

A Rough Guide

to

Individual Educational Planning

(IEPs)

Mary Nugent, Senior Educational Psychologist, NEPS

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A Rough Guide to IEPs

Introduction

This article is based on my experiences of developing and implementing individual education plans for children with special educational needs in mainstream and special school settings. It is intended as guidance for schools and teachers who are either beginning to develop individual educational plans in their school, or who wish to further refine a system already in place. The focus here is on children with special educational needs, who may have their needs met by attending a special school, a special class, or through mainstream placement, perhaps with the support of a special education or resource teacher.

With the advent of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004, schools will find that they increasingly need to become familiar with educational planning and it is hoped that the guidance here will contribute to increased confidence and competence. It is anticipated that the National Council of Special Education will issue guidance in relation to the development of education plans. In the absence of these more detailed guidelines, what follows is indeed, a rough guide.

Section 1

What Is an IEP?

What is an Individual Educational Plan?

First of all we should be clear that an individual educational planning is not about producing a piece of paper. It is very much about a **process**, where a written document is the **product** of that process. Should a written document be produced without the essential process elements it will, of necessity, be a barren and ineffective document. Developing an IEP is about the collaboration of concerned people in planning for a student's special educational needs and about how that plan can be brought to life in a meaningful and useful way.

Key Characteristics of an IEP

An individual education plan should have the following characteristics:

- **Special**
- **Individualised**
- **Have a shelf life of one year (max)**
- **Specify targets and goals**
- **Specify teaching methods and supporting strategies**
- **Be regularly reviewed**
- **Shared with the student**
- **Shared with parents and carers**
- **Be a working document**

These characteristics deserve further description:

Special

An individual education plan can be the medium by which we put the special into special education. It is, by necessity, about going beyond what is normally available in the curriculum, and specifies what is particular and special about the provision that is being offered to an individual student, irrespective of the place where that provision is delivered.

Individualised

Each individual education plan is tailor made for a particular student. IEPs produced for children with special needs should not look the same, and those produced for children attending the same class should not have identical targets. The individualised nature of the planning depends on in-depth knowledge of a child's strengths, needs and aspirations.

Has a shelf life of one year (max).

An individual educational plan should not cover more than one academic year, because to extend further than that would lead us into distant speculation and vagueness. The IEP is a more immediate plan that specifies the learning and teaching that will happen in a relatively short time frame. IEPs can be written for a term or even a week, but the time frames must be realistic. Often a written IEP covers a full academic year and, at the same time, more detailed targets are developed for weekly or termly instruction.

Targets and goals are specified

The individual educational plan specifies the targets and goals that a student will achieve within a given time frame. It should be noted that the term educational is used in its broadest sense and goals can include social targets, self-help skills, attendance goals as well as targets for academic learning and cognitive development.

Specifies teaching methods/supporting strategies

The individual education plan also specifies how these targets and goals will be taught in terms of the methods and resources that will be used to support the learning.

Reviewed regularly

An IEP needs to be monitored and reviewed, not least to gauge whether or not it is being effective. Systems for doing this can vary widely and there is no doubt that a key adult needs to take responsibility for co-ordinating information to ensure that reviewing is effective. In my experience, in the mainstream context this is an important role for the specialist teacher.

Shared with the student

A really effective IEP is one that the student understands and to which he or she is committed. Depending on the student's level of skill, he or she can be engaged in the process from the very beginning, from planning through to self monitoring and review.

Parents participate

Parents play a crucial role in helping to develop meaningful goals and in implementing aspects of the agreed plan. Their involvement and commitment is essential to the process.

A working document

Most of all a meaningful individual educational plan is a **working document**, which can be modified in light of experience and must be responsive to changing situations. It is always discouraging to hear any of these key participants say that an IEP exists, but they are not sure what it says or where it is. This suggests that the IEP exists in paper only and is without meaning or value. It should be a guide to which students, teachers and parents refer on an on-going basis.

Section 2

Why Have an IEP?

There are very good reasons to have IEPs and these are summarized below and then described more fully in this section.

- **Makes best use of assessments**
- **An opportunity to share information**
- **Establishes priorities**
- **Clarifies expectations**
- **Engages parents**
- **Motivates students**
- **Documents success**
- **Facilitates review**
- **Provides on-going information**

An IEP makes best use of assessments

Most children now attending special educational provision have been assessed by a psychologist. A comprehensive psychological report should include information about the child's learning strengths and difficulties and suggestions for supporting the child in his or her learning. There are also other valuable sources of assessment information that can be used, such as teacher evaluations, in class tests, speech and language therapy reports and information from other professionals. Information from these sources can be used to plan effectively for a child's education.

It is an opportunity to share information

This is perhaps one of the most important reasons to have an individual education plan. Everyone concerned with the child can share information in a planning meeting. This develops a collaborative approach and encourages participation and commitment.

It establishes priorities

Sometimes when we work with a child with special educational needs, those needs can appear quite overwhelming. For example, a child may have articulation problems, difficulties making friends, poor skills in addition, a weak pencil grip, unhealthy eating habits, an inability to concentrate for more than ten minutes, attention seeking behaviour in class etc. In these cases it can seem hard to know where to start.

However, in the context of a planning meeting, the participants can discuss the issues and agree priorities. This can help teachers and parents to feel less burdened, because there is some plan of action and a sense of purpose.

It clarifies expectations

The process of developing an IEP helps all parties to be clear about what to expect in the coming year. In my experience, teachers are often concerned that parents have different expectations to those held by the school. Sometimes the school experiences these expectations as unrealistic and feel under pressure. The IEP process allows all parties to discuss the priorities and goals and usually goes a long way to dispel anxieties about progress.

It engages parents

For many parents whose children are found to need special education, contact with schools, psychologists and special education professionals has consisted of descriptions of difficulty and need and has focussed on negative elements of the child's school experience. The IEP process can offer an opportunity to talk about a child's gifts and strengths, their hopes and plans and what will be done to help them. It can be a positive experience, not least because it is highly practical and has a problem solving focus. Parents who are otherwise reluctant to attend school based meetings, may be more willing to attend meetings to develop individual plans, because there is a sense that their unique child is individually valued and that such a meeting is purposeful.

It motivates students

When students have participated in planning their goals and are aware of the expectations on them, it gives them motivation and direction. For many students, traditional methods of assessment such as class tests or public examinations are not readily available to them as benchmarks of success. The individual education plan gives them specific goals, that are realistic and attainable and allows the students to have a sense of purpose.

It documents success

For many children with special educational needs progress can be very slow. Again, the usual mechanisms for documenting success may not be accessible to such students. For teachers too there can be a sense of a long struggle to teach a concept, without a defined outcome. The individual education plan allows all parties (parents, teachers and students) to look back on their work and document the progress made and the record successes.

It facilitates review

How do we know if a child in special education has made progress in the last year? Unless the child's level of skill has been accurately recorded at the beginning of the year, it can be very difficult to discern whether, for example, reading or social skills have actually improved and if so, at what rate. The IEP allows for more thorough reviews, not just of what the child has learnt, but also of what teaching methods were found useful. One special school principal who has used an IEP system across the whole school noted that the quality of school reports improved significantly once the system was established.

It provides on-going information

As the process of IEPs becomes established in a school, the IEP itself becomes a tool for planning and reviewing. The previous IEP can, and should, be used to plan the next IEP and there is an invaluable record of priorities, plans, targets achieved and not achieved and resources deployed.

Is it useful?

There is no doubt that there has been a great deal of criticism of IEPs in both Britain and the USA where they are more widely used. The crucial difference between our experience in Ireland and that of our English speaking neighbours is that, to date, IEPs in Irish special education are a matter of choice, not compulsion. This has allowed us enormous flexibility in our approach and encourages us to build on best practice. This is changing somewhat with the requirements implicit in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004. My own experience, both as a teacher within special education (in special schools and integrated primary settings) and as an educational psychologist, is that Individual Education Plans can be a powerful tool for developing excellence in special educational provision. The only research carried out in Ireland to explore the utility of IEPs, found a resounding 85% of teachers found the process of IEPs to be useful to them in delivering special educational services (see Nugent, REACH Vol 15, No. 2, 2002).

Section 3

Getting Started and Organisational Matters

Getting Started

We are in a time of change and development and we need to see the development of IEPs in schools as an ongoing process and journey that will be refined and improved in light of experience. In schools where there is little or no experience of devising IEPs, the tasks of gathering information, organising planning meetings, recording targets and reviewing can seem very daunting. Inevitably, like any new process, the first few attempts will be experienced as unfamiliar and there will be elements of resistance, confusion and difficulty. It should also be remembered that the process will be far more time-consuming at first and with experience the various elements will not seem so cumbersome and demanding. My advice to any school is to start small. Perhaps plan for every teacher in special education to work on developing one or two

IEPs or focus on a particular year group. Schools will probably find it very helpful to begin this process before the requirements of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 are fully operational, (particularly Section 3), so that the process of development is given plenty of time.

Training

The next step is to organise adequate training for staff. This could be organised through your local teacher's centre, or perhaps through a professional body such as IATSE/ ILSA. Ideally, initial training of perhaps a half-day duration would be followed up by some practical support within the first year of implementation. It may be that there is already expertise within the staff that could be shared with colleagues. You may also wish to consult with your NEPS school psychologist.

Gathering Information

A key task in developing an IEP is to gather information from relevant sources. It is important that one adult has overall responsibility for the IEP. This is particularly important in situations where a child has contact with many people in the course of his or her school day. Some information can be gathered before a planning meeting takes place, and particular care needs to be taken to ensure the meaningful collaboration of parents and children. A planning meeting should not be abandoned just because some information is not available. For example an up-to-date psychological report may not be forthcoming. In this situation, accessing such a report may become one of the targets to include on the IEP.

The Planning Meeting

This is the most crucial component of the process. The IEP planning meeting, with time, may also become the forum in which an IEP is reviewed. However, given that most schools operate a planning system that encompasses an academic year (often with a change of teacher each year) it may be realistic to think of the planning meeting being convened in late September / early October.

In essence, the people who need to attend this meeting are those involved directly in the child's educational provision. Let's start with the professional staff. In a mainstream setting this should include the mainstream classteacher, the special education teacher and ideally the school principal. Other concerned professionals such as the educational psychologist or speech and language therapist may be invited as appropriate. In some special schools there may be far larger numbers of people involved including all the above but with additional staff such as special needs assistants, nursing staff, child care workers, physiotherapists, vocational instructors, work experience co-ordinators etc. If possible, parents and the student should be present, and this is discussed further below.

One person needs to chair the meeting, and ideally, another can make some written notes. With experience it is possible to have a completed IEP written and ready for distribution at the end of the meeting.

A typical agenda could include:

- **Introducing participants**
- **Identifying child's strengths and gifts**
- **Identifying child's needs and difficulties**
- **Suggested priorities**
- **Suggested targets in key areas, with suggested strategies**
- **Agreed actions**
- **Review date set**

It is most helpful if participants come to the meeting with some ideas and suggestions prepared. This is particularly important for teachers. Many teachers like to have their targets and strategies drafted in advance of the meeting.

An IEP should meet the requirements set out in section 9 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act. This specifies the content of the IEP as follows:

- The nature and degree of the child's abilities, skills and talents
- The nature and degree of the child's special educational needs and how these needs affect his/ her progress
- The present level of educational performance of the child
- The special educational needs of the child
- The special education and related support services to be provided to the child
- The goals which the child is to achieve over a period not exceeding 12 months

In the sections below, these terms are integrated into the text, and are shown in italics.

Agreed Actions

During the planning meeting, it is very important that all participants are aware of who is going to implement which aspects of the IEP. For example, a target that a child improve attendance so that she /he attends every day, might involve parents who commit to waking the child, a child who commits to not wasting time in the shops, a teacher who undertakes to monitor attendance, plus an agreed reward for a week's perfect attendance. In cases where information is being sought, such as a hearing test, it should be clear who will undertake to make this happen and by when.

Also, it is a requirement under the Act that the IEP sets out the nature of the special educational services that the child is to receive (*the special education and related support services to be provided to the child*). This section might include details about the name and designation of persons supporting the child and an outline of the frequency, timing and composition of any additional teaching. For example, Mrs Murray (resource teacher) will see Leanne for two 30 minute individual sessions (Monday and Wednesday) and two small group sessions (Tuesday and Thursday).

Section 4 **Writing Targets and Strategies**

This is a crucial area and the one that perhaps causes teachers most anxiety. To support the comments in this section I have included two sample IEPs. For reasons of confidentiality, I have not reproduced exactly any of the excellent IEPs developed by teachers. However, these are composite IEPs, firmly based on very real children and real situations.

Writing Targets

For many people it is the writing of targets that is at the heart of the IEP. Certainly, the better the IEP is written the more easily it can be implemented and evaluated. Under the terms of the Act, long term goals, targets and strategies would all be part of the section '*goals which the child is to achieve over a period not exceeding 12 months.*'

The first task is to identify the child's strengths and difficulties (*the nature and degree of the child's abilities, skills and talents and the nature and degree of the child's special educational needs and how those affect his/ her progress*). It is most important that information is recorded in precise behavioural terms. The greater the level of detail at this stage, the more likely that targets will be accurate and relevant. For example, it is more useful to describe a child as, 'able to take turns and join in team games in the yard' than as 'has good social skills'. Equally, the term 'loud and disruptive' is rather vague. Details such as, 'Calls out 10-15 times every morning and interrupts other students on a daily basis' is more useful.

It is at this preparation stage that objective data is most useful, because it allows us to set realistic targets, it gives a clear baseline from which to work and it establishes clarity about the current level of functioning. If you know that a child is calling out 10-15 times per session, you will also know that if this child were to call out twice in a session at the end of the year, this does represent significant progress. Ideally teachers should prepare a written account of the child's level of skill in key areas (*the present level of educational performance of the child*).

On the basis of the above information it should be possible to agree a summary statement about the child's special educational needs, (*the special educational needs of the child*).

The next step is to talk about priorities and long term goals. It is very useful for a teacher to ask her/himself, '*What do I want this child to be doing at the end of this year that she/ he cannot do now?*'. To foster positive thinking, it can be helpful to say, '*It would be great if...*'. This question should be explicitly aired at the planning meeting to have as much consensus as possible. The answer to such a question usually gives the whole IEP endeavor a focus. For example, a child in a special school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties might have a long term goal, *To return to mainstream education*. A child with learning difficulties may have the long term goals, *To read fluently at level 4* (of a named scheme) and *To participate regularly in classroom oral activities*. Subsequent targets will then feed into the long term goals.

The next step is to compose some targets. These should relate very directly to the needs identified in the first section and should also build on the gifts and strengths identified. Again, precise terms are essential if the targets are to be meaningful. Some practitioners refer to SMART targets (specific, measurable, agreed, realistic, timed). It is not necessary to become tortuously convoluted and pedantic, but it is essential that the targets are written in such a way that they can be effectively evaluated. For example a target 'to improve his reading' is virtually useless. A target that specifies to increase his sight vocabulary to 100 words (baseline 26 words) is far more useful. The writing of such targets is a discreet skill and teachers sometimes need specific training, practice and support to develop this skill.

Targets should be expressed in positive terms, and this may mean describing what will happen when an unwanted behaviour is eliminated. In the case of the child who calls out continually, it is best to specify what the child should be doing, (putting up his hand when he wishes to contribute).

Specifying Strategies

This is a vital step in articulating what is special about the special education that the student is offered. Where relevant, teachers should state the ways in which targets are to be delivered. For example, the aim to teach a child 20 sight words, should specify those words and the chosen method (flashcards, individual work with special education teacher, plus practice at home). Strategies may also include some note of the place and time when teaching might take place, for example a target to encourage a child to line up with others would be implemented both in the yard and in the classroom. When looking at behavioural issues, the strategies needed to support targets are crucially important. For example, which adults are involved in monitoring behaviour? What rewards will be offered and by whom? Perhaps the best way of bringing all these to life is to look at some sample IEPs, and for this reason two are included at the end of this article.

Section 5 **Involving Parents and Students**

Parental Involvement

Where the planning meeting involves a large number of professionals, particularly those who work together and feel relaxed in each other's company, parents can feel very marginalised and simply outnumbered. Parents who lack social confidence, are limited in their literacy skills or have poor experiences of schools generally, may be very daunted by such gathering and may either not attend or remain passive and silent. There are many ways to address this. First of all, ensure that parents know that they can bring a friend or companion with them. Secondly, one familiar person, ideally the child's class teacher, should greet the parent outside of the meeting and accompany the parent to the meeting and introduce him/her to all the participants. Participants should

be invited to describe their role in working with the child, rather than just give a job title, such as 'SNA' which can be unhelpful.

In some situations it may be better if the parents views are sought before the planning meeting, either by informal meeting, questionnaire or by telephone interview. These mechanisms need not be overly time-consuming and allow professionals to be aware of parental issues in advance of the meeting. This also allows parents to have had a structured framework to work through in advance of the meeting and may help them to clarify their own thoughts and have some sense of what to expect.

In some cases the parents need not attend the planning meeting, but their contribution may be recorded, shared at the meeting, and the IEP can be drafted by the multidisciplinary team and then shared with the parent subsequently in a more informal meeting. At this point the IEP can be amended and modified in light of the parental contribution. Parents should always have a copy of their child's IEP.

Parents do often ask, '*What can I do to help my child?*' and teachers should give this question some prior consideration. Parents may volunteer to undertake a task, such as listening to a child read every evening. Parents may also be involved in monitoring behaviour. Most importantly, parents can be engaged in the giving of rewards.

I do not believe there is one set procedure that can be held up as best practice in parental participation. The point is to maximise this participation, and to make the experience for parents as positive and supportive as possible.

Student Participation

As described above, very large meetings of professionals may be experienced as intimidating by students. Some students may be too young or immature to cope with attendance. In these cases a familiar and sympathetic adult should spend some time with the student in advance of the meeting, eliciting his/her views. Schools can develop a very simple proforma prompt sheet with relevant questions and issues. If the student will not be attending the meeting, his/ her views should be shared with the group. Some schools have found it useful to ask the student to join the meeting towards the end of the process. This is then used as a time to congratulate successes, identify next steps and have clarity about what is expected. Usually, if a child is capable of writing his/her first name, she/he should sign the completed IEP.

Students, particularly older students, can also be involved in monitoring their own behaviour. For example, if a target is: *to play co-operatively in the yard*, then the child can be given a card with the target specified and told that when, say, 15 signatures are collected, the child will earn his/her reward. This places responsibility on the child and also allows whichever staff is on the yard to be able to give positive feedback in a structured way.

Section 6 **Monitoring and Reviewing**

Monitoring

An IEP needs some amount of on-going monitoring. A key member of staff needs to have an overview of the targets and of the child's progress. Certainly, staff should not be doggedly implementing a strategy that does not work, just because it is specified in the original IEP. Remember the IEP is a working document and it is quite appropriate, in fact I would argue that it is best practice, to have notes, amendments, and comments, written and dated in the margins. Sometimes a strategy will need to be changed, at other times the target will quickly be achieved and a further target will be needed so that the momentum of progress is sustained.

Reviewing

The Education Act 2004 specifies various requirements in terms of reviewing education plans in section 11. The guidance here is broadly compatible with those requirements.

Reviews should actively involve the child and parents, as well as teachers and support staff. There is a range of different ways of organising reviews. It is usually best if any system developed fits in as far as possible with existing school structures. For example, if the school usually have an open day at the end of the school year, this would be an appropriate forum in which to host reviews. Sometimes one or two key individuals can collect information from others and feedback to parents. Sometimes the end of year feedback can take the form of a school report, written in such a way as to specify which targets have been met. (School principals will be obliged to report to both parents and the local Special Needs Organiser at least annually).

There should be some written documentation, even if it is a scribbled, dated note on the original IEP which notes which targets have been achieved. This will be invaluable information for the following year when the IEP for the next academic year is being prepared.

In a formal review meeting key questions which need to be asked are:

- **What progress has the child made?**
- **Which targets have been achieved?**
- **How successful were the strategies used?**
- **What are the next steps?**
- **Should alternative strategies be tried?**
- **Is a more detailed assessment needed?**
- **Is everyone clear about what has been agreed?**
- **Who will do what, by when?**

Section 7

Final Thoughts

Where do we find time for this?

If only there was a quick answer to this question! In some ways this brings me full circle, in the sense that if IEPs are found to be useful to teachers in delivering special educational programmes, then the time needs to be found to give staff training, hold planning meetings/ review meeting and develop expertise in engaging parents and students. The school principal has an important role to play in providing leadership and assisting teachers in developing their practice.

It works best if a block of time can be identified for planning meetings. Schools will need to make local arrangements for this. The IEP review can be part of normal school open days, parent –teacher meetings and school reports.

I would advise to beware of cumbersome systems, which involve a lot of paperwork. These usually collapse or else are sustained through teacher exhaustion but are neither helpful to teachers, nor useful to children. It is far more important that the quality of dialogue during a review meeting is of the highest standard, then that the written document is pristine. Some solutions; drafted targets can be written on slips of paper and, if agreed, can be pasted onto a blank document. Do not reinvent the wheel. Proformas for the IEP planning sheet and the IEP document itself can be gleaned from relevant sources. With time, most school will probably develop their own system, with tailor made paperwork, but proformas are certainly a way to get started (two are included at the end of this article).

Introducing IEPs at first can be daunting, but getting started, even with a small number of students, is the key. It is hoped that this article is helpful in giving some encouragement and practical guidance.

Section 8

Sample IEPs

Jack is a child in Senior Infants who experiences learning difficulties and has not yet learnt to follow classroom routines. He is well liked by his peers. He receives two hours individual support from a special education teacher per week.

Jack's IEP just shows the writing of targets and strategies.

Melanie is a first class girl who has great difficulty with her social behaviour. She is capable of good work, but usually underachieves. Melanie has few friends, but responds very well to one-to-one attention. Melanie lives in care.

Melanie's IEP specifically meets the requirements set out in section 9 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act.

Individual Education Plan For Jack Murphy

Date Started: 20th February 2003

Long Term Goals

For Jack to conform to classroom routines and expectations

For Jack to develop early literacy and language skills

Short Term Targets and Strategies

Target 1. For Jack to give two sentences of news

Strategies

For parents to prepare one or two phrases of news for Jack on his way to school

For adults to give prompts

Participation in weekly language group with peers (resource teacher/ extra support)

Target 2. For Jack to develop a sight vocabulary of 20 words

Strategies

Read Folen's 'Magic Emerald' books

Flashcards and precision teaching methods to learn words, the, is, down, up, not, in, I, can, Mammy, Daddy, Jack, look, am, play, school, have, went, want (special education teacher, practice at home)

Also, Jack to be read stories regularly (at home and in school, in special education time and classroom) without any pressure on him to 'read' or recognize words (both for developing his language skills and promoting his interest in books).

Target 3. For Jack to line up with other students

Strategies

Adults to give minimum attention to inappropriate behaviour. If Jack pushes in the supervising adult should calmly take him by the hand and redirect him to the back of the line, saying, 'We must all take our turn. We do not push in.' No other argument or discussion should be entertained.

Special education teacher can explain why this behaviour is important and can role play Jack being successful and give praise and direction

Adults to notice and praise Jack when he has lined up correctly.

Jack can be rewarded from time to time by being allowed to be first in the line going to PE.

Target 4. For Jack to sit with his group and complete tasks

Strategies

Jack to be seated at table 2, next to teacher's desk, so that gentle prompts and reminders can be given

Peers at table 2 to be encouraged to give each other 'reminders of kindness' to conform to routines

Jack to have rewards, on reward chart for doing his work. Teacher to put smiley face for each successful session. Rewards to be given by parents at home. 5 smiley faces = treat, 10 smiley faces = trip to cinema.

Target 5. For Jack to correctly form the letters of the alphabet and be able to write his own name

Strategies

All staff to concentrate on letters c, o, g, a, d and q at first

Jack to use Rol n' Write for letter formation (with special education teacher)

Jack to use individual worksheets in classroom

Write own name with tracing and copying techniques

Note:

Jack is waitlisted for speech and language therapy. Once this assessment is completed, Mrs Murphy will ask for a report and specific advice for the school.

Review Date: May 2003

Signed _____

Parent

Teacher

Child

I.E.P. Planning/Review Sheet

Name of Student Melanie O'Donoghue

Class First Class

Progress to Date/ Strengths

(the nature and degree of the child's abilities, skills and talents)

Melanie has settled well into her new classroom and has begun to understand what is expected. She relates well to the class teacher and responds to praise and encouragement. Melanie loves music and singing. She also enjoys individual attention and will work well in a one to one setting. Melanie is socially interested in others. Melanie is improving her basic skills in reading and spelling and takes pride in completed work.

Areas for Improvement/Presenting Difficulties

(The nature and degrees of the child's special educational needs and how those needs affect his/ her progress)

Melanie tends to dominate others and to want to be in control of situations. She is unwilling to share equipment with others at her table and will snatch equipment, hoard items and refuse to return items. Melanie is socially isolated at present. She is quick to highlight the weaknesses of others. On the yard Melanie is frequently involved in conflict (at least 3 incidents every week). She will quickly resort to physical aggression if she cannot have her own way (kicking, pushing or hitting others). In class, Melanie usually does not complete her work, usually through lack of application. This is causing her to underachieve.

(The present level of educational performance of the child)

Melanie's recent Micra-T and Sigma-T results indicate that she is functioning at the 12th-16th percentile.

Summary of Special Educational Needs

(The special educational needs of the child)

Melanie experiences emotional and behavioural difficulties. She attends the child guidance services. A report from the multi-disciplinary team is on file.

Special Educational Provision

(The special education and related support services to be provided to the child)

Melanie goes to Ms Mooney (resource teacher) for 4 sessions (45 minutes each) per week. Two sessions are individual and two are as part of a small group.

Further Information

Melanie came into care eight months ago. She is currently living in 55 The Beeches care home, but her situation is being reviewed with a view to a more long term placement in a family. There has been a query about Melanie's hearing and Melanie's carers will seek an urgent review with her GP. Melanie attends Dr Meade at the child guidance clinic.

Individual Education Plan

Name: Melanie O'Donoghue

Class: First Class

Priorities/Long Term Goals

For Melanie to develop new friendships.

For Melanie to complete assigned tasks in school.

Targets and Strategies

(the goals which the child is to achieve over a period not exceeding 12 months)

Target 1. For Melanie to play co-operatively in the yard

Strategies

Participation in weekly social skills group with resource teacher.

Participation in whole class Circle Time

Melanie to be supported by her 6th class buddy

Care staff also to encourage friendships by allowing Melanie to invite a friend to join in activity, such as bowling

Target 2. For Melanie to share equipment at her table

Strategies

Whole class to be encouraged to share

Care staff to provide Melanie with new pencil case and full set of equipment

Class teacher to include this in daily behaviour monitoring chart

Target 3. For Melanie to speak kindly to other students

Strategies

Resource teacher to work with Melanie on appropriate ways of expressing disappointment/anger.

Class teacher to monitor as part of reward chart

Target 4. For Melanie to have tasks completed within given time

Strategies

Melanie to be told explicitly what is expected of her at beginning of session.

If work is finished ahead of time, Melanie can go to reading corner or help Mrs Duff in the office (Mon, Tues & Thur morning only).

If work is not completed Melanie will do it for homework (note in school journal to care staff).

Target 5. For Melanie to realise that her work can be of a very good standard

Strategies

Encourage Melanie to notice when she has done well objectively (spellings all right)

All staff to comment positively when Melanie produces good work, to include telling her directly that she is clever, bright, talented etc. (Staff should avoid adding negative comments, such as, 'If only you did work like this all the time', which will detract from the positive message).

Melanie to be sent to show her good work to the principal when she has done particularly well.

Care staff to display Melanie's good work on kitchen fridge.

Rewards for reward chart will be negotiated with school staff and Care staff and reviewed regularly. The day is divided into three sessions, morning, after break and afternoon. Melanie has three targets on her chart, (speak nicely, share equipment and do my work) For the moment, every time Melanie earns 15 ticks, she will get a star for table 2 and 10 minutes special computer time.

Signed Staff:

Date:

Parent:

Date:

Student:

Date:

Proposed Review Date:

I.E.P. Planning/Review Sheet

Name of Student

Class

Progress to Date/ Strengths

(the nature and degree of the child's abilities, skills and talents)

Areas for Improvement/Presenting Difficulties

(The nature and degrees of the child's special educational needs and how those needs affect his/ her progress)

(The present level of educational performance of the child)

Summary of Special Educational Needs

(The special educational needs of the child)

Special Educational Provision

(The special education and related support services to be provided to the child)

Further Information

Individual Education Plan

Name _____

Class _____

Long Term Goals

Targets and Strategies

(the goals which the child is to achieve over a period not exceeding 12 months)

Signed Staff:

Date:

Parent:

Date:

Student:

Date:

Proposed Review Date:

Mary Nugent is an educational psychologist working with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). The opinions, policies and practices expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of NEPS.