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## Minister for Education and Skills appoints new Council

Term of office: 1st January 2010 – 31st December 2013

The Minister for Education and Skills appointed a new Council for a three year term from 1st January 2010 as the previous Council of NCSE completed its term of office on 31st December 2009. The Chairperson and 12 other members of the Council are appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills under Section 21 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004. These appointments are made by the Minister from among persons who have a

special interest in or knowledge relating to the education of children with disabilities, and include two persons nominated to the Minister by the National Disability Authority (NDA) and a nominee of the Minister for Health and Children. Appointments are for a three year term and members may be appointed for a maximum of two terms.

The Council meets at least six times a year and the new Council has met on three occasions so far in 2010. ■

## Membership of the NCSE Council 2010–2013

**Mr Sydney Blain** (Chairperson). Mr Blain is a former Principal of the Church of Ireland College of Education.

**Sr Maighread Ní Ghallchobhair** (Deputy Chairperson). Sr Maighread is a former Principal of Benincasa School for children with severe emotional/behavioural difficulties.

**Dr. Seamus Hegarty**. Dr Hegarty is Chairperson of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and a former Director of the National Foundation for Education Research in England and Wales.

**Tom O'Sullivan**. Mr O'Sullivan is the Assistant General Secretary of the Irish National Teachers Organisation and former Principal of St Senan's Boys National School, Limerick.

**Teresa Griffin**. Ms Griffin is a Principal Officer in the Special Education Section of the Department of Education and Skills.

**Don Mahon**. Mr Mahon is an Assistant Chief Inspector in the Department of Education and Skills.

**Siobhan Barron**. Ms Barron is Director of the National Disability Authority.

**Dr. Anne Lodge**.\* Dr Lodge is the Principal of the Church of Ireland College of Education.

**Joan Russell**.\* Ms Russell is Education Officer for Co. Cork VEC.

**Pat Kinsella**.\* Mr Kinsella is Principal of Colaiste Choilm, Ballicollig, Co. Cork.

**Julie O'Leary**.\* Ms O'Leary is a graduate of UCC and currently a post graduate student in NUI Galway.

**Marie Kennedy**.\* Ms Kennedy is a Principal Officer in the Office of the Minister for Disability and Mental Health.

**Mick Coughlan**.\* Mr Coughlan is Principal Clinical Psychologist of the National Learning Network.

\* New members

Articles to be considered for publication and comments about the newsletter may be emailed to:  
newsletter@ncse.ie.

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the National Council for Special Education.

## New NCSE Council members



*Mick Coughlan (NDA nominee), Sydney Blain, Chairperson of Council, Marie Kennedy (Department of Health and Children) and Joan Russell (Education Officer, Co. Cork VEC)*

## Consultative Forum

Under Section 22 of the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (2004), the NCSE is required to appoint a Consultative Forum to consult on matters relating to the performance of its functions. As the term of office of the first Forum had expired, the NCSE called for nominations to the second Consultative Forum to be submitted by April 22nd 2010.

The Council can appoint up to and not more than seventeen persons to the Consultative Forum and must ensure that at least seven of these people are women and at least seven members are men. The Minister for Education

& Skills may appoint a maximum of three people to the Consultative Forum, at least one of whom should be a woman and one should be a man. In appointing people to the Consultative Forum both the Council and the Minister are obliged to take into account the desirability of appointing persons who themselves have special educational needs, their parents and representatives.

The Council and the Minister are currently considering nominations received. The members of the new Consultative Forum will be posted on the NCSE website as soon as appointments are approved.

## NCSE Annual Report 2009

The NCSE 2009 Annual Report will shortly be published on the NCSE website. The main achievements of the organisation during 2009 are highlighted as follows:

### Main Achievements in 2009

1. Completion of the NCSE annual allocation of resources to schools to support children with special educational needs in a timely manner.
2. Advancement of an extensive Research Programme with the completion of a number of important international literature reviews of the evidence of best practice provision and the commissioning of further research projects as part of an agreed programme.
3. The NCSE's first research seminar was held in December 2009. This seminar provided an overview of the current NCSE research programme and featured presentations on a selection of key research reports completed in 2009.
4. Introduction of a structured Appeals Process whereby schools and where appropriate, parents may seek to appeal the decision of the Special Educational Needs Organiser in relation to the resources allocated to the school and the piloting of this process.
5. Localisation of the system for the Assessment of Needs process for children aged under five years which takes place under Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005 and involves local collaboration between the Health Service Executive (HSE), the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).
6. Launch of a new NCSE newsletter, NCSE News with on-line issues published in May and December 2009.
7. Commencement of a nationwide review of SNA allocations on the request of the Minister for Education and Skills.
8. SENOs processed over 11, 000 applications for additional teaching hours in primary and post primary schools.
9. SENOs processed over 4, 600 applications for SNA support in primary and post primary schools.
10. Further development of NCSE governance and organisational infrastructure to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2009.

## Dublin North Welcomes New Provisions for Pupils with Autism

### Opening of New Early Intervention Unit at Scoil Bhríde Junior National School, Donaghmede, Dublin 13

Scoil Bhríde JNS, Donaghmede, Dublin 13, is delighted to have recently opened an Early Intervention Unit for children with autism. It is great news for both parents and school alike that this need is being met. The parents are thrilled that their children have this opportunity to attend such a class as it is meeting the children's needs and develops a positive attitude to inclusivity.

Five boys, of pre-school age, are attending the unit and a little girl is to join the group in the next few weeks. A new purpose-built unit of 100 square metres houses the classroom, toilets and a sensory room, which doubles up as a therapy room.

Ms. Carol-Ann Ó Sioráin has been appointed as class-teacher and she is being ably assisted by Michelle Walsh-Dowdall (SNA) and Colette Carroll (SNA). We would like to congratulate them on their new appointments and wish them the best of luck in their new posts. An eclectic educational approach is implemented with LÁMH and PECS being used to enhance communication.

We would like to thank the Building Section of the Department of Education and Skills for their commitment to this project, and in particular Alan McIntyre for all his hard work and patience throughout the process.

Scoil Bhríde would like to acknowledge the help of the SENO, Margaret Carolan in the setting up of the unit, and the support that we are receiving from St. Michael's House. We are looking

forward to opening our Junior Class in September 2010.

The Grange Community School in Donaghmede has also opened up a new class for pupils with autism. This is only the second of its kind in the Dublin North region and is a very welcome provision for post-primary pupils with such a diagnosis in the Dublin region. We would like to take the opportunity to wish the Grange the very best of success.

The NCSE would like to acknowledge the invaluable support and dedication of the school Principal, Áine Dillon, and the Board of Management.



*Photograph of Sensory Room*

### New Autistic Unit in Grange Community College

In late January 2010, after months of preparation and renovating, our new unit opened its doors for the first time. Our students arrived with great excitement and anticipation and a new chapter in the history of the Grange began.

Running an autistic unit is a new experience for me, the teachers and the school. The response to the unit from staff and students has been positive and enthusiastic. Since we opened there has been a steady stream of visitors eager to learn more about the unit. The mainstream students, especially the first years, were keen to meet with the new students and looked forward to participating in inclusive activities with them.

Our facilities are bright and spacious. The VEC has done a marvelous job in creating a wonderful work environment for these students. Our facilities include: individual student work stations each with own computer, art station, sensory/quiet room, fully fitted kitchen, an integrated white board and reading corner complete with soft chairs to relax.

Our students are well settled in and enjoy coming to school. Two of our students are mainstreamed and teachers have suggested possible ways to include the others. We are now looking forward to our official opening in the near future.

The National Council for Special Education would like to thank all those involved in this development, including the City of Dublin VEC, the school Principal, Frank Costelloe and resource staff, and indeed their Special Education Needs Organiser Margaret Carolan for all their hard work and commitment to this project.

## Project IRIS



Project IRIS (Inclusive Research in Irish Schools) is a three year longitudinal research project funded by NCSE which is carrying out the most in-depth study of special and inclusive education ever conducted in Ireland. This project, jointly managed by The University of Northampton, UK, Trinity College Dublin and The Institute of Child Education and Psychology Europe is gaining multiple perspectives, including those of students, parents, school based staff, allied professionals and disability groups in order to gain insights into the current practices and procedures that provide support to young people with special educational needs in both mainstream and special schools.

Researchers working on this project are currently focusing upon the work of primary and special schools and next year will shift their attentions to the post primary sector. Over the past six months data has been collected through the use of focus groups comprised of both service users and providers. More recently attention moved towards the compilation of case studies based upon a sample of special and mainstream schools across Ireland. During this time the research team have been interviewing professionals, parents and students in schools, observing lessons and other situations and scrutinising school documentation. This is enabling the development of an understanding of the many innovative practices currently in place to support students with a wide range of needs and disabilities from multiple perspectives.

A sample of students from these schools will be followed over the next two years, including a number who will make the transition from primary to post primary schooling.

Additional information is being sought through an electronic survey sent to schools and via the construction of literature reviews which will view practice in Ireland in an international context. The research team have been particularly pleased with the warm reception which they have received in schools and the opportunity to engage in professional dialogue with colleagues. Further interaction with the team is invited and it is anticipated that by the end of Project Iris they will have accumulated the largest data base of practice in special education ever accumulated in Ireland and significantly more detailed than that available in most other countries.

All colleagues with an interest in special and inclusive education are invited to engage in discussion with members of the project team who can be contacted via email at [info@projectiris.org](mailto:info@projectiris.org) or by contacting the project leader Professor Richard Rose at [Richard.Rose@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:Richard.Rose@northampton.ac.uk)

The project website can be visited at [www.projectiris.org](http://www.projectiris.org)

Further update on the project will be posted in future editions of this newsletter.

**projectIRIS**   
Inclusive Research in Irish Schools

# NCSE Research Conference Dec 2009



*Professor Marc Marschark,  
National Technical Institute  
for the Deaf, New York*



*Dr Sarah Parsons and Dr Karen Guldborg,  
University of Birmingham*



*Mr Peter Baldwin, DES, and  
Dr Seamus Hegarty, NCSE Council*

The NCSE research seminar featured presentations from the authors of four recently completed reports which addressed separately the issues of the education of children on the autistic spectrum, children who are deaf or hard of hearing and children who are blind or visually impaired, and the future role of special schools and classes.

These four research reports are now available for download on the NCSE website at <http://www.ncse.ie/research/researchreports.asp>

*From left:  
Dr Graeme  
Douglas,  
Ms Anne-  
Marie Farrell,  
Dr Mike  
McLinden,  
Dr Jean Ware  
and Mr Don  
Mahon*



*From left: Dr Jean Ware, Dr Joe Travers, Dr Therese Day,  
Ms Anne-Marie Farrell, with Mr Don Mahon*



*Mr Sydney Blain,  
Chairperson NCSE*

## Special Education Inclusive Framework for Schools

One of the actions arising out of the NCSE's Strategy of Statement 2008- 2011 is the development of a framework for inclusion for special education. The NCSE established an inter-agency advisory group, representative of education and disability partners, to oversee the development of this work on a national basis.

The framework has been designed for use in all educational settings including mainstream schools and special schools on a self-assessment and voluntary basis. The NCSE Inclusive Framework is intended to provide clear signposts to assist schools in mapping a journey towards inclusion. It supports the good work that has been on-going in schools and is a practical resource that invites schools to critically reflect and evaluate the ways in which inclusive values and practices are manifested within the school and classrooms.

The Framework covers ten core areas:

1. Leadership and Management
2. Whole-School Development Planning
3. Whole-School Environment
4. Communication
5. Pupil and Staff Wellbeing
6. Curriculum Planning for Inclusion
7. Individualised Education Planning
8. Teaching and Learning Strategies
9. Classroom Management
10. Support for and Recognition of Learning

A draft of this Inclusive Framework is currently being piloted in ten schools around the country. The views of school personnel involved in the pilot as well as other educational stakeholders are being sought to ensure that the Framework and the self-assessment template is as comprehensive, user friendly and appropriate as possible.

The inter-agency advisory group will meet over the summer to consider the feedback from the pilot and consultation process and finalise the Framework. It is expected that a final version of the Framework will be presented to the Council of the NCSE in October. The NCSE will then engage in an information campaign to encourage the utilisation of the Framework within schools.



## Update on the Introduction of New Appeals Process

Following the conclusion of the pilot stage in February last, the appeals process was extended to all schools nationwide. From the end of February, schools and parents could initiate an appeal where they considered that the NCSE did not observe the Dept of Education & Skills policy parameters in reaching a decision.

Since then, a small number of appeals have been submitted by schools and parents. This appeals process is now in place for the 2010-2011 resource allocation process.

The Independent Appeals Advisory Committee will be established with its first meeting to take place in October 2010. This Committee will review the operation of the appeals process in relation to the 2010/11 applications process. The Committee will consist of an independent chairperson, a representative of school management bodies and a parent representative. The Committee will submit a report to the Council. The NCSE will publish the recommendations of the Appeals Advisory Committee in relation to the operation of the appeals process, together with the views of the Council, in the Annual Report of the Council, 2010.

Full details in relation to the appeals process may be obtained from the NCSE website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie)

## Report on the Review of SNA Allocations to Schools

### April 2009 – March 2010

In February 2009, the Dept of Education & Skills requested the NCSE to undertake a review of SNA allocations to all primary, second level and special schools in order to ensure that there was a continued need, in line with the Departmental guidelines for the allocation of SNAs, for the level of SNA in each school reviewed.

Between April 2009 and March 2010, approximately 2,900 schools out of 3,150 with an allocation of an SNA, were reviewed. It is envisaged that the remaining 250 schools will be reviewed before the end of the 2009/10 academic year.

The outcome of the review as at end March 2010 indicated that 358 of the 8,821 whole-time equivalent posts were no longer required. This figure should be understood in terms of the totality of schools reviewed where in some schools, the level of SNA allocation increased whereas in other schools the level decreased, as a result of the review.

The full report to the Minister may be viewed on the NCSE website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie)

