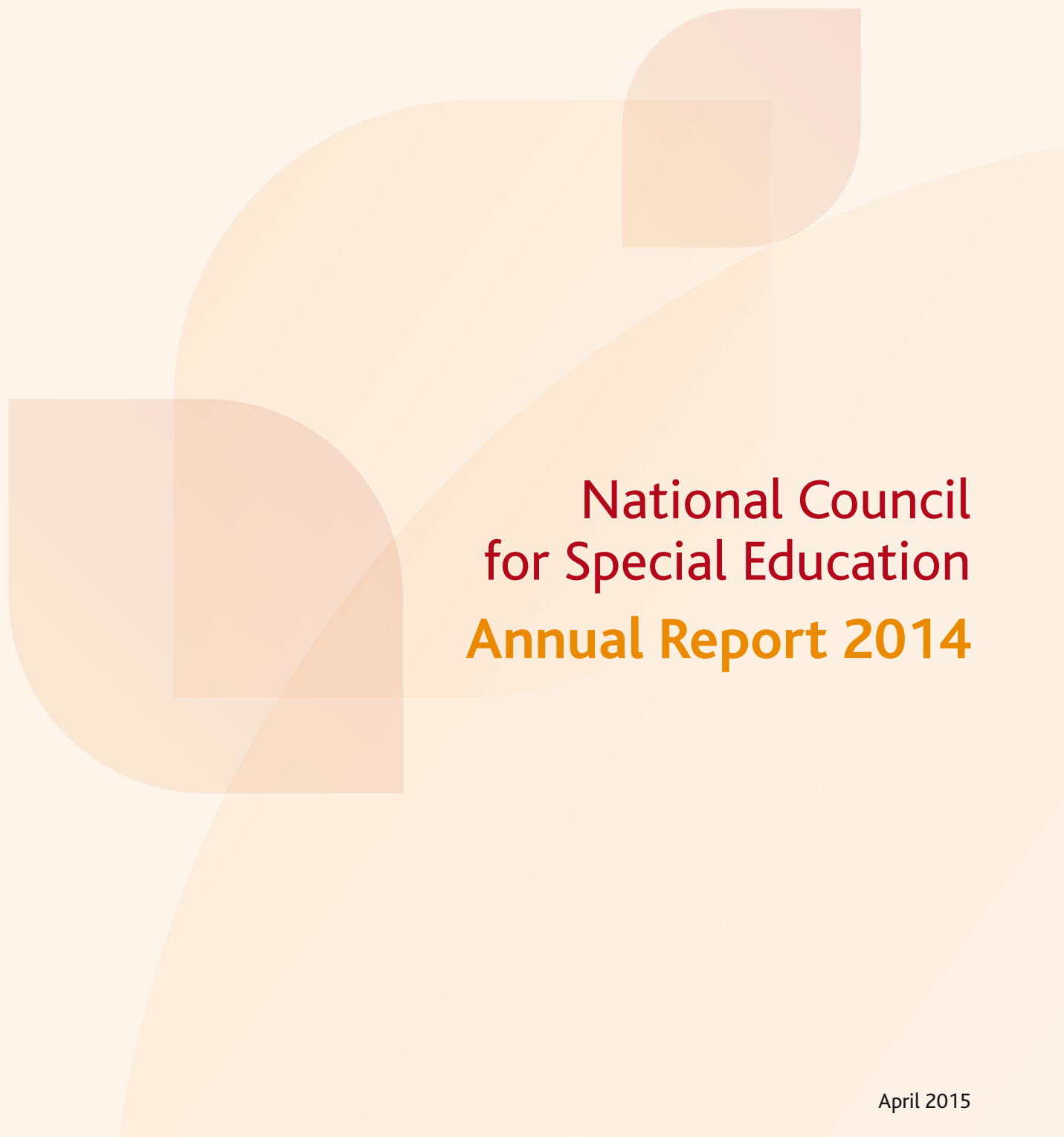


National Council for Special Education

Annual Report 2014





National Council for Special Education **Annual Report 2014**

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National Council for Special Education

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Oideachas Speisialta**

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Table of Contents

NCSE Chairperson's Letter to the Minister	3
Our Strategies	5
Main Achievements	9
Strategic Priority 1: Plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs	13
Strategic Priority 2: Provide evidence-informed policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills concerning the education of children with special educational needs	21
Strategic Priority 3: Conduct and deliver a research programme to underpin the dissemination of information relating to best practice in special education to schools, parents and the education sector	27
Strategic Priority 4: Review further and higher educational provision for adults with special educational needs and develop best practice guidelines	37
Strategic Priority 5: Ensure that the NCSE continues to develop as an effective organisation which is compliant with all statutory, regulatory and corporate governance requirements as well as having effective information dissemination, communication and media strategies in place	41
Governance	45

Appendices (1-5)

1. Confirmations of Compliance with Requirements of the Code of Governance for State Bodies	55
2. NCSE Staffing	57
3. Statistical Information for the School Year 2013-14	58
4. Description of Disability Categories	60
5. Glossary of Main Acronyms Used	63

NCSE Chairperson's Letter to the Minister

April, 2015

Ms Jan O'Sullivan, TD
Minister for Education and Skills
Department of Education and Skills
Marlborough Street
Dublin 1

Dear Minister

I am writing to provide you with a copy of the NCSE's annual report for 2014 as required by Section 34 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004.

I also wish to report to you as required under paragraph 13.1 of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies as follows:

- ▶ The NCSE is not a commercial State body. We have no subsidiaries, joint ventures or shareholdings. No commercially significant developments affected the NCSE in 2014 and we do not anticipate any such developments.
- ▶ The financial position of the NCSE is as disclosed in our 2014 annual accounts which are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General. These accounts, when audited, are submitted separately to you under Section 29 of the EPSEN Act and will include, as required, my report and confirmations to you regarding the NCSE System of Internal Financial Controls (SIFC).
- ▶ The NCSE has adopted, and is in compliance with, the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.
- ▶ In this context, I confirm that:
 - ▼ All appropriate procedures for financial reporting, internal audit, travel, procurement and asset disposals are being carried out.
 - ▼ NCSE members comply with the NCSE Code of Business Conduct for Members.
 - ▼ NCSE employees comply with the Code of Behaviour for Civil Servants.
 - ▼ Salaries payable to the chief executive and all employees comply with Government policy.
 - ▼ No directors' fees are payable to NCSE council members.
 - ▼ The NCSE complies with the guidelines for the appraisal and management of capital expenditure proposals.
 - ▼ The NCSE complies with Government travel policy requirements.
 - ▼ The NCSE expects no significant post-balance sheet events.

The year 2014 was an important and eventful one in our work in special education. Our annual report highlights key points and achievements during 2014.

A highlight was the publication of the NCSE Working Group Report to you proposing a new model for allocating teaching resources for students with special educational needs. We are confident that the proposed new model is a better and more equitable way of delivering teaching supports for students. When implemented, it will give schools a greater capacity to support students with special educational needs and help them to achieve their potential.

We have continued our research programme which is critical in informing us and others on new developments in special education both in Ireland and internationally. We disseminate our research findings in various ways including our annual research conference and I would like to thank you for taking the time to attend our conference in November 2014 and for delivering the opening address.

Through our local staff – Special Educational Needs Organisers – we have continued to engage with schools, parents and others, including relevant professionals, in allocating resources in line with established policy to support the provision of services by schools for students with special educational needs.

We recognise the need for information and the central role of parents in making choices about the educational options that meet their children's needs. In 2014, we published seven new information pamphlets for parents; we also initiated a programme of information sessions for parents of young children with special educational needs; and in addition we developed, published and disseminated an information booklet on the post-school options for adults and school leavers with disabilities.

The Council met with you in December 2014. We found this engagement very positive and helpful for us in our work and we look forward to continuing to work closely with you and with your Department.

As you will be aware, one of our members, Mick Coughlan, passed away during the year. Council was saddened by Mick's passing and I would like to acknowledge his significant contribution as a Council member since 2010.

NCSE will be happy to provide any further clarification required if you or your Department need any further information about our activities in 2014.

Yours sincerely

Eamon Stack
Chairperson
National Council for Special Education

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Our Strategies

Our Strategies

NCSE Strategic Approach

Our mission is to promote a continuum of educational provision which is inclusive and responsive and which provides an appropriate education for children and adults with special educational needs. We do this by allocating supports to schools; by providing advice and information; by undertaking and disseminating research into special education; and by providing policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills on special education issues.

Our functions, set out in Section 20 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004, include:

- ▶ Planning for, and co-ordinating provision of, education for children with special educational needs and ensuring that a continuum of provision is available.
- ▶ Conducting and commissioning research.
- ▶ Advising the Minister for Education and Skills on policy for special education.
- ▶ Disseminating information, including best practice, on special education to parents, schools and other interested persons.
- ▶ Consulting voluntary bodies to ensure their knowledge and expertise inform the development of NCSE policy.
- ▶ 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 the education of adults with a disability.

The Council has set down five strategic objectives for delivery of our statutory functions. We outline the progress made under each of these objectives in this report.

Table 1: NCSE Strategic Objectives

▶ Strategic Objective 1: Plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs.
▶ Strategic Objective 2: Provide evidence-informed policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills concerning the education of children with special educational needs.
▶ Strategic Objective 3: Conduct and deliver a research programme to underpin the dissemination of information relating to best practice in special education to schools, parents and the education sector.
▶ Strategic Objective 4: Review further and higher educational provision for adults with special educational needs and develop best practice guidelines.
▶ Strategic Objective 5: Ensure that the NCSE continues to develop as an effective organisation which is compliant with all statutory, regulatory and corporate governance requirements as well as having effective information dissemination, communication and media strategies in place.

The image features a light beige background. In the upper left, there is a large, rounded orange shape. Below and to the right of this is a larger, rounded red shape. A thin red line extends from the bottom right corner of the red shape towards the bottom right edge of the frame. The text 'Main Achievements' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font, positioned within the orange shape.

Main Achievements

Main Achievements

Providing Support for Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

In the 2013-14 school year, the NCSE:

- ▶ Enabled over 45,700 students with special educational needs to receive additional teaching in mainstream schools.
- ▶ Enabled over 24,000 students with special educational needs who also have significant care needs to access special needs assistant (SNA) support.
- ▶ Processed over 16,000 new applications from primary and post primary schools for students with special educational needs for additional teaching hours.
- ▶ Processed over 8,800 new applications from schools for students with special educational needs for access to SNA support.
- ▶ Processed over 2,700 new applications for school transport for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Processed over 3,000 new applications for assistive technology/special equipment for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Had established a total of 737 special classes in mainstream schools with places available for almost 5,000 students.

Providing Information for Parents

In 2014, the NCSE:

- ▶ Published seven information pamphlets for parents to explain how the education system supports students with different types of disabilities:
 - ▼ Specific Learning Disabilities;
 - ▼ Specific Speech and Language Disorders;
 - ▼ Autism Spectrum Disorder;
 - ▼ Emotional and/or Behavioural Difficulties or Disorders;
 - ▼ General Learning Disabilities;
 - ▼ Physical Disability;
 - ▼ Blind/Visual Impairment.
- ▶ Started a new programme of locally delivered information sessions for parents of children with special educational needs.

Policy Advice

In 2014, the NCSE:

- ▶ Published the report of the NCSE working group on a new model for allocating teaching resources to schools for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Carried out extensive consultations with the education partners on educational provision for students with autism spectrum disorder as part of the process of preparing policy advice for the Minister.

Research

In 2014, the NCSE:

- ▶ Published four new research reports entitled as follows:
 - ▼ Understanding Special Class Provision in Ireland.
 - ▼ Educational Experiences and Outcomes for Children with Special Educational Needs: A Secondary Analysis of Data from the Growing Up in Ireland Study.
 - ▼ Review of NCSE Resource Allocation Process and Evaluation of Deployment of Resources in Schools.
 - ▼ A Report on the Database of Research and Policy Related Publications in the Field of Special Education.
- ▶ Continued our work on six other research projects.
- ▶ Provided research based background and analysis to support NCSE policy review.
- ▶ Disseminated key research findings at our sixth annual research conference.

Post School Education and Training

In 2014, the NCSE:

- ▶ Published and disseminated an information booklet on post school education and training options for adults and school leavers with disabilities.

Corporate Functions

In 2014, the NCSE:

- ▶ Continued to maintain and develop our capacity as an effective organisation.
- ▶ Ensured all essential NCSE services and functions continued to be delivered on a nationwide basis within our reduced budgetary and staffing limits.
- ▶ Transferred our transactional human resources, payroll and pension services to the new civil service shared service centre.



Strategic Priority 1

Plan and co-ordinate
the provision of education
and support services to
children with special
educational needs

Strategic Priority 1

Plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs

Introduction

The NCSE plans, co-ordinates and reviews provision of additional education supports for schools that enrol students with special educational needs, in line with Department of Education and Skills policy. Over 4,000 schools are supported by 80 locally based SENO staff who plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services in their local areas. Since 2005, schools have applied to their SENO for resource teaching support, SNA support, assistive technology/specialist equipment or for non-standard school transport arrangements.

Section 2 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN), Act 2004 provides that children with such needs will be educated in an inclusive environment unless the nature or degree of those needs are such that to do so would be inconsistent with the best interests of the child or the children with whom the child is to be educated. Consistent with this provision, most students with special educational needs in schools are now educated in mainstream classes.

Students with special educational needs are served by a continuum of provision ranging from full-time enrolment in mainstream classes to full-time enrolment in special schools. This range of placement options includes:

- ▶ **A mainstream class**, where the student with special educational needs may receive additional support from the class teacher through differentiation of the curriculum and/or additional teaching support provided by a learning support/resource teacher.
- ▶ **A special class in a mainstream school** with six to 11 students in each special class, depending on the particular special educational need.
- ▶ **A special school** for students with more complex special educational needs with classes ranging from six to 11 students, depending on the particular special educational need.

Resourcing Schools in the 2013-14 School Year¹

Applications for Additional Supports

In the 2013-14 school year, SENOs processed over 30,000 applications for additional supports for students with special educational needs. A breakdown of this activity across the schemes is given in table 1 under.

Table 1: Number of Applications Processed in School Year 2013/14

Scheme	No of Applications
Resource teacher	Over 16,000
SNA	Over 8,800
School transport	Over 2,700
Assistive technology/specialist equipment	Over 3,000

Mainstream Classes

The NCSE allocated 5,721 resource teachers to mainstream schools to provide additional teaching capacity to schools for students with special educational needs. In the 2013-14 school year, the overall number of students accessing resource teaching supports rose to over 45,700. This compares with 42,000 students in the 2012-13 school year.

4,997 places
available in
737 special
classes in
mainstream
schools

Special Classes

SENOs sanctioned the establishment of 118 new special classes in the school year 2013-14 which provided an additional 746 student places. At the end of June 2014, special classes in mainstream schools totalled 737 with 4,997 places available.

Special Schools

In the 2012-13 school year, there were approximately 7,300 students enrolled in special schools. In the 2013-14 school year, overall numbers enrolled in special schools rose to 7,500.

SNA Supports

By the end of the 2013-14 school year, about 24,000 students were granted access to SNA support. The number of SNA posts allocated to primary, post primary and special schools was 10,671.

¹ The 2013-14 school year is from September 2013 to June 2014.

Resourcing Schools in the 2014-15 School Year²

For the 2014-15 school year, the number of resource teaching posts available for allocation was increased by 480 to 6,225 and the number of SNA Posts was increased by 365 to 11,110. Full details of school-by-school allocations are published on the NCSE website www.ncse.ie.

The number of additional resource teachers and SNAs allocated to schools at end of December 2014 is set out in table 2 below. A full outline of resources allocated for the 2014-15 school year will be available in the 2015 Annual Report.

An additional 480 resource teaching posts made available in 2014

An additional 365 SNA posts made available in 2014

Table 2: Number of Resource Teaching and SNA Posts in Schools

	End 2013-14 school year	End December 2014
Resource Teacher Posts	5,721	6,204
SNA Posts	10,671	11,078

Resource Allocation Appeals Process

In 2014, the NCSE processed over 24,000 applications from schools for resource teaching and SNA support for the 2014-15 school year. NCSE operates an appeals process for the decisions on these applications. Schools are advised of the NCSE appeals process, details of which are on our website www.ncse.ie.

42 per cent reduction in the number of appeals submitted as compared to 2013

Through our local SENOs, the NCSE explains its resource allocation decisions. By end December 2014, 96 appeals were received for the 2014-15 resource allocation decisions. This is a reduction of 42 per cent over the equivalent 2013 figure.

Details of the appeals process for 2014 are set out in table 3 below.

² The 2014-15 school year is from September 2014 to June 2015

Table 3: Analysis of appeals – received by December 2014

Analysis of appeals – received by December 2014	
Total number of appeals received	96
Appeals received from parents	17
Appeals received from schools	79
Appeals received on SNA allocations	61
Appeals received on resource teaching hours	35
Appeals withdrawn	28
Appeals upheld	7
Appeals not upheld	61

Information for Parents

NCSE provides advice and information for parents. Parents, and particularly those whose children have special educational needs, are key decision makers in the education of their children. We recognise therefore that they require information and advice about the educational services and options available.

Information Pamphlets

In 2014, the NCSE published seven new information leaflets for parents/guardians of children and young people with special educational needs to explain how the education system supports these students. The NCSE information leaflets cover the following areas of special educational needs:

- ▶ Specific Learning Disabilities;
- ▶ Specific Speech and Language Disorders;
- ▶ Autism Spectrum Disorder;
- ▶ Emotional and/or Behavioural Difficulties or Disorders;
- ▶ General Learning Disabilities;
- ▶ Physical Disability;
- ▶ Blind/Visual Impairment; and
- ▶ Deaf and Hard of Hearing (first published in 2013).

More information provided for parents of children or young people with special educational needs

An additional information pamphlet on the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) scheme will follow in early 2015.



All these information leaflets are available on www.ncse.ie or from our local special educational needs organisers (SENOs).

Information Sessions for Parents

In 2014, we started hosting local nationwide information sessions for parents and guardians of children with special educational needs. These are delivered by SENOs and inform parents on locally available educational services and supports and how to access them. While SENOs regularly meet parents as part of their work, this new programme has brought a more structured approach to delivering information in response to parent needs.

In the last quarter of 2014, fifty-one sessions took place around the country with over 900 parents attending. These sessions targeted parents of pre-schoolers starting school in September 2015. The events gave opportunity to meet SENOs and ask questions about how the educational system could support their child in school. The roles of school staff were outlined and the various schemes for accessing other supports such as special classes, school transport or assistive technology explained. Parents received information leaflets, booklets and hand-outs. They were asked for their feedback on the sessions and this has been positive.

Over 900 parents attended 51 information sessions around the country



Strategic Priority 2

Provide evidence-informed policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills concerning the education of children with special educational needs

Strategic Priority 2

Provide evidence-informed policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills concerning the education of children with special educational needs

NCSE Role

The NCSE provides the Minister for Education and Skills with expert, independent, evidence-informed policy advice on special education for children and young adults.

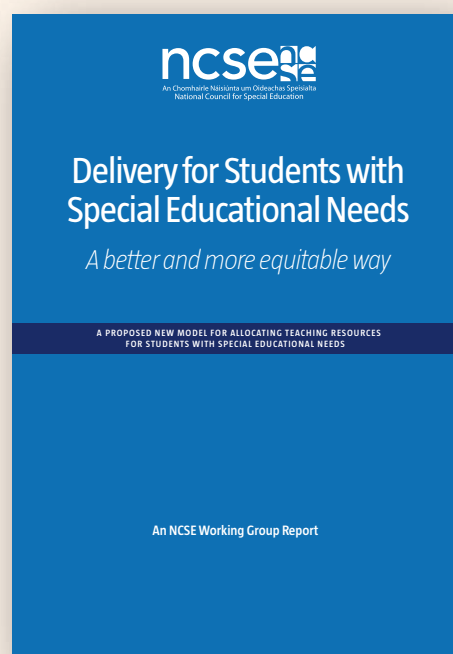
In 2014, NCSE

- ▶ Published the report of the NCSE working group on a new model for allocating teaching resources for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Carried out extensive consultations with the education partners on educational provision for students with autism spectrum disorder as part of the process of preparing policy advice for the Minister.
- ▶ Participated in international work with the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE).

NCSE Working Group Report

Delivery for Students with Special Educational Needs: A better and more equitable way

In June 2014, an NCSE Working Group published a proposed new model for allocating additional teaching supports to schools, for students with special educational needs



Following presentation and publication in May 2013 of our policy advice on supporting students with special educational needs in schools³, the Minister requested the NCSE to set up a working group to develop a proposal for a better way to allocate additional teaching resources for students with special educational needs. The agreed term of reference for the working group was to:

'...Develop a proposal for a model for allocating teaching resources to mainstream primary and post primary schools that is reflective of recommendations in NCSE policy advice and takes account of factors that identify the educational profiles of schools and the recording of outcomes for students with special educational needs'

The NCSE Working Group concluded its deliberations and on June 18, 2014 published proposals to the Minister for Education and Skills for a new model for allocating additional teaching supports for students with special educational needs.

The working group, chaired by Eamon Stack, chairperson, NCSE, recommended that the following factors should determine the level of additional teaching support allocated to schools:

- ▶ The number of enrolled students with very complex special educational needs.
- ▶ The overall levels of educational achievement.
- ▶ The school's socio-economic context.

Members of the NCSE Working Group with Teresa Griffin, CEO, NCSE



Back row left to right: Don Mahon, Pat Kinsella, Anne English, Brian Mac Giolla Phádraig, Maureen Costello, James O'Grady, Peter Archer and Mary Byrne. **Front row left to right:** Áine Lynch, Eithne Fitzgerald, Teresa Griffin (CEO), Eamon Stack (chairperson), Katherine O'Leary and Antoinette Nic Gearailt.

³ NCSE Policy Advice Paper No 4: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Schools (2013)

Educational Provision for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

The Minister for Education and Skills asked the NCSE to prepare policy advice on educational provision for students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). In developing its policy advice, the NCSE has:

- ▶ Engaged in a widespread consultation process with the education partners, including parents, teachers and other experts in the education of students with ASD.
- ▶ Examined findings from national and international research studies and international guidelines and other policy documentation on educating students with ASD.
- ▶ Commissioned our own systematic literature review on educating people with ASD and an evaluation of educational provision for students with ASD in this country.
- ▶ Visited mainstream classes, special classes and special schools to see at first hand the educational experiences of students with ASD.

The policy advice is expected to be submitted to the Department of Education and Skills in 2015.

NCSE is developing policy advice on educational provision for students with ASD

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE)

EASNIE is an independent international organisation enabling collaboration in special needs and inclusive education by its member countries. It aims to improve educational policy and practice for learners with special educational needs. During 2014, the NCSE participated in two bi-annual meetings, one in May in Oslo during which the Norwegian Ministry for Education and Research provided a study visit to the Norwegian Education Support System; and the other in November in Berlin, during which the German hosts organised an additional seminar on inclusive education.

NCSE participates in European work to develop special and inclusive education



Strategic Priority 3

Conduct and deliver a research programme to underpin the dissemination of information relating to best practice in special education to schools, parents and the education sector

Strategic Priority 3

Conduct and deliver a research programme to underpin the dissemination of information relating to best practice in special education to schools, parents and the education sector

Introduction

The NCSE commissions research on a variety of special education themes. It examines and analyses national practice and provision and also looks to the international scene to ensure we are up to date in the latest research evidence available.

In 2014, we published four new research reports, commissioned a new project while work continued on six on-going pieces of research. In addition, our sixth annual research conference was the best attended to date with over 250 stakeholders present.



Minister for Education and Skills, Jan O'Sullivan, and NCSE research committee chairperson, Professor Sheelagh Drudy at the NCSE Research Conference on November 19.

Our research informs parents, educational and other professionals, disability and advocacy groups, policymakers and academia about the latest themes and trends emerging in special education. It also provides a sound evidence base to inform our policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills. Our research programme will continue to focus on developing knowledge and information and to provide a basis for evidence-informed policymaking.

NCSE Research Reports Published in 2014

The NCSE published four research reports in 2014 and all are now available on our website www.ncse.ie.

- ▶ **Understanding Special Class Provision in Ireland**
- ▶ **Educational Experiences and Outcomes for Children with Special Educational Needs: A Secondary Analysis of Data from the Growing Up in Ireland Study**
- ▶ **Review of NCSE Resource Allocation Process and Evaluation of Deployment of Resources in Schools**
- ▶ **A Report on the Database of Research and Policy Related Publications in the Field of Special Education**

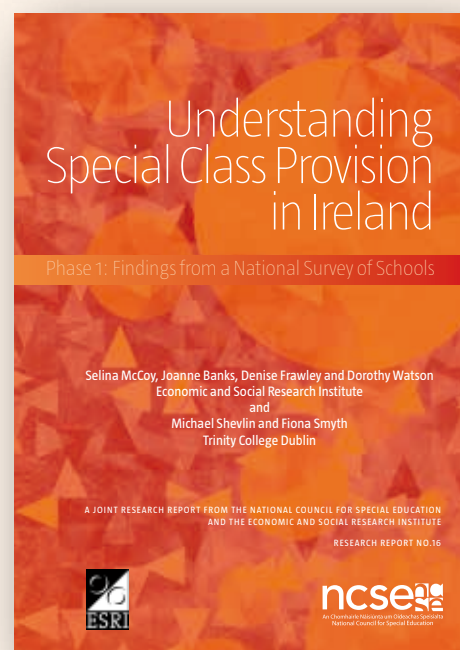
Understanding Special Class Provision in Ireland

Authors: Selina McCoy, Joanne Banks, Denise Frawley, Dorothy Watson, Michael Shevlin and Fiona Smyth

The research was undertaken for the NCSE by the ESRI and Trinity College Dublin. It reported the findings from a national survey of special classes in Irish schools, which showed that significantly more special classes are opening each year compared to two decades ago.

While this trend is seen at primary and post primary, the growth in provision has been more marked in the latter. In the 1990s, primary schools were opening eight special classes per year compared to 25-28 classes per year from 2009-11. At post primary level, two classes per year were opening in the 1990s compared to 50-67 classes during 2009-11.

The survey also showed that classes specifically for students with autism are now the dominant form of special class provision at primary level; with 60 per cent of special classes at this level catering for these students. 14 per cent of primary special classes were for students with mild general learning disabilities and 11 per cent for students with specific speech and language disorders. At post primary the picture was different; with 22 per cent of classes for students with mild general learning disabilities, 19 per cent for those with autism and 19 per cent of classes with no specific designation, but responding to a variety of educational needs.



A marked difference was noted between primary and post primary schools in how these classes were established. At primary, most are established formally by the NCSE or by the DES. Whereas at post primary, more than half were established informally by schools through the pooling of resource teaching hours allocated for individual students. The findings also show that students in special classes tend to spend most, if not all, of the week together in their own class setting and to remain together across school years.

These findings are from phase 1 of this study. Phase 2 is taking a more in-depth look at a number of special classes in 12 case study schools; the findings from this phase will be published in 2015.

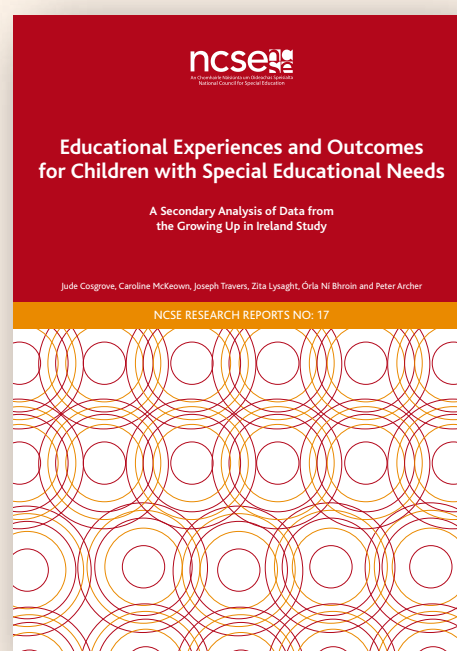
Educational Experiences and Outcomes for Children with Special Educational Needs: A Secondary Analysis of Data from the Growing Up in Ireland Study

Authors: Jude Cosgrove, Caroline McKeown, Joseph Travers, Zita Lysaght, Órla Ní Bhroin and Peter Archer

This report on the educational experiences of and outcomes for children with special educational needs drew on data from a nationally representative sample of nine-year old children collected as part of the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) study. The analysis was conducted by a team from the Educational Research Centre and St Patrick's College, Dublin.

The analysis identifies children with special educational needs/learning difficulties within the GUI cohort and examines how these children are faring on a range of fronts including reading and maths test results, well-being, independence, bullying, attendance and liking school, relative to children without special educational needs. It also examines and compares experiences and outcomes across groups of children with different types of needs.

The analysis found parents/teachers had identified just under 28 per cent of children as having special educational needs or learning difficulties. Generally, they achieved lower scores in reading and mathematics than those without special educational needs. However, achievement scores varied widely across the 12 SEN groups identified in the study. For example, children with a physical or sensory disability and with autistic spectrum disorders had mean reading scores not significantly different from those of children without special needs. In contrast, children with social emotional behavioural difficulties (SEBD) with a general learning disability, or who had dyslexia together with social emotional and behavioural difficulties had considerably lower mean scores than children without special needs.



On average, children with special educational needs liked school less than those without. Overall attendance rates were also lower among children with special educational needs compared to children without. Low attendance was particularly marked among those with dyslexia and with social emotional or behavioural difficulty.

The second wave of the data on children at age 13, has just become available and in 2014, the NCSE commissioned a further investigation to examine how outcomes for these children have changed or progressed since age nine.



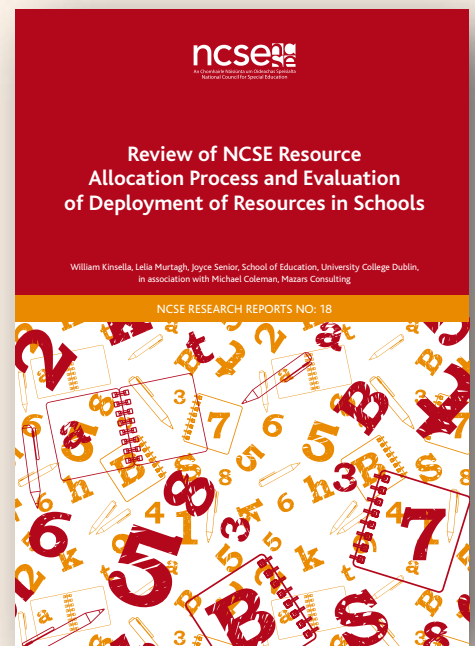
L to R: Caroline Mc Keown, Educational Research Centre; Jude Cosgrove, Educational Research Centre; Joseph Travers, St. Patricks College, Drumcondra at the NCSE Research Conference.

Review of NCSE Resource Allocation Process and Evaluation of Deployment of Resources in Schools

Authors: William Kinsella, Lelia Murtagh, Joyce Senior and Michael Coleman

This research looked at the system of allocating additional resources for students with special educational needs and considered if the system was perceived to be working effectively and efficiently. It also looked at how schools utilised these additional resources.

During 2010 and 2011, twelve in-depth case studies were conducted in mainstream and special schools and engaged with principals, class and SEN teachers, SNAs, students receiving the additional support and their parents. The schools' educational psychologists and SENOs were also interviewed. In addition, the research involved a survey of a stratified representative sample of schools.



Schools perceived the resource allocation system to be efficient in terms of the timely decisions made on applications. Schools also noted that the process had improved since the establishment of the NCSE and the appointment of SENOs. Difficulties in getting access to assessments in order to receive support, however were identified by parents and schools. Access often depended on the parent's or school's ability to pay for private assessments.

Variation in how schools used the resources they received was considerable. But, there was little evidence of any systematic recording of student progress to establish if the additional support was effective. Some principals strongly advocated the need for more formal monitoring of the deployment of additional resources to ensure interventions are achieving the desired outcomes.



An Inventory of Research and Policy Related Publications in the Field of Special Education on the Island of Ireland since 2000:

Report on Updating of Database from 2009-2013

Joseph Travers and Rosie Savage, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra



A report commissioned by the NCSE 2014

The National Council for Special Education has funded this research. Responsibility for the research (including any errors or omissions) remains with the authors. The views and opinions contained in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the Council.

NCSE Database of Research and Policy Related Publications in the Field of Special Education

Authors: Joseph Travers and Rosie Savage

In 2014, we published an updated database of references to publications in the field of special education on the island of Ireland since January 2000. The database now contains almost 3,200 references, nearly double the number contained in the first edition of the database published in 2009.

The database provides a valuable online searchable resource for the NCSE, researchers, practitioners, policy makers, students and others working in the field of special education. It aims to provide for a more efficient use of

research resources as it helps to highlight the evidence base on which to build and the gaps in the special education research knowledge base in Ireland.

The report published alongside the database provides an overview of how the data base was updated, the range of publications found and the additional themes these publications bring to the entries already included in the database.

Want to know what's new in special education research in Ireland since 2000?

Check out our database on Research and Policy Publications in Special Education in Ireland. We updated it in 2014 and it now contains almost 3,200 references!

Other Research Work in 2014

Six other commissioned research projects continued or were under review in 2014. These were:

- ▶ Assistive Technology Supporting the Education of Children with Special Educational Needs – What works best?
- ▶ Educating Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders – A Systematic Literature Review.
- ▶ An Evaluation of Educational Provision for Students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders in the Republic of Ireland.
- ▶ Inclusive Research in Irish Schools (Project IRIS).
- ▶ The Special Class Model in Ireland: How Is It Working for Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools? [Phase 2]
- ▶ A Study of the Experiences of Students with Special Educational Needs at Post Primary School.

During 2014 the NCSE research unit continued to provide research support to the development of NCSE policy advice including:

- ▶ A background paper for the NCSE working group on a new model for allocating teaching supports, drawing on international research and current practice in a number of countries.
- ▶ A paper providing an overview of current research in ASD to support the development of policy advice to the Minister in 2015.

NCSE Annual Research Conference

We held our biggest ever annual research conference on November 19, 2014 at Croke Park Conference Centre with over 250 key stakeholders in attendance. These included those involved in teacher education and support, principals and teachers, researchers, parents, educational psychologists, disability advocacy groups, departmental officials, access officers and teacher union representatives, among others.



Teresa Griffin, NCSE CEO, and Eamon Stack, NCSE chairperson with the Minister for Education and Skills, Jan O'Sullivan at the NCSE Research Conference on November 19.

We hosted our biggest ever research conference in 2014 – over 250 attended. We recorded the conference this year, so you can find out exactly what our presenters had to say on our website.

Jan O’Sullivan, Minister for Education and Skills, opened the event. The conference had three themes for each of its sessions – autistic spectrum disorders, educational experiences and outcomes and school-wide positive mental health.

The event featured a presentation from a guest speaker from the US on ASD, presentations on NCSE commissioned research on ASD and educational experiences and outcomes; and presentations from research conducted by other agencies on whole-school positive mental health programmes. The day concluded with a lively set of reflections from a panel of teachers and principals on their experiences of implementing mental health programmes.

All conference presentations from 2014 – and from all of the previous NCSE research conferences – are available to download from the NCSE website.

Some of the presenters at the NCSE Research Conference



Back Row L to R: Caroline Bond, University of Manchester; Wendy Symes, Edge Hill University; Joseph Travers, St. Patricks College, Drumcondra; Sam Odom, University of North Carolina. **Middle Row L to R:** Patricia Daly, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick; Michael Shevlin, Trinity College, Dublin; Richard Rose, University of Northampton. **Front Row:** Emer Ring, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick.



Strategic Priority 4

Review further and
higher educational
provision for adults
with special educational
needs and develop best
practice guidelines

Strategic Priority 4

Review further and higher educational provision for adults with special educational needs and develop best practice guidelines

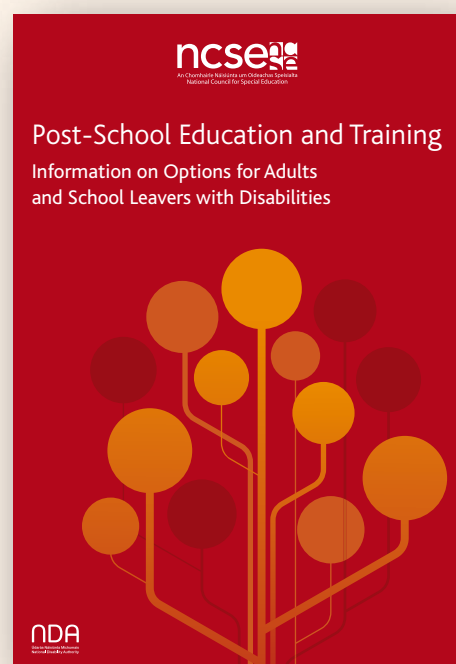
During 2014, we published an information booklet on post school education and training options for adults and school leavers with disabilities.

Access to accurate and relevant information is essential for people considering further and higher education or training options and pathways. Students need this information as they begin to prepare for transition from school to further and higher education and training. Similarly, adults also need it when deciding to return at a later stage to education or training.

Sometimes people with a disability may have difficulty getting clear information and advice on the options and pathways available and appropriate for them and about the supports available for their particular needs.

NCSE in co-operation with the National Disability Authority developed and published an information booklet to summarise the main national programmes and supports in education and training available for adults with disabilities. It also indicates how to access further information and guidance on the relevant education and training services in:

- ▶ further education;
- ▶ vocational training;
- ▶ higher education;
- ▶ rehabilitative training;
- ▶ adult day services.



Information
available on
choices once
you leave school

Strategic Priority 5

Ensure that the NCSE continues to develop as an effective organisation which is compliant with all statutory, regulatory and corporate governance requirements as well as having effective information dissemination, communication and media strategies in place

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Ensure that the NCSE continues to develop as an effective organisation which is compliant with all statutory, regulatory and corporate governance requirements as well as having effective information dissemination, communication and media strategies in place

Introduction

In 2014 we continued to maintain and develop our capacity as an effective organisation in compliance with all our statutory, regulatory and other requirements.

Meeting with the Minister

In December 2014, the Council met the Minister for Education and Skills, Jan O'Sullivan. The Minister and the Council discussed priority topics and themes related to the role of the NCSE and the provision of special education services.



Minister for Education and Skills, Jan O'Sullivan with Eamon Stack, chairperson, NCSE.

Council Self-Evaluation

During 2014, the Council conducted a self-evaluation of its own performance. The review focused on improving preparation for meetings, induction and ongoing training of members, facilitation of quality interaction at Council meetings, communications with the executive and stakeholders, objective setting and performance monitoring.

Performance Delivery Agreement

The NCSE and the Department of Education and Skills have a Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA) which covered 2012-14. Monitoring of progress under the agreed targets in the PDA takes place through quarterly reporting and meetings at official level. Arrangements for an annual evaluation of performance under the PDA were agreed in 2014 and will be implemented in 2015. Discussions are underway with a view to agreeing a PDA for the period 2015-16.

Shared Services

NCSE transactional human resources, payroll and pensions functions are now delivered through the civil service shared service.

Annual Accounts

The NCSE annual accounts are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General and following audit they are submitted to the Minister and then published on the NCSE website at www.ncse.ie.

Confirmations of Compliance with Requirements of the Code of Governance for State Bodies

NCSE has adopted the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and our confirmations of compliance with all requirements of the code are included in Appendix 1 and in the chairperson's cover letter with this report.

An abstract graphic design on a light beige background. It features a large, dark red shape with a rounded top-left corner and a thin line extending from its bottom-right corner towards the bottom right. Overlapping the top-left of this red shape is a smaller, solid orange shape with a rounded top-left corner. The word "Governance" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font within the orange shape.

Governance

Governance

The Council of the NCSE

The NCSE governance authority 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 2013 and expiring on December 31st 2015. The Council met seven times during 2014. Details of individual members and their attendances are given in the table following. Further details are published on our website.

Members of the NCSE Council with the Minister for Education & Skills



Back row left to right: Eithne Fitzgerald, Mary Friel, Sheelagh Drudy, Maureen Costello, Tom O'Sullivan, James O'Grady, Joan Russell.
Front row left to right: Pat Kinsella, Helen Guinan, Eamon Stack, Chairperson of the National Council for Special Education, Jan O'Sullivan, T.D., Minister for Education & Skills, Johnny Murphy, Philip O'Callaghan. Missing from photo Jenny Ennis.



Sadly, Mick Coughlan, principal psychologist of the National Learning Network, who had served as a member of the Council since 2010 contributing most significantly to our work, passed away during 2014 following a serious illness.

Membership of the Council of the NCSE during 2014		
Name	Details	Attendance
Eamon Stack, chairperson	Former chief inspector in the Department of Education and Skills (DES)	6
Pat Kinsella, deputy chairperson*	Former principal, Colaiste Choilm, Ballincollig, Co Cork.	6
Maureen Costello*	Director, National Educational Psychological Service	4
Mick Coughlan* ⁴	Principal clinical psychologist of the National Learning Network	–
Sheelagh Drudy	Emeritus Professor of Education at University College Dublin and former head of the UCD School of Education	6
Jenny Ennis	Mother-of-two sons with special educational needs. Former member of the board of management of Holy Child Community School	4
Eithne Fitzgerald	Head of policy and research at the National Disability Authority	7
Mary Friel	Recently retired as principal of the Margaret Aylward Community College, Whitehall, Dublin	6
Helen Guinan	Chairperson of the National Disability Authority. Recently retired as principal of St Paul's Special School, Montenotte, Cork	7
Johnny Murphy	Divisional inspector, Department of Education and Skills	6
Philip O'Callaghan	Policy adviser to the Minister for Health and post primary teacher	6
James O'Grady*	Former head of disability services in the Health Service Executive. Board member of the National Disability Authority	6
Tom O'Sullivan ⁵	Former assistant general secretary, INTO. Former principal of St. Senan's Boys National School, Limerick	2
Joan Russell*	Project officer for instructional practices with Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). Previously education officer with Cork Education and Training Board (CETB)	6

Those members whose names are denoted with an * are serving a second consecutive term on the Council

⁴ The late Mick Coughlan was unable, due to illness, to attend Council meetings during 2014.

⁵ Tom O'Sullivan was appointed by the Minister in October 2014.

Council Committees

The Council created five committees under Section 33 of the EPSSEN Act. They report to Council in accordance with their terms of reference and governance guidelines as determined by the Council. Council members each serve on one or more committees. In the case of the audit committee, the Council has appointed an external chairperson with relevant experience.

Audit (four meetings)	Attendance
John Fitzgerald, chairperson	4
Eithne Fitzgerald ⁶	1
Helen Guinan ⁷	3
Philip O'Callaghan	4
James O'Grady	4
Eamon Stack	4

CEO Performance (two meetings)	Attendance
Eamon Stack, chairperson	2
Pat Kinsella	2
Joan Russell	2

Finance (six meetings)	Attendance
Joan Russell, chairperson	6
Jenny Ennis	4
Mary Friel	4
Philip O'Callaghan	6

⁶ Eithne Fitzgerald resigned from the audit committee in March 2014

⁷ Helen Guinan replaced Eithne Fitzgerald on the audit committee in June 2014

Research (five meetings)	Attendance
Sheelagh Drudy, chairperson	5
Maureen Costello	4
Johnny Murphy	5
Tom O'Sullivan ⁸	1

Strategy and Policy (five meetings)	Attendance
James O'Grady, chairperson	5
Eithne Fitzgerald	5
Helen Guinan	5
Pat Kinsella	4

⁸ Tom O'Sullivan was appointed to the committee in October 2014

NCSE Consultative Forum

The consultative forum was established by the Council under Section 22 of EPSSEN. The Council appoints up to 17 members following a prescribed consultation process. In addition three members are appointed by the Minister. Members were appointed to the forum for a three-year term beginning in July 2013. There were three meetings in 2014. Membership of the body is listed below.

NCSE Consultative Forum (three meetings)		
Council-appointed members		Attendance
Seán Balfe	Primary school principal	2
Ann Bourke	Disability specialist, Health Service Executive	1
Seán Burke	Recently retired CEO, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board	1
Denis Burns	Director of postgraduate diploma in special education needs, University College Cork	3
Breda Corr	General secretary, National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education	3
Patricia Griffin	Education officer, Down Syndrome Ireland	3
Adam Harris	Works with voluntary bodies supporting people with autism	2
Miriam Hilliard	Senior special educational needs organiser	3
Ann Jackson	Principal of a special school and officer of Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education	2
Denise Kelly	Education officer, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment	1
Christy Lynch	Chairperson, National Federation of Voluntary Bodies. Chief executive officer, KARE	2
Teresa McDonnell	Chairperson of a support organisation for parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing children	3
Patrick McVicar	Former post primary principal and member of the Teaching Council	3
Deirbhile Nic Craith	Senior official, Irish National Teachers' Organisation	3
Julie O'Leary	Works with the COPE Foundation	2
Carmel O'Shea	Works with National Parents Council	3
Donie O'Shea	Senior policy advisor, National Disability Authority.	2

NCSE Consultative Forum (continued)		
Members appointed by Minister for Education and Skills		Attendance
Alan Sayles	Inspector, Department of Education and Skills	2
Eamon Clavin ⁹	Inspector, Department of Education and Skills	–
Michael Cullinane	Regional director, National Educational Psychological Service	1
Aisling Curley	Assistant principal, Special Education Section, Department of Education and Skills	2

⁹ Eamon Clavin was appointed by the Minister on September 23, 2014 to replace Alan Sayles who has retired

The image features a minimalist design on a light beige background. A large, dark red shape, resembling a stylized 'U' or a thick bracket, occupies the lower and middle portions of the frame. Overlapping the top-left corner of this red shape is a semi-circular area in a vibrant orange color. The word 'Appendices' is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font within this orange semi-circle.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Confirmations of Compliance with Requirements of the Code of Governance for State Bodies

NCSE System of Internal Financial Control (SIFC)

The Council is responsible for the NCSE system of internal control and for reviewing annually the effectiveness of the internal controls, including financial, operational, compliance controls and risk management. Confirmation of the review by the Council of the NCSE SIFC in 2014 is provided in the NCSE audited annual accounts which are published separately.

Tax and Regulatory Compliance

There have been no communications concerning non-compliance with requirements of regulatory or tax authorities regarding any matter. The NCSE is not aware of any actual or possible non-compliance with laws or regulations that could affect our financial statements.

NCSE Travel Policy

Government policy on business travel is being complied with in all respects. The NCSE has developed and maintains its travel policy and procedures in accordance with Government requirements. Details of payments to Council in 2014 for business travel claims will be included in the audited NCSE Financial Statement.

Procurement Policy

Government policy on public procurement is being applied in the NCSE.

The NCSE avails of shared service arrangements and central drawdown contracts including those procured by the National Procurement Service and ICT Government contracts where available.

Disposal of Assets

Disposal of assets by the NCSE fully complies with requirements set down by the Code of Practice.

Confidential Disclosures

The NCSE has agreed procedures whereby employees and members may, in confidence, raise concern about possible irregularities in financial reporting or other matters and will, where appropriate, ensure meaningful follow-up of any matters raised in this way.

Child Protection

The NCSE has developed procedures and guidelines for staff in dealing with child protection concerns that may arise from time to time. These guidelines are based on the Children First Guidance published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The NCSE guidelines are available on our website at www.ncse.ie.

Audit

The NCSE has established an internal audit function and has agreed an internal audit charter. Council has appointed an audit committee with agreed terms of reference including oversight of the internal audit function and review of the draft annual accounts.

Annual Energy Efficiency Reporting

In 2014, the NCSE commenced reporting the organisation's energy performance in 2013 and preceding four years directly to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland as required under EU regulations.

Overview of NCSE energy usage in 2013 (latest figures available)

172.69 MWh of electricity

240.14 MWh of fossil fuels

0.00 MWh of renewable fuels

Appendix 2

NCSE Staffing

Grade	Staff in post end 2014
Chief executive	1
Principal	4
Head of local services	1
Assistant principal	3
Senior special educational needs organiser	9
Special educational needs organiser (SENO)	67
Higher executive officer	5
Executive officer	3
Staff officer	1
Clerical officer	3
Total	97

Appendix 3

Statistical Information for the School Year 2013-14

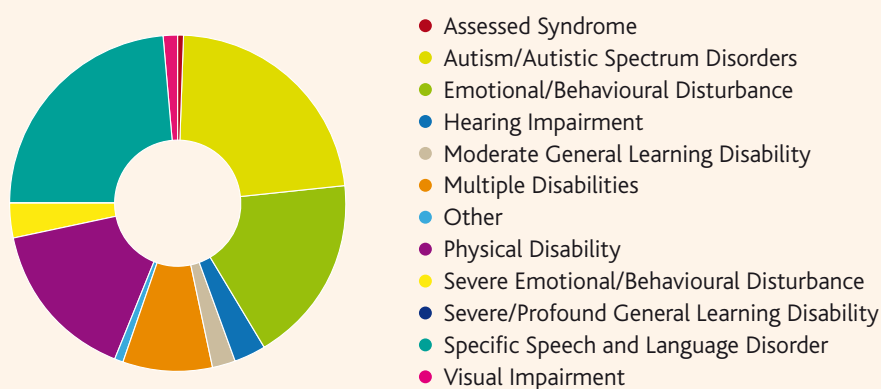
Students Accessing Resource Teaching by Category of Disability.

Over 45,700 students receive extra teaching from resource teachers in schools. 24,104 of these are in mainstream primary and 21,669 are post primary students.

Primary School

Disability Category	No of Students
Assessed syndrome	193
Autism/autistic spectrum disorders	5,455
Emotional/behavioural disturbance	4,357
Hearing impairment	746
Moderate general learning disability	558
Multiple disabilities	2,059
Other	185
Physical disability	3,778
Severe emotional/behavioural disturbance	776
Severe/profound general learning disability	24
Specific speech and language disorder	5,662
Visual impairment	311
Total	24,104

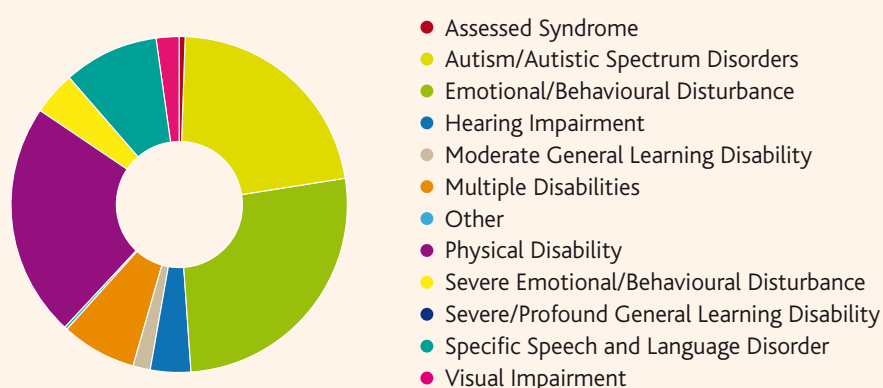
Primary Disability Category



Post Primary

Disability Category	No of Students
Assessed syndrome	68
Autism/autistic spectrum disorders	2,557
Emotional/behavioural disturbance	3,079
Hearing impairment	461
Moderate general learning disability	192
Multiple disabilities	839
Other	37
Physical disability	2,624
Severe emotional/behavioural disturbance	485
Severe/profound general learning disability	1
Specific speech and language disorder	1,089
Visual impairment	227
Students with a borderline or mild general learning disability or a specific learning disability (estimate)	10,010 ¹⁰
Total	21,669

Post-Primary Disability Category



¹⁰ This figure reflects the number of students with a high incidence disability in post-primary schools. In the 2012 NCSE annual report, the figures for the disability categories included a figure of 10,010 students in post-primary schools with a mild general learning disability, borderline mild general learning disability and specific learning disability. From 2012, some 700 resource teaching posts were pre-allocated to post-primary schools to support students with these learning disabilities and schools no longer made individual applications for these students.

Appendix 4

Description of Disability Categories

High Incidence disabilities	
Disability category	Description
Borderline mild general learning disability	Such pupils have been assessed by a psychologist as having a borderline mild general learning disability. The pupil's full scale IQ will have been assessed in the range of 70 to 79.
Mild general learning disability	Such pupils have been assessed by a psychologist as having a mild general learning disability. The pupil's full scale IQ will have been assessed in the range 50 to 69.
Specific learning disability	Such children have been assessed by a psychologist as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Being of average intelligence or higher. ▶ Having a degree of learning disability specific to basic skills in reading, writing or mathematics which places them at or below the second percentile on suitable, standardised, norm-referenced tests.
Low Incidence disabilities	
Disability category	Description
Autism/autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)	A psychiatrist or psychologist will have assessed and classified such pupils as having autism or autistic spectrum disorder according to DSM-IV or ICD-10 criteria. Note: In 2013, the DES also informed the NCSE that a diagnosis using DSM V would meet the criteria for the allocation of resources.
Emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems	Such pupils are being treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist for such conditions as neurosis, childhood psychosis, hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and conduct disorders that are significantly impairing their socialisation and/or learning in school.
Hearing impairment	Such pupils have a hearing disability that is so serious it impairs significantly their capacity to hear and understand human speech, thus preventing them from participating fully in classroom interaction and from benefiting adequately from school instruction. Most have been prescribed hearing aids and are availing of the services of a visiting teacher.

Low Incidence disabilities	
Disability category	Description
Moderate general learning disability	Such pupils have been assessed by a psychologist as having a moderate general learning disability. The pupil's full scale IQ will have been assessed in the range 35 to 49.
Multiple disabilities	Pupils assessed with multiple disabilities meet the criteria for two or more of the low incidence disabilities described.
Pupils with special educational needs arising from an assessed syndrome	Such pupils with an assessed syndrome, e.g. Down syndrome, William's syndrome and Tourette's syndrome in addition to any of the other low-incidence disabilities.
Physical disability	<p>Such pupils have permanent or protracted disabilities arising from such conditions as congenital deformities, spina bifida, dyspraxia, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, brittle bones or severe accidental injury. Because of the impairment of their physical function, they require special additional intervention and support if they are to have available to them a level and quality of education appropriate to their needs and abilities.</p> <p>Many require the use of a wheelchair, mobility or seating aid, or other technological support.</p> <p>They may suffer from a lack of muscular control and co-ordination and may have difficulties in communication, particularly in oral articulation, as for example severe dyspraxia.</p>
Severe and profound general learning disability	Such pupils have been assessed by a psychologist as having a severe or profound general learning disability. The pupil's full scale IQ will have been assessed as being below 35. In addition, such pupils may have physical disabilities.
Severe emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems	The criteria for severe EBD are that the pupil is in the care of a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist for a severe clinical disorder. A very small number of pupils would be expected to fall within this category.

Low Incidence disabilities	
Disability category	Description
Specific speech and language disorder	<p>Such pupils should meet each of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ non-verbal or performance ability that must be within the average range or above, that is, non-verbal or performance IQ of 90 or above. ▶ assessed by a speech and language therapist and found to be at two or more standard deviations (SD) below the mean, or at a generally equivalent level (– 2 SD or below, or below a standard score of 70) in one or more of the main areas of speech and language development. <p>Two assessments, a psychological assessment and a speech and language assessment are necessary.</p>
Visual impairment	<p>Such pupils have a visual disability which is so serious as to impair significantly their capacity to see, thus interfering with their capacity to perceive visually presented materials, such as pictures, diagrams and the written word. Some will have been diagnosed as suffering from such conditions as congenital blindness, cataracts, albinism and retinitis pigmentosa. Most require the use of low-vision aids and are availing of the services of a visiting teacher.</p>

Appendix 5

Glossary of Main Acronyms Used

ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
CETB	Cork Education and Training Board
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DSM	Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders
EASNIE	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
EBD	Emotional disturbance/behavioural disorder
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
EU	European Union
GUI	Growing Up in Ireland
ICD	International classification of diseases
ICT	Information and communications technology
IRIS	Inclusion Research in Irish Schools
IQ	Intelligence quotient
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
PDA	Performance delivery agreement
SEN	Special education need
SD	Standard deviation
SENO	Special educational needs organiser
SIFC	System of internal financial controls
SNA	Special needs assistant
UCD	University College Dublin

