



# Annual Report 2011

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## Foreword

Our annual report for 2011 reflects the achievements and activities of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) during that year.

The year 2011 was very challenging for the organisation as, for the first time since the introduction of the policy of 'automatic response' in 1999, the Government placed a cap on the number of teaching and special needs assistant (SNA) posts available for allocation to schools. While the Council appreciates the significant priority given by Government to special educational matters – demonstrated by the substantial numbers of both resource teaching and SNA supports made available – the need to operate within a capped number created logistical and procedural challenges for both the NCSE and schools. In addition, along with all other national agencies, the NCSE was required to reduce staffing numbers while continuing to maintain our services to schools and parents.

However, I am pleased to report that, through our special educational needs organisers (SENOs), we were able to respond to applications from schools for additional resource teaching and SNA support. It is never easy to change long-standing application processes – especially those that involve over 4,000 schools and 20,000 individual applications – and I would particularly like to acknowledge and thank schools and the education partners for adapting to our changed requirements for applications during the year. I also wish to extend my appreciation to our own staff who worked hard and diligently to ensure that the NCSE could respond to applications for support.

While significant work is being carried out in our schools every day in the education of children with special educational needs, it is always good to reflect on current policies and practices and identify areas where improvements may be made. The year 2011 saw the publication of our policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills on the future role of special schools and special classes. In addition, we provided the Minister with policy advice on *The Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children in Ireland* (published 2012).

We know, through our daily interactions with parents and from our research, that parents have found it difficult to source good information on how the education system supports pupils with special educational needs. I was very pleased that, in 2011, the NCSE was able to publish *Children with Special Educational Needs: Information Booklet for Parents* both on our website and also in hard copy.

Our ongoing programme of research is a source of considerable satisfaction to the Council. The availability of good quality research is essential for the development of sound policy advice in any area, but particularly in special education where children's needs are very individual and often complex. I would encourage everyone with an interest in this area to visit our website and download our research.

The year 2011 also saw the appointment of a new chief executive officer for the NCSE to replace Pat Curtin who retired at the end of 2010. The Council was delighted to appoint Teresa Griffin to the role in March of this year.

Sydney Blain  
Council Chairperson



## The Organisation

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was established in 2003. Our functions are set out in Section 20 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004.

These functions include:

- planning for, and co-ordinating, the provision of education for children with special educational needs and ensuring that a continuum of special educational provision is available
- conducting and carrying out research
- providing policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills in relation to special education
- disseminating information, including best practice, on special education to parents, schools and other interested persons
- consulting with voluntary bodies to ensure that their knowledge and expertise can inform the development of policy by the Council
- reviewing generally the provision made for adults with disabilities to avail of further, higher and/or continuing education and advising educational institutions concerning best practice in respect of the education of adults who have disabilities.

In 2011, a total of 107 people were employed by the NCSE to enable the delivery of the above functions. This includes 85 special educational needs organisers (SENOs) who were locally based and who provided a local service to schools and parents.





## NCSE Main Achievements in 2011

### Providing for Special Education in schools

In 2011, additional resource teaching hours were in place in schools to provide supplementary tuition to over 38,000 pupils with special educational needs. Special needs assistant (SNA) posts were in place to support the care needs of over 19,000 pupils who attend mainstream and special schools.

- SENOs processed nearly 15,000 applications for additional teaching hours in primary and post-primary schools.
- SENOs processed over 6,400 applications for SNA support in primary, special and post-primary schools.
- SENOs opened 33 new special classes in mainstream schools.

### Research

In 2011, the NCSE:

- Published a freely accessible database containing over 1,600 references to Irish research or policy publications in special education since 2000 on our website – [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).
- Disseminated some of our key research findings at the third annual NCSE research conference in November – this was attended by more than 150 delegates. The conference saw the launch of two new research reports and the Inclusive Education Framework and featured a presentation on the NCSE policy advice to the Minister on special schools and classes as well as an international guest speaker on inclusive teacher education.
- Published three new research reports on the subjects of:
  - evidence to support pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties
  - the prevalence of special educational needs in Ireland
  - access to the curriculum amongst young pupils with special needs.

### Policy Advice

In 2011, the NCSE:

- Published NCSE policy advice to the Minister on *The Future Role of Special Schools and Classes in Ireland*.
- Provided the Minister with policy advice on the future education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children (*The Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children in Ireland*, published in 2012).
- Published the NCSE Information Booklet *Children with Special Educational Needs: Information Booklet for Parents*.
- Published a new guide for schools for the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. The *Inclusive Education Framework* comes with interactive tools that schools can use to support and evaluate the way pupils with special educational needs are included.

## Corporate Functions

In 2011, the NCSE:

- Ensured delivery of our essential priority services and functions on a nationwide basis.
- Operated within our reduced budget and our reduced approved staffing levels.

## Strategic Priority 1

### **Facilitate Children with Special Educational Needs to get an Appropriate Education in an Inclusive Setting**

#### **Resource Allocations Process 2011**

One of our key roles is to ensure that additional resource teaching hours and SNA posts are allocated to schools that have enrolled pupils with special educational needs who meet the criteria for such supports.

In December 2010, in light of the need to control public sector employee numbers, the Government decided to place a cap on the number of posts, including resource teaching and SNA positions, that were available for allocation. This meant that, for the first time since 1998, the allocation of resource teaching posts and SNA posts was no longer 'demand driven' and now needed to be managed within a definite number.

A total of 5,500 resource teacher posts and 10,575 SNA posts were made available for allocation to schools. This number of posts was broadly in line with the level of resources already in place in schools and represents approximately €656 million of annual public expenditure.

There has been extensive public commentary and media focus on this issue since the decision. Parents, in particular, are most concerned to ensure that the NCSE can continue to sanction teaching and/or care supports in response to the needs of their children. The NCSE will continue to ensure that all available resources are allocated in response to need and in a fair, equitable and consistent manner to all qualifying schools. In this context, we published on our website, for the first time, the allocations of resource teacher and SNA supports sanctioned for each school.

Applications from schools for resource teacher and SNA support are processed by their local NCSE SENO.

Resource teacher hours are allocated to schools that have enrolled pupils with certain special educational needs. The number of applications for the 2011-12 school year exceeded the total number of resource teaching posts available for allocation. This meant that a 10 per cent reduction was applied to the level of resource teaching allocations sanctioned for schools. For example, in 2010-11 a school with one pupil with a severe emotional/behavioural difficulty was allocated five additional teaching hours per week. In 2011-12, the school was sanctioned 4.5 additional hours per week.

Resource teaching applications	
School Year	Number processed
2010-11	14,171
2011-12	14,992

SNA posts are allocated to primary, special and post-primary schools that have enrolled pupils with disabilities who also have significant care needs.

SNA applications	
School Year	Number processed
2010-11	5,644
2011-12	6,424

Statistical tables on resource teaching and SNA applications for the academic year 2010-11 are included in Appendix 3.

### Other resourcing activities

The NCSE provides support to the Department of Education and Skills in processing applications from schools for assistive technology for pupils with special educational needs. This support is also provided in processing special school transport arrangements and in processing applications for home tuition from parents of pre-school and school-aged children with autism, for whom no educational placement is available.

### Inclusive Education Framework

In 2011, we published a new guide for schools for the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. The *Inclusive Education Framework* is a tool for schools to support and evaluate the way pupils with special educational needs are included in their schools. The *Framework* provides examples of good practice for including pupils and it comes with interactive user-friendly tools that enable schools to:

- show what they are doing well
- identify areas where they need to improve
- rate their levels of inclusion
- put plans in place to address the areas that need improvement.

## Strategic Priority 2

### **Promote the Identification and Certification of Educational Programmes for Children with Special Educational Needs and Monitor Outcomes**

One of our key roles is to promote improved educational outcomes for children with special educational needs. We do this through our research and policy advice programmes but also by working with other state agencies that have specific remits impacting on educational outcomes.

#### **Curricular matters**

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is responsible for advising the Minister for Education and Skills on curriculum and assessment for early childhood, primary and post-primary education – including special education. This advice is generated through engagement with schools and educational settings, with expert and representative committees and working groups, and is informed by research and evaluation.

The NCSE is represented on the NCCA Special Education Steering Committee. The work of this committee during 2011 included discussions of:

- Draft teaching guidelines which issued on the new Level 2 learning programmes, which are under development by the NCCA, for use in post-primary schools for pupils with general learning disabilities. *A report on the School Network, Level 2 Learning Programmes: Toolkit for Schools*, was circulated in June, 2011. This report describes work with schools as part of the development of the Level 2 learning programmes mentioned above.
- Consultation findings relating to the new Junior Cycle proposals, as outlined in *Innovation and Identity: Ideas for a New Junior Cycle* (2010).

Working with the NCCA enables us to contribute to the development of new and revised educational programmes for children with special educational needs.

#### **Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development**

NCSE research clearly points to the need for teachers to be knowledgeable of, and proficient in, the education of children with special educational needs. Our policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills is consistent in identifying the requirement for teachers to be skilled in this area of education.

The role of the Special Education Support Service (SESS) is to enhance the quality of learning and teaching in relation to special educational provision. The service co-ordinates, develops and delivers a range of professional development initiatives and support structures for school personnel working with students with special educational needs in mainstream primary and post-primary schools, special schools and special

classes. The SESS operates under the remit of the Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education and Skills.

The aim of the service is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, with particular reference to special educational provision.

The NCSE is represented on the SESS steering committee and provides advice and guidance to the SESS in their role. The NCSE representative attended three meetings of the SESS steering committee, held in March, June and October 2011. At each of these meetings updates were provided on the SESS programme of work for 2010-2011, on financial matters and on the evaluation of the SESS by management consultants.

## Teacher Education

Following a request from the Minister, the Council submitted a short paper in September 2011 outlining its views in relation to teacher education.

The paper did not constitute a comprehensive literature or country review of teacher education for special education as this was not possible within the short time-frame available. It was prepared following consideration of an overview of the evidence available from existing NCSE research, NCSE policy advice, some key documents from the Irish Government and statutory bodies, as well as information on major reform taking place in teacher education for inclusion in Scotland. The paper also took into account the recently published Teaching Council's criteria and guidelines for initial teacher education.

The paper emphasised three key findings from the international literature:

- the quality of teachers and their teaching are the most important factors in student outcomes (OECD, 2005:12)
- the key factor contributing to pupils' progress, including those pupils with complex needs, is access to experienced and qualified specialist teachers (OFSTED, 2006)
- the appropriate training of mainstream teachers is crucial if they are to be confident and competent in teaching children with diverse educational needs and that the principles of inclusion should be built into teacher training programmes, which should be about attitudes and values not just knowledge and skills (WHO, 2011).

The paper considered specific competencies that teachers should have acquired upon completion of their programme of initial teacher education. Finally, in relation to continuous professional development, the paper differentiated between what should be in place for:

- all teachers of pupils with special educational needs
- teachers in specialist roles and settings (learning support/resource teachers, visiting teachers, and teachers in special schools and classes)
- principals and deputy principals.

## European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE)

The European Agency for Development in Special Educational Needs (EADSNE) is an independent and self-governing body established by member states of the European Union. Iceland, Norway and Switzerland are also participating countries. The EADSNE is maintained by annual contributions from member countries and is also supported by the European Union institutions under the EU Lifelong Learning Programme. The EADSNE facilitates the collection, processing and dissemination of information regarding the education of young people with special educational needs across Europe and also promotes the full participation of young people with special educational needs in mainstream education and training.

The NCSE participates in the work of the EADSNE and one of our staff members is its national co-ordinator for Ireland. The EADSNE held two meetings during 2011, in April and November. A progress report on EADSNE activities was presented at both these meetings. Updates on a number of current projects were made by EADSNE staff members, including the Higher Education Access Guide (HEAG); Teacher Education for Inclusion; the provision of accessible information for lifelong learning; and vocational education and training.

New thematic projects being planned by the EADSNE include:

- Organisation of provision to promote inclusion
- Raising achievement for all learners – quality in inclusive education

The EADSNE held a European hearing on young views on inclusive education in the European Parliament in Brussels on November 7th, 2011. This event aimed to provide young people from across Europe, both with and without disabilities, with the opportunity to have a real voice. Ireland was represented at the hearing by three students from the St Joseph's School for Deaf Boys in Cabra, and Rosmini Community School in Drumcondra, and their two accompanying adults.

Working with the EADSNE enables the NCSE to keep up to date with international research and developments in special education. It also enables us to inform European colleagues about progress and developments in relation to the education of children with special educational needs in Ireland. As a result, a number of examples of good and innovative practice from Ireland have been included in literature issuing from the EADSNE.

## NCSE NEWS

Two further issues of the NCSE newsletter, *NCSE NEWS*, were electronically published on our website (in May and December 2011). The key items over the two issues included:

- a special issue of the *European Journal of Special Needs Education* (Volume 26, Issue 1, 2011), which published four sets of papers arising from research commissioned by the NCSE
- announcement of NCSE statistics published on our website

- publication of a new NCSE information booklet for parents
- publication of the NCSE *Inclusive Education Framework* for Schools
- report on the NCSE research conference held in November 2011
- publication of a new guide for schools for the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs.

All current and back issues of our newsletter, *NCSE NEWS*, are available to view or download on our website ([www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie)).



## Strategic Priority 3

### **Coordinate the Provision of Supports to Enable Inclusive and Effective Education for Children with Special Educational Needs to be Delivered**

Our work requires close cross-agency and cross-departmental linkages with the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive (HSE). These linkages occur at local level with SENOs and local HSE and DES staff working together, as well as at senior management level, with the NCSE represented on the national education/health cross-sectoral team.

One example of cross-agency cooperation is the assessment of need process under the Disability Act for younger children. The HSE currently refers to the NCSE all assessments carried out under the Disability Act that have identified the need for an educational service for a pre-school age child. This enables the NCSE to begin the planning process for children who may need supports once they start attending school. It also enables a link with the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) to be established. The NEPS may identify from the assessment of need documentation that a specialist setting may be required for the child. The NEPS also provides clarification, if needed, to SENOs on assessment documentation.

Developments underway in the health sector include the establishment of early intervention and school intervention teams to provide assessment and intervention for children. These developments are very welcome and the NCSE looks forward to working in close cooperation with these teams at local level.

### **Health and Education Working Together**

Children with special educational needs may require additional supports funded through the health authorities, as well as additional educational supports. The NCSE is part of a health and education cross-sectoral working group (comprising the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Health, the NCSE and the HSE), which considers overlapping health and educational issues as they arise.

A direct, and continuing, result of this working group has been the development of closer working relationships between SENOs, HSE professionals and the NEPS.

One of the education/health protocols agreed by this group relates to the need for the HSE and the NCSE to work together in relation to the assessment of needs process under the Disability Act, 2005.

### **Assessment of Needs (Under 5s)**

The Disability Act, 2005 is a key element of the National Disability Strategy and is designed to provide for and underpin the participation of people with disabilities in society by supporting the provision of disability specific services and improving access to mainstream public services.

Part 2 of the Disability Act, 2005 commenced in June 2007 and established a system for the assessment of children with a disability who were aged less than five years in June 2007. Under the provisions of the Act, the assessment officer may request the assistance of the NCSE to identify educational services that may be available to a child. During 2011, over one thousand requests for assistance were received and processed by the NCSE.

## Section 29 Appeals

The NCSE has a key role in providing for specialist school places for children with special educational needs. However, from time to time, a school may refuse to enrol a child.

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

- permanent exclusion from a school
- suspension from a school
- refusal to enrol a child.

The appeal is processed by an appeals committee set up by the Department of Education and Skills. The appeals committee may seek a statement from the NCSE in relation to exclusions of children with special educational needs. In 2011, the NCSE provided information to the appeals committee involving children with diagnosed special educational needs where the Section 29 process had been followed.

## NCSE Consultative Forum

Section 22 of the EPSEN Act, 2004, provides for the establishment, by the Council, of a consultative forum, with whom the Council may consult with respect to the performance of its functions. The forum's members represent stakeholders in special education.

The consultative forum met on three occasions during 2011 (February, April and September). Two of these meetings were dedicated to a discussion of the NCSE policy advice on the future education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children.

In February 2011, presentations were made by the Special Education Support Service and the Visiting Teacher Service for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children. The NCSE commissioned literature review, *Evidence of Best Practice Models and Outcomes in the Education of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children: An International Review* (Marschark, M and Spencer P, 2009), was also discussed at this meeting. At the second meeting, on April 13th, 2012, presentations were made by parents of present and former Deaf and Hard of Hearing pupils regarding their personal experiences of the education system and the supports required by these pupils. A written submission from the Deaf Education Partnership Group was also considered at this meeting.

The third meeting was held in September 2011 and was dedicated to the discussion of the NCSE policy advice on the future education of children with challenging behaviour arising from emotional disturbance and /or behavioural problems.

The NCSE appreciates the substantial contribution made by this group to the development of its policy advice programme during 2011

## Strategic Priority 4

### **Enhance Educational Provision for Children with Special Educational Needs through Quality Research and Policy Advice**

#### **Research Programme 2011**

Our research programme is well developed and we publish our research on our website ([www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie)). Our programme of research informs parents, educational professionals and academia who are interested in knowing the trends and latest thinking in special education. It also informs our policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills. Our research programme will continue to focus on developing knowledge and to provide a basis for evidence-informed policy making.

#### **The NCSE Third Annual Research Conference**

More than 150 delegates attended the third annual research conference at Croke Park in November 2011 where they heard about the latest research and policy advice on special education from the NCSE. The conference was opened by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald TD and featured:

- the launch of the NCSE *Inclusive Education Framework*, a practical tool for schools to support the inclusion of pupils with special needs
- presentations of two research studies on access to the curriculum for young primary school pupils and on the prevalence of special educational needs
- a thought provoking presentation from a guest speaker on inclusive practice and the implications for teacher education
- a paper on the NCSE's policy advice to the Minister on *The Future Role of Special Schools and Classes in Ireland*.

The conference was attended by a wide range of education stakeholders, including parents, teachers, SNAs, academics, researchers, departmental officials, advocacy groups, educational psychologists, inspectors and representatives from teacher unions and other national bodies.

#### **New NCSE Research Publications**

In 2011, we published three new NCSE research publications

##### ***1. Access to the curriculum for pupils with a variety of special educational needs in mainstream classes: An exploration of the experiences of young pupils in primary school***

The study focused on 46 children in 11 schools and noted that generally, children with special needs were able to access the curriculum about 85 per cent of the time. Additional support from an SNA was the main form of support used and many of the

tasks engaged in by the SNAs went well beyond their role. Other forms of support used, which were infrequent, included changing the classroom organisation, using additional or different resources, changing the content of the lesson or using some form of specialist teaching methods. Major factors acting as barriers to accessing the curriculum included: lack of support from professionals with expertise in special needs; lack of time for planning with other staff; and lack of appropriate training for teachers.

## ***2. A Study on the Prevalence of Special Educational Needs***

This study drew on the analysis of data of 8,578 nine year old children from the *Growing Up in Ireland* study to estimate a new prevalence rate of special needs in Ireland. The analysis includes information collected from parents and teachers on the special educational and learning needs of children, ranging from mild to complex needs, such as physical disabilities, learning disabilities/difficulties, communication and coordination disorders, slow progress, chronic physical or mental health problems and emotional difficulties. The study estimates that the prevalence rate of children with special needs is 25 per cent.

## ***3. Evidence of Best Practice Models and Outcomes in the Education of Children with Emotional Disturbance/ Behavioural Difficulties: An International Review***

This report looked at hundreds of articles in this area and found that with adequate training and support, mainstream school staff can make a real contribution to preventing emotional and behavioural difficulties amongst pupils and can also improve their emotional and behavioural wellbeing. It found that practices based on behavioural and cognitive behavioural models have the strongest evidence of good outcomes. These approaches can often be learned through brief training programmes and are best implemented within a whole school approach.

## **Other Research Work**

Eight other research projects continued or were under review in 2011. They were titled:

1. *Inclusive Research in Irish Schools* (Project IRIS). (This was a longitudinal study examining the provision of special education within Irish schools, the experiences of pupils/students with special educational needs receiving this education and their associated outcomes.)
2. *A Study of Transition from Primary to Post-Primary School for Pupils with Special Educational Needs*.
3. *Review of NCSE Resource Allocation Process and Evaluation of the Deployment of Resources in Schools*.
4. *A Study of Access and Progression Experiences of Students with Special Educational Needs Moving from Compulsory Education to Further and Higher Education*.
5. *A Review of the International Research Literature on Curriculum and Curriculum Access Issues for Students with Special Educational Needs in Post Primary Settings*.

6. *Measuring Educational Engagement, Progress and Outcomes for Children with Special Educational Needs: A Review.*
7. *The Special Class Model in Ireland: How is it working for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools?*
8. *Continuum of Education Provision for Children with Special Educational Needs: Review of International Policies and Practices.*

### **Database of Special Educational Needs Research and Policy in Ireland**

We also considered that the compilation of a single database of research and policy publications on special education would be a useful resource for researchers. This year, we published on our website a freely accessible database containing over 1,600 references to Irish research or policy publications in special education that have been published since 2000.

The database will help users to find out what range of Irish material is available on any given topic within special education and is a valuable source for researchers, policy makers, students and other interested people. A report summarising the 1,600 references was also published, which provides an interesting overview of the focus of publications over the last 12 years.

### **Special Issue of a European Journal Dedicated to NCSE Commissioned Research**

A special issue of the *European Journal of Special Needs Education* (Volume 26, Issue 1, 2011) published four sets of papers arising from research commissioned by the NCSE. Each set of papers included a summary of the research and an exploration of the findings from the perspectives of a teacher and a policy maker. They also outlined classroom implications in a practical and accessible way.

## **Policy Advice Programme 2011**

One of our key roles is to provide policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills on how the special educational system can be enhanced. In 2011 we provided policy advice to the Minister on the future role of special schools and special classes as well as the education of children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

## **Future Role of Special Schools and Classes**

The Council submitted its policy advice on the future role of special schools and classes to the Minister for Education and Skills on February 3rd, 2011.

The policy advice emphasised the NCSE commitment to the principle enshrined in the EPSN Act that the vast majority of pupils with special needs should be educated alongside their peers in inclusive settings, unless that is not in their best interests or the best interest of their peers with whom they are to be educated. However, in line with the spirit of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSN) Act, the policy advice recognised that some children have such complex or severe needs that this would not be in their best interests. For these children, locally based special classes or special schools located on mainstream campuses are recommended as the best way forward to maximise inclusion.

Among a number of recommendations relating to special schools and classes, the NCSE policy advice paper recommended that the Department of Education and Skills develop a code of practice, to support and guide parents and professionals in placement decisions.

## **The Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children in Ireland**

Policy advice on the education of children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing was submitted to the Minister for Education and Skills in December 2011. The significance of this policy advice paper was highlighted by research evidence suggesting that the academic achievement levels of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children remain significantly delayed compared to those of hearing children with similar ability.

The Minister considered that this is a very thoroughly researched and comprehensive report, which addresses all of the main issues affecting the education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in Ireland. He was very pleased that the recommendations take into account best international practice and he acknowledged that the report outlines a clear pathway for the planning of future educational provision for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in Ireland.

The NCSE policy advice paper mapped out the future direction for the education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in Ireland. It emphasised that the goal must be that Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in Ireland are given the opportunity to achieve academic outcomes similar to that of their hearing peers of similar ability. Other key points included in the paper are summarised below.

1. Where effective early intervention and skilled teaching is provided, the average language and early reading skills of young children with a hearing loss have been found to be similar to hearing children.
2. Research shows that access to any language, oral or signed, is vital and will improve the ability of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children to benefit from education. The paper recommended that all Deaf and Hard of Hearing children and their families should be provided with the opportunity to learn sign language from the time of diagnosis. While this scheme currently exists, not all families are aware of and/or availing of it.
3. Deaf and Hard of Hearing children require access to teachers who understand how Deaf and Hard of Hearing children think and learn. Research shows that if teachers communicate well in the language used by their students, this represents 'best practice' in Deaf education. The paper makes a number of recommendations in relation to teacher training and qualifications to ensure that teachers understand how Deaf and Hard of Hearing children think and learn in order to support them in the classroom.

The paper was based on evidence from national and international research and views expressed during a consultation process. It provides a blueprint to guide future spending decisions as the economic situation improves.

### Other Policy Papers

The following policy papers were also submitted by the NCSE during 2011:

- *Response to the Department of Education and Skill's Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools*
- *Response to the Teaching Council's Draft Policy Paper on the Continuum of Teacher Education*
- *Submission to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector*
- *Response to the Discussion Paper on a Regulatory Framework for School Enrolment.*

### New Information Booklet for Parents of Children with Special Educational Needs

Our research and our own daily meetings with parents have both shown that parents did not have ready access to comprehensive information on the educational system and how it supports children with special educational needs. With this in mind, we published a new information booklet for parents entitled *Children with Special Educational Needs: Information Booklet for Parents* in September 2011. This booklet provides information to parents, for the first time, on the full range of educational supports available in schools for children with special educational needs.

As well as giving information on the range of educational supports in schools, the booklet provides information on how a child's educational needs are assessed and on

what a child will learn at school. The booklet was made available both in electronic form on our website and in hard copy form.

The NCSE also intends to publish information pamphlets on different areas of special educational needs. When published, these will also be available in hard copy and on the NCSE website.



## 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**

#### **Organisation Development**

During 2011, the NCSE continued to maintain and develop its capacity as an organisation in line with statutory and regulatory requirements, prescribed policy, the code of governance, budgetary and staffing limits, and its strategic priorities.

In line with the Government policy on public service staffing, the NCSE was required to reduce its staffing under the Employment Control Framework. This required a review of our organisation. It aimed to identify essential priority frontline and other functions and to ensure they continued to be maintained and developed, if possible, within available resources. This is a considerable challenge to the organisation and an ongoing process is taking place to ensure efficiencies are identified and delivered, and that critical services and functions are safeguarded.

The NCSE action plan and progress reports for the implementation of reform under the Public Service Agreement are published on our website ([www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie)).

#### **Strategic Planning and Implementation**

The NCSE *Strategy Statement 2008–2011*, which was developed and adopted by the NCSE Council, is published on the NCSE website. A work plan of the actions for 2011 to implement the priorities in the strategic plan was agreed by the Council. The implementation of the work plan was actively monitored by the Council during the year. In 2011, the Council also reviewed its strategy statement and agreed certain changes in strategic policy priorities; these will be reflected in its *Strategy Statement 2012–2016*.

#### **Appointment of CEO**

Following the retirement in December, 2010 of Pat Curtin, the Council appointed Teresa Griffin as chief executive officer on a seven year contract, following a public open competition conducted by the Public Appointments Service. Ms Griffin commenced duty in March 2011. Prior to the appointment of the chief executive, the Council nominated Sé Goulding, NCSE Head of Operational Services, as interim officer in charge.

#### **Staff Training and Development**

Appropriate training and development programmes have been provided in 2011 for staff, in line with identified organisational and staffing needs. A significant challenge for the NCSE is to develop and maintain necessary in-house capacity and competencies to ensure the delivery of all corporate and organisational functions and to comply fully

with governance requirements in a changing environment. A further challenge is the dispersed nature of NCSE local staff. An online training programme was developed to meet identified needs. The NCSE avails of networking opportunities across the public service and within the organisation in developing staff and organisational competencies. The performance management development system (PMDS) is utilised; it is an important process in identifying individual development and training needs.

### **Online Programme of Continuing Professional Development for SENOs**

The first of four online training modules for SENOs was delivered by St. Patrick's Teacher Training College, Dublin, to one group of SENOs in May 2011 and to the second group in September 2011. In each case, the course lasted four weeks. This four module programme is designed to provide appropriate professional development to SENOs, so that they may more effectively fulfil their responsibilities in working with schools and with parents of children with special educational needs. Work on the development and design of the second module was undertaken in December, 2011, with a view to delivery in 2012.

#### **Programme Outline**

Module 1: Special Education: Historical and Current contexts

Module 2: Inclusion of Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Module 3: Schools/Agencies and how they function

Module 4: Individualised Planning for Students with Special Educational Needs.

### **ICT Developments**

The NCSE manages its ICT network and systems largely through outsourced service arrangements. It avails of centrally procured drawdown arrangements and the framework agreements put in place by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. For example, the NCSE retendered for best price mobile phone services in 2011 using the framework agreement.

The NCSE commissioned an independent review of its Special Education Administration System (SEAS). At year end, it was actively considering the review's recommendations, with a view to ensuring an appropriate system is in place to meet requirements in a changing policy environment.

### **NCSE Office Accommodation Infrastructure**

The NCSE operates a network of 40 offices throughout the state including its headquarters in Trim, Co. Meath. NCSE local staff operate from local offices and provide services directly to schools and parents in their areas.

Further details of NCSE office accommodation are provided in Appendix 1. Full contact details for public access to NCSE headquarters and local services are published and available on the NCSE website ([www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie)).

## **Finance and Governance Procedures**

The NCSE follows the arrangements set out in the code of practice for the governance of state bodies.

The audited annual financial statements of the NCSE for year ended 2011 will be published separately on the NCSE website. A summary of the draft income and expenditure account is provided in Appendix 4.

The NCSE is actively engaged in seeking shared service arrangements with other public sector bodies in line with Government policy. In 2011, it engaged with the Department of Finance to successfully transfer NCSE payroll administration from an outsourced service to the Department of Finance's payroll shared service.



## Governance

### The Council of the National Council for Special Education

The governance authority for the NCSE is the Council of the National Council for Special Education. The Council is appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills 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 January 1st 2010 and expiring on December 31st 2012. The Council met on nine occasions during 2011 (including one teleconference meeting). Details of individual members and their attendances are given in the table below.

Membership of the Council of the NCSE during 2011		Attendance
*Sydney Blain (Chairperson)	Former Principal, Church of Ireland College of Education, Dublin.	9
*Maighread Ní Ghallchobhair (Deputy Chairperson)	Former Principal, Benincasa School for children with emotional and behavioural disorders.	8
*Siobhán Barron	Director, National Disability Authority (NDA). Nominated by the NDA.	7
Mick Coughlan	Principal Clinical Psychologist of the National Learning Network. Nominated by the NDA.	9
*Teresa Griffin (see Note 1 below)	Principal, Special Education Section, Department of Education and Skills.	3
Maureen Costello (see Note 2 below)	Director, National Educational Psychological Service.	2
*Seamus Hegarty	Chairman of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. Former Director of the National Foundation for Educational Research (UK).	7
James O'Grady (see Note 3 below)	Former Head of Disability Services in the Health Service Executive and Disability Policy Adviser to the Office of Mental Health and Disability in the Department of Health.	7
Pat Kinsella	Principal, Coláiste Choilm, Ballincollig, Co. Cork.	5
Anne Lodge	Principal, Church of Ireland College of Education, Dublin.	3
*Don Mahon	Assistant Chief Inspector, Department of Education and Skills.	6
Julie O'Leary	Graduate of University College Cork and NUI Galway.	7
*Tom O'Sullivan	Assistant General Secretary, INTO. Former Principal of St. Senan's Boys' National School, Limerick.	8
Joan Russell	Chief Executive Officer (Acting) for Co. Cork Vocational Education Committee.	7

**Note 1:** Teresa Griffin resigned as a member of the Council on March 31st 2011 on her appointment as Council chief executive.

**Note 2:** Maureen Costello was appointed by the Minister on September 23rd 2011.

**Note 3:** James O'Grady was appointed by the Minister on February 15th 2011.

**Note 4:** Those members with an \* are serving a second term on Council.

## Council Committees

The Council has established five committees under Section 33 of the EPSEN Act. These committees operated during 2011 and reported to Council in accordance with their terms of reference and governance guidelines, as agreed by the Council. 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
Seamus Hegarty (Chairperson)
Tom O'Sullivan
Anne Lodge
Julie O'Leary
Don Mahon

Strategy and Policy
Maighread Ní Ghallchobhair (Chairperson)
Pat Kinsella
James O'Grady
Mick Coughlan

Finance
Siobhán Barron (Chairperson)
Joan Russell
Teresa Griffin (up to end March 2011)
Maureen Costello (from October 26th, 2011)

Audit
Donal Lawlor (Chairperson)
Maighread Ní Ghallchobhair
Seamus Hegarty
Siobhán Barron

CEO Performance
Tom O'Sullivan (Chairperson)
Sydney Blain
Siobhán Barron

## NCSE Consultative Forum

For 2011, the forum consisted of the following members:

Members of the Consultative Forum	
Members appointed by the Council	
Pat Goff (Joint Chairperson)	Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN)
Seán Burke (Joint Chairperson)	Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA)
Sally Maguire	Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI)
Des Swan	Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI)
Edward Byrne	National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education (NABMSE)
Rory O'Sullivan	National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD)
Marie Therese Kilmartin	Joint Managerial Body (JMB)
Sarah Parlane	National Parents Council Primary (NPC)
Seán Balfe	Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA)
Robert Jones	Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI)
Bernie Ruane	Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI)
Antoinette Nic Gearailt	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)
Mary Dunne	People with Disabilities in Ireland (PwDI)
Mary Van Lieshout	National Disability Authority (NDA)
Feargal Brougham	Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)
Katherine O'Leary	Inclusion Ireland
Patricia McLarty	Health Service Executive (HSE)
Members appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills	
Alan Sayles	Inspector, Department of Education and Skills (DES)
Paula Long	Senior psychologist, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
Terry Reynolds	Assistant principal, Special Education Section, Department of Education and Skills (DES)





## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 – NCSE Offices

NCSE Offices*	
Trim, Co. Meath (NCSE HQ)	Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny
Carlow, Co. Carlow	Portlaoise, Co. Laois
Cavan, Co. Cavan	Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim
Ennis, Co. Clare	Limerick city
Cork city (Mahon)	Newcastlewest, Co. Limerick
Dunmanway, Co. Cork	Longford Town, Co. Longford
Fermoy, Co. Cork	Drogheda, Co. Louth
Mallow, Co. Cork	Castlebar, Co. Mayo
Donegal, Co. Donegal	Navan, Co. Meath
Letterkenny, Co. Donegal	Monaghan, Co. Monaghan
Dublin city centre	Tullamore, Co. Offaly
Blanchardstown, Co. Dublin	Roscommon, Co. Roscommon
Blackrock, Co. Dublin	Sligo, Co. Sligo
Donabate, Co. Dublin	Clonmel, Co. Tipperary
Kimmage, Co. Dublin	Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
Tallaght, Co. Dublin	Waterford city
Galway City 1	Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
Galway City 2	Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford
Tralee, Co. Kerry	Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow
Naas, Co. Kildare	Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow

\* See NCSE website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie) for full address information.

## Appendix 2 – NCSE Staffing

Grade	Staff end 2011
Chief executive	1
Principal (head of function)	4
Assistant principal	5
Higher executive officer	5
Executive officer	3
Staff officer	1
Clerical officer	3
Senior special educational needs organiser	10
Special educational needs organiser	75
Total	107

## Appendix 3 – Statistical Tables for Academic Year 2010–11

In 2011, over 38,000 pupils were in receipt of additional resource teaching support through the NCSE; and over 19,000 pupils in mainstream and special schools were in receipt of care support from special needs assistants.

These figures include new allocations made during the academic year 2010/2011, which are outlined in detail in the sections below.

### Primary Schools (including Special Schools)

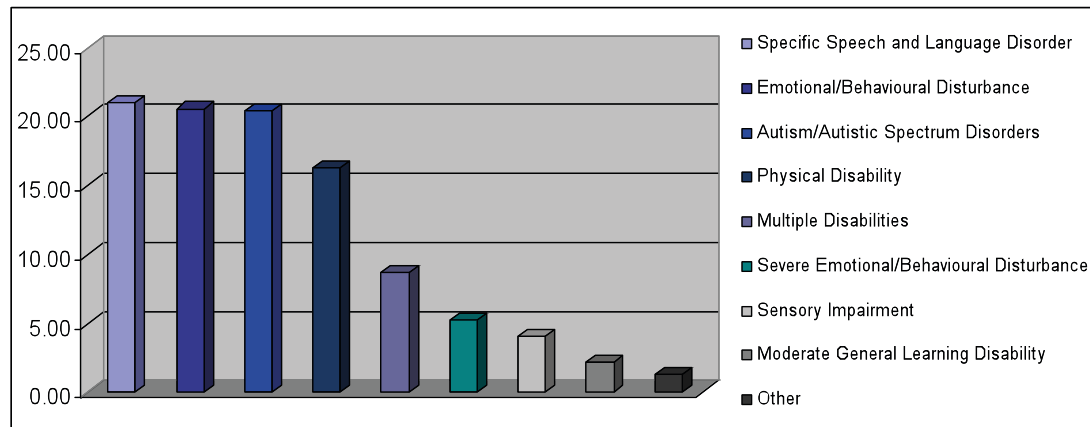
#### Analysis of Applications for Resource Teaching Supports

In total, 7,518 applications for resource teaching support were received in relation to children with low incidence disabilities. Children with high incidence disabilities are supported through the General Allocation Model which operates in primary schools.

Of the 7,518 applications, 5,941 resulted in additional resource teaching support being granted.

The graph below presents resource teaching supports granted to primary schools in 2011, by type of disability.

#### Resource Hours Granted by Disability – Primary (Mainstream)\*



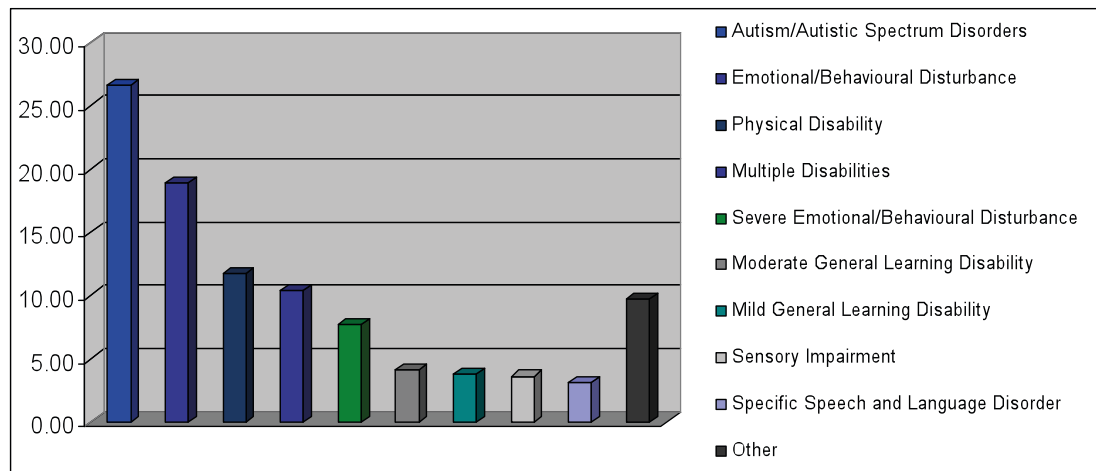
\*includes those in a special class in a mainstream setting

## Analysis of Applications for SNA Supports

A total of 4,299 applications for access to SNA support were received. Of these, 2,648 were granted.

The graph below presents SNA supports granted to primary schools in 2011, by type of disability.

### SNA Support Granted by Disability – Primary (Mainstream)\*



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

## Conclusions

The following trends can be identified from the above figures:

- Over one fifth (21 per cent) of applications granted for resource teaching and three per cent of applications for access to an SNA related to children with specific speech and language disorder.
- A total of 23 per cent of applications granted for resource teaching and 26 per cent of applications for access to an SNA related to children with an emotional behavioural disturbance or a severe emotional behaviour disturbance.
- One fifth (20 per cent) of applications granted for resource teaching and 26 per cent of applications for access to an SNA referred to children with autistic spectrum disorder.
- Finally, 16 per cent of applications granted resource teaching and 12 per cent of applications for access to an SNA related to children with a physical disability.

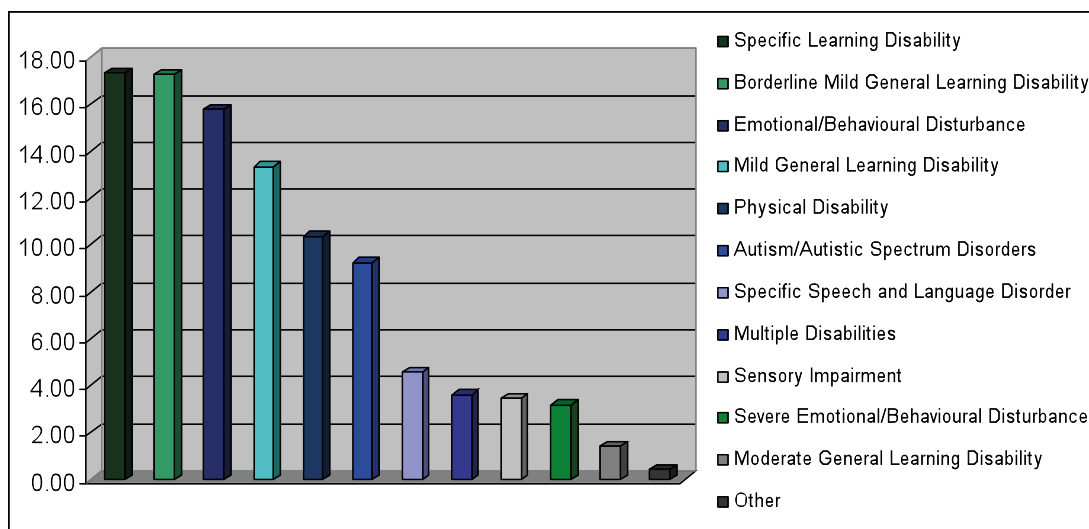
## Post Primary Schools

### Analysis of applications for Resource Teaching Supports

A total of 7,474 applications for additional teaching support were received. Of these, 4,932 resulted in additional resource teaching support being granted. Pupils with a high incidence disability are included in these figures as the General Allocation Model only applies at primary level.

The graph below presents resource teaching supports granted to post-primary schools in 2011, by type of disability.

#### Resource Hours Granted by Disability – Post Primary

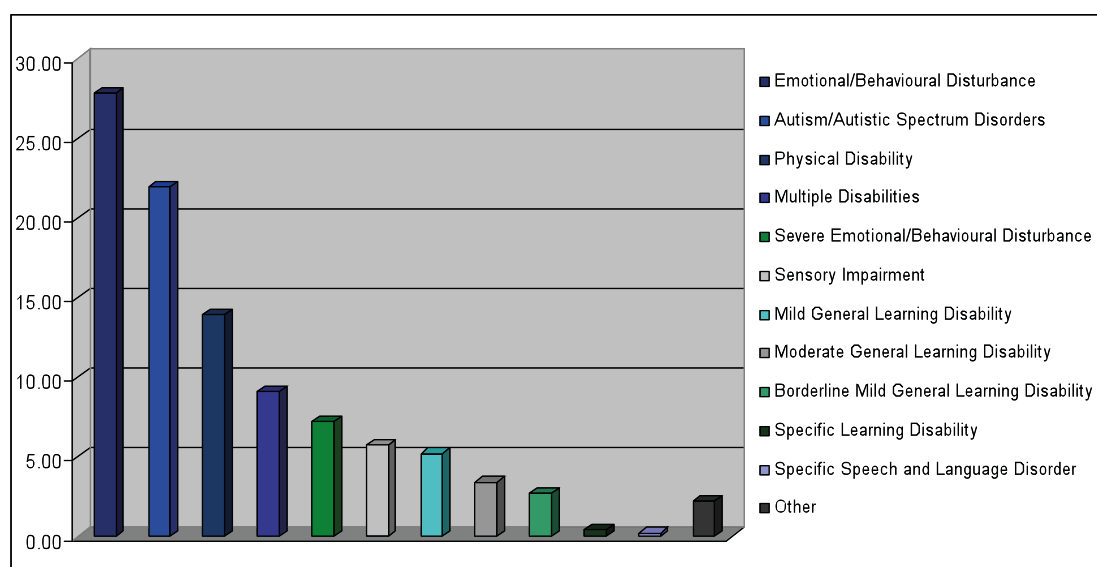


### Analysis of applications for SNA Supports

A total of 2,125 applications were received for access to SNA support. Of these 1,174 resulted in SNA support being granted.

The graph below presents SNA supports granted to post-primary schools in 2011, by type of disability.

**SNA Support Granted by Disability – Post Primary**



### Conclusions

The following trends can be identified from the above figures:

- Almost one fifth (19 per cent) of applications granted for resource teaching and 35 per cent of applications for access to an SNA related to children with an emotional behavioural disturbance or a severe emotional behavioural disturbance.
- A total of 13 per cent of applications granted for resource teaching and five per cent of applications for access to an SNA related to children with a mild general learning disability.
- Nine per cent of applications granted for resource teaching and 22 per cent of applications for access to an SNA related to children with autistic spectrum disorder.

## Appendix 4 – Report of Income and Expenditure 2011

Report of Income and Expenditure 2011*		
	2011	2010
	€	€
<b>Income</b>		
State grant	8,152,000	8,216,000
Transfer to capital account	108,691	119,499
Other income	7,051	13,545
Total	8,267,742	8,349,044
<b>Expenditure</b>	(8,593,267)	(8,582,886)
Surplus/(deficit) of income over expenditure	(325,525)	(233,842)
Surplus at January 1st	433,274	667,116
Surplus as at December 31st	107,749	433,274

\* The income and expenditure report is extracted from the unaudited draft annual financial statements for year end 2011. A copy of the annual financial statements will be made available on [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie) when they are finalised, on completion of the audit.

