

National Council for Special Education

Annual Report 2015





National Council for Special Education **Annual Report 2015**

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National Council for Special Education

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NCSE Chairperson's Letter to the Minister

June, 2016

Mr Richard Bruton, 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 2015 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 2015 and we do not anticipate any such developments.
- ▶ The financial position of the NCSE is as disclosed in our 2015 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.

We welcome the decision to establish the Inclusion Support Service (ISS) within NCSE. This important development is in line with the findings of our recent review and policy advice recommendations. The ISS, when operational, will extend the remit of the NCSE to include; the provision of continuing professional development in special education for teachers; the provision of behavioural support in schools; and the provision of the Visiting Teacher Service for children and young people who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing or who are Blind/Visually Impaired. Bringing these support services together will, over time, help to improve outcomes for students with special educational needs. NCSE has been engaged with your Department and the Support Services since 2015 in considering and planning the arrangements to implement this decision.

Following a comprehensive review and consultative process we finalised policy advice on education provision for students with autism. We were pleased to provide this advice to the previous Minister in September 2015.

We continued our Research Programme in 2015. We published a report on "Project IRIS – Inclusive Research in Irish Schools" a longitudinal study of the experience of, and outcomes for, students with special educational needs in Irish schools.

During 2015, we continued our work in allocating resources to primary and post-primary schools to support the provision of services by schools for students with special educational needs. We acknowledge the additional resources made available to meet needs in 2015 and appreciate the continuing priority given to these programmes within the overall exchequer demands and constraints.

The term of office of the members of the Council of NCSE was completed on 31st December 2015. Most of us have now served a three year term and some have completed second terms. As Council Chairperson, I would like to acknowledge the significant contribution of Council members in the work of NCSE and also their support and assistance to me in my role. I look forward to working with the members of Council when they are appointed.

The Council looks forward to engaging with you and will be happy to provide any further information and clarification required about our activities in 2015.

Yours sincerely

Eamon Stack
Chairperson
National Council for Special Education

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Introduction:

Our Strategic Approach

Introduction:

Our Strategic Approach

Our aim is promote a continuum of educational provision which is

- ▶ inclusive and responsive and
- ▶ 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.

We have set down our five strategic objectives for the delivery of these functions (see table NCSE Strategic Objectives). We outline in this report, the progress under each of these objectives, which we have made in 2015.

Table: 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. The text 'Main Achievements' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font, positioned within the orange shape. A thin red line extends from the bottom right corner of the red shape towards the bottom right edge of the frame.

Main Achievements

Main Achievements

Our main achievements during 2015 are outlined in this report, including the following which are summarised here.

In the 2014-15 school year, the NCSE:

- ▶ Enabled over 48,000 students with special educational needs to receive additional teaching in mainstream schools.
- ▶ Enabled over 27,000 students with special educational needs who also have significant care needs to access special needs assistant (SNA) support.
- ▶ Processed over 16,200 new applications from primary and post primary schools for students with special educational needs for additional teaching hours.
- ▶ Processed over 8,600 new applications from schools for students with special educational needs for access to SNA support.
- ▶ Processed over 3,200 new applications for school transport for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Processed over 2,900 new applications for assistive technology/special equipment for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Had established a total of 855 special classes in mainstream schools with places available for 5,700 students.

In 2015, the NCSE also:

- ▶ Finalised policy advice on educational provision for students with autism spectrum disorder.
- ▶ Published our largest research study to date, Project IRIS (Inclusive Research in Irish Schools) – a longitudinal study that looked at the experiences of and outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.
- ▶ Sponsored an award at the Young Scientist Exhibition promoting an awareness and understanding of children and young people with special educational needs – which was won by Coláiste Pobal Osraí, Kilkenny.



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.

Each year over 4,000 schools are able to apply to their locally based NCSE SENO (Special Educational Needs Organiser) for:

- ▶ resource teaching support,
- ▶ SNA (Special Needs Assistant) support,
- ▶ assistive technology/specialist equipment, and/or
- ▶ 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 2014-15 School Year

Applications for Additional Supports

In the 2014-15 school year¹, SENOs processed over 31,000 applications for additional supports for students with special educational needs under four allocation schemes. Details of these schemes and the number of applications processed in 2014-15 are given in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Summary of applications processed by NCSE in 2014-15

Scheme	No of Applications
Resource teacher	16,209
SNA	8,656
School transport	3,289
Assistive technology/specialist equipment	2,928
Total	31,082

Mainstream Classes

The NCSE allocated 6,204 resource teachers to mainstream schools to provide additional teaching capacity to schools for students with special educational needs in 2014/15. This is an increase of 483 whole time equivalent resource teaching posts on the number (5,721) allocated to mainstream schools in the 2013-14 school year. In the 2014-15 school year, the overall number of students accessing resource teaching supports rose to over 48,000 (see Appendix 3). This compares with 45,700 students in the 2013-14 school year.

Special Classes

SENOs sanctioned the establishment of 139 new special classes in the school year 2014-15. By the end of school year 2014-15, there were 855 special classes in mainstream schools with over 5,700 places available. This is a net increase of 118 new special classes and over 700 additional places in 2014-15.

Special Schools

In the 2014-15 school year, there were over 7,500 students enrolled in special schools supported by the NCSE. The NCSE allocated 1,145 teachers and 2,222 SNAs to special

Over 5,700
places now
available in 855
special classes
in mainstream
schools

1

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

schools in 2014-15. The corresponding figures in the previous school year 2013-14 were 1,107 teachers and 2,149 SNAs.

SNA Supports

By the end of the 2014-15 school year, over 27,000 students were granted SNA support. The number of SNA posts allocated to primary, post primary and special schools by the end of that school year was 11,174.

Resourcing Schools in the 2015-16 School Year²

For the 2015-16 school year, the number of resource teaching posts available for allocation increased by 627 to 6,852 and the number of SNA posts was increased by 610 to 11,940. Full details of the resource teaching and SNA allocations made by the NCSE to each school are published each year on an individual school basis on the NCSE website www.ncse.ie.

The number of resource teachers and SNAs allocated to schools by the end of December 2015 is set out in **Table 2** below. The final details of these resources allocated for the 2015-16 school year will be provided in our 2016 Annual Report.

An additional
751 SNA posts
allocated in
2015

An additional
619 resource
teaching posts
allocated in
2015

Table 2: Number of Resource Teaching and SNA posts

	End 2014-15 school year	End December 2015
Resource Teacher Posts	6,204	6,823
SNA Posts	11,174	11,925

Students with Down syndrome

For the 2015-16 school year, the Minister for Education & Skills announced the introduction of an interim scheme to allocate 2.5 additional teaching hours per week for every student with Down syndrome attending mainstream class settings who was not already supported under the scheme for low incidence allocations. 183 eligible applications were processed and 19 whole time equivalent teachers were allocated to schools under this scheme. These posts are also included in the above **Table 2**.

2 The 2015-16 school year is from September 2015 to June 2016

Resource Allocation Appeals Process

By December 2015, the NCSE had processed approximately 25,000 applications from schools for resource teaching and SNA support for the 2015-16 school year. NCSE operates an appeals process for the decisions made on these applications. Details of the appeals process are published on our website www.ncse.ie.

By end December 2015, 137 appeals were received for the 2015-16 resource allocation decisions. 96 appeals were received in 2014.

Table 3: Analysis of appeals – received by December 2015

Analysis of appeals – received by December 2015	
Total number of appeals received	137
Appeals received from parents	31
Appeals received from schools	106
Appeals received on SNA allocations	72
Appeals received on resource teaching hours	65
Appeals withdrawn	35
Appeals upheld	8
Appeals not upheld	88
Appeals awaiting decision as at end December 2015	6

Information for parents

NCSE
provides
information
for parents

A programme of local information sessions for parents and guardians of children with special educational needs continued to be delivered by SENOs to inform parents on locally available educational services and supports and how to access them. The events give parents the opportunity to meet SENOs and ask questions about how the educational system could support their child in school and parents receive information leaflets, booklets and hand-outs. The programme was directed primarily at parents of children who were commencing school in September 2015. We completed this programme in early 2015.

In 2015, we evaluated the 2014-2015 programme. We found that parents were overwhelmingly positive about the initiative.

99% of parents found the materials provided at information sessions useful; while 97% said the sessions were helpful

NCSE promotes the inclusion of students with special educational needs in education

Approximately half of those that attended provided feedback and 97% of them said that they found the session either "very helpful" or "helpful" and 99% found that the materials provided at the sessions were either "very useful" or "useful".

SENOs started delivering further information sessions towards the end of 2015 to prepare parents whose children are starting school in September 2016 and we will continue to evaluate the quality of the programme.

Special Award at the 2015 BT Young Scientist Exhibition

The NCSE sponsored a Special Award at the 2015 BT Young Scientist Exhibition. The award was for the best project that:

- ▶ Promotes an awareness and understanding of children and young people with special educational needs and /or has a direct impact on their lives;
- ▶ Promote the inclusion of students with special educational needs in the education system.

The winners (pictured below) of the NCSE Special Award in 2015 were from Coláiste Pobal Osraí, Kilkenny, for their project on autism³.



Eamon Stack, Chairperson, NCSE pictured at the BT Young Scientists Exhibition 2015 with the winners of the NCSE Special Award, Maeve Shaw and Éabha Ní Shluain from Coláiste Pobal Osraí, Kilkenny.

3 Tomhais de dhiallais ar fhreagair eiticúil idir dhaoine le huathachas agus gan uathachas (A measurement of deviation in ethical response between autistic and non-autistic groups)



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 students.

Policy advice finalised on supporting students with ASD

Policy Advice on educational provision for students with autism spectrum disorders

The NCSE finalised policy advice for the Minister on educational provision for students with autism spectrum disorders.

This policy advice builds on the NCSE recommendations made in 2013 for improving the system for all students with special educational needs but focuses particularly on specific supports students with ASD require that differ from, or are additional to, those that all students with special educational needs require.

The contents of this paper were thoroughly discussed by Council before being finally approved as its formal policy advice and was submitted to the Minister in September 2015. The report was not published by end 2015 as it is customary to provide the Minister and officials with some time to consider the report before it is published. The NCSE is pleased at the Minister's acknowledgement, in December 2015, that the NCSE had produced a 'very comprehensive and important report'.

Information provided on the proposed new allocation model

New Resource Teaching Allocation Model

The NCSE responded to many invitations from parental and teacher/principal organisations throughout the country seeking further explanation and discussion of the proposed new resource teaching allocation model and clarification about how it is likely to impact on students with special educational needs and their schools.

International Work

During 2015, the NCSE continued to participate in the international work of European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE).

Some of the main EASNIE activities supported during 2015 included:

NCSE continues to support the work of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE).

- 1. Inclusive Pre-Primary Education:** This project aims to identify, analyse and subsequently promote the main characteristics of quality inclusive early childhood education for all children.
- 2. Financing of Inclusive Education:** This project aims to map country approaches to funding inclusive education and to identify critical factors within models of funding that support access to education.
- 3. European Hearing on Inclusive Education:** The Hearing was held in Luxembourg in October 2015. It aimed to give young people from across Europe an opportunity to express their own views on their education, explain their needs and requirements and share their hopes for the future.

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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

New
Research
Report
published

Introduction

We commission research on a variety of special education themes. The research looks at practice and provision within Ireland and also looks at international evidence. This ensures that we are up to date about the latest themes and trends emerging in special education and have access to the latest research evidence available. This provides us with a sound evidence base to inform our policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills.

Research Completed in 2015

The NCSE completed a number of research projects in 2015. Our largest study to date – 'Project IRIS', was published and is available on our website www.ncse.ie.

This study involved over 150 students, their parents and school staff in 24 mainstream and special schools around the country over a three year period. The research focused on school policies, provision and practices, and the experiences of and outcomes for the pupils and their parents in the study.



The study shows that Irish schools were generally providing an inclusive learning environment for children with special educational needs and that substantial progress has been made in recent years. In particular, the research notes that the strong learning support and resource teacher network ensured that most pupils with special educational needs received high levels of support.

The research concluded that there was significant positive progress made by students in their education as well as in areas of happiness, engagement and independence. The majority of parents were also satisfied with the academic and social experiences of their children. However, progress made by some students was often not measured or was measured in ways that were not appropriate for students with special educational needs. The need to develop ways to measure and recognise progress made by all students with special educational needs was identified.

The study also highlighted other shortcomings in the system such as difficulties in accessing timely assessments in order to avail of resources; limited and inconsistent access to therapeutic supports; the need for greater levels of teacher knowledge and expertise; and inconsistent development and application of individual plans.

Other research

A number of other studies were completed or were on-going and many of these will be published in 2016:

1. Assistive Technology in Supporting the Education of Children with SEN – What works best?

The experiences of those using Assistive Technology (AT) and the perceived impact of the technology on students with special educational needs in primary and post-primary schools were explored in this research.

2. Educating Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders – A Systematic Literature Review.

This study reviewed the latest research evidence available on educational interventions for students with ASD.

3. An Evaluation of Educational Provision for Students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Ireland.

This evaluation looked at educational provision for students with ASD in a range of settings including mainstream classes, special classes, special schools, and those availing of the home-tuition scheme and the extended school year.

4. A Study of the Experiences of Post Primary Students with SEN.

The educational experiences of over 200 post-primary aged students were explored in this study across a range of post-primary settings.

5. Special Class Provision in Ireland. Phase 2: A Qualitative Study

This study follows on from a previous survey of special classes in Ireland and looks at special class provision and practice in-depth in 12 primary and post-primary schools.

6. Educational Experiences and Outcomes for Children with SEN. Phase 2: From age 9-13.

Using data from the major longitudinal study of children in Ireland, this analysis focuses on children with SEN at 13 years old and follows their progress made from an earlier report when the children were 9 years old.

New research commissioned

Three new
research
projects
commissioned

1. Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion

This research will explore the impact of recent changes to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Ireland on the education of students with special educational needs. This will be the first longitudinal study of inclusion in initial teacher education in Europe and will follow students from their final year on their ITE programme through to the first two years of teaching and track how well student and newly qualified teachers feel prepared to educate students with SEN.

2. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Inclusion: Scoping provision in Ireland

There is a significant amount of CPD available to teachers who wish to engage in further professional development. CPD is provided by a large number of different providers and the information on options available is therefore widely dispersed. This can make it difficult for teachers to access the information. This project will identify and categorise all CPD provision available to teachers on special education and inclusion in Ireland and provide this information in one single accessible source.

3. Review of the Altered Provision Project

A number of schools are involved in a pilot project – the Altered Provision Project (APP), which involves the appointment of a teacher, rather than that of a Special Needs Assistant (SNA), to support some post-primary students with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties/Disabilities (EBD). The project explores how students with EBD and schools fare with additional teaching in the self-management of behaviour, as an alternative to the care support provided by an SNA. The NCSE commissioned a review of this pilot as the project comes to an end in 2016.



Front Row LtoR: Mel Ainscow, University of Manchester; Richard Wynne, Work Research Centre; Paula Connolly, SESS.
Back Row LtoR: Eamon Stack, NCSE Chairperson; Gina Grant, Parent at NCSE Research Conference on November 25.

NCSE Annual Research Conference

Our 2015 research conference took place on 25th November at Croke Park Conference Centre with over 200 key stakeholders attending – including principals and teachers, researchers, parents, educational psychologists, those involved in teacher education, disability advocacy groups, departmental and union officials.

The conference centred on two themes – teacher education for inclusion and assistive technology for students with SEN. On the theme of teacher education for inclusion, the first guest speaker from the University of Manchester, outlined new ideas and strategies for teacher education that equip teachers to educate students with diverse needs. A presentation on the two new studies commissioned by the NCSE on teacher education followed this.



Mel Ainscow, University of Manchester; opening guest speaker at the NCSE Research Conference on November 25.

The afternoon session on assistive technology opened with a presentation from another guest speaker from King's College London on new developments in the area of assistive technology for students with special needs. The findings from the NCSE's commissioned study on Assistive Technology (AT) in Irish schools followed this. The day was wrapped up with a set of reflections from users of AT and those that support them describing educational challenges they experienced and how assistive technology benefited their educational experiences. All conference presentations are available to download from the NCSE website, www.ncse.ie.



Front Row LtoR: Peter Hick, Manchester Metropolitan University; Carmel Duggan, Independent Consultant; Teresa Griffin, NCSE; Eamon Stack, NCSE Chairperson; Sheelagh Drudy, NCSE Council; Tom O'Sullivan, NCSE Council.

Back Row LtoR: Mel Ainscow, University of Manchester; Johnny Murphy, NCSE Council; Jennifer Doran, NCSE; Paula Connolly, SESS; Gina Grant, Parent. NCSE Research Conference on November 25.



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

NCSE Role

The NCSE has a remit under the EPSEN Act (Section 20) to review generally the provision made for adults with a disability to avail of further, higher and/or continuing education and advising education institutions concerning best practice in the education of adults with a disability.

National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education

Participation in the HEA Advisory Group on Equity of Access

During 2015 NCSE continued to participate in the Advisory Group of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) National Access Office. The NCSE, following engagement with the Consultative Forum, made a submission to the HEA in regard to the new National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-19. This new plan which has been adopted by the HEA and the Department of Education and Skills sets new targets and actions for the inclusion of people with disabilities in Higher Education.

The NCSE provided a submission to the HEA on the review of the Fund for Students with Disabilities. This review is one of the key actions identified in the National Plan for Equity of Access.

We also participated in the review by the Irish Universities Association of the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) Scheme. DARE is a third level alternative admissions scheme operated by certain universities and colleges for school-leavers whose disabilities have had a negative impact on their second level education. DARE offers reduced points places to school leavers who as a result of having a disability have experienced additional educational challenges in second level education.

Post-School Education and Training for People with Disabilities

We commenced engagement with service providers and people with disabilities to establish the extent, accessibility and nature of the options in post school education and training for people with disabilities. The initial focus of NCSE in our 2015 Work Plan was on the school leavers and HSE day services including rehabilitative training. In this regard, we have engaged on this theme with the NCSE Consultative Forum and we have initiated consultation with the HSE. We expect to further progress this work in 2016.

Consultation
with service
providers
and people
with
disabilities

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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.

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.

Introduction

In 2015 we continued to maintain and develop our capacity as an effective organisation in compliance with all our statutory, regulatory and other requirements.

Council Self-Evaluation

A self-evaluation was conducted in 2015 of the performance of the NCSE Finance, Audit, Strategy & Policy and Research Committees. The review focused on a number of areas including briefing documents, induction and ongoing training, quality of committee discussion, effectiveness of committee communications, and the setting of performance objectives.

Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA)

The NCSE prepared and submitted an evaluation report to the Department of Education and Skills (DES) on our performance under the PDA. Discussion also took place with the DES regarding the process for the development of a new PDA in line with good governance guidelines in State Agencies and Government Departments.

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 www.ncse.ie. Our annual accounts are presented and published separately from this report.

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

Details of these confirmations by Council, which are required in accordance with the Code, are included in Appendix 1.

Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015

This legislation came into effect during 2015. The Chief Executive is a designated public official under this Act.

Establishment of a New Inclusion Support Service within the NCSE

In February 2015, the Minister for Education and Skills announced the establishment within the National Council for Special Education of a new Inclusion Support Service to assist schools in supporting students with special educational needs. When operational, this service will include the Special Education Support Service (SESS), the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) and the Visiting Teacher Service for children who are deaf/hard of hearing and for children who are blind/visually impaired (VTVHI).

The establishment of the service is in line with previous NCSE recommendations that there should be one coherent service to build the professional capacity of schools to meet the needs of students with additional learning needs.

The NCSE has been working with the DES and the support services to plan a smooth and seamless transfer. Arrangements have been made to ensure services to students, families, teachers and schools are continued as normal while the new services are being developed, agreed and put in place within the NCSE.

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 of the frame. 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



Council Members 2015:

Back row L to R: Joan Russell, Pat Kinsella, Eithne Fitzgerald, Tom O'Sullivan, Helen Guinan, James O'Grady, Mary Friel.

Front row L to R: Maureen Costello, Philip O'Callaghan, Sheelagh Drudy, Eamon Stack, Chairperson, Teresa Griffin, CEO, Jenny Ennis, Johnny Murphy.

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 EPSEN 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 on 6 occasions during 2015. Details of individual members and their attendances are given in the table following. Further details are published on our website www.ncse.ie.

Membership of the Council of the NCSE during 2015		
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.	5
Maureen Costello* ⁴	Director, National Educational Psychological Service	2
Sheelagh Drudy	Emeritus Professor of Education at University College Dublin and former head of the UCD School of Education	5
Jenny Ennis	Mother-of-two sons with special educational needs. Former member of the board of management of Holy Child Community School	5
Eithne Fitzgerald	Head of Policy and Research at the National Disability Authority	6
Mary Friel	Former Principal of the Margaret Aylward Community College, Whitehall, Dublin	6
Helen Guinan	Chairperson of the National Disability Authority. Retired Principal of St Paul's Special School, Montenotte, Cork	6
Johnny Murphy	Divisional Inspector, Department of Education and Skills	6
Philip O'Callaghan	Policy Adviser to the Minister for Health and former Post Primary Teacher	6
James O'Grady*	Former Head of Disability Services in the Health Service Executive. Board Member of the National Disability Authority	5
Tom O'Sullivan	Former Assistant General Secretary, INTO. Former Principal of St. Senan's Boys National School, Limerick	5
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 Council .

⁴ Maureen Costello retired from Council after the 89th Meeting on 24th June 2015

Council Committees

The Council created five Committees under Section 33 of the EPSEN Act. The Committees 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 (4 meetings)	Attendance
John Fitzgerald, Chairperson	4
Helen Guinan	3
Philip O'Callaghan	4
James O'Grady	3
Eamon Stack	4

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

Finance (6 meetings)	Attendance
Joan Russell, Chairperson	6
Jenny Ennis	5
Mary Friel	6
Philip O'Callaghan	6

Research (7 meetings)	Attendance
Sheelagh Drudy, Chairperson	7
Maureen Costello	4
Johnny Murphy	7
Tom O'Sullivan	5

Strategy and Policy (7 meetings)	Attendance
James O'Grady, Chairperson	7
Eithne Fitzgerald	7
Helen Guinan	6
Pat Kinsella	7
Sheelagh Drudy ⁵	5

⁵ Sheelagh Drudy was appointed to the Strategy and Policy Committee from 12 January 2015

NCSE Consultative Forum

The Consultative Forum is established by the Council under Section 22 of the EPSEN Act. The Council appoints up to 17 members following a prescribed consultation process. In addition 3 members are appointed by the Minister. Members were appointed to the Forum for a three year term beginning in July 2013. There were 3 meetings in 2015. Membership of the body is listed below.

NCSE Consultative Forum (3 meetings)		
Council-appointed members		Attendance
Seán Balfe	Primary School Principal	3
Ann Bourke	Disability Specialist, Health Service Executive	3
Seán Burke	Former Chief Executive Officer, 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	1
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	2
Christy Lynch	Chairperson, National Federation of Voluntary Bodies. Chief Executive Officer, KARE	3
Teresa McDonnell	Chairperson of a support organisation for parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing children	2
Patrick McVicar	Former Post Primary Principal and member of the Teaching Council	3
Deirbhile Nic Craith	Senior Official, Irish National Teachers' Organisation	2
Julie O'Leary	Works with the COPE Foundation	1
Carmel O'Shea	Works with National Parents Council	2
Donie O'Shea	Senior Policy Advisor, National Disability Authority.	3

NCSE Consultative Forum (3 meetings) (continued)		
Members appointed by Minister for Education and Skills		Attendance
Eamon Clavin	Inspector, Department of Education and Skills	3
Michael Cullinane	Regional Director, National Educational Psychological Service	2
Aisling Curley ⁶	Assistant Principal Officer, Special Education Section, Department of Education and Skills	–

⁶ Aisling Curley was assigned to other duties in DES during 2015

The image features a light beige background. In the upper left, there is a semi-circular orange shape. Below and to the right of this is a larger, more complex red shape that also has a semi-circular top edge. The word "APPENDICES" is written in white, bold, uppercase letters within the 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 2015 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 members in 2015 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. No issues were raised under this procedure in 2015.

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. Any matters drawn to attention in 2015 were processed in accordance with these procedures.

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 2015, the NCSE reported on the organisation's energy performance for 2014 to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland as required under EU regulations.

Overview of NCSE energy usage

162.34 MWh of electricity

265.4 MWh of fossil fuels

0.00 MWh of renewable fuels

Appendix 2

NCSE Staffing

Grade	Staff in post end 2015
Chief Executive	1
Principal	4
Head of Local Services	1
Assistant Principal	3
Senior Special Educational Needs Organiser	9
Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO)	69
Higher Executive Officer	5
Executive Officer	3
Staff Officer	1
Clerical Officer	3
Total	99 ⁷

⁷ There were 2 vacancies and 1 temporary supernumerary position.

Appendix 3

Statistical information for the school year 2014/15

Students accessing resource teaching by category of disability.

Over 48,000 students received extra teaching from resource teachers in schools with 25,647 students in mainstream primary and 22,777 students in post primary schools.

Disability Category	No of Students	
	Primary	Post-Primary
Assessed syndrome	208	59
Autism/autistic spectrum disorders	5,709	2,917
Emotional/behavioural disturbance	4,617	3,313
Hearing impairment	751	480
Moderate general learning disability	585	178
Multiple disabilities	2,003	993
Other	46	9
Physical disability	4,076	2,924
Severe emotional/behavioural disturbance	814	458
Severe/profound general learning disability	35	1
Specific speech and language disorder	6,494	1,204
Visual impairment	309	231
Students with a borderline or mild general learning disability or a specific learning disability (estimate)		10,010*
Total	25,647	22,777

* 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 Categories⁸

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, DSM-V, or ICD-10 criteria.
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 of them have been prescribed hearing aids and are availing of the services of a visiting teacher

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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, eg 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. (i.e. 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 (S.D.) below the mean, or at a generally equivalent level (i.e. - 2 S.D. or below, at or below a standard score of 70) in one or more of the main areas of speech and language development. ▶ Two assessments, a psychological assessment and a speech and language assessment are necessary.
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 Acronyms Used

APP	Altered Provision Project
ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
AT	Assistive Technology
CETB	Cork Education and Training Board
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DARE	Disability Access Route to Education
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
HEA	Higher Education Authority
ICD	International classification of diseases
ICT	Information and communications technology
ISS	Inclusion Support Service
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
IRIS	Inclusion Research in Irish Schools
IQ	Intelligence quotient
NBSS	National Behaviour Support Service
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
PDA	Performance delivery agreement
SESS	Special Education Support Service
SEN	Special educational need
SD	Standard deviation

SENO	Special educational needs organiser
SIFC	System of internal financial controls
SNA	Special needs assistant
UCD	University College Dublin
VTVHI	Visiting Teacher Service for children who are deaf/hard of hearing and for children who are blind/visually impaired

