

National Educational Psychological Service - Information for Parents



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Seirbhíse Síochánaíochta / Child Welfare Psychological Service

What do NEPS psychologists do?

NEPS stands for the National Educational Psychological Service. It is a service provided by the Department of Education and Skills. NEPS psychologists work with both primary and post-primary schools. We are concerned with learning, behaviour and social & emotional development. Each NEPS psychologist is assigned to a group of schools. We work with teachers, parents and pupils to help all pupils develop to their potential. We offer a range of services. For example, we support individual pupils, we provide advice and support to schools and we help schools cope when tragedies happen. The focus of this parent leaflet is on how we work with individual pupils.

What should I do if I am worried about my child's progress?

You need to begin by discussing your concerns with the teacher and/ or school principal. The teacher will normally be able to reassure you regarding your child's progress. Where the teacher has similar concerns he/she will discuss and agree a plan called a Support Plan to address concerns.

What happens if I feel my child is still not making progress and we need the help of a NEPS psychologist?

In some cases the teachers and the parents will agree that it would be helpful to have support from the NEPS psychologist. The school will then discuss the case with the psychologist and agree that his or her involvement would help. You will be asked for your signed consent at this stage. NEPS psychologists use a problem-solving approach when we work with teachers, parents and pupils. The problem-solving approach involves four steps. The NEPS psychologist will work through these steps with you and your child's teachers. Your child's views and ideas will be included and their active participation will be encouraged at every step. The diagram overleaf helps to illustrate the problem-solving approach.

If my child is meeting a psychologist, should I tell him/ her first?

Take your child's age into account. It may be better to tell older pupils. Some pupils feel more comfortable knowing what to expect, while others become nervous by being told in advance. Psychologists sometimes like to observe pupils in class (we do this discreetly, so that neither the particular pupil nor his / her friends know who is being observed). It is often better if the pupil is not expecting this.

What happens to information about my child?

You should be aware that all records about your child are covered by the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act. These laws set strict rules to protect privacy and they give you certain rights. NEPS treats all information about your child as confidential. If the psychologist writes a report detailing their involvement with your child you will receive a copy of this report. A copy will also be sent to the school. We will share information about your child with another person or agency only with your written consent. We will keep a record of our work with your child, containing all information that has been gathered, including notes and copies of reports. The record will be kept in a safe place. We also make a short electronic record, containing your child's name and address, reason for our involvement, actions taken and our findings in order to help us manage our files and records and for statistical purposes. In general, parents are welcome to look at any records that NEPS holds on their child simply by contacting the psychologist involved.

What do I do if I am not happy with NEPS service?

NEPS is committed to a quality customer service. We aim to provide an effective and professional service, and we follow the Department of Education and Skills Customer Service Charter. If, however, you have concerns specifically about the NEPS service you should discuss these with the NEPS psychologist working with your child's school or, if more appropriate, with the relevant NEPS Regional Director. If you are not satisfied that your issue has been dealt with at this level you may make a formal complaint to the Department's Customer Services Office at:

Change Management Unit, Customer Services Office, Department of Education & Skills, Marlborough St., Dublin 1, Tel: (01) 889 6690 or by email to: complaints@education.gov.ie

The NEPS Problem-Solving Approach

1. What is the Concern?

The first step is to meet with all concerned to become clear on what the problem is. This will include looking at how different people (the teacher, parents and pupil) see the problem and what changes they would like to see. Looking at what has been tried in school can be really helpful. At this stage we will look at the information we have and agree if further information is needed to help us figure out why the problem is occurring. We will agree who will be involved in gathering that information.

2. Why is it happening?

This step involves looking more closely at the information we have and sometimes gathering more information. We may agree that you will observe your child's responses and behaviours over a period and complete some questionnaires. Teachers may also be able to gather more information in school. Sometimes it is agreed that the psychologist will meet the pupil individually to get a more complete picture of his/her strengths and needs in order to contribute to a support plan. The psychologist may then observe your child in the classroom or school yard. They may complete some tests with your child to see how they learn and what they find difficult. They may talk to your child or help them to complete questionnaires to better understand their feelings and motivations. The psychologist may also, with your permission, contact other professionals such as speech and language therapists who may have information that would be helpful. Once we have gathered more information we will try to see what it is telling us about why the problem is happening and help us to decide what to do to help.

3. What can we do to help?

When we have a good idea why the problem is occurring we can then discuss interventions which can make a difference in school. We will also discuss with you things you can do at home to help your child. When we are agreed about what we are all going to do we will agree some targets and how we will record progress to see if things are improving.

4. Did it work?

It is very important that we decide how and when we will review whether the things we have tried are working. This may be done in scheduled meetings between parents, pupil and teachers. The school will normally keep the psychologist informed about progress. If there are still concerns, we may all need to meet to see what needs to be changed.

