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Message from the Chairperson of Council

I would like to begin by welcoming all our readers to this edition of NCSE news and by drawing your attention to the NCSE Annual Research Conference 2012 which will take place in the Croke Park Conference Centre on the 21st November 2012. The conference will feature presentations on NCSE commissioned research from eminent national and international researchers. You can book your place at the conference by submitting a booking form by 5pm Wednesday November 7th 2012. Please visit our website, www.ncse.ie, to get an online booking form.

We recently published policy advice on the education of students with challenging behaviour arising from severe emotional disturbance/behavioural disorders. Our initial focus was on a small number of children with special educational needs whose

extreme behaviour was proving almost impossible to manage within their special school settings. However, it soon became clear that inappropriate behaviour is a significant issue in schools across the country and concerns pupils without special educational needs as well. We believe our

recommendations, if implemented, will assist schools in preventing challenging behaviour and managing it when it occurs.

One of our recommendations was that schools should be supported to implement educational programmes with proven success in the management of behaviour. We are especially pleased to publish here articles describing two of these programmes, the Incredible Years Programme and FRIENDS.

One of our responsibilities is to sanction additional teaching and care supports to schools. We were pleased that in these difficult economic circumstances, the number of resource teaching posts available to us was slightly increased this year to 5,265 and the number of SNA posts remained constant at 10,575. In addition, we have been able to establish 91 new special classes to cater for over 500 students with special needs in 88 mainstream primary and post primary schools. We would like to thank schools and parents for continuing to assist our SENOs with their work in allocating available resources to schools in a fair and equitable way.

I would like to reiterate the NCSE's continued determination to work hard to serve the interests of students with special educational needs and their families. The NCSE will continue to meet our responsibilities

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NCSE Research Conference 2012

Wednesday 21st November
Hogan Suite, Croke Park Conference Centre, Dublin
9.00am – 4.00pm

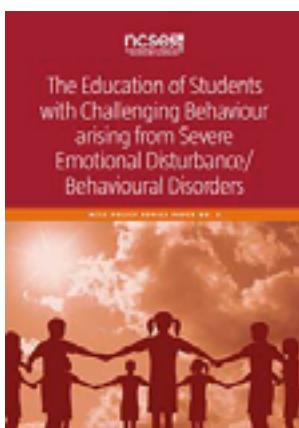
The NCSE annual research conference provides an opportunity to hear about and discuss some of the latest national and international research in the field of special education.

The conference features presentations from ongoing and completed studies commissioned by the NCSE, as well as from international guest speakers on key contemporary issues.

Conference speakers will address the themes of teacher education for inclusion, achievement and outcomes, models of provision, special classes, and findings from the NCSE longitudinal study.

Further information can be found on the NCSE website www.ncse.ie. Please click [here](#) for the conference agenda. Please click [here](#) to complete and submit the online booking form.

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



(Message from the Chairperson of Council continued)

to provide schools, in a timely manner, with the additional educational supports required to help children receive an appropriate education, and continue to meet our obligations in relation to the publication of NCSE research and the submission of policy advice to the Minister.

The term of office of this Council draws to a close at the end of this year, with a new Council to be appointed by the Minister from January 2013. I would like to acknowledge each member's commitment to the governance of NCSE over the last term. This involved members attending and contributing to regular Council meetings – which for many meant travelling considerable distances. In addition it involved reading extensive documentation in advance of meetings, and active participation in the Council's work through chairing or being members of sub-committees. I would like to thank you all for your willingness to share your knowledge and experience in such a generous and collaborative spirit and to wish you all well in your future work.

I would like to finish by acknowledging the professionalism and dedication of the staff of the NCSE, both SENOs and administrative sections and to thank them for their cooperation with the Council and myself over the last six years.



Sydney Blain
Chairperson

NCSE Publications

NCSE Statement of Strategy 2012 – 2016

The NCSE has published its Statement of Strategy 2012-2016. This Statement focuses on five strategic objectives for the NCSE, principally based on its key functions set out in Section 20 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act,



2004 (EPSEN). These strategic objectives, when delivered, will expand the level of knowledge of special education in Ireland and internationally; provide further evidence-based policy advice on special educational issues; ensure the equitable allocation of available teaching and care supports to schools which have enrolled pupils with special educational needs; meet our legislative and corporate governance responsibilities; and address further and higher education requirements for

adults with special educational needs. A copy of the Statement of Strategy can be viewed at http://www.ncse.ie/publications/strategy_statements.asp

NCSE Annual Report 2011

The NCSE Annual Report, which reflects the achievements and activities of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) during 2011, has been published. This report is available to view and download from our website, http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/Annual_Report_accessible_version.pdf

NCSE Operations

2012/2013 Resource Allocation

The NCSE published the allocation of Resource Teacher and Special Needs Assistant posts to schools for the 2012/2013 school year on their website on Wednesday 13th June.

Increased Demand for Resource Teaching Support

The NCSE has allocated the equivalent of 4,830 resource teaching posts to schools for 2012/2013 in respect of applications received up to May 2nd 2012. The overall demand for resource teaching posts has increased.

A decision was taken by the Department of Education and Skills to adjust the basis for sanctioning resource teaching hours to schools at 85% of current policy level, in order to ensure that the NCSE had capacity to respond to further applications in the autumn.

Schools were requested to submit all outstanding applications for additional resource teaching support to their Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) by October 5th for processing.

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

10,304 SNA posts have been allocated to schools for 2012/13; a similar number to that of last year.

- 55% of schools experienced no change in SNA support;
- 23% saw a decrease in SNA support and 22% saw an increase.

This reflects the changing nature of demand in approximately 3,200 schools. The NCSE confirmed that it would be able to respond to urgent applications for SNA support that may arise during this school year as up to 10,575 posts are available.

The NCSE is currently developing and finalising an appeals process which will be shortly available.

NCSE Research Reports

Published Reports from the NCSE Commissioned Research Programme 2009 – 2011

Since 2009 the NCSE has published a series of reports from its commissioned research programme. These are all available on the NCSE website to download. The reports are listed below in year order which readers may find useful, together with links to the electronic versions of the reports.

2011

A Study on the Prevalence of Special Educational Needs (2011) Joanne Banks and Selina McCoy, the Economic and Social Research Institute: NCSE Research Reports No. 9.

http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/Prevalence_of_SEN_10_09_12.pdf

Access to the curriculum for pupils with a variety of special educational needs in mainstream classes (2011) Jean Ware, Cathal Butler, Christopher Robertson, Margaret O'Donnell and Magi Gould, Bangor University and St Patrick's College, Dublin: NCSE Research Reports No 8. http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/AccessToTheCurriculum_1.pdf

An Inventory of Research and Policy Related Publications in the Field of Special Education (2011) Joseph Travers, Cathal Butler and Margaret O'Donnell, St Patrick's College, Dublin. http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/Report_of_Audit_January_2011_1.pdf

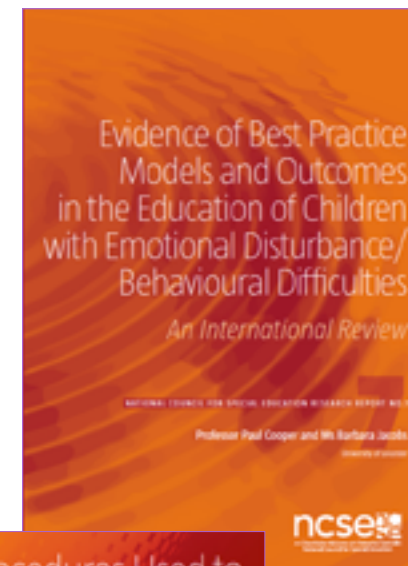
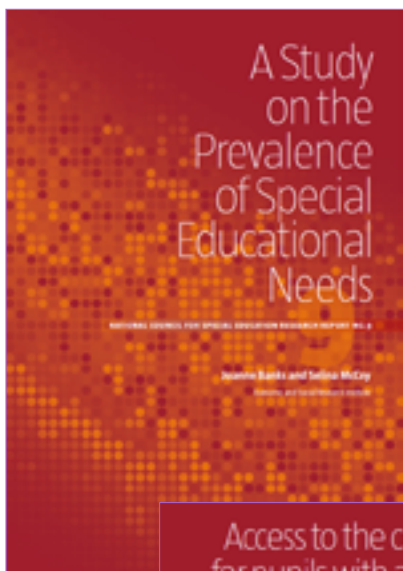
The link above is to the main report from this inventory. The database of references and supplementary reports are also available on the NCSE website.

Evidence of Best Practice Models and Outcomes in the Education of Children with Emotional Disturbance/Behavioural Difficulties (2011) Paul Cooper and Barbara Jacobs, University of Leicester: NCSE Research Reports No 7. http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/7_NCSE_EBD.pdf

2010

A National Survey of Parental Attitudes to and Experiences of Local and National Special Education Services (2010) David Armstrong, Gillian Kane, Gillian O'Sullivan and Maura Kelly, PricewaterhouseCoopers: NCSE Research Reports No 6. http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/6_NCSE_ParentalAttitude.pdf

A summary of the research report above is also available at: http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/Parental_Survey_Summary_1.pdf



NCSE Published Reports (continued)

Procedures used to Diagnose a Disability and to Assess Special Educational Needs: An International Review (2010) Professor Geoff Lindsay and Dr. Martin Desforges, Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research, University of Warwick: NCSE Research Reports No 5. http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/5_NCSE_Diag_Ass.pdf

Literature Review of the Principles and Practices Relating to Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs (2010) Eileen Winter and Paul O'Raw, Institute of Child Education and Psychology Europe (Maynooth) in conjunction with the 2007-9 NCSE Consultative Forum. http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/NCSE_Inclusion.pdf

2009

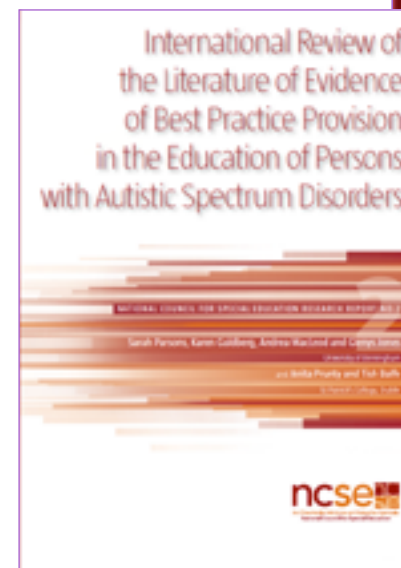
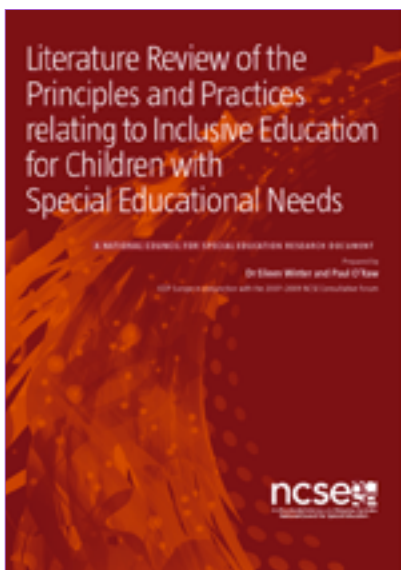
Research Report on the Role of Special Schools and Classes in Ireland (2009) Dr Jean Ware, Tish Balfe, Cathal Butler, Thérèse Day, Maeve Dupont, Catherine Harten, Ann-Marie Farrell, Rory McDaid, Margaret O'Riordan, Anita Prunty and Joe Travers, St Patrick's College, Dublin: NCSE Research Reports No 4. http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/4_NCSE_SpecSchlsClas.pdf

International Review of the Literature of Evidence of Best Practice in the Education of Blind and Visually Impaired Children (2009) Graeme Douglas, Steve McCall, Mike McLinden, Sue Pavey, Jean Ware and Ann Marie Farrell, University of Birmingham and St Patrick's College, Dublin: NCSE Research Reports No 3. http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/3_NCSE_Visual_1.pdf

International Review of the Literature of Evidence of Best Practice Provision in the Education of Persons with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (2009) Sarah Parsons, Karen Guldberg, Andrea MacLeod, Glenys Jones, Anita Prunty and Tish Balfe, University of Birmingham and St Patrick's College, Dublin: NCSE Research Report No 2. http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/2_NCSE_Autism.pdf

Evidence of Best Practice Models and Outcomes in the Education of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children: An International Review (2009) Marc Marschark and Patricia Spencer, National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester Institute of Technology, NY: NCSE Research Reports No 1. http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/1_NCSE_Deaf.pdf

A summary of the above report is also available at: <http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/NCSEDeafReportExecutiveSummary.pdf>





NCSE Commissions Two New Research Studies

Hearing the Voice of Students with Special Needs

It is now widely acknowledged by academics and policy makers that we need to understand how students experience all aspects of school if we are to improve provision, practice and student learning. The NCSE has recently commissioned an exciting new study which will enable students with special needs in secondary schools to tell us about their experiences and how they think they are faring in the education system.

Listening to what young people have to say is already an important part of the Irish policy development process through the National Children's Strategy which promises that children and young people 'will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity'. Earlier this year the NCSE invited proposals through public advertisement from academics and researchers interested in carrying out the study, and in June the contract was awarded to an experienced team at Manchester University, led by expert Dr Garry Squires,

with the involvement of Irish academics and an NCSE advisory committee.

The study will focus on student views and experiences of issues which impact on their participation in, and engagement with school and learning, both formal (relating to academic achievement) and informal (relating to well being and independence). It will also attempt to assess how these student experiences link to both formal and informal educational outcomes (e.g. academic attainment, early school leaving, independence, skills development). There is some evidence that the second level environment may present more difficulties for students with special educational needs, than for students without such needs. However, we need more rigorous research like this to establish what the distinct experience of students with a wide range of special educational needs is, and how these students feel they are faring with the curriculum, school and their peers.

The project will start with a review of the Irish and international literature focused on the general experiences of secondary students in relation to curriculum access, learning, participation and engagement at school, and an overview and analysis of key lessons that



New Research Studies (continued)

emerge from the literature for students with SEN in particular. Phase two will then engage with students in a sample of 30 to 40 schools around the country, interview key school personnel and collect relevant background documentation and data from those schools. Most of the fieldwork will take place in 2013 and it is envisaged that the study will be completed by the end of 2014.

A Study of the Experiences of Students with Special Educational Needs at Post Primary School: Principal Investigator, Dr Garry Squires, Manchester University

National and International Review of Provision for Adults with Disabilities

The NCSE has just commissioned its first ever research study to investigate the field of provision for adults with disabilities. This important study will help the NCSE gain a better understanding of this area and identify potential best practice in education, training and rehabilitation supports for adults with disabilities, nationally and internationally.

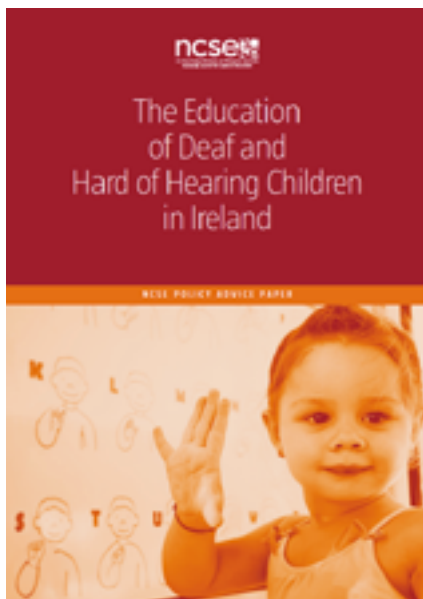
The NCSE has a number of statutory roles with regard to the education of adults with disabilities. Under Section 20 (1) of the EPSEN Act (2004) the NCSE is required to review provision made for adults with disabilities to avail of higher education and adult and continuing education, rehabilitation and training; and to advise all educational institutions concerning best practice in respect of the education of adults who have disabilities. (Section 7 (3) of the Disability Act (2005) outlines further responsibilities for the NCSE, although this part of the Act has not commenced yet).

The development of work relating to these particular functions is a core objective of the current NCSE Strategic Plan and a number of activities arising from this objective have been planned for this strategic period. This study is one of these activities and will make a valuable contribution to building an evidence base for the development of information materials, practice and provision guidelines and policy advice. [Other activities include engaging with further, higher education and training providers to map the nature and extent of current Irish provision and supports; and providing information to parents and young adults with disabilities regarding the range of options and supports available to them.] Earlier this year the NCSE invited proposals through public advertisement from academics and researchers interested in carrying out this study and in May the contract for the study was awarded to Dr Carmel Duggan of WRC Social and Economic Consultants in Dublin.

Education, rehabilitation and training provision for adults with disabilities in Ireland is currently the responsibility of more than one Government department and section, and is delivered by a significant number of providers in both mainstream and non-mainstream settings. This research review will be necessarily broad ranging as it will need to cover all types of provision to adults, across a wide range of disabilities. The study will also generate a number of more detailed country case studies to illuminate aspects of best practice in more detail. The selection and number of case study countries will be determined by evidence emerging from the literature and consultation with the NCSE during the research process. It is envisaged that the review will conclude by the end of 2012.

What Works in the Provision of Higher and Further Education, Continuing Education, Rehabilitation and Training for Adults with Disabilities: A Literature and Country Review. Principal Investigator, Dr Carmel Duggan, WRC, Dublin 2.

Update on NCSE Policy Advice



A New Way Forward for Deaf and Hard Of Hearing Children in Irish Schools

The NCSE's policy advice paper on the future education of Deaf/Hard of Hearing Children was presented to the Minister for Education and Skills on February 3rd 2012. Later in the day, the policy advice was formally launched by the Minister for Children, Ms Frances Fitzgerald in the Clock Tower, Department of Education and Skills.

Speaking at the launch, Minister Fitzgerald said that, 'the importance of this paper is that it shows how academic outcomes for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children can be improved – through focussed early intervention; improved access to early language acquisition; comprehensive information for parents from the point at which their child is diagnosed; provision of a range



of educational settings through which Deaf and Hard of Hearing children can obtain the necessary support services; and development of teachers' skill-sets to enable them to help Deaf and Hard of Hearing children to realise their academic potential'.

An electronic copy of the NCSE paper is available at: http://www.ncse.ie/policy_advice/policy.asp

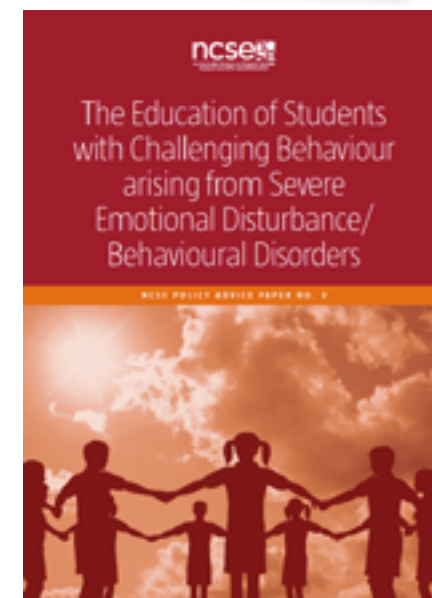
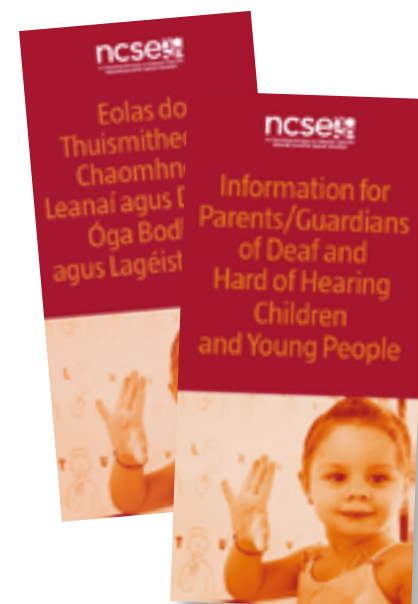
Information for parents of children with special educational needs

The NCSE has published the first in a series of Information Pamphlets for parents of children with special educational needs: *Information for Parents/Guardians of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and Young People*. An electronic and Irish Sign Language version of this pamphlet is available on the NCSE website at: http://www.ncse.ie/for_parents/Information_Pamphlets.asp

A hard copy version of this pamphlet is available through the SENO network.

Making schools safer – Plan to combat students' challenging behaviour

On October 1st, 2012, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) published its policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills showing how challenging behaviour can be prevented or reduced in schools.



Making schools safer (continued)

In considering the issue of challenging behaviour in schools, the NCSE initially focussed on a number of children with special educational needs whose extreme behaviour was proving almost impossible to manage within their special school settings. However, it soon became clear that inappropriate behaviour is a significant issue in schools across the country and concerns pupils without special educational needs as well. Every school can benefit from the NCSE's recommendations.

The challenging behaviour of some students is causing extreme difficulties to schools. Research, commissioned by the NCSE, shows that, with the appropriate expertise and programmes in place, challenging behaviours can reduce in intensity and quantity, allowing teachers to teach and students to learn in safe environments.

The NCSE policy advice recommends early intervention before behavioural problems become embedded and teachers to be specifically trained in the management of behaviour. Schools need to adopt a whole school approach to the management of behaviour and, in particular, implement programmes with proven success, some of which are recommended in the plan.

The paper also contained a suite of recommendations which are directed at those students whose levels of exceptionally challenging behaviour prevent them from attending and/or engaging with school and from achieving their own individual potential. These recommendations focus on the supports required by these students to participate meaningfully in education.

The NCSE policy advice paper: "The Education of Students with Challenging Behaviour arising from Severe Emotional Disturbance/Behavioural Disorders" is available to download at: http://www.ncse.ie/policy_advice/policy.asp

NCSE consults with Education Partners

The Department of Education and Skills has requested the NCSE to:

- prepare policy advice on how students with special educational needs should be supported in schools and to
- develop a Code of Practice on the educational placement of students with special educational needs.

The NCSE held a series of consultation meetings with its own Council, its Consultative Forum and other educational partners from April to June 2012 seeking views on these matters.

The educational partners included students, parents, teachers, SNAs, advocacy groups, unions, principal representatives, HSE professionals, educational psychologists, school management bodies and voluntary bodies.

The NCSE is currently considering the views expressed during the consultation process. The policy advice on supporting students with special educational needs will be published in Spring 2013.



Teaching children and young people to cope with anxiety

How can we teach children and young people to develop their resilience and cope with feelings of anxiety?

ELIZABETH CHARLES, SENIOR EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST, NEPS (THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE)

Feeling anxious, afraid and worried is something we have all experienced. It is a normal response to situations which we think are threatening. At its extreme, fear produces an instinctive stress response which results in fight, flight or freeze behaviours. The rush of adrenaline that comes with the stress response can be useful in helping us to perform well. However, anxiety can also prevent us from doing our best and living our lives to the full.

There are some children and adolescents that live with constant anxiety which interferes with their lives in school and at home. In fact, anxiety is among the most common health concerns in young people; by the age of 18, approximately 1 in 10 children and teenagers will have suffered from an anxiety disorder according to Costello et al 2003.

People show their anxiety in different ways and in ways that can disguise their underlying feelings. Some students may need constant reassurance, attention and approval. Others may avoid attention, never volunteer an answer in class and never approach a teacher for help when they need it. Some students may use disruptive behaviour as a strategy to distract from difficulties they may be having with school work. All of these behaviours may be a signal that a student is experiencing frequent anxiety.

Feelings of anxiety can adversely affect academic performance in terms of unexpected low test scores, difficulties in starting a task, remembering things, maintaining concentration or difficulties in finishing a task because the student feels it needs



to be perfect. Anxiety and worry can also impact socially e.g. a student may be reluctant to speak out in larger groups, may have difficulty going into the yard, and difficulties in making and maintaining friendships. At its extreme, anxiety can result in students refusing to attend school and in long term vulnerability to mental health issues like depression and self harm.

Whilst anxiety is a normal response to unexpected change or transitions from one setting to another e.g. starting school or moving to post primary school, there are simple effective techniques that can be taught to help all people, from very young children to adults, cope with, and manage feelings of anxiety more effectively.

Evidence based Interventions to help manage anxiety

Psychologists recognise that there is an interaction between how we think about something and how we feel about it in terms of emotional and body responses and that this interaction of thoughts and feelings can be expressed through behaviour. For example, if we think we are going to fail, we might experience body symptoms associated with anxiety (e.g. increase in heart rate, 'butterflies' in stomach etc.) and we can experience this as emotions of anxiety, nervousness, worry or fear. This combination of thoughts, feelings and body responses usually results in us wanting to avoid situations and as a result we may deprive ourselves of an experience that would otherwise have shown us we could have coped. This response can result in a cycle of ongoing and escalating avoidance of difficult situations and loss of confidence in our ability to manage our thoughts and emotions.

Programmes based on Cognitive Behavioural Approaches are recognised as effective interventions for children and young people experiencing anxiety (Cooper & Jacobs 2011) as well as for adults experiencing anxiety (NICE Guidelines 2007). These interventions work through a range of strategies

Teaching children and young people to cope with anxiety (continued)

including encouraging people to change their thinking to more balanced, helpful thoughts e.g. 'all that matters is that I try my best.' Concentrating on thoughts that are more helpful can help people cope with situations that provoke anxiety and this experience of coping increases confidence and willingness to try new things.

The Friends programmes

Psychologist Paula Barrett has researched and developed a series of programmes based on a cognitive behavioural approach. These preventative programmes are designed for use in schools and early education settings and aim to teach a whole class, or smaller groups of children or young people, the skills to manage their thoughts, emotions and body responses.

Fun Friends is a play based programme for children aged 4 to 7 years old that is structured around the acronym FRIENDS;

F representing a basic understanding of 'Feelings',
R for teaching simple 'relaxation' techniques (e.g. milkshake breathing),

I stands for 'I can try' and helping children think in helpful ways,
E represents 'encourage' and focuses on breaking difficult things up into little steps, being a good friend and celebrating effort and success,

N stands for 'Nuture' and considers who are the important role models in children's lives and identifies people who are supportive.

D 'Don't forget to be brave' and

S 'Stay happy' are the final two sessions that focus on maintaining and applying skills in real life.

The FRIENDS for Life programme is designed for use with school age children aged 8-11 years, whilst My Friends Youth is aimed for students aged 12-16 years old.



“ My Friends Youth is aimed for students aged 12-16 years old ”

These programmes aim to help students cope with feelings of anxiety, fear and worry by developing self esteem and teaching coping skills in a simple, structured way. As in Fun Friends programme, the word FRIENDS is used as an age appropriate acronym which is used as a reminder of different strategies e.g. awareness of feelings and body responses, using relaxation and mindfulness strategies, thinking in helpful, balanced ways and using problem solving strategies to tackle difficult tasks and think about and evaluate different choices in situations causing anxiety.

Each programme can be delivered over 10-12 weeks. Together the programmes form a spiral curriculum that re-visits and extends concepts based on research evidence and using a cognitive behavioural framework.

The FRIENDS for life programme is now acknowledged by the World Health Organization (2004) for its 17 years of comprehensively evaluated practice and has been adapted and used in schools internationally (see for example the implementation of the programme in British Columbia, Canada at www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mental_health). Its effectiveness was recently evaluated in primary schools in Carlow and Kilkenny and Crosbie et al (2011) found significant improvements in anxiety and self esteem measures following the programme which were maintained 3 months after the programme was completed.

The National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS), in collaboration with NEPS and the SPHE Support Service ran a national project based on the Friends for Life programme in 14 post-primary schools in the 2011-2012 academic year. This study demonstrated that the Friends for Life Programme is suitable for First Year students in post primary schools when some materials are supplemented from the My Youth programme (Rodgers & Henefer 2012). The project's evaluation demonstrated significant reductions in anxiety levels among participating students following the programme. These results were confirmed by parents. In addition, according to the Strengths

Teaching children and young people to cope with anxiety (continued)

and Difficulties Questionnaire, students also recorded a significant reduction in overall stress, emotional stress, peer difficulties, behaviour difficulties and attention deficit hyperactivity difficulties after completing the programme. The 14 schools in the national project have continued with the roll out of the programme this year. Some are also introducing My Youth programme to LCA and TYP classes. The Friends for Life programme is also particularly suitable for Junior Cycle students with literacy difficulties.

Teaching FRIENDS for life as part of the SPHE Curriculum

All of these programmes encourage participants to learn from their own and from others' experiences. A circle time format and use of small group work can be used very effectively to facilitate learning within a whole class group. The programme addresses objectives in all three strands of the SPHE primary curriculum and is particularly relevant to the strand units; Self Identity, Taking Care of my Body, Growing and Changing, Making Decisions, Myself and my Family, My Friends and Other People, Relating to Others and Developing Citizenship. At second level, the Youth Programme meets all of the aims of the post primary SPHE curriculum; namely, developing skills for self fulfilment and living in communities, promotion of self esteem and self confidence, enabling students to develop a framework for responsible decision making, providing opportunities for reflection and discussion and promotion of physical, mental and emotional well being.

More information

Teachers can deliver this programme once they have attended a training programme delivered by a licensed trainer who is normally a psychologist. This year NEPS will carry out a research study into the implementation of the FRIENDS for Life programme in 27 primary schools. This will involve training primary school teachers to deliver the Friends for Life programme. The effectiveness of the programme in reducing anxiety and promoting self-esteem will be evaluated by comparing results to a group of students who have not received the programme. It is hoped to be able to extend the training of teachers to deliver the programme over the coming years. The NBSS will deliver training on the Friends for Life and My Youth programmes to teachers from over 90 post

primary schools in late November, 2012. For further information about the programme see www.friends.info.net.

Updates on the FRIENDS programme

The Friends organisation in Australia has recently launched the sixth edition of the Fun Friends/Friends for Life/My Youth programmes. The upcoming training being delivered by the NBSS and NEPS will be based on the sixth edition of the programmes.

Dr. Paula Barrett has also developed a 2 day Resilience for Life for adults programme based on the same principles as the FRIENDS programmes. She is interested in teachers training in the adult resilience programme for themselves as well as being trained to deliver the Friends Programmes in schools. The NBSS will be holding an information session on the Adult Resilience Programme in December 2012.

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The Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programme

Helping schools and teachers to manage behaviour and promote social and emotional competence

GABRIELLE GREENE, REGIONAL DIRECTOR NEPS (THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE)

Behaviour Problems in Schools

It is difficult to get an accurate picture of the prevalence of behavioural difficulties in children of school age due to differences in classification across disciplines and jurisdictions. There is a general consensus however, among researchers, that up to one in five pupils may experience emotional and or behavioural difficulties at some stage during their school years. The prevalence of behavioural difficulties may also vary across settings. This was reflected recently in the findings of the *How Are Our Kids* study (2012) which was carried out by Limerick Children's Services Committee. This study found that between 15% and 37% of children living in regeneration or designated disadvantaged areas were rated as having significant emotional and behavioural difficulties compared to 6% in more economically and socially advantaged areas.

These figures should concern us as child conduct problems in an educational context are associated with academic underachievement, poor attendance, disengagement from school, school failure and early school leaving, (Knitzer, 1993). Early behaviour difficulties are also associated with a greatly increased life-time risk for depression, low self-esteem, criminality and substance misuse (Kazdin, 1995). Research tells us that behavioural and conduct problems also become more resistant to change as children get older. Studies have indicated that teachers often feel ill-equipped to deal with challenging behaviour in the classroom (Shernoff and Kratochvill 2007) and that only a small percentage of those children needing clinical psychological or mental health services actually access these services. Furthermore high levels of persistent



disruptive behaviour in the classroom setting may also have a negative impact on the school and classroom environment and can contribute to teacher stress and burnout (INTO 2005).

There are multiple risk and protective factors associated with behavioural and/or conduct problems in children involving an interaction of individual and environmental factors. Of particular relevance to educators, are those school and classroom risk factors which have been shown to be associated with the development and maintenance of behavioural difficulties, and those protective factors, which allow children to develop resilience and the ability to cope with adversity. School and classroom risk factors include poor teacher classroom management skills, the number of children in the classroom with behavioural difficulties, poor parental involvement with schools and teacher stress and burnout (Webster-Stratton and Reid 2008). School and classroom protective factors include positive

classroom management strategies, positive pupil-teacher and parent-teacher relationships, support for teachers and a focus on developing children's social and emotional competence and problem-solving skills (Webster-Stratton and Reid 2008).

All of this research tells us that a coordinated multi-agency response is needed to meet the needs of children with significant behavioural difficulties. Within such a model the educational response needs to emphasise early and universal intervention and the development of teachers' classroom management skills. Classroom management has been identified by the DES (2006) as a key element of teaching.

The National Educational Psychological Service has identified the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management (IY TCM) programme as a highly effective programme for developing teacher competence with regard to classroom management skills and promotion of social and emotional competence.

The Incredible Years Series

The Incredible Years Series consists of three interlocking evidence based training programmes for parents, children and teachers which have been developed over a thirty year period by Dr. Carolyn Webster-Stratton, University of Washington, Seattle. The programmes have two long range goals: to provide cost effective early intervention programmes that all families and teachers can use to promote social, emotional and academic competence and to prevent conduct problems, and to provide comprehensive interventions targeted at treating and reducing the early onset of conduct problems in young children. The programmes have been implemented and

Incredible Years Programme (continued)

evaluated in several countries including the UK, Norway, New Zealand and Ireland. This set of programmes has been selected as one of only eleven “Blueprint” programmes in the US that have met rigorous evidence standards (Blueprints for Violence Prevention Series 1998).

The Teacher Classroom Management Programme

This programme focuses on strengthening those teacher classroom management strategies which have been shown to promote children’s social, emotional and academic competence and promoting positive teacher-parent relationships and collaboration. The programme also seeks to address the school risk factors, for later anti-social and conduct problems, which include number of pupils in the classroom with conduct problems, teacher stress and lack of support, poor parental involvement, harsh or negative discipline practices and inadequate training and confidence in classroom management of behaviour. As well as developing teachers’ classroom management skills the programme also equips teachers to develop tailored responses to the needs of specific groups or individual children in their classrooms. Workshops take place over five/six¹ full days, delivered monthly, by two Group Leaders to between 14 and 17 teachers. Collaborative, interactive and self-reflective training methods are used, including video-led, group discussion and rehearsal.

Evaluation studies carried out in the US, UK and Ireland to date all support the effectiveness of the programme in significantly improving child behaviour, classroom environment and teacher skills and confidence (Webster Stratton et al 2004, Hutchings et al 2007, Fitzsimons et al, 2007, Davenport and Tansey, 2009, McGilloway et al, 2010).

¹ The programme can also be delivered over 10-12 half days.

NEPS and IY TCM

To date 128 NEPS psychologists have attended the 3 day IY TCM Group Leader training programme to enable them to deliver the programme to teachers. NEPS psychologists have delivered IY TCM training to approximately 2,000 teachers over the past 5 years. The IY TCM programme represents the most cost-effective strand of the IY programmes for Educational Psychologists to deliver, with one programme (delivered to 17 teachers) having potential positive outcomes for all of the children they teach (approximately 480 children) in that year. If we take the *Growing Up in Ireland* study (2010) estimates in relation to the prevalence of significant behavioural difficulties, that figure may include 43 children with significant behavioural difficulties, who will benefit directly by having a behaviour plan developed, implemented, monitored and revised, as their teachers attend the programme. The IY TCM programme therefore, enables schools and teachers to provide a continuum of support for pupils with behavioural difficulties as described in the NEPS publication *Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support* (2010).

A Partnership approach to delivering IY programmes

In communities of high levels of disadvantage and need, a full partnership approach is recommended to rolling out all strands of the parent, child and teacher programmes. There are now several locations nationally where this interagency partnership approach has been adopted including Louth, Clare, Kerry and Galway. The partnership models generally involve statutory and voluntary services using existing resources to deliver the strands of the programme appropriate to their service remit.

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European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education



European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education

The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education is an independent and self-governing organisation established by member countries to act as a 'platform for collaboration regarding the development of provision for learners with special educational needs'. The Agency facilitates the collection, processing and transfer of European level and country specific information and offers member countries the opportunity to learn from each other through experience exchange and study visits.

The Agency is maintained by the Ministries of Education in the participating countries (member states of the European Union as well as Iceland, Norway and Switzerland) as well as supported by the European Union Institutions under the EU Lifelong Learning Programme.

A bi-annual meeting of the Agency will be held in Ireland on 14-16 May 2013, linked to the Irish Presidency of the EU. Representatives from all participating countries will attend.

Current Agency Projects

1. Vocational Education and Training

The main objective of this project is to identify and investigate key aspects of Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes for learners with special educational needs aged between 14 and 25 years, with a clear link to employment opportunities. The final VET project conference will take place from 12-13 November 2012 in Nicosia in the framework of the Cyprus Presidency. The aim is to gather responses to the questions 'what' works in the VET programmes for students with special educational needs, 'how' it works and 'why'. Irish representatives for this project are Finn O'Murchú, Inspector, Department of Education and Skills and Rory O'Sullivan, Principal, Killester College of Further Education.

2. Organisation of Provision to Support Inclusive Education

This 3-year Agency project aims to investigate how countries organise systems of support to meet the needs of learners with disabilities in mainstream settings. The goal is to identify the factors within mainstream provision that are effective in directly supporting learners in inclusive settings. The role of special schools and the special sector in supporting mainstream settings is a particular focus and will be explored via a review of international and national research literature as well as a country survey of all participating countries.

The project started in 2011 and will end early in 2014. All countries are participating in this project through their representatives to the Agency.

3. Raising Achievement for All

This project is focused on ways to promote quality education in inclusive settings as a strategy for raising achievement for all learners. A major conference was organised in collaboration with the Danish Ministry of Education and the Odense Municipal authorities. It was held in Odense, Denmark from 13th-15th June 2012 and was recognised as an official event under the Danish Presidency of the EU. The outcomes of the event will now be used as the basis for development work for this major thematic project within the Agency's multi-annual work programme.

Irish representatives, Finn O'Murchú, Inspector, DES and Clare Farrell, Research Officer, NCSE attended the conference in Odense.

4. Special Needs Education Data Collection: A new development

The Agency has secured additional operating grant funding from the European Commission to develop its Special Needs Education data collection work.

These development activities will build on the Agency's current biennial data collection exercises as well as the findings from the MIPIE project work (<http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/mapping-the-implementation-of-policy-for-inclusive-education>).

The intention is provide additional, more focussed data across European countries which will directly inform the European Union strategic objectives in the area of special and inclusive education policy.

The Irish representative for this project is Jennifer Doran, Head of Special Education, NCSE.