

National Council for Special Education Annual Report 2018



**National Council
for Special Education
Annual Report 2018**

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National Council for Special Education

1-2 Mill Street

Trim

Co Meath

T: 046 948 6400

www.ncse.ie

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NCSE Chairperson's Report to the Minister

June 2019
Mr Joe McHugh, TD
Minister for Education and Skills
Department of Education and Skills
Marlborough Street
Dublin 1

Dear Minister

In line with the requirements of the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004, I am, as Chairperson of the NCSE, honoured to present you with our annual report for 2018.

2018 was a busy year for the NCSE.

In May, we published our Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Scheme. This policy advice, submitted to you in March 2018, made a number of recommendations regarding the inclusion of students with additional care needs in our education system. In particular it recommended the development of a new School Inclusion Model focused on delivering the right supports at the right time for students with additional care needs. It recommended the provision of a new training programme for SNAs, and a new SNA allocation model.

The Government and the Department of Education and Skills made a firm commitment to implementing this model on a phased basis with the allocation of funding for it in Budget 2019. I am especially pleased to confirm that NCSE staff are working closely with officials from your Department to carry through on this important commitment.

2018 also saw the roll-out of the In-School and Pre-School Therapy Support Demonstration Project to 75 schools and 75 pre-schools in parts of Dublin, Wicklow and Kildare.

This exciting initiative, led by your Department and managed by the NCSE, has seen the introduction of capacity building and tailored therapeutic supports to schools and pre-schools, with the ultimate aim of improving outcomes for children and fostering greater collaboration between school and pre-school staff, therapists and parents. This project offers great potential to meet the needs of students with special educational needs in an innovative manner. The NCSE looks forward to reporting to you in 2019 on its outcomes.

Following the transition in 2017 of separate education services into the NCSE, the development of an interim regional structure for NCSE support services continued in 2018. We have established 10 teams across five regions. These comprise advisors, visiting teachers and special educational needs organisers (SENOs). They will provide a coordinated service to students, schools and families and will improve outcomes for children with special educational needs. This work is a necessary building block to support the implementation of the School Inclusion Model and the Therapy Support Demonstration Project.

In addition to providing you with an annual report under the EPSEN Act, I am also required under the 2016 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 2018. We do not anticipate any such developments.
- ▶ The financial position of the NCSE is as disclosed in our 2018 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 include, as required, my report, confirmations to you regarding the NCSE System of Internal Controls and the required governance statement and board members' report.
- ▶ The NCSE Council completed an evaluation of NCSE performance by reference to the annual plan and budget in December 2018.
- ▶ An external evaluation of the performance of the Council was commissioned and completed in 2018.
- ▶ The NCSE has adopted the 2016 Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and continues to be fully compliant with all aspects of it.
- ▶ In this context, I confirm that:
 - ▼ All appropriate procedures for financial reporting, internal audit, travel and asset disposals have been carried out.
 - ▼ The NCSE is adhering to Government policy on public procurement and implementing our current Corporate Procurement Plan. In the case of two contracts, however, we identified non-compliance with guidelines and have disclosed this in our Statement of Internal Control in our annual accounts.
 - ▼ The NCSE is adhering to the relevant aspects and procedures of the public spending code.
 - ▼ The NCSE carried out an appropriate assessment of principal risks, including a description of these risks and, where appropriate, associated mitigation measures and strategies.
 - ▼ NCSE members comply with the NCSE Code of Business Conduct for Members of State Boards.
 - ▼ 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. Individual Council members' expenses are detailed in the governance statement published separately to this report.
 - ▼ 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.

Further confirmations of compliance with the requirements of the Code are set out in Appendix 1.

During 2018, we continued to allocate SNA posts to schools for special educational needs. As detailed in this report, by the end of the 2017-18 school year over 14,000 SNA posts were in place in schools to support over 34,000 students with additional care needs. We also continued to work with your Department on the implementation of the Special Education Teacher allocation process.

At your request, we commenced work on a new piece of policy advice reviewing special classes and special schools in Ireland. In 2018 an extensive consultation process was initiated along with a multi-strand research process. This work will continue throughout 2019 during which time I anticipate the Council being in a position to submit a progress report to you.

Along with the research strand of this policy advice, our multi-annual research programme continued with two projects progressing and one new project commencing – the evaluation of the in-school and pre-school therapy demonstration project.

Our annual research conference held in November was attended by over 200 delegates. The conference themes of lifelong learning for adults with disabilities, and the provision of in-school therapy supports attracted many new delegates and delegates from new sectors this year.

The NCSE remains ready to provide any further information or clarification to you or your officials about any of our activities in 2018.

Yours sincerely

Joe Hayes
Chairperson,
National Council for Special Education





Introduction:

Our Strategic Approach

Introduction

Our Strategic Approach

The NCSE's vision is for a society where children and adults with special educational needs are supported to achieve better outcomes in their education to enable them to reach their potential.

In striving to achieve this vision, we have a number of activities arising from our functions as set out in Section 20 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004. Specifically, these include:

- ▶ Planning and coordinating the provision of education supports for children with special educational needs.
- ▶ 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 and advising on educational provision for adults with disabilities.

Table 1 below outlines the five strategic goals of our statement of strategy. This report is structured around these goals, reporting progress under each.

Table 1: NCSE Strategic Goals Statement of Strategy 2017-21

- ▶ **Goal 1:** Support schools to enable students with special educational needs achieve better outcomes and ensure a range of educational placement options are available.
- ▶ **Goal 2:** Provide a research programme that identifies key issues, emerging trends and an evidence base to support the work of the NCSE and achievement of better outcomes for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ **Goal 3:** Provide independent, expert and evidence-informed policy and practice advice to the Minister for Education and Skills.
- ▶ **Goal 4:** Review provision and advise on best practice in education and training for adults with special educational needs.
- ▶ **Goal 5:** Maintain an effective organisation that complies with all legal and corporate requirements and manage information and communication strategies with parents, students, adults with disabilities, schools and the wider public.



Main Achievements



Main Achievements

Some of our main achievements during 2018 are summarised below:

In the 2017-18 school year, the NCSE:

- ▶ Enabled over 34,000 students with special educational needs who also have significant care needs to access special needs assistant (SNA) support.
- ▶ Processed over 8,700 new applications from schools for students with special educational needs for access to SNA support.
- ▶ Processed over 3,500 new applications for school transport for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Processed over 4,100 new applications for assistive technology/special equipment for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Had established over 1,300 special classes in mainstream schools with places available for 8,370 students.

In 2018, the NCSE also:

- ▶ Published its Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme, which recommended the development of a new School Inclusion Model for students with additional care needs.
- ▶ Began the roll-out of the In-School and Pre-School Therapy Support Demonstration Project across 75 schools and 75 pre-schools.
- ▶ Continued the development of its interim regional structures to support students, schools and families. This included establishing ten teams in five regions, combining the expertise of special educational needs organisers (SENOs), visiting teachers and advisors. These professionals provide a coordinated service with the ultimate aim of improving outcomes for students with special educational needs. A combined policy and practice section was also established, enhancing NCSE's focus on developing good practice.
- ▶ Completed a three-year review process of SNA allocations in line with DES Circular 0030/2014.
- ▶ Commenced a review of special classes and special schools at the request of the Minister for Education and Skills.
- ▶ Hosted its annual research conference, attended by over 200 delegates this year, which focused on transitions and lifelong learning for adults with disabilities, and providing therapies in schools.

Department of Education and Skills Action Plan for Education 2016-19

The DES Action Plan for Education 2016-19 sets out a clear vision for the Irish education and training system to become the best in Europe over the next decade and for every person to have an opportunity to fulfil their potential. Support for learners is embedded in the five action plan goals, with Goal 2 targeting learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs.

The NCSE continued to work with the DES in 2018 to deliver on identified targets and actions within the required timeframe, including completing the three year review of the SNA scheme, informing schools of their SNA allocation before the end of the 2017-18 school year, supporting the embedding of the special education teachers allocation model and commencing the in-school and pre-school therapy demonstration project.

The NCSE will continue to work with the DES to deliver on other identified and related actions within the required timeframe, including implementing, monitoring and evaluating the therapy demonstration project, further developing the NCSE support service and progressing the review of special schools and special classes.



Strategic Goal 1

Support schools to enable students with special educational needs achieve better outcomes and ensure a range of educational placement options is available

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Support schools to enable students with special educational needs achieve better outcomes and ensure a range of educational placement options is available

The NCSE plans, coordinates 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 can apply to their locally based NCSE special educational needs organiser (SENO) for a variety of resources depending on the needs in the school. They are:

- ▶ SNA (special needs assistant) support
- ▶ assistive technology/specialist equipment, and/or
- ▶ non-standard school transport arrangements

Most students with special educational needs are now educated in mainstream classes. However, provision ranging from full-time enrolment in mainstream classes to full-time enrolment in special schools is available for students. The 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 special education 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.

Furthermore, the Visiting Teacher Service provides advice and support to ensure the educational needs of children and young people who are deaf/hard of hearing or blind/visually impaired are met. This service is available at pre-school, primary and post-primary level.

Resourcing Schools in the 2017-18 School Year

Applications for Additional Supports

In the 2017-18 school year¹ SENOs processed over 16,500 applications for additional supports for students with special educational needs under the three allocation schemes listed above. Table 1 below outlines the number of applications processed under each scheme.

Table 1: Summary of Applications Processed by NCSE for School Year 2017-18

Scheme	No of Applications
SNA	8,781
School transport	3,597
Assistive technology/specialist equipment	4,157
Total	16,535

Special Classes

SENOs sanctioned the establishment of 174 new special classes in the school year 2017-18. By the end of the school year there were 1,304 special classes in mainstream schools with 8,370 places available. This is a net increase of 915 places over the previous year.

Special Schools

In the 2017-18 school year, over 7,900 students were enrolled in special schools supported by the NCSE. The NCSE allocated 1,204 teachers and 2,470 SNAs to special schools in 2017-18. The corresponding figures in the previous school year 2016-17 were 1,197 teachers and 2,405 SNAs.

8,370 places now available in 1,304 special classes in mainstream schools

SNA Support

By the end of the 2017-18 school year, over 34,500 students were granted SNA support. This was an increase on the previous year, at 32,500 students. The number of SNA posts allocated to primary, post-primary and special schools by the end of 2017-18 also increased from 13,006 to 14,063.

¹ The 2017-18 school year is from September 2017 to June 2018

Supporting the continued Implementation of the Special Education Teacher Allocation Model

A new model for the allocation of special education teachers was introduced with effect from September 2017. Over 13,200 teachers were originally allocated in 2017 for the school years 2017-18 and 2018-19. A list of schools and their SET allocation is provided on the NCSE website.

The NCSE continued to support the implementation of the model in 2018 through its local staff engaging with schools. It also continued to finalise reviews of cases where exceptional circumstances arose in a school subsequent to its original allocation being calculated. For the 2017-18 school year, 70 applications were received under this exceptional review process. Of these, 22 applications were submitted for review, with 17 schools receiving an additional revised allocation

Further information about the SET review process is in DES Circulars 0013/2017 and 0014/2017.

Resourcing Schools in the 2018-19 School Year²

NCSE staff continued to engage with schools to support the implementation of the SET allocation model. It also reviewed new applications for reviews of allocations in cases where exceptional circumstances arose in a school in the 2018/19 school year. This process started in October 2018, with 56 applications received by the end of December 2018.

As a result of the exceptional reviews in both 2017 and 2018, the number of special education teachers in schools rose to 13,396.

The number of SNAs allocated to schools by the end of December 2018 is set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Number of SNA posts

	End 2017-18 School Year	End December 2018
SNA Posts	14,063	14,973

13,396 special education teachers allocated to schools by end of 2018.

² The 2018-19 school year is from September 2018 to June 2019

Special Needs Assistant Appeals Process

Every year some decisions on SNA allocations are appealed by schools or parents. By the end of December 2018, 79 appeals were received in respect of over 8,700 SNA decisions.

Table 3: SNA Decision Appeal Figures end December 2018

Total number of SNA appeals received	79
Appeals upheld	7
Appeals not upheld	59
Appeals withdrawn	5
Appeals being processed	18

NCSE Support Service for Schools

For the 2018 calendar year

- ▶ 465 courses were delivered
- ▶ 16,467 teachers were engaged in professional development and learning at NCSE seminars and Whole Staff seminars
- ▶ 18,564 professional development and learning days provided for NCSE seminars and Whole Staff seminars
- ▶ 1,862 applications were received from schools for in-school support³

St Angela's College, Sligo, (a college of the National University of Ireland, Galway [NUIG]), offers a postgraduate certificate/diploma in special educational needs (autism spectrum disorder (ASD) professional development programme⁴ in collaboration with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) for teachers of students with ASD. In November 2018, two students graduated with a certificate, 21 students graduated with a diploma and two students graduated with a masters (MA SEN [ASD]).

NCSE also facilitates teachers working with pupils with autism in accessing specific courses through Middletown Centre for Autism. One-hundred-and-forty-four teachers were trained in Middletown⁵ seminars in 2018.

Visiting Teacher Service

Our visiting teachers support children who are deaf/hard of hearing and who are blind/visually impaired, and their families. This support is provided in the home and in schools. In 2018, 4,900 school-going children and 775 babies/pre-school children were supported by our visiting teachers, covering about 2,550 schools and 355 pre-schools.

³ In-school support may include the provision of assistance with SET implementation, provision of in-school support and the development and delivery of CPD to teachers.

⁴ See DES Circular 0006/2018.

⁵ Middletown Centre for Autism is a North-South educational initiative established in 2007 with funding from the Department of Education (DE), Northern Ireland and the Department of Education and Skills (DES), Ireland.

Implementation of the In-School and Pre-School Therapy Support Demonstration Project

After a significant amount of development work and planning in late 2017 and 2018, the implementation of the In-School and Pre-School Therapy Support Demonstration Project began in September 2018. This innovative, cross sectoral multi-agency project managed by the NCSE sees the introduction of a multi-tiered therapy support model involving school staff, speech and language therapists (SLTs), occupational therapists (OTs) and families.

The project is being rolled out in 75 schools and 75 early years settings in parts of south Dublin, Kildare and west Wicklow. Through capacity building and collaboration between therapist and teacher, the model aims to provide universal, targeted and intensive support to facilitate the learning, engagement and facilitation of all students.

75 schools and
75 pre-schools
participating in
Therapy Support
Demonstration
Project



Then Minister for Education and Skills Richard Bruton TD, launching the In-School and Pre-School Therapy Support Demonstration Project, May 2018. The project is managed by the NCSE.

Special Award at the 2018 BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition

The NCSE sponsored a special award at the 2018 BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition. The NCSE 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's NCSE special award was presented to Ashleigh Wood, Lucy Quirke and Elspeth McIntosh from Bandon Grammar School in Cork. The winning team's project was titled "Dyslexia: Learning Difficulty or Hidden Talent?"



Teresa Griffin, Chief Executive Officer, National Council for Special Education, presenting the National Council for Special Education Award to Ashleigh Wood, Lucy Quirke and Elspeth McIntosh from Bandon Grammar School, Co Cork, for their project "Dyslexia: Learning Difficulty or Hidden Talent." in the Social and Behavioural Sciences Intermediate Group Category.

NCSE wins at the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards

Each year, certain initiatives across the Civil Service are shortlisted for the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards. These initiatives are examples of best practice and innovation across Government Departments and Offices. In 2018, the NCSE was part of the team that won the Citizen Impact Award for the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). AIM provides additional information, guidance and resources to pre-schools to support young children who need additional help to attend mainstream settings.



Strategic Goal 2

Provide a research programme that identifies key issues, emerging trends and an evidence base to support the work of the NCSE and achievement of better outcomes for students with special educational needs

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Introduction

Research plays an important role in the work of the NCSE. It deepens our knowledge of special education issues, keeps us up to date on the latest developments and contributes to the development of an evidence base to inform our policy advice to the Minister for Education and Skills.

In 2018, we published five pieces of research, including three related to the Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme, progressed two research projects and commissioned a new study. We also responded to numerous requests for statistics, research data and reports.

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Our Publications

Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion: Phase 1 and 2 Report

The Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion (ITE4I) project is a four-year longitudinal study that seeks to examine the impact of changes to how teachers are trained in Ireland in relation to educating students with special educational needs. The study tracks teachers from the final year of their ITE programme to the end of their second year teaching as a qualified teacher.

The report of the first two phases of the project examined the content of 30 different initial teacher education (ITE) programmes delivered by 13 providers in Ireland. It also survey 437 final year ITE programme students and interviewed 47 of them about their experiences of teacher training and their views on being prepared to be inclusive teachers. Twenty-one ITE provider staff were also interviewed as part of the study.

First report from major longitudinal study on Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion was published

The findings showed that student teachers were positive in their approach to inclusive teaching and felt well prepared in terms of values and attitudes. Some teachers, however, did not feel confident to use their knowledge and skills to implement inclusive practices in schools. While teacher educators reported being supportive of the promotion of inclusive practices in schools, some noted that they often felt such practices were not covered sufficiently in ITE programmes and they did not have sufficient knowledge of inclusive practices/special education.

The study is ongoing, with the final phases almost complete – see further below in the 'ongoing research' section.

Educational Experiences and Outcomes of Children with Special Educational Needs: Phase 2 – from age 9 to 13. A Secondary Analysis of Data from the Growing Up in Ireland Study

This report analysed data from the longitudinal *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) study to examine how students with special educational needs were doing in a range of areas at age 13, their progress from when they were aged nine and their progress compared to their peers without special educational needs. The outcome areas examined were reading, mathematics, attitudes to school, attendance rates, wellbeing, feelings and experiences of bullying. In total, data relating to 2,017 students who had special educational needs at age nine and/or 13 were analysed out of a total sample of 7,525 students in the GUI study.

The report notes that those aged 13 with special educational needs had made positive progress in a number of areas compared to their peers without such needs. For example, the gap between the two groups had narrowed in the areas of wellbeing, and in reading/verbal reasoning, meaning children with special educational needs had made more progress relative to their peers between nine and 13. However, they still had significantly lower wellbeing scores at age 13, compared to their peers without special educational needs. In addition, twice as many students with special educational needs reported being bullied at age 13 compared to students without special educational needs, and adjusted less well to post-primary school compared to their peers without special educational needs.

The report offers detailed and important insights into the experiences of students with special educational needs at a significant transition point in their educational lives.

Suite of Research Published As Part of the Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme

In 2018 we published three pieces of research undertaken to support the development of policy advice on the future of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme.

Literature review

A wide-ranging literature review was undertaken which examined published evidence on the impact of different types of support relating to the activities of paraprofessionals for students with additional needs in an educational context. In total, almost 1,000 citations were identified and reviewed for relevance to the study, before 73 were selected for further investigation. Of these, 14 were included in the final analysis, with an additional six review articles also used.

The literature review noted a number of important findings. Although research on the work and impact of paraprofessionals has increased in recent years, there are still few studies of high enough quality to say with certainty what the impact paraprofessionals have. Of the quality studies reviewed, one looked at the role and impact of teaching assistants (TAs) in England. This study noted that the more support students received from TAs, the less progress they made in maths, English and science. Findings from other studies in the review noted the positive impact paraprofessionals can have on student outcomes when they are trained to deliver particular interventions, and the positive effect they can have on reducing inappropriate behaviour and improve classroom engagement. Studies also noted the potential benefits of peer support on student outcomes when compared to outcomes achieved from paraprofessional support on its own.

Cross country review

We administered a survey to officials in 56 administrations around the world to identify how students with additional care needs are supported in school through the use of non-teaching adult support staff. Responses were received from 32 administrations.

The responses revealed that all administrations attempted to support students with disabilities with care needs in the classroom through the provision of additional support, which in the majority of cases was through the provision of paraprofessional support. The work of these paraprofessionals is generally determined by the needs of students, be they care, physical, behavioural or educational. Access to paraprofessional support was via individual diagnostic assessment in the majority of administrations.

The entry qualifications to the position of a paraprofessional were not high, with little noted requirement for formal training. In most administrations, there was no formal career path open to individuals filling these roles. The responses also revealed that there was little formal tracking of student outcomes arising from this form of support beyond the level of the school, if at all.

A study of how well young people with disabilities are prepared for life after school

This research, co-commissioned with the National Disability Authority, examined the views of a range of stakeholders on how the SNA scheme supports students with disabilities and in particular in preparing them for life after school. The research team spoke with 35 young people who recently completed the senior cycle of post-primary education and had SNA support while at school as part of the research. A number of parents, teachers, principals, SNAs, employers and representatives of organisations providing post-secondary education and training options for adults with disabilities also participated in the study.

The findings noted that, generally, staff in post-school environments believed students with disabilities were not adequately prepared for life after school and had become over-dependent on SNA support. This was particularly the view of staff in adult day services, and employers. The view was less common but present among parents, and staff in higher and further education sectors. Teachers did not share the view. While students spoke positively about the support they received from SNAs while in school, they did not believe they played an active part in their preparation for life after school. Parents also spoke positively about the role played by SNAs in supporting their children in school, but their views were mixed on how well the experience of being supported in this way prepared them for life after school.

SNAs reported that they provided support to the young people they worked with beyond meeting their care needs; they facilitated student learning and contributed to their development of life skills, social skills and confidence.

Major longitudinal study on Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion in Ireland concludes with a number of interesting findings

Ongoing Commissioned Research in 2018

Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion

Phases 3 and 4 of our longitudinal study on Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion continued through 2018. These phases involve surveying and interviewing newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in each of the first two years of their professional lives, as well as interviews with a number of school principals. It focuses on how well-equipped these teachers are to teach in an inclusive way and support the needs of students with special educational needs in their classrooms.

The final report will be published in 2019 and notes a number of interesting findings.

A particularly strong finding in the research is the importance of school context on the experiences and development of NQTs and the extent to which they identify as inclusive teachers. This emerged in different ways, including in the way the school approaches inclusive teaching, mentoring for NQTs, the way in which support is provided for students with special educational needs, and opportunities for teacher collaboration and professional learning.

Another finding noted that in their first year teaching, the majority of NQTs felt their ITE programme made a difference to the academic outcomes for their students. The majority of these teachers had experience of pupils with special educational needs in their schools. Survey findings from the second year of teaching note that NQTs often strengthened their commitment to develop a more nuanced understanding of inclusive teaching and had greater confidence in their practice. This is despite the reality shock experienced in moving from being a student teacher to an NQT.

Review of Educational Provision in Adult Day Services

This research focuses on examining the provision of education and lifelong learning in adult day services delivered and/or funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE). The study has a number of parts, including: a review of policy and practice guidelines on education provision in similar services internationally; a survey of adult day service providers in Ireland on their activities; interviews with key stakeholders across the sector; and in-depth qualitative work in 25 sites across Ireland. This in-depth work involves speaking with adults with disabilities about their educational experiences in these services, as well as engaging with service staff and parents. The study aims to document the learning outcomes for adults with disabilities who access day services, with a view to identifying lessons for future provision. The study will conclude in late 2019 with a published report expected in early 2020.

New Research

As part of the NCSE's management of the In-School and Pre-School Therapy Demonstration Project, in autumn 2018 we commissioned a comprehensive evaluation of the project. This will examine the development, implementation and outcomes of the service in the school year 2018-19, with a view to identifying lessons and the possible roll-out of the service. The study will conclude in late 2019 with a published report expected in early 2020.

Research Conference 2018

The annual NCSE research conference took place on November 20th in Croke Park Conference Centre. Over 200 delegates attended with a mix of teachers, adults with disabilities, parents, researchers, principals, academics, disability advocacy group representatives, psychologists, government department and agency officials and union representatives.

The morning sessions focused on the theme of transitions from school to lifelong learning for adults with disabilities. Sheila Riddell, University of Edinburgh, gave a presentation on research on students in Scotland who transitioned to a range of different educational settings after school. She focused on the need to address a number of challenges that can emerge as children become adults, and the importance of planning for transitions throughout adult life, not just at the school gates. This was followed by Michael Shevlin of Trinity College Dublin who gave an overview of the NCSE's commissioned study on reviewing educational provision in adult day services and progress to date.

The morning session concluded with an illuminating panel discussion on the theme. The panel comprised two adults with disabilities who had recently left school and transitioned into adult services, a representative from the HSE disability services and a number of provider representatives.

Strategic Goal 2

The afternoon session examined the theme of in-school therapeutic support for students with special educational needs. The first presentation by Eve Hutton, Canterbury University (UK), addressed the issue of implementing in-school therapy programmes, with a particular focus on occupational therapy. The final presentation of the day, by Elspeth McCartney, University of Stirling, examined the evidence base for providing speech and language therapy services in school.



At the NCSE Research Conference 2018 were: Teresa Griffin, Chief Executive Officer, NCSE; Elspeth McCartney, University of Stirling; Eamon Stack, Chairperson, NCSE 2013-18; Sheelagh Drudy, Vice Chairperson, NCSE 2016-18; Eve Hutton, Canterbury Christchurch University (UK); Finian O'Shea, NCSE Council; Sheila Riddell, University of Edinburgh; and Dalton Tattan, Assistant Secretary, Department of Education and Skills.

The graphic consists of two overlapping circles. The top circle is orange and contains the text 'Strategic Goal 3'. The bottom circle is dark red and contains the text 'Provide independent, expert and evidence-informed policy and practice advice to the Minister for Education and Skills'. The background features a faint, stylized floral pattern in light yellow and white.

Strategic Goal 3

**Provide independent, expert
and evidence-informed policy
and practice advice to the
Minister for Education and
Skills**

Strategic Goal 3

Provide independent, expert and evidence-informed policy and practice advice to the Minister for Education and Skills

NCSE Role

A key role for the NCSE is to provide the Minister for Education and Skills with expert, independent, evidence-informed policy advice on the education of children with special educational needs.

Publication of the Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme

The NCSE published its comprehensive review of the SNA scheme in May 2018. The aim of this review was to identify how students' additional care needs should be met in the future and what the most appropriate forms of support are to provide for better student outcomes.

As part of the review the NCSE:

- ▶ Undertook eight different pieces of research and information gathering exercises;
- ▶ Met 37 groups of stakeholders;
- ▶ Reviewed 330 responses to our public consultation;
- ▶ Visited ten mainstream schools, special classes and special schools;
- ▶ Established one NCSE working group whose discussions and report fed into the review process

We found the SNA scheme has worked well with many positive and worthwhile features. The scheme has, over the past 20 years, greatly assisted thousands of students with additional care needs to attend school.

NCSE publishes major review of the SNA scheme

Strategic Goal 3

We also found gaps in services and we advised the Minister that he needed to improve supports for students with additional care needs. We recommended a new School Inclusion Model to deliver the right supports at the right time to students with additional care needs. The new model would include:

- ▶ 230 experts in ten NCSE regional teams to build school capacity;
- ▶ A state-funded national training programme for inclusion support assistants (proposed new name for SNAs);
- ▶ Students to have access to support without the need for a diagnosis;
- ▶ In-school therapy services;
- ▶ Guidance for schools on the management of complex medical and behavioural needs.

The then Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton T.D., welcomed the NCSE's report and indicated that his Department would begin to develop proposals to implement the review's recommendations. He also stated his intention to engage closely with parent and disability representatives, as well as education stakeholders, at all stages of the development of a new model.

Throughout 2018, the NCSE continued to work with DES in relation to the implications of this policy advice and in the development of an implementation plan.

In addition to the review report, the NCSE published the following associated documents, all of which are available on our website at: <https://ncse.ie/policy-advice>

- ▶ Guide for parents and students on the Comprehensive Review;
- ▶ Progress report submitted to the Minister in 2017;
- ▶ Infographic outlining the process and findings of the review;
- ▶ Report of the working group set up to develop a proposal for a new model of support.

NCSE Participates in Working Group on Nursing Provision

The NCSE participated in a DES-led working group to review nursing provision for children with complex medical conditions, including those attending special schools. This cross-sectoral working group comprised members from the Departments of Education and Skills, Health, Children and Youth Affairs, NCSE and HSE, as well as an expert clinician.

The report of this working group is also available on the NCSE website at: <https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Final-Report-CST-Nursing-supports.pdf>

Minister Asks NCSE to Advise on Educational Provision for Special Schools and Classes

In 2018 the Minister requested the NCSE to develop policy advice on educational provision for special schools and classes. The terms of reference for this advice are available on the NCSE website.

During 2018 the NCSE engaged in initial consultations with education stakeholders, parents and advocacy groups as part of the development of this policy advice. We also commenced the research process that will provide a robust evidence basis for the advice. This work will continue in 2019. The policy advice is due to be submitted to the Minister by end June 2020.

International Work

NCSE Staff Members Visit New Brunswick, Canada, to Study its Inclusive Education System

A number of years ago the Canadian province of New Brunswick decided to educate all students with their peers in mainstream classes, including those with the most profound disabilities. As part of the development of policy advice on special schools and classes, the CEO and head of special education visited New Brunswick to examine its system of inclusive education. The study visit was organised with the assistance of Mr Jody Carr, a former Minister for Education in New Brunswick.



From left-right, Jody Carr (Inclusive Education Canada Associate), Teresa Griffin (Chief Executive Officer, NCSE), Mary Byrne (Head of Special Education, NCSE), Dominic Cardy (Minister for Education, New Brunswick, Canada)



Teresa Griffin, Chief Executive Officer, NCSE, and Mary Byrne, Head of Special Education, NCSE, engage with school staff during their study trip to New Brunswick, Canada.

The NCSE visited five different schools during its time in New Brunswick. This included one high school, two middle schools and two elementary schools. Each school visit followed the same format. The delegation was welcomed by the school principal who led the school visit and the discussions. This was followed by a tour of the school which included visiting classrooms and speaking with students and staff.

In addition, meetings were held with a family advocacy group, district officials, Department of Education officials and a retired school administrator.

As part of its policy advice work on special schools and special classes, the NCSE may seek to engage further with stakeholders in other administrations to review international practice.

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

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. It has a strong focus on building an evidence base through research and collaboration across its member countries to inform its work.

During 2018, the NCSE benefited from EASNIE membership by:

- ▶ Engaging with national coordinators on the early phase of our research work to support the development of policy advice on special schools and special classes;
- ▶ Continuing to use the EASNIE profile of inclusive teachers to underpin our research on initial teacher education for inclusion – in the Irish context;
- ▶ Disseminating early findings from the Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion research across member countries;
- ▶ Continuing to provide information on special and inclusive education to prepare a picture of provision across member-states.

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

The graphic consists of two overlapping circles. The top circle is orange and contains the text 'Strategic Goal 4'. The bottom circle is dark red and contains the text 'Review provision and advise on best practice in education and training for adults with special educational needs'. The background features a faint, stylized floral pattern in shades of yellow and orange.

Strategic Goal 4

**Review provision and advise
on best practice in education
and training for adults with
special educational needs**

Strategic Goal 4

Review provision and advise on best practice in education and training for adults with special educational needs

Introduction

Under the EPSEN Act the NCSE's role includes reviewing generally the provision made for people with disabilities to avail of further and higher education and training provision after they have completed school.

NCSE Provides Advice and Information on Education and Training for Young Adults with Special Educational Needs and Their Parents/Guardians

A number of activities occurred during the year including:

- ▶ Research commissioned to review educational provision for adults in adult day services.
- ▶ Participation in the DES review of career guidance in schools, a formal submission made and engagement in a consultation with stakeholders.
- ▶ The publication and dissemination of three information leaflets on post-school education and training options for people with disabilities. The leaflets are available on the NCSE website and include information on:
 - ▼ Further education and training;
 - ▼ Higher education;
 - ▼ Rehabilitative training and adult day care services.
- ▶ The commencement of a review of the implications of Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005 with reference to the sections of the Act that will commence for adults aged 18 in 2020.

Three new information leaflets published on post-school education and training options



The graphic consists of two overlapping circles. The top circle is orange and contains the text 'Strategic Goal 5'. The bottom circle is red and contains a detailed description of the goal. The text is white and centered within each circle.

Strategic Goal 5

Maintain an effective organisation that complies with all legal and corporate requirements and manage information and communication strategies with parents, students, adults with disabilities, schools and the wider public



Strategic Goal 5

Maintain an effective organisation that complies with all legal and corporate requirements and manage information and communication strategies with parents, students, adults with disabilities, schools and the wider public

In 2018 the NCSE continued to maintain our organisation to ensure we operate effectively and in compliance with all our statutory, regulatory and governance requirements. A key role for the NCSE is to provide information to parents, schools and all our stakeholders on matters relating to special education. Throughout the year, we continued to engage with our stakeholders in different ways, including through our staff, our website and social media.

Further Development of the NCSE's Interim Management Structure

The NCSE continued its work in 2018 to integrate the staff and supports of special education services which transitioned to it in March 2017.⁶ Central to this work was the establishment of ten teams across five regions covering the entire country. Each team now combines the expertise of SENOs, visiting teachers and advisors to meet the needs of students, schools and families with the goal of improving student outcomes. These staff are supported by interim team leaders with each region having an interim manager.

This work also involved establishing a policy and practice section in the organisation. While this section maintains NCSE's strong and longstanding focus on developing policy advice, it is now also responsible for practice development across the organisation, with the appointment of specialist leads to support this work. At head office, work has also continued to integrate the IT and finance activities of the former organisations.

Effecting significant change in any organisation is never without its challenges. For NCSE these challenges included bringing together organisations with their own distinct cultures and work practices while at the same time maintaining their high standards of service delivery to students with special educational needs, their families and schools.

⁶ The former Special Education Support Service (SESS), National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) and Visiting Teacher Service.

Information for Parents

Each year, our special educational needs organisers (SENOs) deliver the NCSE's parental information programme. The programme aims to inform parents and guardians of children starting school of the educational services and supports available in their area. SENOs also answer any questions that parents/guardians may have and distribute the extensive range of NCSE information leaflets and booklets to them.

In 2018, SENOs delivered 30 parent information sessions to almost 600 parents. Parents were again very positive in their feedback to SENOs on the sessions and the material provided.

NCSE on Twitter

We continued to use our Twitter account @ncseirl in 2018 to publicise our news, events and publications, in addition to publishing through our website. We gained over 380 followers on Twitter in 2018, and issued 13 tweets on different aspects of our work.

Customer Charter

As a public service organisation, the NCSE is required to develop a customer charter and customer action plan for a three-year period in line with guidelines published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. To this end, we engaged in a consultation process with our customers in late 2017 and 2018 with a view to developing our new charter. The new charter and plan were approved by our Council in late 2018 and will be published on our website in early 2019.

Data Protection

In compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the NCSE published a full Data Protection Statement on our website at <http://www.ncse.ie/ncse-data-protection>. This statement sets out how the NCSE collects personal data, how it is used and how individuals can interact with the NCSE about the data.

In 2018 we continued to increase awareness of and improve compliance with data protection in the NCSE and all staff received GDPR awareness training via seminars. We also processed a number of Data Access Requests, in accordance with the regulations.

Consultative Forum

The Consultative Forum, appointed under the EPSEN Act, is a forum that the NCSE engages with on special education matters. The Council appoints up to 17 members following a prescribed consultation process. In addition, three members are appointed by the Minister. Members were appointed from December 2016 and their term expired at the end of December 2018.

The forum met twice in 2018. At its April meeting, it discussed the implications of the Disability Act 2005 for the NCSE, innovative practice in continuous professional development for teachers and principals and the role of special classes and special schools in Ireland. At its October meeting, it further discussed the role of special schools and classes in Ireland, the implications of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 for the NCSE, and stakeholder views on the potential of a new NCSE website.

Strategic Goal 5

Forum membership and attendance at the 2018 meetings is listed below.

NCSE Consultative Forum		
Council-appointed members		Attendance
Fidelma Brady	Down Syndrome Ireland	1
Michael Byrne	National Disability Children and Families Team, Social Care Division	1
Breda Corr	General Secretary, National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education	2
Noelle Connolly	National Council for Special Education	2
Padraig Flanagan	Principal, post-primary school	2
Margaret Flood	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment	1
Marie Therese Kilmartin	Principal, Coláiste Bríde	1
Gerard Gallagher	Disability Advisor, NUI, Maynooth	0
Adam Harris	Chief Executive, AsIAM	0
Julie Helen	Advocacy project worker, Inclusion Ireland	2
Ann Higgins	Principal, special school	1
Siobhan Long	Enable Ireland disability services	2
Matt Melvin	Principal, primary school	1
Teresa McDonnell	Chairperson of a support organisation for parents of deaf and hard of hearing children	1
Deirbhile Nic Craith	Assistant General Secretary, Irish National Teachers' Organisation	2
Carmel O'Shea	National Parents Council	1
Donie O'Shea	Senior Policy Advisor, National Disability Authority	2
Members appointed by Minister for Education and Skills		Attendance
Michael Cullinane	Regional Director, National Educational Psychological Service	2
Eamon Clavin	Divisional Inspector, Department of Education and Skills	2
Catriona Hanevy	Assistant Principal Officer, Department of Education and Skills	2



Governance



Governance

Performance Management

The NCSE Statement of Strategy covers the period 2017-21. An annual work plan for 2018 based on the strategy was developed and approved by Council in December 2017 with progress reviewed quarterly, alongside associated risks. The annual full review of risk and our 2017 risk register was also conducted and an updated register of risk for 2018 was agreed by the Council on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk committee.

Annual Accounts

The 2018 annual accounts were presented to the Minister in June 2019. The NCSE annual accounts are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General and, following audit, are submitted to the Minister and then laid before the Oireachtas and published on the NCSE website. The annual accounts are presented and published separately from this report.

Confirmation of Compliance with Requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies

The NCSE adopted the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in August 2016. All agencies are required to comply with the code's full requirements. Appendix 1 details the confirmations of NCSE's compliance with the code.

Regulation of Lobbying Act, 2015

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

The Lobbying Act also requires publication of information relating to any working groups operating under the transparency code. As part of the Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme, the NCSE established a working group to assist in identifying and developing the most appropriate form of support options. In accordance with the Act, details of the membership, terms of reference and minutes of meetings of the working group are published on our website.

The Council of the NCSE



NCSE Council 2016-18 with the Chief Executive Officer: Back row (from left): Marion Meany, Áine Lynch, Anne Tansey, Johnny Murphy, Joe Hayes, Helen Guinan, Antoinette Nic Gearailt and Teresa Griffin, Chief Executive Officer. Front row (from left): Tom O'Sullivan, Eithne Fitzgerald, Finian O'Shea, chairperson Eamon Stack, 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 EPSEN Act, 2004. The term of office of the Council expired on December 31st, 2018.

The Council's functions are set out in section 20 of the EPSEN Act. The Council is accountable to the Minister for Education and Skills and is responsible for ensuring good governance. Council's work and responsibilities are set out in the EPSEN Act and Corporate Governance Guide for Council Members, which specifically set out matters reserved for Council. Council business and duties are further outlined in the Council Terms of Reference and Standing Orders. Standing items considered by Council include:

- ▶ declaration of interests
- ▶ reports from committees
- ▶ financial reports/management accounts
- ▶ performance report
- ▶ reserved matters, and
- ▶ review of risks associated with NCSE

The Chief Executive Officer manages and controls generally the staff, administration and business of the Council as set out in section 24 of the EPSEN Act. The regular day-to-day management, control and direction of the NCSE are the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer and the senior management team as set out in the Statement of Strategy (2017-21) approved by the Council.

The Council is responsible for preparing the annual plan and financial statements for the organisation. Confirmation that the financial statements provide a true and fair view of the NCSE's financial performance and its financial position in 2018, is provided in the NCSE audited annual accounts which are published separately.

As required under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, the Council reviewed its performance and that of its committees during the year. In 2018, the Council commissioned an external evaluation of its performance, a requirement every three years under the code.

The Council met on eight occasions during 2018. Details of individual members and their attendances are given in the following table.

Membership of the Council of the NCSE during 2018		
Name	Details	Attendance
Eamon Stack,* Chairperson	Former Chief Inspector in the Department of Education and Skills (DES)	8
Sheelagh Drudy,* Deputy Chairperson	Emeritus Professor of Education at University College Dublin and former Head of the UCD School of Education	8
Eithne Fitzgerald*	Retired Head of Policy and Research, National Disability Authority	7
Helen Guinan*	Chairperson of the National Disability Authority. Recently retired as principal of St Paul's Special School, Montenotte, Cork	7
Joe Hayes	Former Irish Ambassador to China, Denmark and Iceland, to the Czech Republic and Ukraine and latterly as Ambassador to Singapore	6
Áine Lynch	CEO of the National Parents Council Primary	6
Don Mahon	Former Assistant Chief Inspector in the Department of Education and Skills (DES)	7
Marion Meany	Assistant National Director in the HSE for Disability Services (which operates within the Social Care Division) and member of the Social Care Management team	5
Johnny Murphy*	Divisional inspector, Department of Education and Skills	8
Antoinette Nic Gearailt	President of the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)	7
Finian O'Shea	Former lecturer at Church of Ireland College, Dublin where he worked primarily on the post graduate diploma in learning support and special educational needs	7
Tom O'Sullivan*	Former Assistant General Secretary, INTO. Former principal of St Senan's Boys National School, Limerick	7
Anne Tansey	Anne Tansey is the Director of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the psychological service of the Department of Education and Skills (DES)	7

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. These 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 and Risk Committee, the Council has appointed an external chairperson with relevant experience.

Audit and Risk (six meetings)	Attendance
John Fitzgerald, Chairperson	6
Sheelagh Drudy	4
Helen Guinan	5
Don Mahon	5
Eamon Stack	5

CEO Performance (two meetings)	Attendance
Eamon Stack, Chairperson	2
Helen Guinan	2
Tom O'Sullivan	2

Finance (seven meetings)	Attendance
Don Mahon, Chairperson	6
Joe Hayes	6
Marion Meany	5
Antoinette Nic Gearailt	6

Research (four meetings)	Attendance
Sheelagh Drudy, Chairperson	4
Johnny Murphy	4
Finian O'Shea	3
Anne Tansey	4

Strategy and Policy (five meetings)	Attendance
Helen Guinan, Chairperson	5
Eithne Fitzgerald	5
Aine Lynch	5
Tom O’Sullivan	5



APPENDICES



Appendix 1

Confirmations of Compliance with Requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016

NCSE System of Internal Control (SIC)

The Council is responsible for ensuring that an effective system of internal control is maintained and operated in accordance with Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 and for reviewing annually the effectiveness of the internal controls, including financial, operational and compliance controls and risk management processes and procedures. The system of internal control, which accords with guidance issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has been in place in the NCSE for the year ended December 31st, 2018. Confirmation of the annual review of effectiveness of the NCSE System of Internal Control in 2018 is provided in the NCSE audited accounts that 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 Officer.

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 where possible 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 an agreed policy and procedures for dealing with protected disclosures in line with the Protected Disclosures Act (2014). No issues were raised under this procedure in 2018.

Child Protection

The NCSE has developed procedures and guidelines for staff on child protection and welfare matters as part of the new requirements enacted in 2017 under the Children First Act, 2015. The NCSE guidelines are available on our website at www.ncse.ie. Any matters drawn to our attention in 2018 were processed in accordance with our procedures.

Audit

The NCSE has established an internal audit function and has agreed an internal audit charter. Council has appointed an Audit and Risk 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 2017, the NCSE reported the organisation's energy performance in 2016 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 per cent energy saving for the public sector by 2020. The data for 2017 is provided below and compared with the previously reported 2016 figures.

Overview of NCSE Energy Usage 2017 and 2016

	2017	2016
MWh of electricity	135	147.34
MWh of fossil fuels	241	219.90
MWh of renewable fuels	0	0

Appendix 2

NCSE Staffing

Grade	Staff in Post End 2018
Civil Servants	
Chief Executive	1
Principal	4
Regional Managers (acting)	4
Assistant Principal	6
Engineer Grade 1 (former Head of Local Services)	1
Team Managers (senior special educational needs organisers)	8
Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO)	63
Higher Executive Officer	6
Executive Officer	5
Clerical Officer	3
Temporary Clerical Officer	3
Sub-total	104

Grade	Staff in Post End 2018
Seconded or Contract Staff	
Director/Specialist Lead	1
National Coordinator	1
Deputy Director	2
Assistant National Coordinator	7
Advisor	51
Visiting Teacher	44
Speech And Language Therapist	3
Occupational Therapist	2
Associates	5.3
Local Facilitator	1
Researcher	1
Education Centres – Cork and Navan (administrative staff)	8.4
Sub-total	126.7
Total	230.7

* Three special educational needs organisers (SENOs) were on unpaid leave as of December 31st, 2018.

* Associates and local facilitators (also known as ALFA) are practising teachers engaged to present to teachers who work in a part time capacity with the NCSE support service. The staff numbers provided equate to an equivalent number of teacher working days provided by 40 associates and eight local facilitators.

* In-School Therapy Project: We currently have a number of staff (included above) temporarily assigned to the In School Therapy Project. This includes one national coordinator, one HEO (on acting AP allowance) and one clerical officer (on acting EO allowance).

In addition the NCSE has oversight of a further 34 staff recruited through the HSE, but assigned to the NCSE for the duration of the project. This includes: 19 speech and language therapists, 12 occupational therapists, one occupational therapy manager, one speech and language therapy manager and one speech and language therapy clinical lead.

Appendix 3

Statistical Information for Previous Academic Years 2011-12 to 2017-18

Tables 1-3 provide trend data for school years 2011-12 to 2017-18 in respect of NCSE resource allocation activity. There is an upward trend across all areas. A growing student population partly explains the increase but as can be seen from Table 2 the increase in students accessing additional supports is growing at a faster rate. In September 2017 a new way of allocating special education teachers was introduced by the Department of Education and Skills.

Table 1: Special Education Resources Allocated to Schools by the NCSE

Type of Posts	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18
SNA	10,320	10,503	10,671	11,174	11,984	13,006	14,063
Low incidence teachers	5,265	5,265	5,722	6,204	6,823	7,427	N/A ⁷
Special school teachers	1056	1,078	1060	1135	1159	1,197	1,205
Special class teachers	602	695	823	956	1,136	1,304	1,480

Table 2: Numbers of Students Supported by NCSE Allocations

Students	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18
SNA mainstream	12,150	13,268	13,907	15,101	16,874	18,513	19,571
Low incidence teaching hours	29,426	32,480	35,763	38,414	42,931	47,065	N/A ⁸
Special classes	3,286	3,684	4,353	4,706	5,472	6,393	7,390
Special schools	6,848	7,077	7,299	7,459	7,607	7,739	7,954

⁷ The application process for low incidence teaching hours was replaced by the new model for allocating special education teacher for school year 2017-18

⁸ The application process for low incidence teaching hours was replaced by the new model for allocating special education teacher for school year 2017-18

Table 3: Special Classes Type by Disability⁹

Type of Special Classes	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18
ASD EI ⁹	34	49	72	96	118	127	130
ASD	296	364	439	531	647	762	917
Speech & Language	64	64	64	63	63	65	65
Mild GLD	73	71	67	65	64	62	57
Mod GLD	31	28	39	39	48	58	59
Hearing	15	16	16	15	17	16	16
EBD/SEBD	9	7	8	11	10	10	10
Other	26	29	32	35	41	49	50
Total	548	628	737	855	1,008	1,149	1,304

Statistics on the SET model

The revised model for allocating special education teachers to schools commenced in September 2017. In that year 13,281 teachers were allocated. It is designed to be a fairer and better way to allocate resources. The NCSE publishes the list of schools and their allocation on the website.

For the 2017-18 school year, 70 applications were received under the exceptional review process for the SET model.¹⁰ Twenty-two applications were submitted for review and of those 17 schools received an additional revised allocation. A number of schools that did not meet the criteria for exceptional review requested and received a visit from an NCSE advisor. NCSE advisors provide support to schools, which may include provision of assistance with SET implementation, provision of in-school support, and the development and delivery of CPD to teachers.

At the end of 2018, 13,395.8¹¹ teachers were allocated. For the 2018-19 school year 56 applications have been received up to December 31st, 2018 for an exceptional review.

The NCSE received 339¹² requests from schools for in-school support on the Special Education Teaching Allocation Model in 2018. These requests were administered by NCSE advisors.

9 EI stands for Early Intervention

10 DES Circulars 0013/2017 & 0014/2017

11 9,226 posts at primary level and 4,129.8 posts at post-primary.

12 258 requests were at primary level, 81 at post-primary.

Visiting Teacher Statistics

Each of the visiting teachers is responsible for a particular region and is allocated a caseload of pupils. Not only does this involve multiple school and home visits, but the teachers also regularly have clinic visits and meet professionals, including speech and language therapists and social workers.

They support about 4,900 school-going children and 775 babies/pre-school children covering up to 2,550 schools and 355 pre-schools.

Appendix 4

Description of Disability Categories¹³

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: 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.

¹³ Department of Education and Skills Circular SP ED 08/02.

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 coordination and may have difficulties in communication, particularly in oral articulation, as for example severe dyspraxia.</p>
Severe and profound general learning disability	Such pupils have been assessed by a psychologist as having a severe or profound general learning disability. The pupil's full scale IQ will have been assessed as being below 35. In addition, such pupils may have physical disabilities.
Severe emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems	The criteria for severe EBD are that the pupil is in the care of a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist for a severe clinical disorder. A very small number of pupils would be expected to fall within this category.

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



Appendix 5

Glossary of Acronyms Used

ACCS	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
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
HSE	Health Service Executive
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
ITE	Initial teacher education
IQ	Intelligence quotient
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
SD	Standard deviation
SENO	Special educational needs organiser
SIC	System of internal controls
SNA	Special needs assistant
UCD	University College Dublin

Statistics Infographic

Number of students supported by SNAs

End of School Year	SNA Posts	In mainstream	In special classes	In special schools	
2017-18	14,063	19,571	7,390	7,954	
2016-17	13,006	18,513	6,393	7,739	



The NCSE opened

174

new special classes

in 2017-18

compared to

152

new special classes

in 2016-17

Some classes were also closed during this period when no longer required.

2017-18

Number of special classes

1,305

Number of special class places

8,370

2016-17

Number of special classes

1,149

Number of special class places

7,455

Number of applications processed in 2018 compared to 2017

School Year	SNA	School Transport	Assistive technology/ specialist equipment	TOTAL
2017-18	8,781	3,597	4,157	16,535
2016-17	9,553	3,460	4,686	17,699

For the 2018 calendar year



4,900

schoolgoing children and

775

babies/pre-school children were supporting by our visiting teachers, covering approximately **2,550** schools and **355** pre-schools



1,862

applications were received from schools for in-school support¹



16,457

teachers were engaged in professional development and learning at NCSE seminars and Whole Staff seminars



18,564

professional development and learning days provided for NCSE seminars and Whole Staff seminars



465

courses were delivered

¹ In-school support may include provision of assistance with SET implementation; provision of in-school support and the development and delivery of CPD to teachers.

