

# National Council for Special Education

## Annual Report 2016







# National Council for Special Education **Annual Report 2016**

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**National Council for Special Education**

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## Table of Contents

NCSE Chairperson's Letter to the Minister	3
Introduction: Our Strategic Approach	9
Main Achievements	13
Strategic Priority 1: Plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs	17
Strategic Priority 2: Provide evidence-informed policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills concerning the education of children with special educational needs	27
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	31
Strategic Priority 4: Review further and higher educational provision for adults with special educational needs and develop best practice guidelines	41
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	45
Governance	51

## Appendices (1-5)

1. Confirmation of Compliance with Requirements of the Code of Governance for State Bodies 2009	61
2. NCSE Staffing	63
3. Statistical Information for the School Year 2015-16	64
4. Description of Disability Categories	65
5. Glossary of Acronyms Used	68



# NCSE Chairperson's Letter to the Minister

June, 2017

**Mr Richard Bruton, TD  
Minister for Education and Skills  
Department of Education and Skills  
Marlborough Street  
Dublin 1**

Dear Minister

I was very pleased to be re-appointed for a second term as Chairperson of the National Council for Special Education with effect from January 2016.

2016 was challenging for the NCSE as the term of office of the previous Council completed in December 2015 and I was the only member of the NCSE Council until late July 2016. I would like to acknowledge and thank your Department's Accounting Officer and officials for working closely with us to agree interim governance arrangements enabling the timely signing off on our 2015 Annual Accounts and Annual Report.

Normal governance arrangements resumed by end July when you moved quickly to appoint the remaining 12 Council members. Unfortunately time did not allow the full Council to meet 6 times in 2016 as envisaged by the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004; but I am pleased to advise you that Council met 3 times between September and December. In addition, Council Committees held many other meetings within this timeframe.

As required by the EPSEN Act, I now provide you with the NCSE annual report for 2016 which details these meetings as well as reporting on the activities of the NCSE during 2016.

I am also required under the 2009 Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies to report to you 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 2016 and we do not anticipate any such developments.
- ▶ The financial position of the NCSE is as disclosed in our 2016 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.
- ▶ The NCSE has adopted, and is in compliance with, the 2009 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 Council has noted the introduction of a revised Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies which was published in August 2016. We are carefully reviewing the revised Code and our current systems. We intend to have all the necessary NCSE governance arrangements in place, as required, for full compliance with the new Code for 2017.

During 2016, we continued to allocate resource teaching and special needs assistant posts to schools for special educational needs. As detailed in this report, by the end of 2015-16 school year over 6,800 resource teaching posts and nearly 12,000 Special Needs Assistant (SNA) posts were in place in schools to support over 50,000 students with special educational needs.

I was especially honoured to work with you and your officials during the year in relation to the introduction of the new model for allocating special education teachers to schools. The old allocation model had been an area of concern for the NCSE and we believe that the new model will result in a better and fairer way of supporting students with special educational needs.

One of our key roles is to provide you with policy advice on the education of students with special needs. In this context, I am pleased to report that work on the comprehensive review of the SNA scheme commenced during 2016 with the research and consultation strands necessary to ensuring our advice is robust and evidence-based. We expect the full review to be completed in the first quarter of 2018.



We continued with our well-established research programme which focuses on a range of key themes and topics relevant to special education in Ireland and internationally. In 2016, we published 5 research papers. We also launched a database on continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities for teachers in the areas of inclusion and special educational needs. This was developed to provide a practical tool for teachers seeking CPD opportunities.

The NCSE will provide any further information or clarification if required to you or your officials about any of our activities in 2016.

Yours sincerely

**Eamon Stack**  
*Chairperson*  
*National Council for Special Education*





**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. We also work with the Department of Education and Skills in the delivery of a number of Objectives and Actions set out in the DES Action Plan for 2016-2019.

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. We outline in this report the progress under each of these objectives which we have made in 2016.

**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.



# **Main Achievements**





## Main Achievements

In supporting learners with special educational needs during 2015-16, the NCSE:

- ▶ Enabled nearly 53,000 students with special educational needs to receive additional teaching in mainstream schools.
- ▶ Enabled over 29,000 students with special educational needs who also have significant care needs to access special needs assistant (SNA) support.
- ▶ Processed over 18,000 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 3,400 new applications for school transport for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Processed over 3,500 new applications for assistive technology/special equipment for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Sanctioned a total of 1,008 special classes in mainstream schools with places available for 6,500 students.

In 2016, the NCSE also:

- ▶ Published policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills on the education of students with autism spectrum disorder
- ▶ Commenced a review of the Scheme for Special Needs Assistants
- ▶ Published 5 new research reports into various aspects of special education
- ▶ Conducted a major Research conference to disseminate and discuss research findings with stakeholders

## DES Action Plan for Education 2016-2019

- ▶ The DES Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 clearly sets out a vision that the Irish Education and Training System should become the best in Europe over the next decade and that every person has an opportunity to fulfil their potential. Support for learners is embedded across the 5 Action Plan goals with goal 2 targeting learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs.
- ▶ The NCSE will work with the DES to deliver on a number of identified targets and actions within the required timeframe, including supporting the introduction of the new allocation model for special education teachers, reviewing the SNA scheme and the development of a new support service.
- ▶ During 2016, the NCSE worked with the DES in respect of the pilot of the new teacher allocation model, preparatory work on transferring the National Behaviour Support Service, the Special Education Support Service and the Visiting Teacher Service to the NCSE. In addition, Terms of Reference for the Comprehensive Review of the SNA scheme were finalised.



## 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 school system in Ireland provides students with special educational needs with a range of placement options including:

- ▶ **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.

The vast majority of students with special educational needs attend their local mainstream school. Some attend special classes in their local school while others attend special schools.

Schools which enrol students with special educational needs may qualify for additional teaching and care supports under various Department of Education and Skills schemes. The NCSE's Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) allocate these additional education supports to schools and, with the co-operation of schools, plan and sanction new special classes as needed. In addition, the NCSE processes applications for special school transport arrangements and assistive technology supports.



Helen Walsh & Muireann McCoy, two SENOs, at the NCSE Research Conference

## Resourcing Schools in the 2015-16 School Year

### Applications for Additional Supports

Just under 34,000 applications were processed for additional resource teacher support, SNA support, school transport or assistive technology/specialist equipment during the 2015-16 school year<sup>1</sup> – up from 31,000 in the previous year.

**Table 2: Summary of applications processed by NCSE for School Year 2015-16**

Scheme	No of Applications
Resource teacher	18,177
SNA	8,621
School transport	3,423
Assistive technology/specialist equipment	3,564
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,785</b>

### 9.6% increase in Students receiving Resource Teacher support in 2015-2016

Almost 53,000 students received additional teaching support from 6,823 resource teacher posts sanctioned for mainstream schools during 2015-2016 (see Appendix 3 for a breakdown by disability category). This is an increase of 9.6% or 619 resource teacher posts over the 2014-15 school year (6,204) when some 48,000 were in receipt of resource teacher hours. 23 resource teacher posts – up from 19 posts in the previous year – were allocated under the interim scheme to support some students with Down syndrome who previously had not received low incidence teaching support from resource teachers.

### 17.9% increase in Special Class Provision

The number of special classes in mainstream schools increased by 153 (17.9%) by the end of 2015-16 bringing the total in place to 1,008 special classes. There are now over 6,500 places available – 800 more than in 2014-15.

Over 6,500 places  
now available in  
1,008 special classes  
in mainstream  
schools

<sup>1</sup> The 2015-16 school year is from September 2015 to June 2016.

## Increased allocations for Special Schools

In the 2015-16 school year, there were over 7,600 students enrolled in special schools with over 1,100 teachers and just over 2,300 SNAs. These resources represented an increase of 14 teachers and 87 SNAs on those in special schools in the preceding school year.

## SNA Supports

The number of SNA posts in place in primary, post primary and special schools in 2015-2016 increased by 810 to 11,984 and supported over 29,000 students with significant care needs.

Full details of the resource teaching and SNA allocations in each school are available on the NCSE website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

## Resourcing Schools in the 2016-17 School Year<sup>2</sup>

For the 2016-17 school year, the number of resource teaching posts available for allocation increased by 600 to 7,452 and the number of SNA posts increased by 960 to 12,900.

960 extra SNA posts available for 2016–2017

600 more resource teacher posts in 2016–2017

The number of resource teachers and SNAs allocated to schools by the end of December 2016 is set out in Table 3 below. The final number of posts sanctioned for schools for the 2016-17 school year will be provided in our 2017 Annual Report.

**Table 3: Number of Resource Teaching and SNA posts**

	End 2015-16 school year	End December 2016	% increase
Resource Teacher Posts	6,823	7,430	8.9%
SNA Posts	11,984	12,892	7.8%

<sup>2</sup> The 2016-17 school year is from September 2016 to June 2017.

## Resource Allocation Appeals Process

Every year, some decisions are appealed by parents or schools. By the end of December 2016, 132 appeals were received in respect of the 27,000 resource allocation decisions for the 2016-17 school year – a decrease of five appeals over the previous year.

**Table 4: Analysis of appeals – received by end December 2016**

Analysis of appeals – received by end December 2016	
Total number of appeals received	132
Appeals received from parents	23
Appeals received from schools	109
Appeals received on SNA allocations	80
Appeals received on resource teaching hours	52
Appeals withdrawn	39
Appeals upheld	6
Appeals not upheld	85
Appeals awaiting decision as at end December 2016	2

## Information for Parents and Schools

### Information Sessions for Parents

99% of parents found the materials provided at NCSE parental information sessions useful; while 100% said the sessions were helpful

The NCSE parent information programme took place throughout 2015-16, aimed mainly at parents and guardians of children with special educational needs and who were intending to begin school in September 2016. The sessions are delivered by SENOs, who outline the educational services and supports available in their locality. SENOs also answer any questions which parents/guardians may have, and distribute the wide range of NCSE information leaflets and booklets to them.

Forty-one sessions took place over the 2015-16 programme. In total, 738 parents attended the sessions. The evaluation of the programme was very positive again this year. Approximately 40% of parents who attended the sessions completed feedback forms (n=278). All of them indicated that they found the session either "very helpful" or "helpful", while 99% of them said they found the materials either "very useful" or "useful".



The rollout of our 2016-17 programme began in September 2016, with a view to it being completed in the spring of 2017. Twenty-nine sessions took place between September and December. As in previous years, we will evaluate the programme to ensure it continues to meet the needs of parents at this important time in their children's lives.

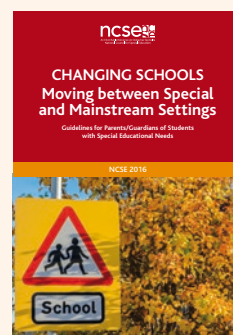
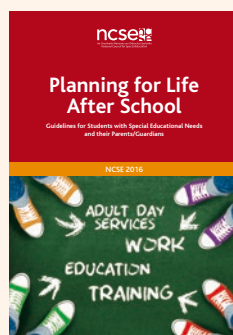
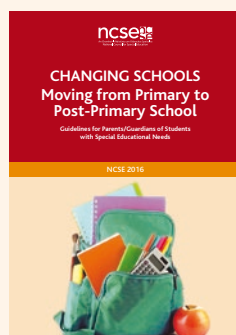
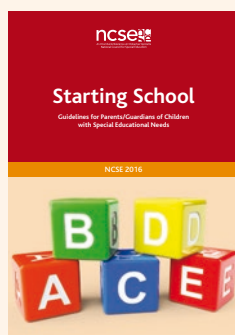
### Transition Guidelines

In January 2016, the NCSE published the first national guidelines to help parents and students with special educational needs to make successful transitions in their lives.

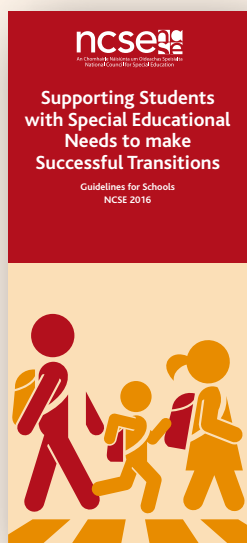
The wide-ranging, comprehensive guidelines provide advice and tips for parents and children with special educational needs. They inform families – children, parents, guardians and others – and help them to make these changes as successfully as possible.

The guidelines cover transitions at all stages and levels:

- ▶ for children starting school
- ▶ for the move from primary to post-primary school
- ▶ when moving between mainstream and special school settings and
- ▶ when preparing for life after school.



NCSE publishes Transition  
Guidelines for Parents,  
Students and Schools



The NCSE also published a guide for schools to support these transitions.

These booklets emphasise the importance of:

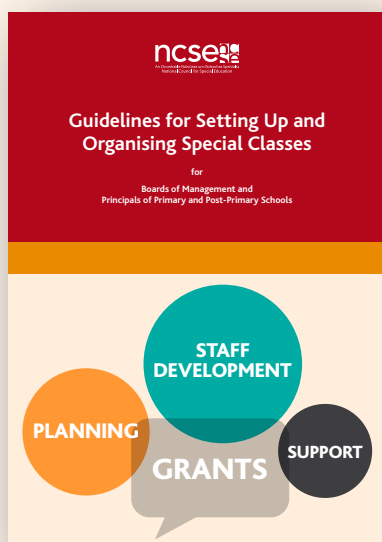
- ▶ Planning for transitions so that students are prepared for change
- ▶ Parents listening and responding to their children's concerns
- ▶ Parents helping children to prepare for starting school or changing schools
- ▶ Schools and parents sharing relevant information so that schools can be ready to support students when they arrive
- ▶ Parents and schools assisting students to become independent so that they are ready for the next step.

The Transition Guidelines are available on the NCSE website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

### Guidelines for Boards of Managements and Principals on Special Classes

The guidelines set out clearly how schools can set up and organise special classes, as part of a continuum of educational provision, for students with special educational needs.

The following questions are answered in the guidelines:



- ▶ Which students are enrolled in special classes?
- ▶ Who decides whether a student is enrolled in a special class?
- ▶ How long do students remain in a special class?
- ▶ How does a special class get established?
- ▶ What are the steps involved in setting up the class?
- ▶ How are special classes resourced?
- ▶ In what circumstances are special classes closed?

NCSE publishes  
Guidelines for  
Setting Up and  
Organising Special  
Classes

The guidelines are available on the NCSE website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

## NCSE Sponsors Special Award at 2016 BT Young Scientist Exhibition

### Special Award at the 2016 BT Young Scientist Exhibition

The NCSE again sponsored a Special Award at the 2016 BT Young Scientist Exhibition. This Award is 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.

This year, NCSE's award was won by a young student, Nicole Marinos, who attends Christ King Girls' Secondary School, Cork. The title of the project was *Living with Hearing Loss: The Influence of Environmental Factors on Speech Audibility*. The project sought to identify what environmental factors contribute to a good listening environment and to use this knowledge to improve speech audibility in different settings. The settings reviewed in this project included home, classrooms and restaurants.



Eamon Stack, Chairperson, NCSE, presenting the NCSE Award to the winner, Nicole Marinos, from Christ King Girls' Secondary School, Cork





## 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 publishes first major report on the education of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in almost 14 years

### NCSE Role

One of the NCSE's key roles is to provide the Minister for Education and Skills with expert, independent, evidence-informed policy advice on the education of children who have special educational needs.

### Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

In July 2016, the NCSE published the first major report on the education of students with autism spectrum disorder in almost 14 years. The publication of the policy advice followed an extensive research and consultation process.

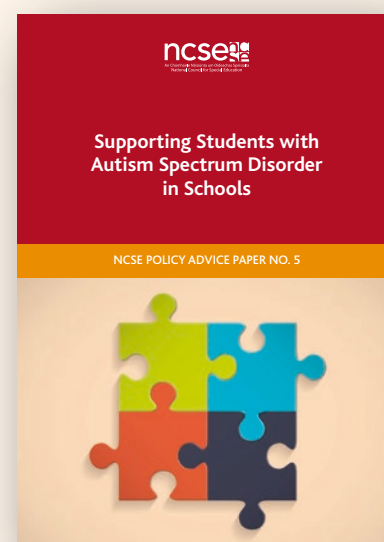
The report found that one in every 65 students or 1.5% of the schools' population has a diagnosis of autism, equating to approximately 14,000 students in the 2015-2016 school year.

Other key findings included:

- ▶ There has been a substantial increase in investment – over €300m is invested annually on additional teaching, transport, technology and other supports specifically for students with autism.
- ▶ Students with autism are generally well supported in schools, especially at primary level though support at post-primary level requires further development.
- ▶ Teacher knowledge and understanding of autism is greatly improved but is still not sufficient.
- ▶ No one approach or methodology is best for all students with ASD – the report identified 34 evidence-informed interventions for use in schools.

The report can be found, along with an accompanying guide for parents and students, at [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

NCSE uses its close links with the European Agency to inform its research and policy advice work



The NCSE is a member of an implementation group established by the Department of Education and Skills to consider the recommendations arising in this report.

### NCSE commences a review of the SNA Scheme

#### Comprehensive Review of SNA scheme

The NCSE is, at the request of the Minister for Education and Skills, currently carrying out a comprehensive review of the SNA scheme.

To date, the NCSE has engaged in consultations with education partners and stakeholders as well as carrying out:

- ▶ a focused review of national and international literature
- ▶ an international country review of how para-professional support is provided
- ▶ an analysis of how SNA support is distributed across different care needs and an examination of the outcomes for students
- ▶ an evaluation of the operation of the SNA scheme in 25 randomly selected schools.

In addition, at our request, the National Disability Authority is:

- ▶ conducting a scoping exercise of post-school supports for students with disabilities in an education/training and work environment
- ▶ commissioning a qualitative study to ascertain how prepared students with disabilities are for life after school.

The comprehensive review will be completed by Q1 2018.

#### International Work

This year, the NCSE continued to support the work of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE).

EASNIE is an independent organisation that acts as a platform for collaboration for its member countries, working towards ensuring more inclusive education systems.

During 2016, the NCSE benefited from EASNIE membership by:

- ▶ gathering information from 15 member countries on how para-professional support is used to support students with special educational needs
- ▶ using the EASNIE Profile of Inclusive Teachers to underpin our research on Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion – in the Irish context.





## 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

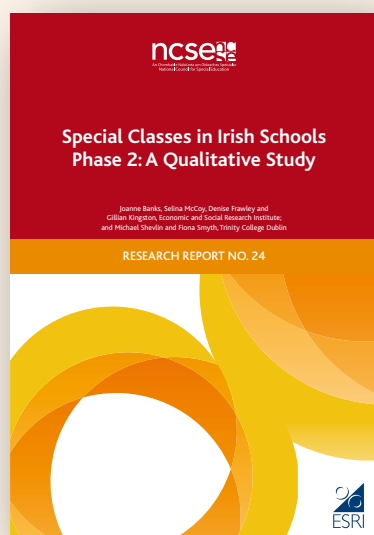
5 new research reports were published and 2 new studies commenced

### Introduction

Our research focuses on a variety of themes in special education and reviews national practice and provision, while also looking at international evidence. It is important that we are up to date on current issues arising 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.

We published five research reports in 2016 and launched our database of continuous professional development opportunities for teachers on inclusion and special education. Work continued on a number of on-going pieces of research, while two new projects specific to the review of the Special Needs Assistant scheme began.

### Our publications



#### Special Classes in Irish Schools Phase 2: A Qualitative Study

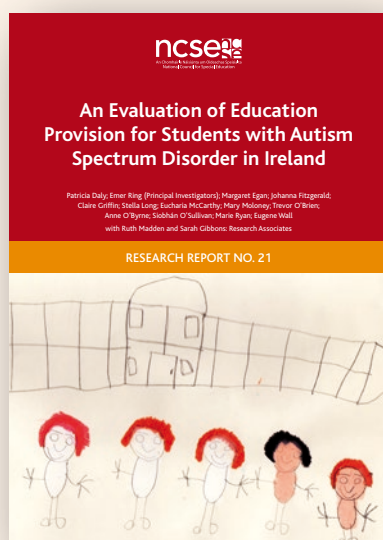
**Authors: Joanne Banks and Selina McCoy *et al.***

Following an earlier NCSE publication from a national survey of schools on special classes in 2014, this research was a follow-up study that took a closer look at special class provision in 12 Irish case study schools – six primary and six post-primary.

The focus of the study was on special classes for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Specific Speech and Language Disorder and Mild General Learning Disability (MGLD) and informal classes set up by schools to support students with a variety of needs.

The researchers engaged with students, special class teachers and principals. They found that schools adopted a variety of approaches to operating special classes – some were fixed settings, with very little integration of students with the rest of the school and, in others, students integrated more frequently with mainstream classes. While some of the teachers in the study felt ill-equipped to teach in special classes, once they had received training, they considered that their capacity to meet student needs was greatly improved.

Student experiences differed in these classes from school to school. Students valued the learning opportunities provided by smaller classes. However, some of the students, specifically those in the informal classes and classes for MGLD, felt a stigma attached to attending the class and were aware of being perceived as 'being different' and at times felt isolated within the school.



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

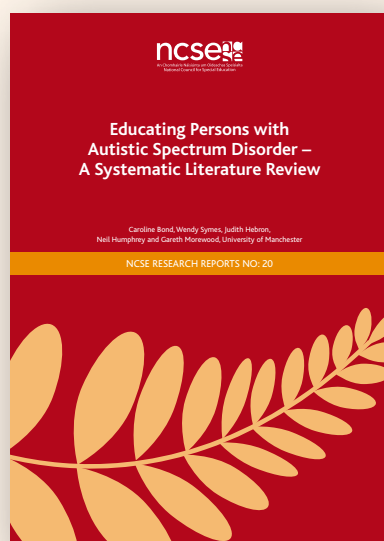
**Authors: Patricia Daly and Emer Ring *et al.***

This evaluation looked at educational provision for students with ASD in a range of settings around the country including mainstream classes, special classes, special schools, and those availing of the home-tuition scheme and the extended school year, also known as the July Education Programme (JEP).

The settings were evaluated against a framework of good practice in the education of students with ASD, which was developed specifically for this study by Middletown Centre for Autism in partnership with the NCSE. The framework was structured around four key areas – teaching and learning, school management, school culture and staff development. The researchers evaluated these areas in 24 settings interviewing school principals, teachers, SNAs, parents and students, as well as observing practice and reviewing documentation.

The framework was extensive in breadth and produced a wide-ranging reporting of findings; a small selection is noted here. In terms of teaching and learning, the researchers considered that the curriculum was generally appropriate, individualised and differentiated in most settings, though in post-primary settings, differentiation of practice was less advanced. The culture across sites was considered positive and inclusive of students with ASD. The learning environment in purpose-built classrooms and schools was ASD-friendly, though adaptations to most mainstream classrooms in this regard required improvement.

In terms of school management, the researchers considered the managerial and administrative structures in place were of a high standard with only one exception. However, difficulties were noted in hiring substitutes for specialist teachers in ASD and hiring teachers for the JEP was particularly difficult. In terms of staff development, teaching staff in most settings had high levels of qualifications and CPD. However, further training for teachers in special classes, home tutors and those providing July Provision in the home, was identified as a need. A lack of CPD for SNAs was also considered problematic in many settings.



## Educating Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders – A Systematic Literature Review

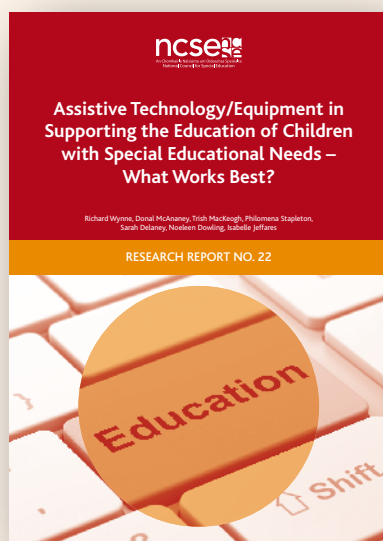
**Authors: Caroline Bond *et al.***

This study reviewed the latest research evidence available on educational interventions for children with ASD. It included research studies published between 2008 and 2013 to build on the evidence already available in a similar NCSE publication in 2009 (Parsons *et al.*).

The researchers considered over 1,000 studies and determined that 85 of these were relevant and rated high enough to be included in the final report. The 85 studies included were quantified into groups with the most, moderate, some and small amount of evidence available. They concluded that the evidence indicates that a range of provision types and intervention strategies are needed.

Looking at the interventions with the most evidence available in the 85 studies, for pre-school children, two interventions were rated in this category – interventions to increase joint attention skills and comprehensive early intervention programmes. Joint attention interventions involve one-to-one delivery of a play-based or turn-taking activity with another adult. Comprehensive pre-school interventions are ASD-specific interventions targeting a number of areas of development such as behaviour, social skills, communication, life skills and learning.

For school-aged children, three interventions were rated as having most evidence available within the 85 studies. Peer-mediated interventions for children in mainstream schools aimed to improve the social skills of the student with ASD, involve lunchtime clubs, problem-solving groups or training for other students to help them to understand how to support the student with ASD. Multi-component social skills interventions include several strategies together such as a parent group to support the child's social skills and social skills training or peer support in the school for the young person with ASD. Behavioural interventions based upon behavioural principles, include prompting the student or changing the student's environment to help them cope better with change.



### Assistive Technology/Equipment in Supporting the Education of Children with Special Educational Needs – What Works Best?

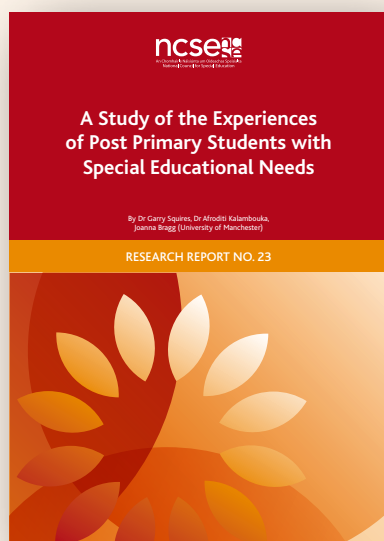
**Authors: Richard Wynne and Donal McAnaney *et al.***

This research examined how assistive technology, as provided to schools by the Department of Education and Skills, supports the education of students with special educational needs. Assistive technology (AT) or equipment can include things like voice-activated software, visual or auditory aids, or soundfield systems.

The study surveyed the views of 100 students and their parents in terms of their experiences of acquiring and using AT as well as their perceived impact of the AT on their education. Teachers and other professionals supporting students using the AT were also consulted and the study was supported by a review of the international research evidence.

Students were generally positive about the AT they received – up to 70% of them reported that their educational needs had been met by their AT. It was viewed as helping them overcome the educational challenges they faced, such as accessing the curriculum and engaging better in class.

While many were positive overall about the process by which AT was acquired and used, a number of areas for improvement were identified, including delays in assessments and poor communications regarding the allocation of equipment. The need for support and training in the use of technology was raised frequently as an issue by all those involved in the study and was also a strong feature in the international literature.



## A Study of the Experiences of Post Primary Students with Special Educational Needs

**Authors: Garry Squires, Afroditi Kalambouka and Joanna Briggs**

This exploratory study looked at the experiences of over 220 students with special educational needs across a range of educational settings including secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools, special schools and Youthreach centres. The research team wanted to know how the experience of Irish students in relation to things like teaching methods, school climate, relationships with peers and teachers, the curriculum and school supports impacted on their engagement and participation in education.

Students in this study shared many of the same views and had similar experiences as those documented in the international literature. They valued teachers who cared about them as individuals and who were sensitive to their learning, emotional and social needs. They liked and wanted to be involved in decisions which affected them, in particular in making curriculum choices, but on occasion needed support to do this. However, some students reported that the curriculum moved too quickly for them, and expressed dissatisfaction when schools delayed in addressing incidents of bullying.

The research identified a number of key lessons, including that: students should be central and actively involved in decisions being made about them; good communication is required between school staff to ensure that consistent approaches to teaching are adopted; and schools should continue to explore how they use a range of strategies with vulnerable students to promote friendship development and maintenance.

A tool for teachers searching for CPD options in SEN was published. The easy-to-use database contains details on over 200 CPD options

### Database on Continuing Professional Development Provision for Teachers in Inclusion

In 2016, we launched a database on continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities for teachers in the areas of inclusion and special educational needs. This was developed to provide a practical tool for teachers by bringing together, in one place, an extensive range of information relating to CPD options available, delivered by a variety of different providers.

There are over 200 entries in the database and it can be searched for CPD opportunities in a number of ways, e.g. by type of provider or by disability focus. Each entry provides summary information, including course aims, content, duration, entry requirements, methods of delivery and assessment methods. The entries also signpost where further information can be found such as websites and prospectuses.

A brief report outlining how the data was compiled and summarising its content was also published along with the database.

### Other research in 2016

#### **Educational Experiences and Outcomes for Children with SEN: From 9-13 years old**

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 when they were 9 years old. This is a follow-up study to that published in 2014 by the NCSE, which reported on the outcomes of the children when they were 9 years old from the same dataset.

#### **Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion**

This longitudinal research is exploring the impact of recent changes to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Ireland on the education of students with special educational needs (SEN). It is following students from their final year on their ITE programme through to the first two years of teaching and tracking how well student and newly qualified teachers feel prepared to educate students with SEN.

#### **Review of the Altered Provision Project**

This is a review of a pilot project operated by the Department of Education and Skills. The project involved the appointment of a teacher, rather than a Special Needs Assistant (SNA), to support students with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties/Disabilities (EBD) at post-primary school. The project is exploring how these students and the schools fare with more additional teaching in the management and self-management of behaviour, rather than care support provided by an SNA.



## New research

Two new research projects commenced in 2016 which have been undertaken specifically to support the review of the SNA Scheme.

### 1. A review of the research evidence

The research evidence regarding the impact of different types of supports on students with additional needs in an educational context is being reviewed. Specifically, this work examines studies published between 2000-2016, that demonstrate an impact of additional non-teaching adults in the classroom, interventions they deliver, or the training they receive, on outcomes for students with additional needs.

### 2. A cross-country review

A review of schemes similar to the SNA scheme in other countries is underway. This work involves the administration of a survey to government departments/agencies in other countries regarding the mechanisms which they use to support children with additional needs in an educational context, the main features of such mechanisms and any identified outcomes recorded.

## NCSE Annual Research Conference

Our 2016 research conference took place on 16th November at Croke Park Conference Centre. It was well attended again by around 200 stakeholders including principals and teachers, researchers, parents, educational psychologists, those involved in teacher education, disability advocacy groups, departmental and union officials, among others. Full details of the proceedings are published on our website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

This year's conference had two themes. The morning session focused on issues relating to mainstream and special provision and our international keynote speaker, Professor Roger Slee, University of South Australia, opened the session on this theme. This was followed by a presentation from our own commissioned research on special classes. In the afternoon, two presentations were provided on our commissioned research that looked at educational experiences and outcomes for students with SEN in post-primary schools as well as a presentation from the NCSE reflecting on special education provision in post-primary schools over the last 10 years.



Mary Byrne, NCSE; Gary Squires, Manchester University; Sheelagh Drudy, NCSE; Eamon Stack, NCSE; and Roger Slee, University of South Australia, at the NCSE Research Conference in November



Front Row (Left to Right): Joanne Banks, ESRI; Mary Byrne, NCSE; Selina McCoy, ESRI; Sheelagh Drudy, NCSE; Caroline McKeown, Educational Research Centre

Back Row (Left to Right): Teresa Griffin, NCSE; Peter Archer, Educational Research Centre; Eamon Stack, NCSE; Johnny Murphy, DES; Gary Squires, Manchester University; and Roger Slee, University of South Australia, at the NCSE Research Conference in November



## 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**

### Review of Current Provision for adults

One of our functions under the EPSEN Act is to review generally the provision made for adults with disabilities to avail of higher education and adult and continuing education, rehabilitation and training. We commenced engagement with providers of these services for adults and with people who have disabilities, focusing initially on relevant HSE service provision. During 2016 we met with and visited a number of service providers including Prosper Fingal, WALK in Dublin and the Daughters of Charity Disability Support Services, St Vincent's, Lisnagry, Limerick. We also engaged with HSE Disability Services and attended the Day Services, New Directions Learning event which was arranged by the HSE for Day Service providers in May 2016. We expect to complete this review and report to the Council in 2017.

### Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024

One of the key priorities under this strategy is to build the skills, capacity and independence of people with disabilities and it sets down a range of actions to be delivered by various responsible government Departments and Agencies, including the Department of Education and Skills and the NCSE. Progress on these actions has been made through the publication of transition guidelines and information for students, schools and families on post-school options and by the deployment of special needs assistants in schools with a focus on developing students' independence skills. As outlined earlier in this report a review of the scheme for the allocation of SNAs is currently underway.

### National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2016-19

The NCSE participates as a stakeholder on the new Department of Education and Skills Steering Committee for the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-19. The steering committee is chaired by the Department and it has a range of responsibilities including monitoring progress towards the implementation of the National Access Plan and advising the Department and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in relation to challenges and opportunities that may arise during implementation of the plan. The new plan includes increased targets for participation in higher education by underrepresented groups, including students with disabilities.

## Strategic Priority 4

One of the actions under the National Plan is to review the Fund for Students with Disabilities. The HEA has appointed consultants to conduct this review, including financial provision, demand and resource requirements, the allocation model, the experience of students and the interactions of higher and further education institutions with the Fund. The review was conducted in consultation with stakeholders. The NCSE engaged with the consultant during 2016 as part of this process. It is expected that the report of the review will be finalised in 2017.



DCU students Finbarr McDermott, Laura O'Neill & Laura Nugent at the NCSE Research Conference in November



## 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**

In 2016 we continued to maintain and develop our capacity as an effective organisation in compliance with all our statutory, regulatory and other requirements.

### New Council

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 three-year term of the previous Council ended on 31st December 2015.

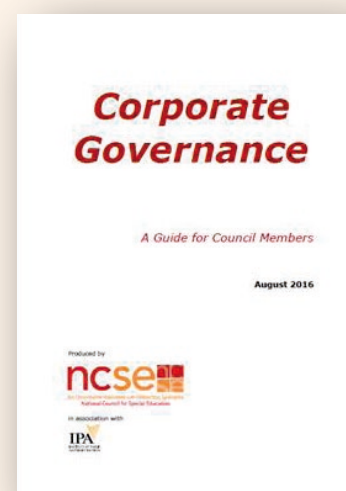
The Minister re-appointed Eamon Stack as Chairperson from 1st January 2016. The remaining members of the Council were appointed from 27th July 2016. Prior to the appointment by the Minister of the other Council members, the NCSE Chairperson, in accordance with the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards – [www.stateboards.ie](http://www.stateboards.ie) – engaged with the Minister in regard to the skills and competencies required of NCSE Council members. The term of office of the new Council expires on 31st December 2018.

### Interim Governance Arrangements

The NCSE and the Department of Education and Skills agreed alternative governance arrangements for the period in 2016 prior to the Council being appointed. These included sign-off by the Chairperson of the Annual Accounts and Annual Report for 2015 and operational budget profiles for 2016. When it was appointed, the new Council was briefed on these arrangements.

### Briefing for the new Council

The NCSE Guide for Council Members on Corporate Governance, which was reviewed and updated with the assistance of the Institute of Public Administration, was provided for new Council members. This Guide contains NCSE Corporate Governance procedures and arrangements, including the schedule of reserved Council functions, Council Committees and their terms of reference, ethics in public office requirements and the Code of Business Conduct for Council Members. Briefing on the Guide was also provided by the IPA for members. A copy of this updated members' Guide is published on our website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).



## Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2009

The updated Guide is based on the 2009 Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. Details of the confirmations by the Council of NCSE compliance with the Code is included in Appendix 1.

## Deputy Chairperson and Committees

The new Council elected Sheelagh Drudy to be Deputy Chairperson of the Council under Section 19 (Schedule 1) of the EPSEN Act. The Council agreed the re-establishment of 5 Committees under Section 33 of EPSEN – Audit Committee, CEO Performance Committee, Finance Committee, Research Committee and Strategy and Policy Committee. It also agreed to the membership of each of these Committees – details are given in the Governance Section of this report. An external Chairperson with relevant expertise was appointed to the Audit Committee.

## Consultative Forum

The Council is required to appoint up to 17 members to a Consultative Forum under Section 22 of EPSEN. The term of appointment of Forum members completed during 2016. Following the process outlined in Section 22, the Council appointed members to the Forum with a term expiring at the end of December 2018. Details of outgoing and incoming Forum members are included in the Governance Section following in this Report.

## Performance Management

The NCSE Strategy Statement covers the period 2011 to 2016. Detailed work plans in line with the strategic priorities were agreed by the Council for 2016. Progress on these work plans was reviewed during 2016. Key organisational risks as identified by the executive and approved by Council, were assessed and reported on during 2016. The annual full review of risk was also conducted and an updated register of risk for 2017 agreed by the Council, on the recommendation of the Audit Committee. The NCSE continued to engage with the Department of Education and Skills on the development of a new performance delivery agreement, consistent with the strategic priorities of the Department and the NCSE. The NCSE commenced work on a new statement of strategy for 2017 forwards.

The Council has agreed arrangements for both Council itself and for its Committees to conduct self-evaluation reviews of their performance. These arrangements will be considered further and implemented having regard to the requirements and guidelines in the 2016 Code of Practice.

## Annual Accounts

The 2015 annual accounts were presented to the Minister in June 2016. The NCSE annual accounts are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General and following audit they are submitted to the Minister and then laid before the Oireachtas and published on the NCSE website at [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie). The annual accounts are presented and published separately from this report.

## Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015

The Chief Executive is a designated public official under this Act.





**Governance**



## Governance

### The Council of the NCSE



NCSE Council 2016-18 with the Chief Executive

Back row L to R: Marion Meany, Áine Lynch, Anne Tansey, Johnny Murphy, Joe Hayes, Helen Guinan, Antoinette Nic Gearailt and Teresa Griffin, CEO

Front row L to R: Tom O'Sullivan, Eithne Fitzgerald, Finian O'Shea, Eamon Stack, Chairperson, Sheelagh Drudy and Don Mahon

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 EPSN Act, 2004. The three-year term of the previous Council ended on 31st December 2015. The Minister re-appointed Eamon Stack as Chairperson from 1st January 2016. The remaining members of the Council were appointed from 27th July 2016. The term of office of the Chairperson and ordinary members of the Council of the NCSE expires on 31st December 2018. The Council met on 3 occasions during 2016. As the full Council was not in place until July 2016, it was not possible to hold 6 meetings as envisaged in Schedule 1 of the EPSN Act. Details of individual members and their attendances are given in the table following. Further details are published on our website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

Membership of the Council of the NCSE during 2016		
Name	Details	Attendance
Eamon Stack*, Chairperson	Former Chief Inspector in the Department of Education and Skills (DES)	3
Sheelagh Drudy*, Deputy Chairperson	Emeritus Professor of Education at University College Dublin and former head of the UCD School of Education	3
Eithne Fitzgerald*	Recently retired Head of Policy and Research at the National Disability Authority	3
Helen Guinan*	Chairperson of the National Disability Authority. Former Principal of St Paul's Special School, Montenotte, Cork	2
Joe Hayes	Former Irish Ambassador	3
Áine Lynch	CEO of the National Parents Council Primary	3
Don Mahon	Former Assistant Chief Inspector in the Department of Education and Skills (DES)	3
Marion Meany	Assistant National Director, HSE, responsible for disability services	3
Johnny Murphy*	Divisional Inspector, Department of Education and Skills	3
Antoinette Nic Gearailt	President of the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)	3
Finian O'Shea	Former Lecturer at Church of Ireland College of Education	2
Tom O'Sullivan*	Former Assistant General Secretary, INTO. Former Principal of St Senan's Boys National School, Limerick	3
Anne Tansey	Director of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)	3

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



## 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 (2 meetings)	Attendance
John Fitzgerald, Chairperson	2
Sheelagh Drudy	2
Helen Guinan	2
Don Mahon	2
Eamon Stack	2

CEO Performance (1 meeting)	Attendance
Eamon Stack, Chairperson	1
Helen Guinan	1
Tom O'Sullivan	1

Finance (3 meetings)	Attendance
Don Mahon, Chairperson	3
Joe Hayes	3
Marion Meany	3
Antoinette Nic Gearailt	3

Research (3 meetings)	Attendance
Sheelagh Drudy, Chairperson	3
Johnny Murphy	3
Finian O'Shea	2
Anne Tansey	2

Strategy and Policy (3 meetings)	Attendance
Helen Guinan, Chairperson	3
Eithne Fitzgerald	3
Aine Lynch	3
Tom O'Sullivan	3

## NCSE Consultative Forum

The Consultative Forum is established by the Council under Section 22 of EPSEN. 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 which ended in July 2016. There was 1 meeting in 2016.

NCSE Consultative Forum (2013-16)		
Council-appointed members		Attendance
Seán Balfe	Primary School Principal	1
Ann Bourke	Disability Specialist, Health Service Executive	0
Seán Burke	Former Chief Executive, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board	0
Denis Burns	Director of Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education Needs, University College Cork	0
Breda Corr	General Secretary, National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education	0
Patricia Griffin	Education Officer, Down Syndrome Ireland	1
Adam Harris	Works with voluntary bodies supporting people with autism	0
Julie Helen	Works with the COPE Foundation	1
Miriam Hilliard	Senior Special Educational Needs Organiser	1
Ann Jackson	Principal of a special school and Officer of Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education	0
Denise Kelly	Education Officer, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment	0
Christy Lynch	Chairperson, National Federation of Voluntary Bodies. Chief Executive Officer, KARE	1
Teresa McDonnell	Chairperson of a support organisation for parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing children	1
Patrick McVicar	Former Post Primary Principal and member of the Teaching Council	1
Deirbhile Nic Craith	Assistant General Secretary, Irish National Teachers' Organisation	0
Carmel O'Shea	National Parents Council	1
Donie O'Shea	Senior Policy Advisor, National Disability Authority.	1

NCSE Consultative Forum (2013-16) (continued)		
Members appointed by Minister for Education and Skills		Attendance
Eamon Clavin	Inspector, Department of Education and Skills	1
Michael Cullinane	Regional Director, National Educational Psychological Service	0
Aisling Curley	Assistant Principal Officer, Special Education Section, Department of Education and Skills	0

### New Consultative Forum appointed in December 2016

The term of the previous Forum completed in July 2016. The new members of the Forum were appointed from December 2016 and their term is due to expire at end December 2018. Membership of the body is listed below.

NCSE Consultative Forum (2016-18)	
Council-appointed members	
Kevin Carragher	Disability Manager, HSE
Noelle Connolly <sup>3</sup>	Head of Local Services, NCSE
Breda Corr	General Secretary, National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education
Padraig Flanagan	Principal, Post Primary School
Gerard Gallagher	Disability Advisor, NUI, Maynooth
Patricia Griffin	Education Officer, Down Syndrome Ireland
Adam Harris	Chief Executive, AsIAM
Julie Helen	Advocacy Project Worker for People with Disabilities
Ann Higgins	Principal, Special School
Denise Kelly	Education Officer, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
Siobhan Long	Enable Ireland Disability Services
Matt Melvin	Principal, Primary School
Teresa McDonnell	Chairperson of a support organisation for parents of Deaf and hard of hearing children

<sup>3</sup> Noelle Connolly's appointment was ratified by the Council in March 2017.

**NCSE Consultative Forum (2016-18) (continued)****Council-appointed members (continued)**

Deirbhile Nic Craith	Assistant General Secretary, Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Paddy O'Neill	Principal, Post Primary School
Carmel O'Shea	National Parents Council
Donie O'Shea	Senior Policy Advisor, National Disability Authority

**Members appointed by Minister for Education and Skills**

Eamon Clavin	Inspector, Department of Education and Skills
Michael Cullinane	Regional Director, National Educational Psychological Service
Catriona Hanevy	Assistant Principal Officer, Department of Education & Skills



The graphic consists of two overlapping circles on a light beige background. The top circle is orange and contains the word 'Appendices' in white. The bottom circle is a larger, dark red color and overlaps the bottom of the orange circle.

## Appendices





## Appendix 1

### Confirmations of Compliance with Requirements of the Code of Governance for State Bodies 2009

#### 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 2016 is provided in the NCSE audited annual accounts which are published separately.

#### Schedule of Reserved and Delegated Functions

The Council has agreed a formal schedule of specific matters specifically reserved to it for decision to ensure its appropriate direction and control of the NCSE. Council has also agreed a schedule of delegations to the Chief Executive.

#### 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.

#### Procurement Policy

Government policy on public procurement is being applied in the NCSE together with adherence to the rules and procedures of the Public Spending Code.

The NCSE avails of shared service arrangements and central drawdown contracts including those procured by the Office of Government Procurement.

#### 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 2016.

### 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](http://www.ncse.ie). Any matters drawn to attention in 2016 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, risk management and review of the draft annual accounts.

### Annual Energy Efficiency Reporting

In 2016, the NCSE reported the organisation's energy performance in 2015 to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland as required under EU regulations. The NCSE continues to track progress towards the 2020 target outlined in The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2014 which underpins commitment to a 33% energy saving for the public sector by 2020.

### Overview of NCSE energy usage 2014 and 2015

	2015	2014
MWh of electricity	139.31	162.34
MWh of fossil fuels	273.32	265.40
MWh of renewable fuels	0.00	0.00

## Appendix 2

### NCSE Staffing

Grade	Staff in post end 2016
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
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>

## Appendix 3

### Statistical Information for the School Year 2015-16

#### Students accessing resource teaching by category of disability

Nearly 53,000 students received extra teaching from resource teachers in schools with 28,714 students in mainstream primary and 24,217 students in post primary schools.

Disability Category	No of Students	
	Primary	Post-Primary
Assessed syndrome	197	59
Autism/autistic spectrum disorders	6,487	3,341
Down Syndrome	167	16
Emotional/behavioural disturbance	5,074	3,637
Hearing impairment	802	487
Moderate general learning disability	599	169
Multiple disabilities	2,272	1,097
Other	28	2
Physical disability	4,504	3,343
Severe emotional/behavioural disturbance	812	474
Severe/profound general learning disability	34	0
Specific speech and language disorder	7,437	1,343
Visual impairment	301	249
Students with a borderline or mild general learning disability or a specific learning disability (estimate)		10,000*
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,714</b>	<b>24,217</b>

\* This figure reflects the estimated number of students with a high incidence disability in post-primary schools. 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<sup>4</sup>

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"> <li>▶ Being of average intelligence or higher.</li> <li>▶ 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.</li> </ul>
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.
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.

4 Department of Education and Skills Circular SP ED 08/02.

Low Incidence Disabilities	
Disability category	Description
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.
Specific speech and language disorder	<p>Such pupils should meet each of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 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.</li> <li>▶ 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.</li> </ul> <p>Two assessments, a psychological assessment and a speech and language assessment, are necessary.</p>

Low Incidence Disabilities	
Disability category	Description
Visual impairment	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.

## Appendix 5

### Glossary of Acronyms Used

ACCS	Association of Community & Comprehensive Schools
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
AT	Assistive Technology
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
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
ESL	Early School Leaving
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HSE	Health Service Executive
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
IPPE	Inclusive Pre-Primary Education
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
IQ	Intelligence quotient
JEP	July Education Programme
MGLD	Mild General Learning Disability
NBSS	National Behaviour Support Service
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NUI	National University of Ireland
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





