

The National Council for Special Education

Annual Report 2008

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Foreword

This report of the work of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in 2008 is the first account of progress on the high-level objectives set out in our Statement of Strategy 2008 -2011. The Statement of Strategy reflects the functions of the NCSE as established under the EPSEN Act 2004 and sets the key priorities of the Council in addressing the major change agenda envisaged by the Act. The Government decision, in the context of the 2009 Budget to defer the implementation of the EPSEN Act, impacts on the practical measures which may now be implemented. However, the key focus of the strategy plan which is the provision of appropriate educational supports and improved educational outcomes for persons, and particularly children, with special educational needs remains intact. In the absence of implementation of the EPSEN Act the NCSE will continue to strive to achieve these objectives in every way possible and consistent with the ambitions of the Act.

Delivery on the priorities set out in this strategy statement will facilitate children with special educational needs to receive appropriate education in an inclusive environment and to achieve outcomes in accordance with their abilities. The Council is now fully engaged in its broad statutory remit to provide local services, to engage in research and to develop policy advice. The engagement in the areas of research and developing policy advice has been facilitated in the current year by the sanctioning of the appointment of key staff in these areas.

The sanctioning of additional teaching hours and special needs assistants to support children with special educational needs through our national network of Special Educational Needs Organisers is our high profile activity. The resource allocation in the special educational needs area continues to be contentious, emotive and high profile. There is a major emphasis on the level of resources provided. While the level of resources is undoubtedly of critical importance, the appropriateness of the policies and quality of the practices which underpin the provision have a major impact on the outcomes for children. The ultimate goal must be the delivery of first class outcomes for all children with special educational needs in accordance with their individual abilities.

In accordance with our strategic objectives we will continue to allocate resources, undertake research, disseminate information on good practice, examine policy and where appropriate, recommend change in co-operation and consultation with parents, schools and other key stakeholders. I am confident that the multifaceted approach adopted by the Council to improving the education system for children with special educational needs is appropriate in the economic climate in which we now operate.

Sydney Blain

Chairman

Introduction

I am pleased to introduce the fifth Annual Report of the National Council for Special Education. This Report provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Council in 2008 and identifies the foundations that have been set for the delivery of our key objectives over the coming years.

I am particularly pleased that the development of our information systems has enabled us to provide a greater amount of statistical data on the community that we serve and the level of service that we provide. The embedding of both the programme of research and the associated quality assurance processes has been a major advancement in the past year. The fruits of this work will appear in future years as the research projects are completed and published. The research programme together with our experience in allocating services directly to children with special educational needs and our ongoing interactions with stakeholders in the special education sector will provide the platform from which we can begin to formulate policy advice to the Minister for Education and Science.

There is little doubt but the targets we have set ourselves over the coming years are stretching and will require a flexible approach in these constrained economic circumstances. I am confident that through innovative governance and flexible executive work programmes we can continue to contribute significantly to a better special education system.

Pat Curtin

CEO

The Organisation

The Council was originally established by Order (SI No. 270 of 2004) made by the Minister for Education and Science under Section 54 of the Education Act 1998 on 24th December 2003.

The Council was established under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (EPSEN Act 2004) with effect from the 1st October 2005. Section 20 of the Act sets the general functions of the Council under the Act.

These functions are

(a) to disseminate to schools, parents and such other persons as the Council considers appropriate information relating to best practice, nationally and internationally, concerning the education of children with special educational needs;

(b) in consultation with schools, health boards and such other persons as the Council considers appropriate to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs;

(c) in consultation with schools and with such persons as the Council considers appropriate to plan for the integration of education for students with special educational needs with education for students generally;

(d) to make available to the parents of children with special educational needs information in relation to their entitlements and the entitlements of their children;

(e) to ensure that the progress of students with special educational needs is monitored and that it is reviewed at regular intervals;

(f) to assess and review the resources required in relation to educational provision for children with special educational needs;

(g) to ensure that a continuum of special educational provision is available as required in relation to each type of disability;

(h) to review generally the provision made for adults with disabilities to avail of higher education and adult and continuing education, rehabilitation and training and to publish reports on the results of such reviews (which reviews

may include recommendations as to the manner in which such provision could be improved);

(i) to advise all educational institutions concerning best practice in respect of the education of adults who have disabilities;

(j) to advise the Minister in relation to any matter relating to the education of children and others with disabilities;

(k) to consult with such voluntary bodies as the Council considers appropriate, (being bodies whose objects relate to the promotion of the interests of, or the provision of support services to, persons with disabilities) for the purposes of ensuring that their knowledge and expertise can inform the development of policy by the Council and the planning and provision of support services, and

(l) to conduct and commission research on matters relevant to the functions of the Council and, as it considers appropriate, to publish in such form and manner, as the Council thinks fit, arising out of such research.

In addition the Council will acquire a range of specific functions under the Act when the provisions of the Act are fully commenced. These functions will broadly relate to the rights of children with special educational needs to assessment, an education plan and appeals processes.

Under its current remit a major function of the Council is the sanctioning of teaching and special needs assistant resources for schools to support individual children with special educational needs. In sanctioning such resources the Council is required to implement Departmental policy while taking into account the special educational needs of children as identified in assessment reports.

In 2008 the Council published its first Statement of Strategy for the period 2008-2011. That Statement sets out 5 high level strategic objectives for the Council over that period. This report outlines the progress made under each of these objectives in 2008.

Main Achievements in 2008

- Progress continued to be made with the resource allocation process which was further refined in order to facilitate applications from schools being dealt with in an efficient and timely manner. The establishment of a review mechanism for decisions relating to the allocation of resources to schools was advanced.
- Work was advanced on the development of the Special Education Administrative System which inter alia facilitates the provision of quantitative data on our client base and the services we provide
- Further development of the Regional Management structure was facilitated by the sanctioning of six additional SENO posts which enabled the senior SENOs to devote half their time to management duties.
- The Statement of Strategy was completed and published.
- Research Governance and Quality Assurance Arrangements were agreed early in 2008 which established good practice methods and guidelines to govern all aspects of the research function.
- A strategic Research Framework for 2009-2010 that guides the research work programme was developed and agreed in 2008.
- The commencement of a debate concerning the nature and definition of inclusive education was facilitated with the assistance of the Consultative Forum.

Strategic Priority 1: Facilitate children with SEN to get an appropriate education in an inclusive setting

Dissemination of Information

Since the establishment of the National Council for Special Education, the profile and visibility of the Council, at local level, has been largely determined by the activity of over 80 Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) and the consequent interaction with schools, parents, education and Health Service Executive services.

Special Education Needs Organisers (SENOs) recognize that parents/guardians are the key stakeholders with regard to the child and are committed to forging good relations with parents and parent groups. When SENOs were first appointed to the role, it was not possible to meet with every parent. However, over the last year, a number of initiatives have been piloted with a view to identifying how a structured information process might be developed e.g. meetings with parents who are enrolling their children in primary or post-primary schools, parents who are seeking the establishment of a special class for their children and parents who are seeking school transport, assistive technology and home tuition. The latter would generally be for children under 5 years with ASD. In general SENOs report that engagement with parents is a beneficial exercise and provides an opportunity to parents to seek information in relation to the entitlements of children with special educational needs. Communication also helps in dispelling myths and misinformation and provides a point of contact for further queries.

Inclusive Education:

The Council facilitated the development of a consensus view on what constitutes inclusive education through the Consultative Forum which is representative of the wide spectrum of special education stakeholders. The Forum through a series of meetings and with the aid of a commissioned international literature review produced a comprehensive consensus report for Council. In presenting the above document to the Council, the Consultative Forum proposed that the next step should be the development of an inclusive framework and self evaluation tool that schools can use on a voluntary basis to assess their levels of inclusiveness.

Special Schools and Classes Review

In 2007 the Minister for Education and Science requested that the Council commission a review of special schools and classes. The proposal for the research was advertised in August 2007 and the contract was awarded in December 2007. The Review of Special Schools and Classes continued throughout 2008. Regular meetings of the Steering Committee were held at which progress reports were provided by the Research Team and feedback was given to them by the committee.

Professional Training Programme for Special Educational Needs

Organisers

A working group was established to investigate and identify the training requirements of the SENO cohort. In consultation with management and Senior SENOs, work was initiated on the production of an outline training programme, the aim of which was to equip SENOs with the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to do their job as defined under the EPSEN Act. It was also intended that where appropriate, NCSE Head Office staff would be included in the programme and the modules adapted to tailor the programme to their learning needs, as required.

The course will form part of an on-going programme of continuing professional development to be further developed over time.

NCSE Newsletter

Detailed planning was undertaken, in consultation with the Senior Management Team concerning the publication of a newsletter by NCSE. A proposal was put forward for consideration by Council and subsequently approved. The main purpose of the newsletter is to provide a means of two-way communication between the Council and its principal stakeholders. Through this medium, the Council will provide information concerning its work and on-going priorities and seek to elicit the views of interested parties about its initiatives. It is intended that the newsletter will be published on a bi-annual basis and circulated to all of the major stakeholders.

Strategic Priority 2: Promote the identification and certification of educational programmes for children with SEN and monitor outcomes

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

The curriculum for Ireland's primary and post-primary schools is determined by the Minister for Education and Science who is advised by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in relation to the curriculum for early childhood education, primary and post-primary and the assessment procedures to be employed in schools (Education Act, Section 41, 1998). The NCCA has an additional responsibility (Education Act, Section 41(2)(f)) to advise the Minister on the requirements, as regards curriculum and syllabuses, of students with a disability or other special educational needs.

Prior to advising the Minister in this regard, the NCCA is obliged to consult with the National Council for Special Education (EPSEN Act, Section 27). Discussions took place between both Councils regarding how a formal and effective consultative process could be put in place which would meet obligations under the Acts. Following these discussions, the the Council accepted an invitation to nominate a staff member to the Special Education Steering Committee of the NCCA.

Curriculum, Assessment and Certification

An issues paper on the curriculum, assessment and certification options currently available to students with SEN in Irish schools was considered by the Council. The purpose of the paper presented to Council in November 2008 was to:

1. describe the curriculum in place in Irish schools
2. outline additional supports for children with special educational needs
3. identify any 'gaps' in the provision of curriculum that need to be addressed
4. raise issues to be considered by Council

Council proposed that the issues paper be referred to the Strategy and Policy Committee for more detailed consideration and to inform future policy development in this area.

Establishment of Collaborative Structures with Key Organisations

Over the course of 2008, on-going work took place to advance the development of effective working relationships with key organisations, both national and international. In the context of Strategic Objective 2, such organisations include the relevant sections within the DES, NCCA, NQAI, FETAC and HETAC.

Strategic Priority 3: Coordinate the provision of supports to enable inclusive and effective education for children with SEN to be delivered

Resource Allocations Process 2008

Guidelines in relation to the applications process issued to all primary, post-primary and special schools on the 14th February 2008. The guidelines provided for a similar process to that which applied last year. The main changes relate to the inclusion of the PPS Number as being obligatory in order to process the application and also the requirement for schools to outline how the current SNA resources are deployed.

As in previous years schools were requested to submit applications for resources well in advance of the end of the school year in order that the SENO could inform the school as to the outcome of the applications process by the end of the current school year. Applications accompanied by the required professional reports were generally processed within a 4-6 week period.

The applications process requires the SENO to take account of the resources, which have been freed up as a result of children with SEN leaving the school, when determining the overall level of resources required in the school for the following September.

A full analysis of applications received for Primary (including Special Schools) and Post Primary is set out at **Appendix II**

Establishment of Special Classes

Over the last number of years significant progress has been made in ensuring that sufficient places are available for children with autism who require a special class setting. A total of 164 special classes were opened at primary level and 27 special classes were opened at post primary level in 2008.

The SENO, through the relevant professional report identifies the need for the placement of a child with SEN in a special class setting. Where insufficient provision

exists, the SENO approaches the local school or schools to discuss the possibility of the establishment of the special class. Following sanctioning of the special class and teaching and SNA supports by the SENO the Department of Education and Science supports the provision of additional accommodation if required, approves the recruitment of the teacher and organises training for the teacher in association with the Special Education Support Service (SESS).

Respective Roles of NCSE and HSE in Resource Allocation

In 2008 discussions took place between the HSE and the NCSE in relation to the assessment process and the subsequent allocation of resources to schools in relation to children with SEN. It was agreed that the role of the HSE personnel was to assess and identify the needs of the child and that the role of the NCSE was to decide on the quantum of resources to be allocated to the school to support those needs in line with Department of Education and Science policy. In May, a letter clarifying the role of each organisation issued to the relevant HSE and NCSE personnel. A similar letter (NCSE 03/2008) also issued to all school Principals clarifying the respective roles of each organisation.

Support the Implementation of the Disability Act

The purpose of Part 2 of the Disability Act of 2005 is to provide an assessment of the health and education needs of persons with a disability.

The Act requires that the HSE authorises Assessment Officers (AOs) to arrange, oversee and coordinate an assessment of need and to produce a report based on the outcome of the assessment. These Officers are independent in their statutory function.

Where the assessment leads to an opinion that a child requires educational provision, section 8 of the Disability Act provides that the matter will be referred to a school principal or the National Council for Special Education for assessment under the Education for Person's with Special Educational Needs Act. As the relevant sections of the EPSEN Act relating to the assessment process (sections 3 and 4 of the Act) have not as yet been commenced, the inputs from the education side, on an

administrative basis, are provided by the NCSE in co-operation with the National Psychological Service (NEPS).

In June 2008, Part 2 of the Disability Act was commenced for children under five years of age. Under current arrangements, all assessment officers forward their requests for assistance from the education sector to the NCSE. Since this date, **636** applications under section 8 of the Act were referred to the NCSE to determine whether there was a need for an education service to be provided to the applicant. These are then processed centrally by NCSE/NEPS and returned to the relevant assessment officer and a copy of the papers forwarded to the relevant SENO. Once the protocols are developed and agreed this process will be devolved to SENOs at local level through their Senior SENOs and this will facilitate the implementation of this framework. This will provide a focus for local contacts to emerge and will result in an improved transfer of information.

Development of Regional Management Structure

In 2008 the Regional Management Structure continued to develop with Senior Special Educational Needs Organisers (SSENOs) taking full responsibility for providing technical expertise to their area team through coaching and mentoring, monitoring work processes, measuring operational performance (through PMDS), dissemination of information, managing operational costs and implementing HR policies and procedures.

Working in collaboration with other agencies

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

A training conference was organised jointly by NEPS/NCSE in June 2008. A committee made up of staff from the NCSE and NEPS oversaw the arrangements for the joint training which took place over one day, in An Grianán, Termonfeekin, Co. Louth.

The context of the training was the issues relating to the implementation of the EPSEN and Disability Acts. Presentations were made by senior officials from the Department of Education & Science, HSE, NEPS and the NCSE. It is intended that

further discussions will take place on how both organisations can co-operate to a greater extent at local level in the context of the requirements, as set out in the legislation.

Department of Education and Science (DES)

In 2008 the NCSE continued to liaise and engage with the Department of Education and Science through regular meetings with officials from the DES to discuss operational issues.

NCSE continued to participate in the **Value for Money and Policy Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme** in 2008. The Council is represented on a Steering Committee by the Head of Operations and the Head of Research and Development. The Head of Research and a Senior SENO are engaged with representatives of NEPS and the Inspectorate in constructing templates and developing procedures for data collection on the role of SNAs in schools, as part of this process.

Role of the Council in Processing Appeals under Section 29 of the Education Act

Section 29 of the Education Act provides that parents may appeal decisions made by a school namely:

- Permanent exclusion from a school
- Suspension from a school
- Refusal to enrol a child

The appeal is made to an Appeals Committee set up by the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science.

In 2008, the Council provided information to the Appeals Committee in relation to approximately 385 cases involving children with diagnosed special education needs where the section 29 process had been triggered. The trends identified in relation to such appeals are:

- 44% referred to children of primary school going age while 56% related to children of second level school going age
- 22% of cases related to children permanently excluded from the school

- 72% of cases related to children where there was a refusal to enrol the child
- 6% of cases related to children who were suspended from school

In 37% of the above cases, the appeal was not upheld while in 24% of cases the appeal was upheld. In other cases a facilitator or local resolution applied or the appeal was withdrawn.

Ombudsman for Children

In 2008 the NCSE responded to 13 investigations initiated by the Ombudsman for Children under the Ombudsman for Children Act, 2002 in relation to the role of the Council in the allocation of resources to particular children with special educational needs. In 4 of these cases, the Ombudsman for Children concluded that there was no evidence of maladministration and that no further investigations were required. In the remaining 9 cases, investigations are still ongoing. In general the complaints made to the Ombudsman related to decisions concerning the level of access of the child concerned to SNA resources or to school transport.

Strategic Priority 4: Enhance educational provision for children with SEN through quality research and policy advice on SEN issues

Research Governance

A set of Research Governance and Quality Assurance Arrangements was agreed early in 2008 which established good practice methods and guidelines to govern all aspects of the research function such as tendering, evaluating and awarding contracts, contractual arrangements with commissioned bodies, review and evaluation procedures for draft reports and sign off and publication of final reports.

2008/2009 Programme

The following research projects commenced in 2008 as part of the 08/09 research programme:

- A review of special schools and classes.
- Four international literature reviews of the evidence of best practice provision and evidenced-based outcomes in the education of pupils and students who are:
 - Deaf/Hard of hearing
 - Blind/Visually impaired
 - Autistic
 - Emotionally disturbed/behaviourally difficult
- An international literature review of the diagnostic procedures/tools used to diagnose a disability and the assessment procedures/tools used to identify the special education needs arising from the diagnosed disability.
- An assessment of the experiences of pupils with special educational needs transitioning from primary to post-primary school.
- A study to explore the application of the curriculum in mainstream primary school classes that include pupils with a variety of special education needs in junior and senior infants, 1st and 2nd classes; and access to the curriculum among those pupils.
- A national parental survey of attitudes and experiences of local and national special education services (c 1,000).

Special Education Research Initiative (SERI)

Throughout 2008, the fourteen projects identified under the Special Education Research Initiative (SERI) were progressed by the researchers appointed to them and a number of projects were completed.

Research Framework

A strategic Research Framework for 2009-2010 that guides the research work programme was developed and agreed in 2008. It arose from the NCSE Strategy Statement 2008- 2011, priorities set out in the NCSE Implementation Plan (2006) and a public consultation process. A wide range of over one hundred stakeholders were written to and invited to make suggestions for priority research themes. In addition to this, public advertisements were placed in numerous national papers and on the NCSE's website. A total of 42 written submissions were received, one of which was supported by letters from 19 individuals.

Four priority research themes emerged with a number of sub themes in each:

1. The experiences of children with special educational needs (and their parents)
 - a. Access to and experiences of inclusive education and the curriculum.
 - b. Outcomes for children with SEN.
2. Best practice/policies in provision for children with SEN
 - a. Educational planning to meet individual special educational needs
 - b. Assessment of SEN.
 - c. Effective pedagogy and curriculum issues.
 - d. School capacity and the nature of support measures and resources.
3. Staff and support issues
 - a. Training and development needs of teachers, support staff and other professionals
 - b. Collaboration and partnership working within and between education and other services.
4. Improved data collection
 - a. prevalence of SEN/disability
 - b. incidence level of particular conditions.

Interagency Advisory Group on Emotional Disturbance and Behavioural Disorders

An interagency advisory group was established to conduct an initial exploration of the needs of children with severe emotional disturbance and or behavioural difficulties (ED/BD) who may be excluded from special schools for severe ED/BD because of persistent violence that is a threat to teachers, other pupils and/or themselves. This problem had been raised by Council members. It is expected that the work of this advisory group and the EBD international literature review will improve our understanding of the issues and contribute to an appropriate response to their needs. The work of this group continues.

Participate in international fora to facilitate the identification of best practice

The Council was represented at two meetings in March and October 2008 with the OECD Group of National Experts in Special Needs Education and two meetings in April and November with the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. These two fora enable Ireland's participation in and contribution to appropriate international projects. It also provides a channel to learn from international practice. The 2008 research projects incorporate reference to international practice and comparison where appropriate.

In October, 2009 the Council was represented at a meeting of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education which was held to finalise protocols on Assessment in Inclusive Setting. The materials resulting from this project will be circulated to schools during 2009.

Strategic Priority 5: Ensure that the NCSE is developed and maintained as an effective organisation and that it operates in a fully compliant manner with all of its statutory, regulatory and corporate governance requirements

Further development of the Organisation

The National Council for Special Education is a relatively new, small and independent statutory body within the Civil Service. Its Governance authority is the Council of the National Council for Special Education.

NCSE is required to develop, from a start up position, and maintain, an appropriate and effective organisational and governance infrastructure in line with the strategic needs of the NCSE. During 2008, the Council continued to maintain and develop this infrastructure including staffing, accommodation, central services, information technology and finance. In developing our organisation NCSE continued to operate within approved staffing complements and the budgetary and policy parameters in which the Council operates.

Detailed clarification of the implications of the statutory requirements surrounding the implementation of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004 has significant considerations for the specification, planning and implementation of NCSE organisational development. NCSE had submitted a detailed plan to the Minister in October 2006 regarding the actions and resources required. In the context of the 2008 emergency budget the Government decided to defer the implementation of the EPSEN Act 2004. It was agreed that NCSE would continue to make preparations for the eventual implementation of the Act..

Strategy Statement 2008-2011

The Council published its Statement of Strategy for the period 2008-2011. This identifies core objectives, key result areas and outcome measures for the next three years. It also provides a basis for the development and management of annual work

programmes, business plans and individual role profiles in line with best governance practice.

Human Resources

The staff of the National Council for Special Education is composed of civil servants who are recruited and employed in accordance with the provisions which apply to the Civil Service generally. NCSE staff includes an appropriate mix of general service and specialist grades. Appropriate staff development and training programmes are in place to identify and develop the skill sets and competencies to deliver the wide range of functions required by NCSE.

Details of NCSE approved staffing during 2008 are set out in **Appendix III**. A review of the NCSE organisational and staffing structure was conducted in 2008 by a working group inclusive of the NCSE, the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Finance. As an interim measure 6 additional Special Educational Needs Organiser posts and 1 administrative post were approved during 2008.

The post of Head of Research and Development which had fallen vacant, and the new post of Research Officer were filled following specialist open competitions to develop and support the Council's Research function.

A specialist open recruitment process was also conducted for the new post of Special Education Adviser which was also filled. This post will support the Council in developing and activating its policy advisory role.

A local service area management structure was introduced in 2007 with the establishment of 12 Senior Special Education Needs Organiser positions and 10 local service areas. The full implementation of this structure continued in 2008 with the provision of training, the full introduction of the PMDS (Performance Management Development System) and the appointment of additional Special Educational Needs Organiser to facilitate the reduction of operational duties for local managers.

IT Systems

NCSE continued to develop, review and maintain its IT systems and network which extends throughout the State in over 40 offices. A mobile connectivity system is in place for local staff. Upgrades of fixed line and mobile connectivity were successfully completed in 2008. The NCSE IT system supports the efficient and effective operation and continuing development of a nationwide service by NCSE.

The Special Educational Administrative System (SEAS) is a purpose designed and built computer system to provide an efficient and effective special education administration system for use by the NCSE staff and management. It enables SENOs and other NCSE staff to efficiently manage and maintain school, pupil, and SENO information and to maintain applications for teaching hours, SNA posts, assistive technology and transport. Statistics are produced from the System which assists the research function of the Council. The system was designed on a phased basis with the initial phase delivered in August 2006.

Progress on SEAS during 2008 included an additional development to the system enabling special school and special class details to be fully recorded on SEAS, electronic versions of SENO decision forms have been designed which replicate the existing paper forms, correspondence templates have also been incorporated into the system and new applications created for 08/09 comprising continuing pupils rolled over and leavers marked on system.

Local Office Network

NCSE has continued to maintain and further develop its network of over 40 local offices in 2008 in line with appropriate norms and organisational needs. The network is designed and managed to facilitate the provision of services at local level throughout the State. A number of new offices were opened in 2008 including 3 offices in Dublin (Blackrock, Donabate and Kimmage) and in Castlebar County Mayo. Services are generally provided by local staff away from their offices by direct contact in schools and other suitable locations and are readily contactable by post, e-mail and phone. Details of NCSE offices are outlined in **Appendix I**.

Finance

The Council has taken steps to ensure an appropriate control environment by:

- ensuring the NCSE complies with its financial obligations under the Act
- clearly defining management responsibilities in a defined organisational structure with clear segregation of duties
- developing and implementing appropriate control procedures
- establishing appropriate committees of the Council to give greater focus on specific areas and
- establishing an internal audit function.

The system of internal financial control is based on a framework, which aims to provide regular management information, administrative procedures (including segregation of duties, authorisation limits and a documented procedures manual), and a system of delegation and accountability. In particular it includes:

- a comprehensive budgeting system with an annual budget, which is reviewed and agreed by the Council prior to presentation to the Department of Education and Science;
- an operational budget agreed by the Council based on prescribed budget limits set by the Department of Education and Science;
- detailed review by the Executive and the Council of monthly and period to date financial reports which indicate financial performance against budget;
- regular review by the Executive and the Council of financial reports and key operational indicators and
- clearly defined procurement and tendering guidelines.

An extract of the provisional unaudited accounts prepared by council is set out in Appendix IV (The audited accounts will be published on the NCSE Website)

Governance

The Council of the National Council for Special Education

The Council is the Governing Body and is appointed by the Minister for Education and Science under Section 21 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004. The current council was appointed for a term of three years commencing 1st January 2007 and expiring on 31st December 2009.

Membership of the Council

The Chairperson and 12 other members of the Council were appointed by the Minister for Education and Science from among persons who have a special interest in or knowledge relating to the education of children with disabilities,

Membership of the Council of the NCSE	
Mr Sydney Blain (Chairperson)	Principal , Church of Ireland College of Education, Rathmines, Dublin
Mr Christy Lynch	CEO KARE, Nominated by NDA
Dr Seamus Hegarty	Chairman of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. Former Director of the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales
Ms Siobhan Barron	Director, National Disability Authority, Nominated by NDA
Mr Rory O Sullivan	Principal, Killester College of Further Education, Dublin
Ms Teresa Griffin	Principal, Special Education Section, Department of Education and science
Mr Tom O Sullivan	Assistant General Secretary, Irish National Teachers Organisation Former Principal of St Senan's Boys National School, Limerick.
Professor Patricia Noonan Walsh	Professor of Disability Studies, UCD. Vice-President International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disability
Maighread Ní Ghallchobhair OP	Former principal of Benincasa School for children with behavioural and emotional difficulties
Ms Anita Dillon	Special class co-ordinator in Killina Presentation Secondary School, Tullamore, County Offaly
Mr Dermot Ryan (see note 2 below)	Principal, Department of Health and Children. Nominee of Minister for Health and Children
Ms Caroline O Brien	Assistant Principal of Holy Child Secondary School, Killiney, County Dublin. Former member of the Board of Directors of the Special Olympics Ireland.
Mr Gearóid Ó Conluain (see note 1)	Deputy Chief Inspector, Department of Education and Science

Note 1: Gearoid O Conluain resigned from the Council in September, 2008 following his appointment to another position.

Note 2: Dermot Ryan resigned from the Council in December, 2008 following his appointment to another position.

Deputy Chairperson of the Council

The Council elected Christy Lynch as Deputy Chairperson in accordance with Section 19 (Schedule 1) of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004.

Council Meetings

The Council met on 7 occasions during 2008.

Council Committees

The Council has established four committees under Section 33 of the EPSEN Act. These committees operated during 2008 and reported to Council in accordance with their agreed terms of reference and governance guidelines. Members of the Council agreed to act on one or more committees. In the case of the Audit Committee, the Council has appointed an external Chairperson with relevant experience.

Research and Communications
Dr Seamus Hegarty (Chairperson)
Mr Gearoid O Conluain
Mr Tom O Sullivan
Professor Patricia Noonan Walsh

Strategy and Policy
Mr Christy Lynch (Chairperson)
Ms Caroline O Brien
Ms Anita Dillon
Mairead Ni Gallachobhair OP

Finance
Ms Siobhan Barron (Chairperson)
Mr Rory O Sullivan
Ms Teresa Griffin
Mr Dermot Ryan

Audit
Mr Donal Lawlor (Chairperson)
Mr Christy Lynch
Dr Seamus Hegarty
Ms Siobhan Barron

Consultative Forum

Section 22 of the EPSEN Act, 2004, provides for the establishment, by the Council, of a consultative forum, with whom Council may consult with respect to the performance of its functions. Council may appoint up to a maximum of 17 people to this forum and must consult with the Minister for Education and Science and other bodies before making the appointments.

For 2008, the Consultative Forum consisted of the following members:

Members of the Consultative Forum 2008	
Mr Tim Geraghty Chairperson	National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD)
Mr Jim Moore	Parents Association for Voc School and Comm Colleges
Ms Geraldine Graydon	National Parents Council (NPC)
Ms Jennifer Duffy	Association of Secondary School Teachers in Ireland (ASTI)
Ms Bernie Ruane	Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI)
Ms Anne Fay	Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)
Ms Patricia McCrossan	National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education (NABMSE)
Mr. Liam Ryder	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)
Mr Sean Burke	Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA)
Mr Pat Goff	Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN)
Ms Helen Guinan	National Federation of Voluntary Bodies
Ms Joanne McCarthy	Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI)
Mr Bill Shorten	Inclusion Ireland
Ms Marion Meaney	Health Services Executive (HSE)
Ms Frances Berry	Centres for Independent Living
Mr Gerard McGuill	Joint Managerial Board (JMB)
Ms Mary Horan	Ministerial Representative
Ms Maureen Costello	Ministerial Representative
Mr Don Mahon	Ministerial Inspectorate Representative
Sr Bernadette Carron	Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA)

Appendix I

NCSE Offices

(full current details are available on www.ncse.ie)

Trim, Co. Meath (NCSE HQ)

Carlow Town, Co. Carlow
Cavan Town, Co. Cavan
Ennis, Co. Clare
Cork City
Fermoy, Co. Cork
Mallow, Co. Cork
Dunmanway, Co. Cork
Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
Glenties, Co. Donegal
Tallaght, Co. Dublin
Blanchardstown, Co. Dublin
Dublin City Centre
Kimmage, Co. Dublin
Donabate, Co. Dublin
Dun Laoighaire, Co. Dublin
Galway City
Athenry, Co. Galway
Tralee, Co. Kerry
Naas, Co. Kildare
Kilkenny City
Portlaoise, Co. Laois

Mnorhamilton, Co. Leitrim
Limerick City
Newcastlewest, Co. Limerick
Hospital, Co. Limerick
Longford Town, Co. Longford
Drogheda, Co. Louth
Castlebar, Co. Mayo
Navan, Co. Meath
Monaghan town, Co. Monaghan
Tullamore, Co. Offaly
Roscommon town
Sligo Town, Co. Sligo
Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
Clonmel, Co. Tipperary
Waterford City
Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford
Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow
Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow

Appendix II

Analysis of Applications for Resource Allocation: Primary Schools

Applications in respect of Children in Primary Schools (Includes a number of applications from Special Schools)

Applications for Resource Teaching

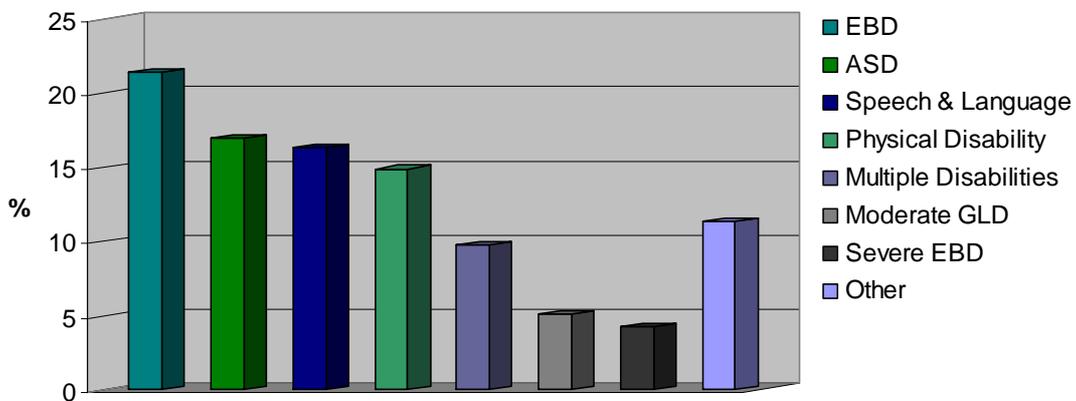
6,893 applications for resource teaching support were received in relation to children with low incidence disabilities as children with high incidence disabilities are supported through the General Allocation Model which operates in primary schools.

2,799 applications for access to SNA support were received. In this regard, a number of applications for such support were received from children with a high incidence disability, primarily those with a Mild General Learning Disability.

The process of entering all the data in relation to these applications on our Special Education Administrative System is on-going. An analysis of applications entered on our system in 2008 indicates a breakdown by disability as shown on the table below.

Resource Hours Applications by Disability – Primary (Mainstream)*

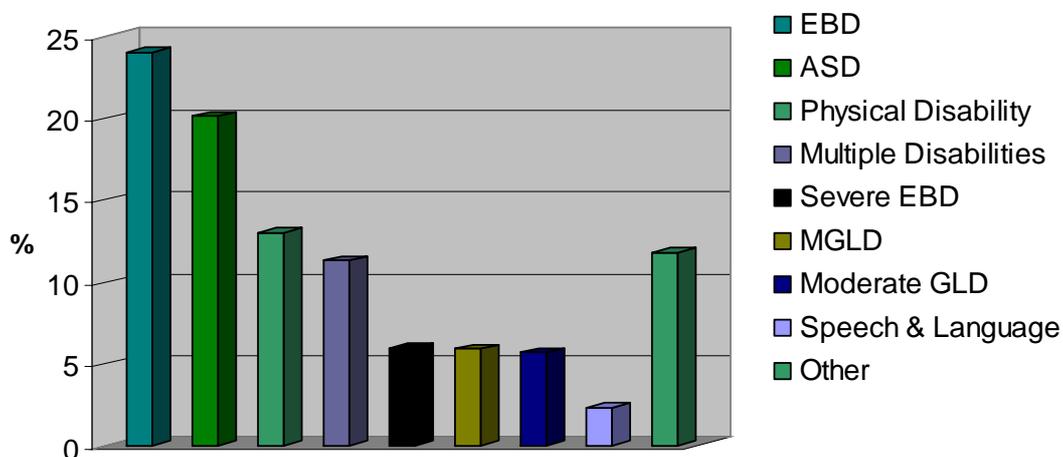
***includes those in a special class in a mainstream setting**



The category 'Other' includes Assessed Syndrome, Visual and Hearing Impairments, Severe and Profound General Learning Disability

SNA Applications by Disability – Primary (Mainstream)*

*includes those in a special class in a mainstream setting



The category 'Other' includes Visual and Hearing Impairments, Severe and Profound General Learning Disability

Conclusions

The following trends can be identified from the above figures:

- 26% of applications for resource teaching and 30% of applications for access to an SNA related to children with an emotional behavioural disturbance or a severe emotional behaviour disturbance.
- 15% of applications for resource teaching and 13% of applications for access to an SNA related to children with a physical disability
- 17% of applications for resource teaching and 20% of applications for access to an SNA referred to children with ASD.
- 16% of applications for resource teaching and 2% of applications for access to an SNA referred to children with Specific Speech and Language Disorder

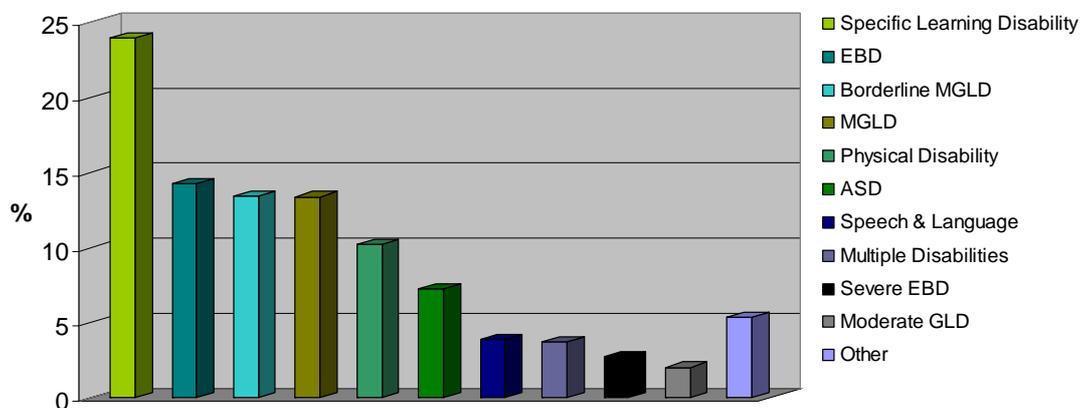
Analysis of Applications for Resource Allocation: Post-Primary Schools

***includes special classes in a mainstream setting**

Pupils with a high incidence disability are included in these figures as the General Allocation Model only applies at primary level.

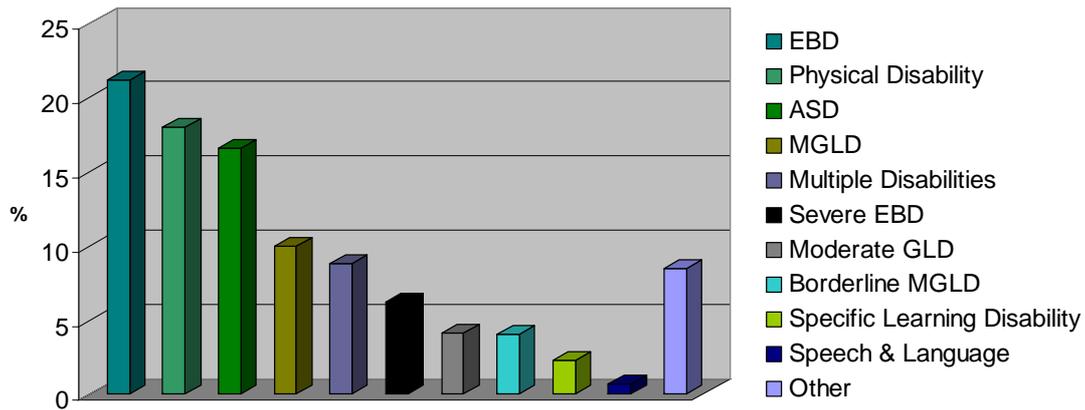
5,934 applications for additional teaching support were received while **1,220** applications were received for access to SNA support.

Applications for Additional Teaching Support by Disability – Post Primary



The category 'other' includes Assessed Syndrome, Visual and Hearing Impairment, Severe and Profound General Learning Disability

SNA Applications by Disability – Post Primary



Conclusions

The following trends can be identified from the above figures:

- 17% of applications for additional teaching support and 27% of applications for access to an SNA related to children with an emotional behavioural disturbance or a severe emotional behavioural disturbance
- 51% of applications recorded for additional teaching support relate to children with a high incidence disability
- 13% of applications for additional teaching support and 10% of applications for access to an SNA related to children with a mild general learning disability

Appendix III

NCSE Staffing

	Approved Posts 2008
Chief Executive Officer	1
Principal Officer	4
Assistant Principal	6
Higher Executive Officer	5
Executive Officer	5
Staff Officer	1
Clerical Officer	3
Senior Special Educational Needs Organiser	12
Special Educational Needs Organiser	76
Total	113

Appendix IV

Summary of Financial Statements 2008*

	2008 €	2007 €
Income		
State Grant	8,350,720	8,919,539
Transfer to Capital Account	22,883	64,524
Other Income	40,564	10,849
	<u>8,414,167</u>	<u>8,994,912</u>
Expenditure	<u>(8,779,794)</u>	<u>(7,916,848)</u>
Surplus/(Deficit)of income over expenditure	<u>(365,628)</u>	<u>1,078,064</u>
*(Taken from Provisional Unaudited Accounts)		

A copy of the audited financial statements for year ended 31st December 2008 will be available on www.ncse.ie.