

## **National Council for Special Education welcomes Minister's action to end exclusionary practices in schools**

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) welcomes the Minister's decision to commence a section of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 giving him the power to compel schools to open special classes with effect from 3 December 2018.

The most fundamental educational requirement is that a child with special educational needs can be enrolled in a school. Sometimes, a child's most appropriate placement is in a special class or a special school. While the NCSE has worked with schools to open hundreds of special classes over the last few years, it has been frustrating for parents and students when there isn't a place available in a special class near them.

In 2013, the NCSE advised the Minister that a robust regulatory enrolment framework for schools was needed to ensure that

- Every child with special educational needs is protected from enrolment practices or policies with barriers that block access to enrolment in the school; and
- All schools must establish a special class if so requested.

Ms Teresa Griffin, CEO, NCSE welcomed the Minister's decision to commence Section 8 stating that: "while most schools do welcome and enrol children with special educational needs, the NCSE strongly supports the Minister's commitment to ensure that exclusionary practices cannot be permitted in any national system of education. Commencing Section 8 of the Education (Admissions to Schools) Act, 2018 will enable the Minister to direct schools to open such classes in regions with insufficient capacity as identified by the NCSE."

Ms Griffin advised that the NCSE would immediately contact and consult the education partners before finalising procedures governing how the NCSE intends to carry out its functions under the Act.

### **Ends**

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### **Notes to Editor**

One of the NCSE's functions is to provide policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills on the education of students with special educational needs. The NCSE also works with schools to open special classes.

In our seminal 2013 policy advice to the Minister, the NCSE identified that some parents encountered "soft barriers" when seeking to enrol their child with special educational needs. The NCSE recommended a robust regulatory admissions framework was needed to ensure every child with a special educational need could be enrolled in a school. The NCSE has worked very closely with the Department of Education and Skills in relation to this legislation.

The number of special classes opened in recent years has gone from 628 in 2012/13 to 1,459 this year. The vast majority of these special classes support students with autism. The number of early

intervention, primary and post primary special classes for each of the last seven years is presented in the table below.

	<b>12/13</b>	<b>13/14</b>	<b>14/15</b>	<b>15/16</b>	<b>16/17</b>	<b>17/18</b>	<b>18/19 (Sept)</b>
Early Intervention	49	71	96	118	128	131	132
Primary	445	493	557	636	712	826	929
Post Primary	134	173	202	254	309	347	398
<b>Total</b>	<b>628</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>1,008</b>	<b>1,149</b>	<b>1,304</b>	<b>1,459</b>