply your name and contact details and we will get back to you.**

**Name :**.....

**Address :**.....

.....

**Telephone number or email address:** .....

**Go raibh maith agat as do chuid ama agus do chomhoibriú.**

**Thank you for your time and co-operation.**



## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EDUCATION SERVICE PROVIDERS

### Section A

1. Name of **Education and Library Board**

.....

2. Your position: .....

3. Do you speak Irish?      No       A few words       Fairly fluent       Fluent     

4. Are you attending Irish classes at present?      Yes           

5. What is your understanding of bilingualism and/ or working with bilingual children?

Full understanding	General understanding	Minimal understanding	No understanding
--------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	------------------

6. What is your understanding of the Irish Medium Education system in Northern Ireland?

--	--	--	--

Full understanding	General understanding	Minimal understanding	No understanding
--------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	------------------

7. Have you received training on bilingualism and/or working with bilingual children?

Yes  No

8. In what ways was the training on bilingualism useful or not useful to you in your work?

<b>Useful</b>
<b>Not useful</b>

9. Have you received training on the Irish Medium Education system?

Yes  No

If **No**, please proceed to **Q11**.

10. In what ways was the training on IM Education **useful** or **not useful** to you in your work?

<b>Useful</b>
<b>Not useful</b>

11. Is training on the Irish Medium Education system something which you feel would be beneficial to your work?

Yes  No

12. Please say in what ways such training would be beneficial / would not be beneficial to your work?

<b>Beneficial</b>
<b>Not beneficial</b>

**13.** Have you received training alongside colleagues in the health service with regard to providing support for pupils with Special Educational Needs?

<b>(a) For the English Medium sector</b>	<b>(b) For the Irish Medium sector</b>
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

**14.** In what ways, if any, do you think a collaborative approach to training for educational and health professionals might improve provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs?

**15. (a)** What language / languages would you use when working with a child who is in Irish Medium education?

**15. (b)** What particular steps would you take to meet the linguistic needs of a child in Irish Medium education?

**16. (a)** What language / languages would you use when working with a bilingual child with a language other than Irish?

**16. (b)** What particular steps would you take to meet the linguistic needs of a bilingual child with a language other than Irish?

17. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs in the Irish Medium sector?

**Section B**

**Please complete if you have experience of working with pupils from the Irish Medium sector.**

1. Which age groups did your work in the Irish Medium sector involve? Please tick the appropriate boxes.

- Pre-school
- Primary school: Key Stage 1
- Primary school: Key Stage 2
- Post-primary school: Key Stage 3
- Post-primary school: Key Stage 4
- Sixth Form



2. Please provide brief details of the type of work you carried out involving pupils in an Irish Medium school either directly with pupils or in a training capacity for parents, teachers, and/or Classroom Assistants.

--

3. What are the **three** greatest challenges for you when working with pupils in the Irish Medium Education sector, if any?

1.
2.
3.

4. How do these challenges impact on the support provided by your service to pupils with Special Educational Needs in the Irish Medium Sector?

--

5. List **three** things which you feel would assist you in your work with pupils in Irish Medium Education.

1.
2.
3.

6. (a) How effective would resource materials in Irish be in enabling you to meet the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs from the Irish Medium Education sector?

<b>Very effective</b>	<b>Effective</b>	<b>Not effective</b>
-----------------------	------------------	----------------------

**6. (b)** If you answered **Very effective** or **Effective**, what type of resource materials in Irish would be necessary in meeting the needs of Irish-speaking children with Special Educational Needs?

**7.** Please identify any disadvantages you see for pupils in the Irish Medium Education sector with regard to **access** to SEN-related health and/or educational services.

<b>SEN-related educational services</b>
---

<b>SEN-related health services</b>

8. Under the following headings, please say how provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs in the Irish Medium sector might be improved, if at all.

<b>Access to services</b>
<b>Assessment</b>
<b>Support in school</b>

<b>Support in the home</b>
<b>Other (Please specify)</b>

**If you would like to have a greater input into this research project or share your experience please supply your name and contact details and we will get back to you.**

**Name** :.....

**Address** :.....

.....

Telephone number or email address: .....

---

**Go raibh maith agat as do chuid ama agus do chomhoibriú.**

**Thank you for your time and co-operation.**



## Appendix 4

### Interview Questions

#### Interview questions for representatives of ELBs

1. Background to the SEN services provided by ELB
2. Services provided for IM schools in particular in the Board area – Outreach support, peripatetic services etc.
3. Staff language competence  
*E.g. Is the Board aware of the language competences of its staff?*
4. Knowledge of staff on bilingualism, working with bilingual children and/or the IM education system  
*E.g. Is the board aware of particular members of staff who may have particular knowledge or expertise in working with bilingual and /or IM pupils?*
5. Training for staff on bilingualism and/or the IM education system  
*E.g. Is this something which happens currently? Is this something which is felt would be useful for members of staff who work with children in IM education or children who are exposed to two or more languages?*
6. Statutory assessment of bilingual pupils / pupils from IM schools

*E.g. Does the issue of statutory assessment pose challenges for educational psychologists etc. when children from the IM sector are concerned with regard to assessment materials and language of the assessment?*

7. Implications of difficulties within the Board e.g. staffing difficulties, funding difficulties provision for children with SEN

8. Recommendations for the development of provision for pupils with SEN in the IM sector

9. Is there anything else you wish to add on the issue of provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs in the Irish Medium sector?



### **Interview questions for Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta**

1. Agus sibh ag deileáil le scoileanna, cad iad na riachtanais atá ag gaelscoileanna ó thaobh soláthar do shainriachtanais oideachais de?
2. An bhfeiceann sibh ábhair imní difriúla ag cineálacha scoilenanna difriúla m.sh. idir bunscoileanna agus iar-bhunscoileanna, idir scoileanna atá ina n-aonaid de scoileanna Béarla agus gaelsoileanna neamhsleácha srl?
3. An aithníonn Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta easpaí sa chóras féin mar atá sé ó thaobh soláthar do shainriachtanais oideachais de?
4. Cad é atá ar bun ag Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta faoi láthair ó thaobh soláthar do shainriachtanais oideachais de?
5. Cad é méid na béime a chuirfear ar sholáthar do shainriachtanais oideachais as seo amach?
6. Cad iad na moltaí a bheadh ag Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta do fhorbairt agus do fheabhsú an tsoláthair do shainriachtanais idir sa ghearrthéarma agus san fhadtéarma?

### Interview questions for IM CASS

1. Ar mhiste leat insint dom faoin ról atá agatsa?
2. Agus tú ag dul thart ar scoileanna ag tabhairt tacaíochta do mhúinteoirí an bhfeiceann tú gnéithe áirithe de fhreastal ar Shainriachtanais Oideachais a chuireann imní ar mhúinteoirí in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta?
3. Cad iad na riachtanais is mó a fheiceann tú i measc múinteoirí agus iad ag déanamh freastal ar Shainriachtanais Oideachais?
4. An gcuidíonn an ról atá agatsa le soláthar do dhaltaí a bhfuil Sainriachtanais Oideachais acu agus má chuidíonn, cad é mar a chuidíonn sé leo?
5. An bhfeiceann tú laigí sa soláthar a dhéantar do dhaltaí a bhfuil Sainriachtanais Oideachais acu in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta? Má fheiceann, cad iad na laigí?
6. Cad iad na moltaí a bheadh agat féin do fhorbairt agus do fheabhsú an tsoláthair ó thaobh Shainriachtanais Oideachais de in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta idir sa ghearrthéarma agus san fhadtéarma?
7. An bhfuil rud ar bith eile ba mhaith leat a rá faoin soláthar do Shainriachtanais Oideachais in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta?

### Interview questions for An tÁisaonad

1. Ar mhiste leat cur síos gairid a dhéanamh ar ról an Áisaonaid agus ar an saghas oibre a dhéanann sé?
2. Cad iad na riachtanais is mó atá ag príomhoidí agus múinteoirí ranga faoi láthair ó thaobh soláthar áiseanna de, de réir mar a fheiceann tú iad?
3. Tá a fhios agam go raibh tú lárnach i gcruthú chóras fónaice don Ghaeilge. Cad iad na himpleachtaí atá aige seo do pháistí atá ag foghlaim trí mheán na Gaeilge agus dá múinteoirí?
4. Agus mé ag labhairt le príomhoidí agus múinteoirí mar chuid den taighde seo, luaíodh an réimse áiseanna agus easpa uirlisí measúnaithe i nGaeilge mar chonstaicí ar sholáthar cuí do Shainriachtanais Oideachais. Cad é an ról a bheadh le himirt ag an Áisaonad i bhforbairt na ngnéithe seo amach anseo?
5. An bhfuil rudaí ann a chuireann srian ar obair an Áisaonaid ó thaobh soláthar áiseanna de, go ginearálta agus, ar sholáthar áiseanna dírithe ar Shainriachtanais Oideachais, ach go háirithe?
6. An bhfuil áiseanna de chineál ar bith ann (m.sh. cúrsaí airgeadais, daonna, srl.) a chuideodh leis an Áisaonad forbairt a dhéanamh ar an soláthar áiseanna do earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta amach anseo? Má tá, cad iad na háiseanna seo?
7. Bunaithe ar do thaithí ón Áisaonad, cad iad na moltaí ata agat do fheabhsú an tsoláthair do Shainriachtanais Oideachais in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta, sa ghearrthéarma agus san fhadtéarma?
8. An bhfuil rud ar bith eile ba mhaith leat a rá faoin cheist ar sholáthar do Shainriachtanais Oideachais in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta?

### **Interview questions for educational psychologists**

1. Do you identify particular needs of children from the Irish Medium education sector when undergoing assessment?
  
2. Do you identify particular needs of teachers in the IM sector with regard to referral and assessment of pupils?
  
3. Are there guidelines in place to assist Educational Psychologists when working with bilingual children and/or children from the Irish Medium sector?
  
4. What are the main challenges, if any, which Educational Psychologists face when assessing children from the IM sector?
  
5. Do you feel that pupils from the IM sector are disadvantaged in any way during the assessment process?
  
6. Assessment materials
  - a. Assessment materials for educational psychologists when assessing pupils from the IM sector
  - b. Access to recommended resources for use with pupils with two, or more, languages
  - c. Are there support systems in place to assist Educational Psychologists, with regard to language, when working with bilingual and/or children from the IM sector?
  - d. Are there other ways of taking account of a child's bilingualism and/or exposure to another language?

- e. Are assessment materials in Irish something which you feel is necessary at present?
- f. Will there be a greater need for assessment materials in Irish in the future as the IM sector grows and develops?

**7. Staff language competence**

Is there a record within the different ELBs of competence of Educational Psychologists in other languages so as to assign particular psychologists to particular schools or pupils who speak languages other than English?

**8. Training for staff on the IM education system**

Might training on the IM education system be of benefit to Educational Psychologists when working with pupils from the IM education system?

**9.** Might collaboration between Educational Psychologists and members of the Health and Social Services Trusts with regard to staff training, assessment procedures be beneficial in meeting the needs of pupils with SEN?

**10.** Recommendations for the development of provision for pupils with SEN in the IM sector in both the short-term and the longterm

**11.** Are there any other issues with regard to provision for pupils with SEN within the IM sector which you wish to relate?

### Interview questions for SENCOs and SEN teachers in IM settings

1. Cad iad na riachtanais is mó a fheiceann tú i measc daltaí a bhfuil Sainriachtanais Oideachais acu in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta i láthair na huaire?
2. Cad é a dhéanann an scoil seo le freastal ar riachtanais na ndaltaí?
3. Thar na blianta an bhfeiceann tú athrú ar bith sna cineálacha difriúla riachtanas atá ag teacht fríd an chóras Gaelscolaíochta?
4. Cad iad na riachtanais is mó a bhíonn ag múinteoirí ranga agus iad ag freastal ar Shainriachtanais Oideachais sa seomra ranga?
5. Agus tú ag plé le tuismitheoirí, cad iad na gnéithe a thagann aníos is minice do thuismitheoirí a bhfuil Sainriachtanais Oideachais ag a bpáistí in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta?
6. Cad iad na laigí is mó a fheiceann tú sa soláthar do dhaltaí a bhfuil Sainriachtanais Oideachais acu in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta?
7. I do ról mar SENCO (CRSO), cad é a bheadh de dhíth ort le cuidiú leat tacú le daltaí a bhfuil Sainriachtanais Oideachais acu?
8. Cad é atá de dhíth le riachtanais na ndaltaí agus riachtanais na múinteoirí, ó thaobh Shainriachtanais Oideachais de, a chomhlíonadh?
9. An bhfuil rud ar bith eile ba mhaith leat a rá faoi Shainriachtanais Oideachais in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta?

## Appendix 5

### Confidence Levels

List of figures		-	+
4.2.1	Responses regarding opinion of current SEN provision: pre-schools	2.56488	3.43512
4.2.1	Responses regarding opinion of current SEN provision: primary schools	1.98896	2.67104
	Responses regarding opinion of current SEN provision: post-primary schools	0.35252	1.18748
4.3.1	Responses from educational psychologists regarding the language they would use when working with a pupil from the IM sector	2.1038	2.4762
4.3.4	Effectiveness of resouces in Irish reported by educational psychologists with experience of the IM sector	1.63116	2.52884
4.4.1	Support provided by CAs rated effective: IM pre-school staff	1.07576	1.44424
4.4.1	Support provided by CAs rated effective: Primary teachers	3.6826	3.9374
4.4.1	Support provided by CAs rated effective: Post-primary teachers	2.56228	3.17772
4.4.1	Support provided by CAs rated effective: CAs	3.96128	3.49872
4.4.1	Support provided by CAs rated effective: SEN CAs	3.96128	3.49872
4.4.6	Extent to which SEN CAs are involved in lesson planning	0.84788	2.01212
4.4.6	Extent to which CAs are involved in lesson planning	1.57272	2.42728
4.5.2	Respondents' level of satisfaction with the implementation of SEN support services in the IM sector: IM pre-school staff	1.6616	2.7984
4.5.2	Respondents' level of satisfaction with the implementation of SEN support services in the IM sector: Primary teachers	1.5168	2.1832
4.5.2	Respondents' level of satisfaction with the implementation of SEN support services in the IM sector: Post-primary teachers	0.96724	1.87276

4.5.5	Respondent opinion regarding access to health-related SEN services: Pre-school staff	1.90848	3.13152
4.5.5	Respondent opinion regarding access to health-related SEN services: Primary teachers	1.24056	2.07944
4.5.5	Respondent opinion regarding access to health-related SEN services: Post-primary teachers	0.35252	1.18748
4.5.8	Understanding of bilingualism Educational psychologist	2.65516	2.96484
4.5.8	Understanding of IM education sector Educational psychologist	2.344	2.736
4.5.9	Training received on working with bilingual children Educational psychologists	1.50968	1.87032
4.5.9	Training received on the IM education sector Educational psychologists	1.88552	2.03448
4.7.1	Use of a 'sub-stage' of the Code of Practice: Primary teachers	1.52712	1.83288
4.7.1	Use of a 'sub-stage' of the Code of Practice: Post-primary teachers	1.77064	2.02936
4.7.2	Are there factors which influence putting a pupil on the SEN register, or to moving a pupil from one stage of the Code of Practice to the next? Primary respondents	1.20284	1.67716
4.7.2	Are there factors which influence putting a pupil on the SEN register, or to moving a pupil from one stage of the Code of Practice to the next? Post-primary respondents	0.82816	1.43184
4.7.3	Percentage breakdown of response from primary and post-primary phases regarding recording health problems on the SEN register: Primary respondents	0.62144	0.95856
4.7.3	Percentage breakdown of response from primary and post-primary phases regarding recording health problems on the SEN register: Post-primary respondents	0.04948	0.39052
4.7.4	Percentage breakdown of responses in relation to their understanding of the Code of Practice: Pre-school respondents	2.31192	3.08808
4.7.4	Percentage breakdown of responses in relation to their understanding of the Code of Practice: Primary respondents	3.27028	3.68972
4.7.4	Percentage breakdown of responses in relation	2.09444	2.72556



	to their understanding of the Code of Practice: Post-primary respondents		
4.7.5	Percentage breakdown of responses regarding respondent understanding of the in-school referral process: Primary respondents	2.0712	5.1288
4.7.5	Percentage breakdown of responses regarding respondent understanding of the in-school referral process: Post-primary respondents	2.25976	3.02024
4.7.6	Percentage breakdown of responses regarding respondent understanding of the referral process involved when referring a pupil to an educational psychologist: Primary respondents	3.10108	3.59892
4.7.6	Percentage breakdown of responses regarding respondent understanding of the referral process involved when referring a pupil to an educational psychologist: Post-primary respondents	1.97228	2.58772
4.9.16	Respondents' years of experience	6.31856	9.90144
4.10.9	Percentage breakdown of respondents who rated SEN training received useful: IM pre-school leaders	1.07576	1.44424
4.10.9	Percentage breakdown of respondents who rated SEN training received useful: IM pre-school assistants	3.6826	3.9374
4.10.9	Percentage breakdown of respondents who rated SEN training received useful: Primary teachers	2.56228	3.17772
4.10.9	Percentage breakdown of respondents who rated SEN training received useful: Post-primary teachers	3.96128	3.49872
4.10.9	Percentage breakdown of respondents who rated SEN training received useful: Classroom assistants	3.96128	3.49872

## Appendix 6

### Letters of invitation to take part in research

(Seoladh)

(Dáta)

A chara,

Between January and April 2007 I conducted research in every IM in the north of Ireland as part of the project, which I am currently carrying out, on the Special Needs of Bilingual Children (Irish – English) from 0 – 18 years. That was the first round of research for the project. I am now about to start on the second round of research which shall be conducted in a sample of IM schools only.

*(ainm na scoile)* has been randomly selected as part of the research sample. I invite you and your school to take part in this round of research which shall include a questionnaire for teachers and classroom assistants about the main issues relating to SEN provision in the IM sector, at present.

I hope that you will be able to take part in this important research. Should there be any reason which may prevent the school from taking part in this research I would be grateful if you could get in touch with me before Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2007. Until then, if you have any questions or would like further information on the research please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to working with you in the near future.

Is mise le meas,

Deirdre Ní Chinnéide

Research Officer

(028) 9043 7077

7<sup>th</sup> February 2007

**Sainriachtanais pháistí dátheangacha ó 0 – 18 bliain d’aois**

**Special needs of bilingual children (Irish – English) from 0 – 18 years**

A chara,

I wrote to you in October 2006 to inform you of the research project which POBAL, umbrella organisation for the Irish-speaking community, are undertaking at present on the special needs of bilingual (Irish – English ) children in conjunction with the Department of Education. Since then, the methodology of the research has been designed, a literature review has been put together and a quantitative questionnaire been created. I am now ready to begin collecting statistics and information in Irish Medium schools.

In order to ensure that the information collected is accurate, I aim to carry out the research in two stages; the first in all IM schools, and the second in a sample of IM schools only.

As part of the first stage, I hope to have a quantitative questionnaire completed in each IM school in the north of Ireland. To this end, I propose to visit all IM schools in order to guide and assist you as you fill in the questionnaire. Completing the questionnaire will take no longer than 30 minutes. The questionnaire asks questions about the IM school in general, children with special needs, the SENCO, special needs within the school and

support for parents. I will send you a copy of the questionnaire in advance of my visit in order to give you the opportunity to familiarise yourself with the information sought.

I am aware that principals have a busy timetable and therefore, will do my best to be as flexible as possible when organising appointments. I enclose a draft timetable for these appointments. You will then be contacted by myself or the Clerical Officer to confirm an exact time which would be suitable for you.

I urge you to participate in this very important research project and to feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Thank you for your co-operation and I look forward to meeting with you in the near future.

Is mise le meas,

Deirdre Ní Chinnéide

Research Officer

(028) 9043 7077

[deirdre@pobal.org](mailto:deirdre@pobal.org)

**The Special Needs of Bilingual Children (Irish-English)  
from 0 - 18 years**

18 June 2007

A Thuismitheoirí / Chaomhnóirí

My name is Deirdre Ní Chinnéide and I am carrying out this two-year research project on The Special Needs of Bilingual (Irish – English) children on behalf of POBAL, the umbrella organisation for the Irish-speaking community. The research is being funded by the Department of Education.

There are currently 4,072 children in Irish Medium (IM) education in the north of Ireland (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, 2006). Special needs provision is, therefore, an emerging issue for the Irish language community. In spite of this, however, there are significant gaps in the research which has been carried out on the special needs of bilingual (Irish – English) children and the provision which is available to them at the present time.

I am keen to include in the research the experiences and opinions of parents / guardians of children who are currently in IM education, particularly those whose children have special educational or health needs.

Your input into this research project is vital and I urge you to take part in this very important piece of research by completing this short questionnaire and returning it to the school.

Thanking you in advance for your time and co-operation.

Is mise le meas,

Deirdre Ní Chinnéide

Research Officer

17 Meán Fómhair 2007

A chara,

As you are aware, I am carrying out a research project on behalf of POBL, umbrella organisation for the Irish-speaking community, entitled **The Special Needs of Bilingual Children (Irish – English) from 0 – 18 years**. The research is being funded by the Department of Education.

Given the importance of the opinion and experience of those working with the pupils, we are organising a series of focus groups to give principals, teachers and naíscóil leaders the opportunity to discuss the main areas associated with the provision for pupils with special needs in the Irish Medium sector. I invite you to attend the focus group which suits you best.

The focus groups will take place as follows:

<b>Armagh</b>	<b>Monday, 1 October 2007</b>	<b>Armagh Teachers' Centre</b>	<b>3.30</b>
<b>Derry</b>	<b>Tuesday, 2 October 2007</b>	<b>North West Teachers' Centre, Strathfoyle</b>	<b>3.30</b>
<b>Maghera</b>	<b>Wednesday, 3 October 2007</b>	<b>An Carn, Carntogher, Tirkane Rd.</b>	<b>3.30</b>
<b>Belfast</b>	<b>Monday, 8 October 2007</b>	<b>Ulidia Centre, Ormeau Rd.</b>	<b>3.30</b>

I would be grateful if you could let me know which session you will be attending by telephone or by email to

**(028) 9043 7077** or [deirdre@pobal.org](mailto:deirdre@pobal.org)

Thank you for your co-operation and I will look forward to seeing you soon,

Is mise le meas,

Deirdre Ní Chinnéide

Research Officer

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