

EDUCATIONAL PLANNING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME

The success of inclusive education in Ireland is testament to the professionalism and commitment of teachers and other staff to students with special education needs.

- Despite recent advances and improvements, schools and teachers remain grossly unsupported. Classroom teachers are extremely concerned that without the proper training, they do not have the skills to prepare and implement complex Individual Education Plans/ Student Support Files.
- The Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act, 2004 includes a requirement for schools to provide an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for students with special needs. However, this section of the EPSEN Act has not been commenced, as was recently confirmed by the Minister for Education and Skills Joe McHugh in a statement to the Dáil: “There is currently not a statutory requirement for schools to provide a mandatory Individual Education Plan for children with special needs”.
- Advice to its members from both the ASTI and TUI Teacher’s Unions- that they do not prepare and implement Individual Education Plans/ Student Support Files - seeks to ensure that the Government delivers on its responsibilities to students with special education needs by equipping schools and teachers with the training and support needed to deliver a fully inclusive education service.
- Students with Down syndrome have the right to be educated in their local mainstream school. It is not unreasonable to expect that any additional training and resources required should be provided. It is shameful that, like other pieces of legislation on the rights of people with disabilities, the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act, 2004 (EPSEN) Act has never been fully enacted, as successive governments have been unwilling to provide the necessary resources for its implementation.
- Down Syndrome Ireland has campaigned for the EPSEN Act to be fully enacted and adequately resourced so that the rights of students with additional educational needs are enshrined in law, rather than depending on the goodwill of schools and teachers.
- While we understand the concerns expressed by the Teacher’s Unions, we cannot accept any action which discriminates against students who have intellectual disabilities. We believe that students with Down syndrome will suffer and will struggle to be successful in education if they don’t have structured education planning in place. While we are concerned that their current position will lead to discrimination against our members, we support the ASTI& TUI in their call for training for all mainstream post primary teachers on supporting students with special educational needs.

An inclusive society begins with inclusive education, and any action which undermines the success of this inclusion cannot be accepted.