

# National Council for Special Education

## Annual Report 2019





**National Council  
for Special Education  
Annual Report 2019**

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**National Council for Special Education**

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# NCSE Chairperson's Report to the Minister

June 2020

Mr Joe McHugh, TD  
Minister for Education and Skills  
Department of Education and Skills  
Marlborough Street  
Dublin 1  
D01 RC96

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 2019.

2019 was another important and exciting year for the NCSE.

Following the transition in 2017 of separate education services into the NCSE, the regional structure for NCSE support services further evolved in 2019. We have established ten teams across five regions. These teams comprise advisors, visiting teachers and special educational needs organisers (SENOs) and are led by team managers. They provide a coordinated service to students, schools and families and will improve outcomes for children with special educational needs. Their work is supported by a policy and practice development unit, comprising staff with a range of clinical and educational specialisms. The unit plays a central role in ensuring NCSE supports are evidence-informed and underpinned by best practice. Behind this is an expanded administrative structure, where enhanced capacity in areas such as finance, business support services, human resources and IT enables our frontline staff to focus on meeting the needs of students, families, teachers and schools.

2019 also saw the launch of the School Inclusion Model pilot project, following from the recommendations of our policy advice to you in 2018. This ground-breaking initiative, led by your Department and managed by the NCSE, will introduce a range of supports into schools to support students as required across 75 primary, post-primary and special schools in parts of Dublin, Wicklow and Kildare. It will also allow schools flexibility in how they deploy their special needs assistants. I am pleased to confirm that NCSE staff continue to work closely with officials from your Department to develop and implement this worthwhile initiative.

The development and implementation of the School Inclusion Model builds on and now includes the positive work arising from the In-School and Pre-School Therapy Support Demonstration Project, which continued to be implemented in these schools and 75 pre-schools throughout 2019. Staff and students from participating settings have reported positively on their experience of the project so far. I look forward to reporting to you in 2020 on the learning arising from the formal evaluation of the 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 2019. We do not anticipate any such developments.
- ▶ The financial position of the NCSE is as disclosed in our 2019 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 2019.
- ▶ 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 eight newly identified contracts, however, we identified non-compliance in 2019 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 Council Code of Business Conduct
  - ▼ NCSE employees comply with the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.
  - ▼ 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 2019, we continued to allocate SNA posts to schools for special educational needs. As detailed in this report, by the end of the 2018-19 school year over 15,000 SNA posts were in place in schools to support over 36,500 students with additional care needs. We also continued to work with your Department on the implementation of the special education teacher allocation process.

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 our policy advice on special schools and special classes in Ireland progressed during the year. We undertook further consultations and continued with our ongoing multi-strand research process. We submitted our progress report to you in October and look forward to engaging with you and your officials on this matter as we finalise our report in 2020.

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 School Inclusion Model pilot project.

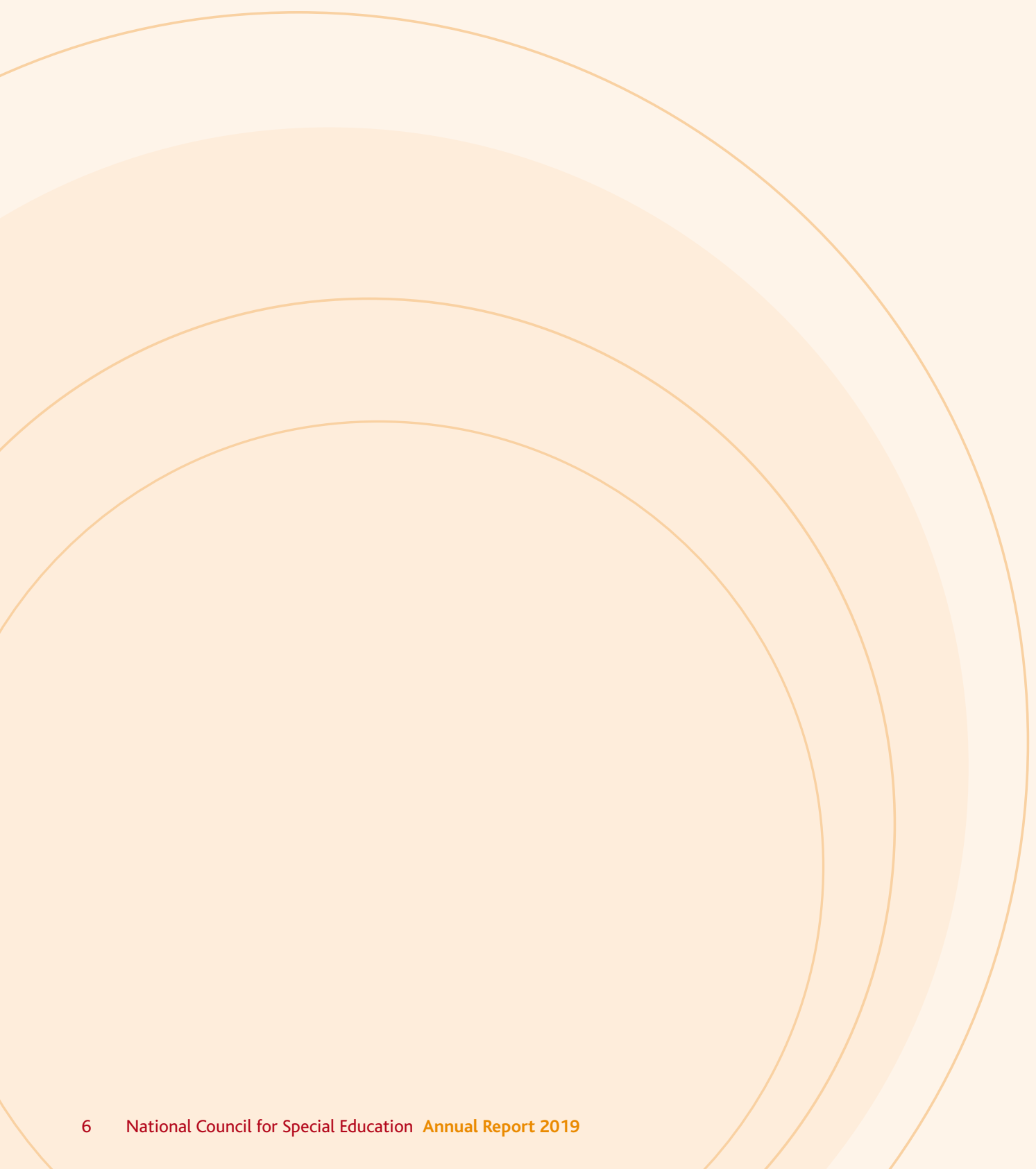
Our annual research conference held in November was attended by over 250 delegates. The conference examined the theme of inclusion from a systems and teacher education perspective and was very warmly received.

This annual report identifies our main achievements for 2019 and all the activities undertaken in relation to our five strategic goals for the year. The NCSE remains ready to provide any further information or clarification to you or your officials about any of those activities.

Yours sincerely

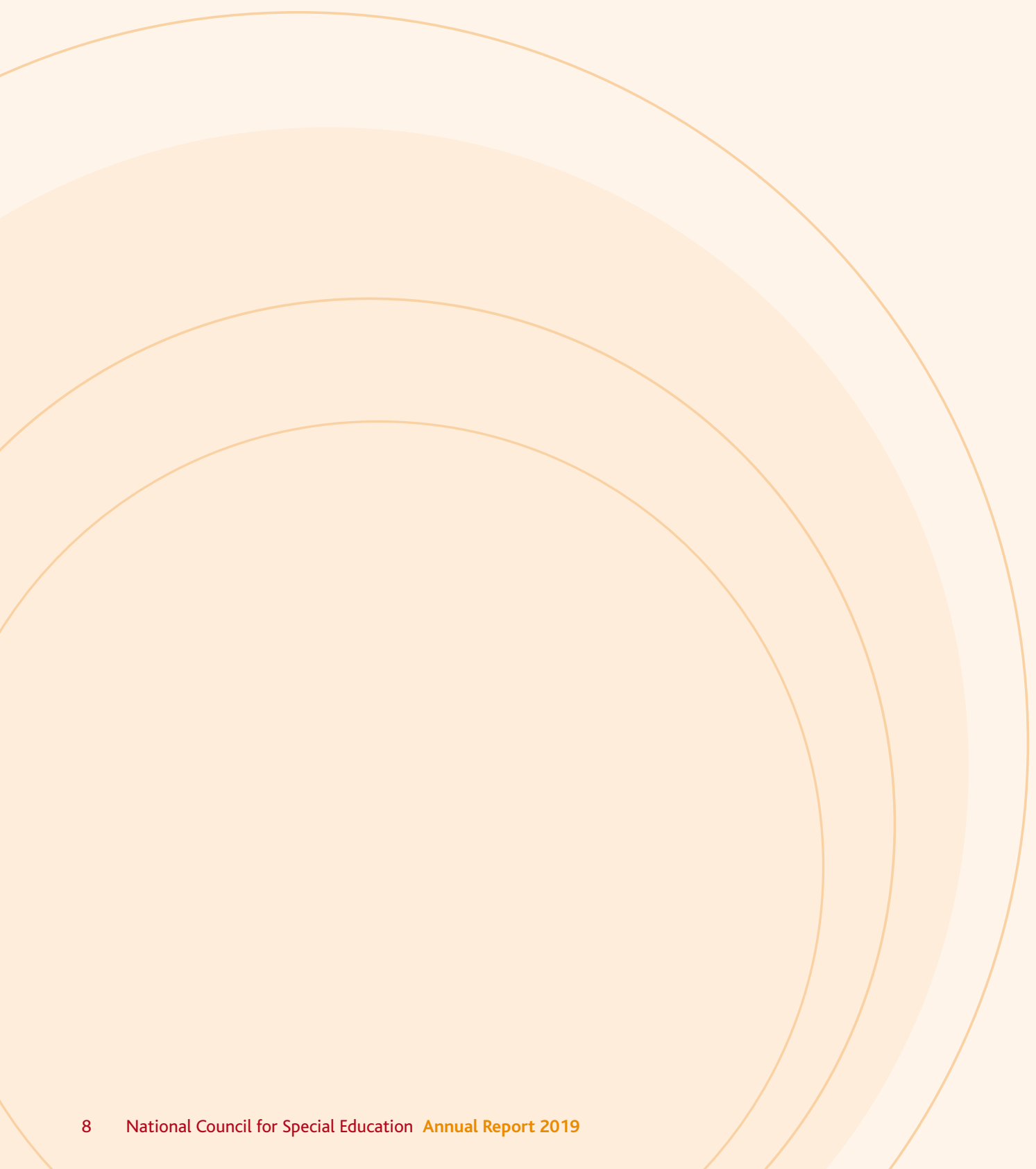


**Joe Hayes,**  
*Chairperson,*  
*National Council for Special Education*



**Introduction**

**Our Strategic  
Approach**



# Introduction

## Our Strategic Approach

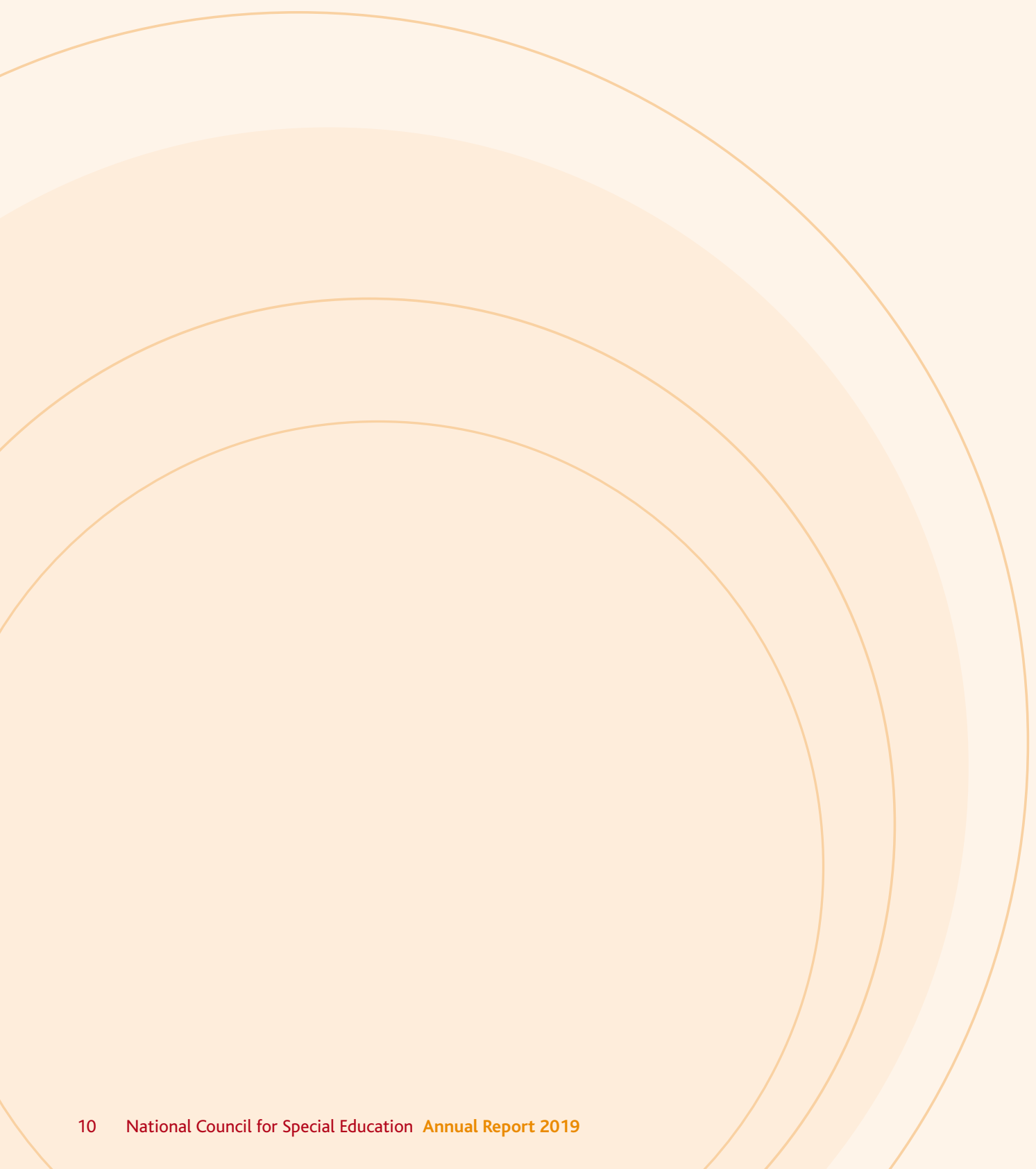
The NCSE's vision is for a society where children and adults with special educational needs are supported to achieve better outcomes in their education to enable them to reach their potential.

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.

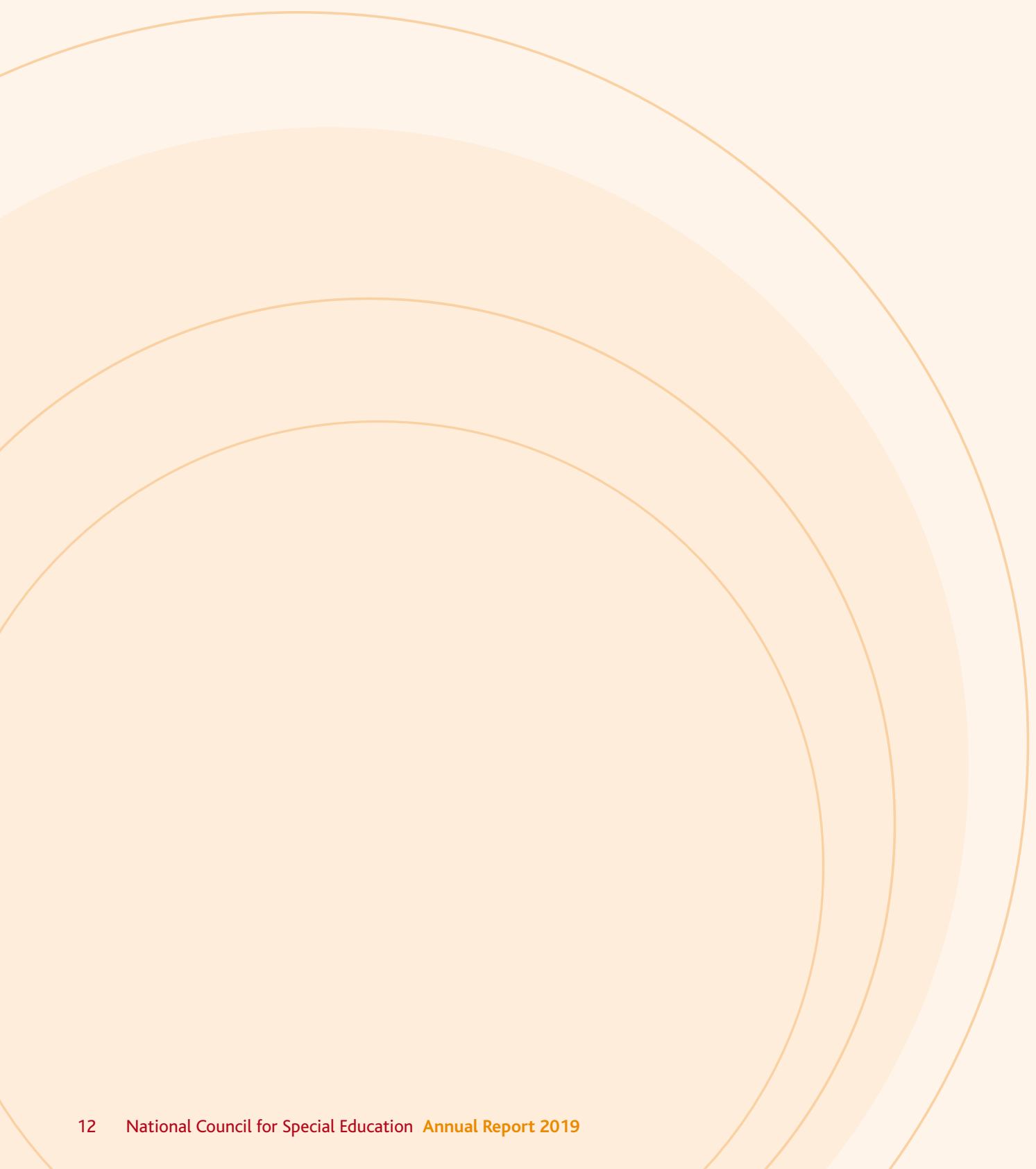
**Table 1: NCSE Strategic Goals Statement of Strategy 2017-21**

- ▶ **Goal 1:** Support schools to enable students with special educational needs achieve better outcomes and ensure a range of educational placement options is 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 2019 are summarised below:

In the 2018-19 school year, the NCSE:

- ▶ Enabled over 36,500 students with special educational needs who also have significant care needs to access special needs assistant (SNA) support.
- ▶ Processed over 9,800 new applications from schools for students with special educational needs for access to SNA support.
- ▶ Processed over 3,800 new applications for school transport for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Processed over 4,400 new applications for assistive technology/special equipment for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Established over 1,450 special classes in mainstream schools with places available for 9,336 students.

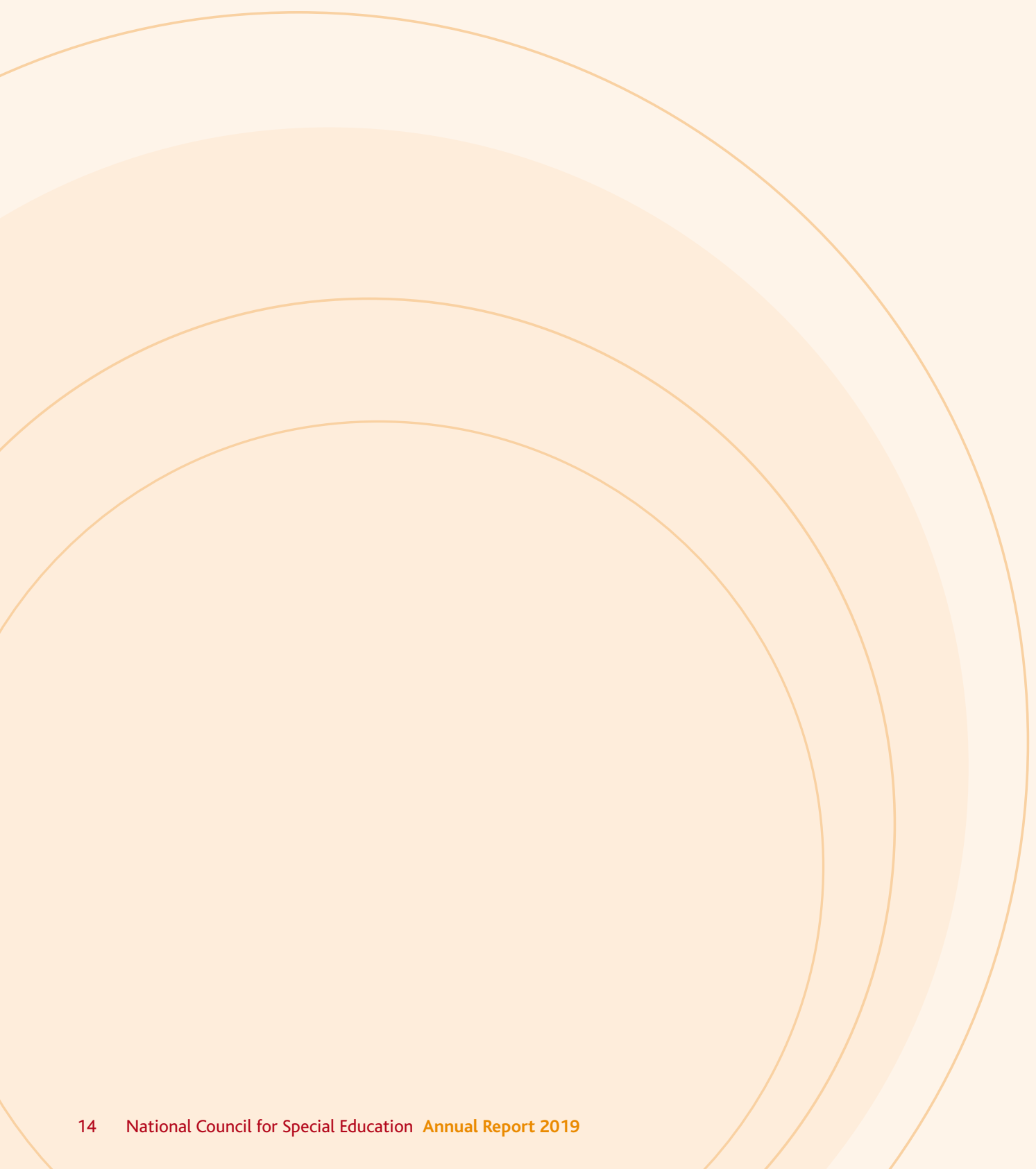
In 2019, the NCSE also:

- ▶ Published our progress report on the development of policy advice for special schools and classes, *An Inclusive Education for an Inclusive Society?*
- ▶ Began the roll-out of the School Inclusion Model across 75 schools, incorporating a second year of the In-School and Pre-School Therapy Support Demonstration Project.
- ▶ Furthered the development of our new structures to support students, schools and families, including the establishment of ten teams around the country that provide a coordinated service to students, families and schools. These are supported by an expanded policy and practice development team with enhanced administrative support capacity.
- ▶ Hosted our annual research conference, attended by over 250 delegates this year, which examined the theme of inclusion in relation: to teacher education; and systemic change.

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

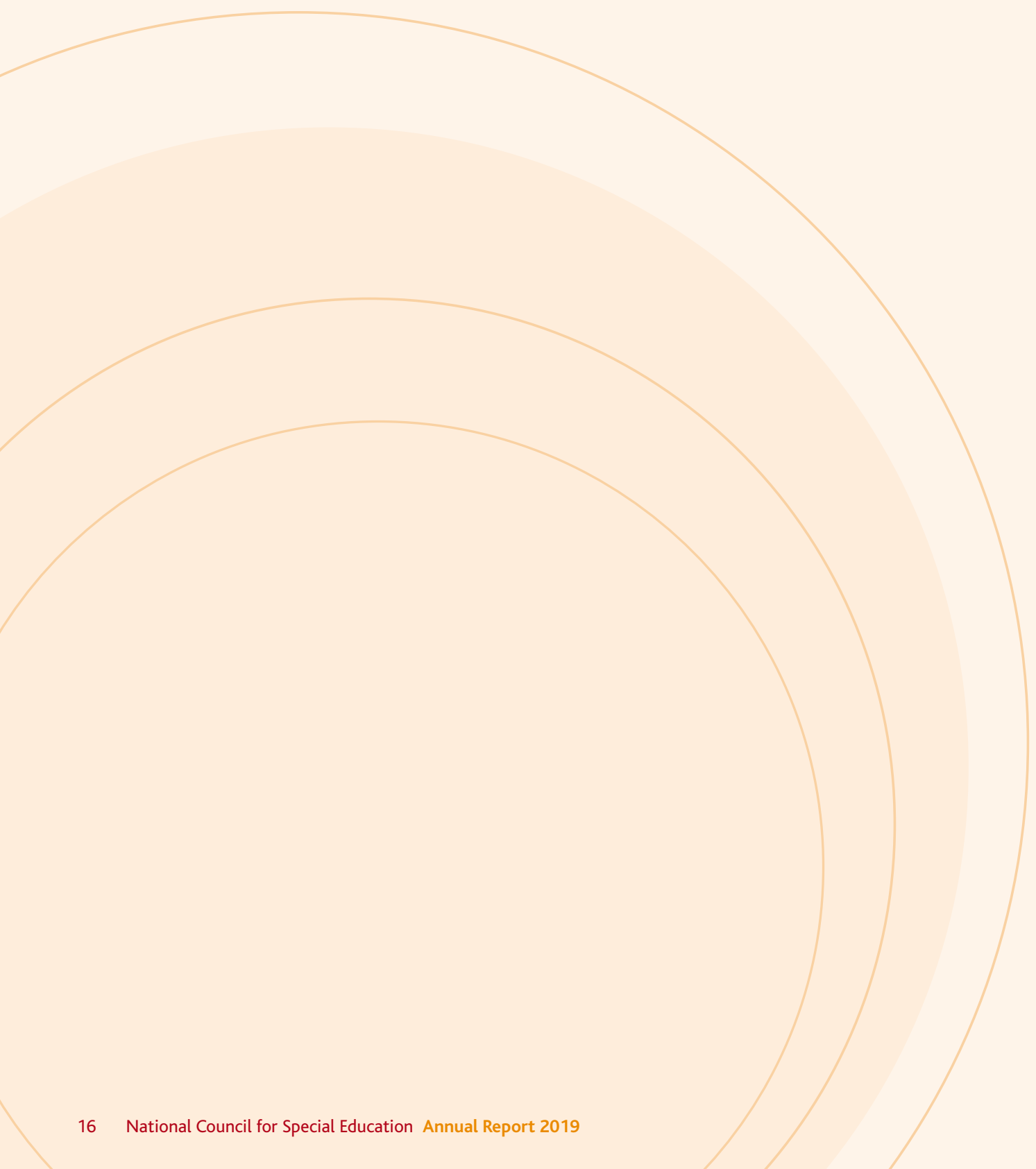
The Department of Education and Skills (DES) Action Plan for Education 2016-19 sets out a clear vision for the Irish education and training system to become the best in Europe over the next decade and for every person to have an opportunity to fulfil their potential. Support for learners is embedded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

The NCSE continued to work with the DES in 2019 to deliver on identified targets, actions and sub-actions within the required timeframe, including informing schools of their SNA allocation before the end of the 2018-19 school year, progressing our policy advice on special schools and classes and progressing proposals for the implementation of the recommendations of the Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme.



## **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**



# 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

## 1.1 Introduction

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 school's needs. These 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 NCSE 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 from birth, through to pre-school, primary, and post-primary levels.

This section provides details on our activities related to resourcing schools in 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, the work of the NCSE Support Service and our work to implement the School Inclusion Model pilot project.

## 1.2 Resourcing Schools in the 2018-19 School Year<sup>1</sup>

### Applications for Additional Supports

In the 2018-19 school year SENOs processed over 18,000 applications for additional supports for students with special educational needs under three allocation schemes. Table 2 below outlines the number of applications processed under each scheme.

**Table 2: Summary of Applications Processed by NCSE for School Year 2018-19**

Scheme	No of Applications
SNA	9,855
School transport	3,847
Assistive technology/specialist equipment	4,453
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,155</b>

### Special Classes

SENOs sanctioned the establishment of 164 new special classes in the school year 2018-19. By the end of the school year there were 1,463 special classes in mainstream schools with 9,336 places available. This is a net increase of 966 places over the previous year.

9,336 places now available in 1,463 special classes in mainstream schools.

### Special Schools

In the 2018-19 school year, over 7,900 students were enrolled in special schools supported by the NCSE. The NCSE allocated 1,223 teachers and 2,528 SNAs to special schools in 2018-19. The corresponding figures in the previous school year 2017-18 were 1,204 teachers and 2,470 SNAs.

### SNA Support

By the end of the 2018-19 school year, over 36,500 students were granted SNA support. This was an increase on the previous year's 34,500 students. The number of SNA posts allocated to primary, post-primary and special schools by the end of 2018-19 also increased from 14,063 to 15,030.

<sup>1</sup> The 2018-19 school year is from September 2018 to June 2019

## Special Education Teacher Allocation Model

A new model for the allocation of special education teachers (SET) 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 2019 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 2018-19 school year, 72 applications were received under this exceptional review process. Of these, 13 applications were submitted for review, with five schools receiving an additional revised allocation up to 31 December 2018. The process was paused at this point in order to make way for a re-profiling exercise in 2019.

Further information about the SET review process is set out in DES Circulars 0013/2017, 0014/2017, 007/2019, and 008/20. NCSE Circular 04/2019 sets out the exceptional review application procedure.

### 1.3 Resourcing Schools in the 2019-20 School Year<sup>2</sup>

Special education teacher (SET) allocations for schools were reprofiled during 2019 and schools advised of their new SET allocations for September 2019. Following this reprofiling exercise 178 schools requested a check of how their revised allocation was calculated. All SET allocations checked were found to be correct. Following the re-profiling of SET allocations, schools could apply for a review of their SET allocation in light of exceptional circumstances in their school. By 31 December 2019, 22 applications were received, of which, seven met the criteria of an exceptional circumstance. Two of these seven schools received an increased SET allocation as a result of their review.

The total number of special education teachers in schools by 31 December 2019 was 13,428.

The number of SNAs allocated to schools by the end of December 2019 is set out in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Number of SNA posts**

	End 2018-19 School Year	End December 2019
SNA posts	15,030	15,948

13,428 special education teachers allocated to schools by end of 2019.

<sup>2</sup> The 2019-20 school year is from September 2019 to June 2020

## Special Needs Assistant Appeals Process

Every year some decisions on SNA allocations are appealed by schools or parents. By the end of December 2019, 113 appeals were received.

**Table 4: SNA Decision Appeal Figures End December 2019**

Total number of SNA appeals received	113
Appeals upheld	8
Appeals not upheld	82
Appeals withdrawn	9
Appeals being processed	14

## 1.4 NCSE Support Service for Schools

For the 2019 calendar year:

- ▶ 443 external professional development courses were delivered
- ▶ 280 whole school seminars were delivered
- ▶ 16,511 teachers were engaged in professional development and learning at NCSE seminars and whole staff seminars
- ▶ 19,737 professional development and learning days provided for NCSE seminars and whole staff seminars
- ▶ 2,266 applications were received from schools for in-school support<sup>3</sup>, of which, 1,628 were from primary schools, 524 from post-primary schools, and 114 were from special schools

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 programme<sup>4</sup> in collaboration with the NCSE for teachers of students with ASD. In November 2019, three students graduated with a certificate, 21 with a diploma and three with a masters (MA SEN [ASD]).

NCSE also facilitates teachers working with pupils with autism in accessing specific courses through Middletown Centre for Autism; 497 teachers participated in Middletown<sup>5</sup> seminars in 2019.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> See DES Circular 0006 2019.

<sup>5</sup> 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.



## Visiting Teacher Service

Our visiting teachers (VTs) 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. The VTs are qualified teachers with particular skills and knowledge of the development and education of children with varying degrees of hearing loss and/or visual impairment. They offer longitudinal support to children, their families and schools from the time of referral through to the end of post-primary education. The VT supports children/young people, parents, guardians, teachers and other professionals involved with the child. The frequency and nature of support takes into account a range of factors based on the individual's needs. The work of the VT involves liaising with other professionals and agencies such as audiological scientists, ophthalmology services, speech and language therapists, low vision specialists, psychologists, early intervention teams, school staffs, and with parents.

In 2019, 46 visiting teachers provided support to 6,880 children. Of these, 1,296 are Blind/Visually Impaired, and 5,584 are Deaf/Hard of Hearing. Table 5 shows the educational or home setting of these children.

**Table 5: Number of Children Supported by Visiting Teachers by Setting**

Setting	Blind/Visually Impaired Children	Deaf/Hard of Hearing Children
Babies/pre-school/other	127	811
Primary school	515	2,446
Post-primary school	407	1,613
Special school	247	714
<b>Total Children</b>	<b>1,296</b>	<b>5,584</b>

## Primary Language Curriculum Seminars for Special Schools 2019

Following an inter-agency agreement between the Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education and Skills, the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and NCSE, NCSE is providing continuing professional development to special school teachers during the academic year 2019-20, with regard to implementation of the primary language curriculum (PLC). In 2019, 41 seminars were delivered to teachers from 84 special schools by a team of six NCSE advisors, in addition to the provision of webinars and leadership seminars facilitated by the PDST.

## NCSE Support for the National Digital Strategy for Schools in 2019

*The Digital Learning Action Plan for Schools 2019* set out a suite of actions for delivery in 2019 that further implemented the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-20. As part of this, the NCSE provided guidance and advice to schools on how digital technologies could be appropriately embedded in teaching, learning and assessment for learners with special educational needs. This undertaking was delivered as follows:

- ▶ 17 seminars were provided to 139 special schools on the digital learning framework (DLF) and developing a digital learning plan in the context of the individual settings as part of an ongoing collaboration with the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)
- ▶ 34 school support visits (161 teachers) relating to digital technology and special educational needs were provided in the 2018-19 academic year.
- ▶ Five different seminars related to digital technology were presented in the 2018-19 academic year.

## 1.5 Implementation of the School Inclusion Model Pilot (SIM)

The Demonstration Project on In-school and Early Years Therapy Support was commenced in 74 schools and 75 early learning and care settings in community health care area 7 (CHO7) in the 2018-19 school year. In April 2019, the Government decided to extend the project for a further year and include the project in the piloting of a new School Inclusion Model (SIM) in the same schools in the 2019-20 school year.

Key components of the School Inclusion Model which commenced in September 2019 are:

- ▶ A new frontloading allocation model for special needs assistants (SNAs). A profiling system for special education teaching was used to allocate resources, breaking the link with the need for an assessment. An appeals mechanism will be included to deal with exceptional cases in schools.
- ▶ The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) has been expanded to provide more intensive support. Additional psychologists have been recruited for the pilot giving greater access to the full range of in-school supports for students with complex educational needs.
- ▶ SNAs will be offered a new national training programme. It will be designed to equip them with the skills and knowledge to support students with additional care needs arising from significant medical, physical, emotional/behavioural, sensory, communication and other significant difficulties that pose a barrier to participating in school life. The training will emphasise the need for students to develop independence and resilience.
- ▶ A new national nursing service for children with complex medical needs in schools will be developed. A cross agency planning group is to be established to develop the scope for the scheme, develop an application procedure for schools and plan for how the service will be delivered. The new service will complement current provision provided through community based services.

- ▶ A regional support team will be set up for schools in the pilot under the auspices of the NCSE. The team will include four speech and language therapists, two occupational therapists and four behaviour support practitioners. A further 19 speech and language therapists and 12 occupational therapists will deliver supports within schools.
- ▶ Consultation with schools, teachers and parents.

Guidelines have issued to the pilot schools on the implementation of the frontloaded allocation of SNA support for students following consultation with the stakeholders and work is ongoing on further agreed changes.

### Activity Update

Demonstration project therapists have delivered 267 training courses to the project schools and early years centres in the 2019 calendar year:

- ▶ 23 external courses (each course was for a duration of 1-3 days)
- ▶ 244 internal courses (divided into half day and full day blocks)
- ▶ Coaching and mentoring for school and early learning and care setting staff on programmes and interventions was provided to build capacity in the schools and settings.
- ▶ As part of the project's multi-tiered model of support, the following number of students were supported at group and individual level:
  - ▶ Targeted group support (Tier 2) – 2,101 students
  - ▶ Intensive individualised support (Tier 3) – 556 students

This support is additional to full class (schools) and room (Early Learning Centre [ELC] settings) support provided to students at universal whole class/group level.

An extensive range of teaching and learning resources have been developed by the project speech and language therapists (SLTs) and occupational therapists (OTs) for schools and ELCs in line with the project SLT and OT frameworks and national curricula.

Formal liaison and collaboration protocols have been established between HSE/HSE funded services; NEPS psychologists; Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) child care committees and therapists in the demonstration project. The protocols are currently being tested and will inform future liaison and collaborative work between HSE and DCYA services, SLTs, OTs and psychologists.

A two-day training programme for SNAs was delivered in late August 2019 as part of the SIM project. A total of 155 SNAs attended from 20 schools involved in the demonstration project. Participant feedback will inform further programme developments for SNAs. A tendering process was put in place for this training on a national basis in November 2019.

## 1.6 Special Award at the 2019 BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition

The NCSE sponsored a special award at the 2019 BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition. It 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.

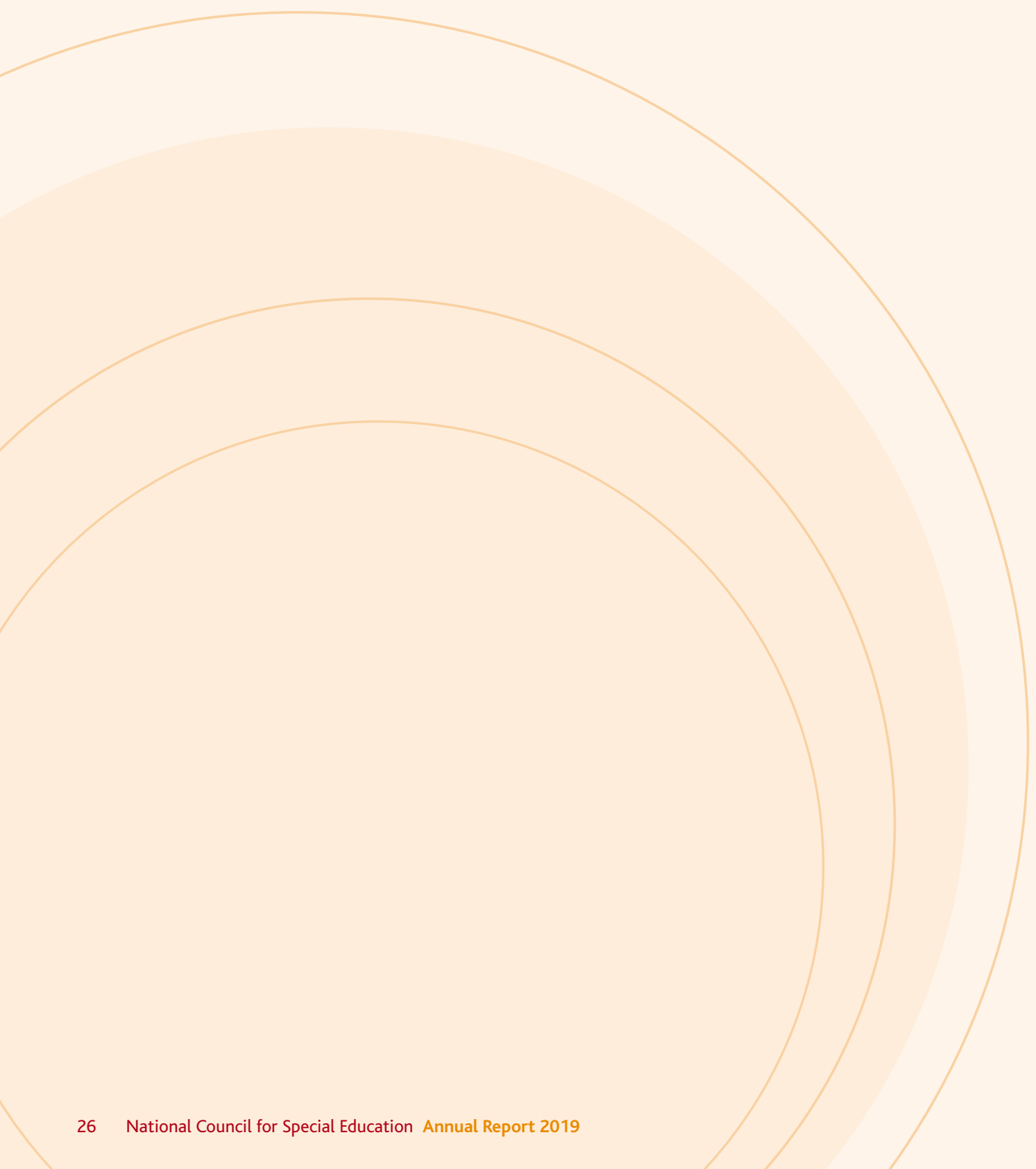
This year's NCSE special award was presented to Ruairi Mullally and Justin Cunningham from Patrician Secondary School, Newbridge, Co. Kildare. The winning team's project was entitled "Reusable Braille Translator."

Teresa Griffin, Chief Executive Officer, National Council for Special Education, presenting the NCSE Award to Ruairi Mullally and Justin Cunningham, Patrician Secondary School, Newbridge, Co. Kildare, for their project "Reusable Braille Translator".



## **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**



## 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

### 2.1 Introduction

Research plays an important role in furthering our knowledge, enhancing our understanding and generating an evidence base on a range of special education issues. It enables us to provide the Minister for Education and Skills with evidence-informed policy advice, as well as to disseminate the latest special education information to the research, policy and practice communities. Work continued on research projects in 2019, including a suite of research relating to the policy advice on special schools and special classes, the review of educational provision in adult day services, and the evaluation of the in-school and pre-school therapy demonstration project. Throughout 2019 we responded to numerous requests for information on special educational needs statistics, research data and reports.

This section provides an overview of our published research reports in 2019, our ongoing research work and a newly commissioned evaluation of SIM. It concludes with a summary of our research conference, held in November 2019.



In 2019, we progressed our in-house research to support the development of the policy advice, as well as two other research projects and commissioned a new study.

## 2.2 Our Publications

### Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion: Final Report

The Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion (ITE4I) project was a four-year longitudinal study that examined the impact of changes to how teachers are professionally prepared in Ireland to educate students with special educational needs. The study tracked teachers from the final year of their ITE programme to the end of their second year teaching as a qualified teacher.

The research noted a number of important findings, including the central role that school context and culture play in the development of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) as inclusive teachers. There was substantial variation in the range of experiences and how well supported they felt in their early jobs. NQTs often reported a perceived discrepancy between the emphasis on inclusive teaching advocated within ITE programmes, and the practices and contexts they experienced in schools. How schools approach inclusive teaching and provide support for NQTs, through formal and informal support and guidance, is central to their development as inclusive teachers.

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. However, some areas where they reported the greatest challenges were in dealing with challenging behaviours, managing the time demands required for differentiation, and working with special needs assistants, other professionals and parents. Experience over time helps NQTs overcome some of these challenges but they felt ill-prepared for liaising with parents and external professionals and this was a consistent finding across the data sources in the study.



## 2.3 Ongoing Research in 2019

### Suite of Research Relating to the Policy Advice on Special Schools and Special Classes

In support of the development of policy advice for the Minister for Education and Skills on educational provision for students in special schools and special classes, we undertook a number of pieces of research and engaged with colleagues in the DES Inspectorate on others. These progressed throughout 2019 as set out below.

- ▶ A review of the research evidence relating to a number of different aspects of educational provision in special and inclusive settings. Specifically, this element of the work searched academic literature published between January 2000 and June 2019 and seeks to identify evidence of outcomes and experiences for students with and without special educational needs.



- ▶ A cross-country review of how specialist provision is provided in other administrations. The review examines how specialist placement and support is provided, how it is allocated, delivered and reviewed, and the outcomes for students arising from such support.
- ▶ A review of approximately 250 professional reports used as the basis for allocating students to special schools or special classes.

While some evidence was found in undertaking this research, there is a relative dearth of published high quality, outcome focused studies. In addition, while all administrations that responded to our survey provide some form of specialist provision such as special schools and/or special classes, there is a lack of available administrative data on outcomes for students accessing this form of support.

### 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 over 20 sites across Ireland, including speaking with adults with disabilities about their educational experiences in these services, as well as engaging with service staff, management and examining practice.

The report will be published in 2020 and notes a number of findings, including: the absence of any best practice framework nationally or internationally for the education of adults with disabilities in these services; the wide range of provision occurring in day services with the aim of contributing to both formal and informal learning; the need to enhance access to mainstream provision for adults with disabilities in more rural areas; and the need to further increase links with employers in some areas.

### Evaluation of the In-School and Pre-School Therapy Support Demonstration Project

In 2018, the NCSE commissioned a team from UCC and Mary Immaculate College, Limerick to evaluate the first year of the In-School and Pre-School Therapy Support Demonstration Project. The evaluation has a number of parts, including reviewing the evidence for tiered approaches to supporting students with special educational needs in schools; evaluating fidelity of the implementation process, including how the service was organised, used and delivered; and the benefits for students, school staff and parents. The evaluation also involves in-depth qualitative work in 20 schools and pre-school services in the area. This in-depth work involves speaking with principals, teachers, therapists, students and parents about their experience of the project. The study aims to document the learning from the project with a view to identifying lessons for future provision should further rollout occur. The study will conclude with a published report expected in 2020.

## 2.4 New Research

As part of the NCSE's management of the School Inclusion Model, in late 2019 we commissioned a comprehensive evaluation of the project. This will examine the development, implementation and outcomes of the model in the school year 2019-20, with the opportunity to extend the study into 2021. The study is being undertaken by the ESRI and Dublin City University.

## 2.5 Research Conference 2019

The annual NCSE research conference took place on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019 in Croke Park Conference Centre. Over 250 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 conference examined the theme of inclusion in two particular areas. The morning sessions focused on teacher education for inclusion. Peter Hick, Manchester Metropolitan University, and Joe Mintz, University of London, presented findings from NCSE's longitudinal research on teacher education for inclusion. Their presentation highlighted the study's key findings including the importance of the school placement experience in preparing newly qualified teachers as inclusive teachers, and the challenges of practice including managing the time demands necessary for differentiation and working with other professionals and parents. This was followed by Órla Ní Bhroin of Dublin City University who outlined what works in professional development for inclusion.

Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills Seán Ó Foghlú addressing the NCSE Research Conference 2019.



The afternoon session examined two parts of the world at different points on the journey towards a single track, fully inclusive education system. The first two presentations examined provision in New Brunswick, Canada. Former New Brunswick Minister for Education, Jody Carr, outlined the changes that took place when it moved to educate all students together in 2013 and the key lessons learned for all those involved in making inclusion happen at a systems level. Kim Korotkov, director of Educational Support Services in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

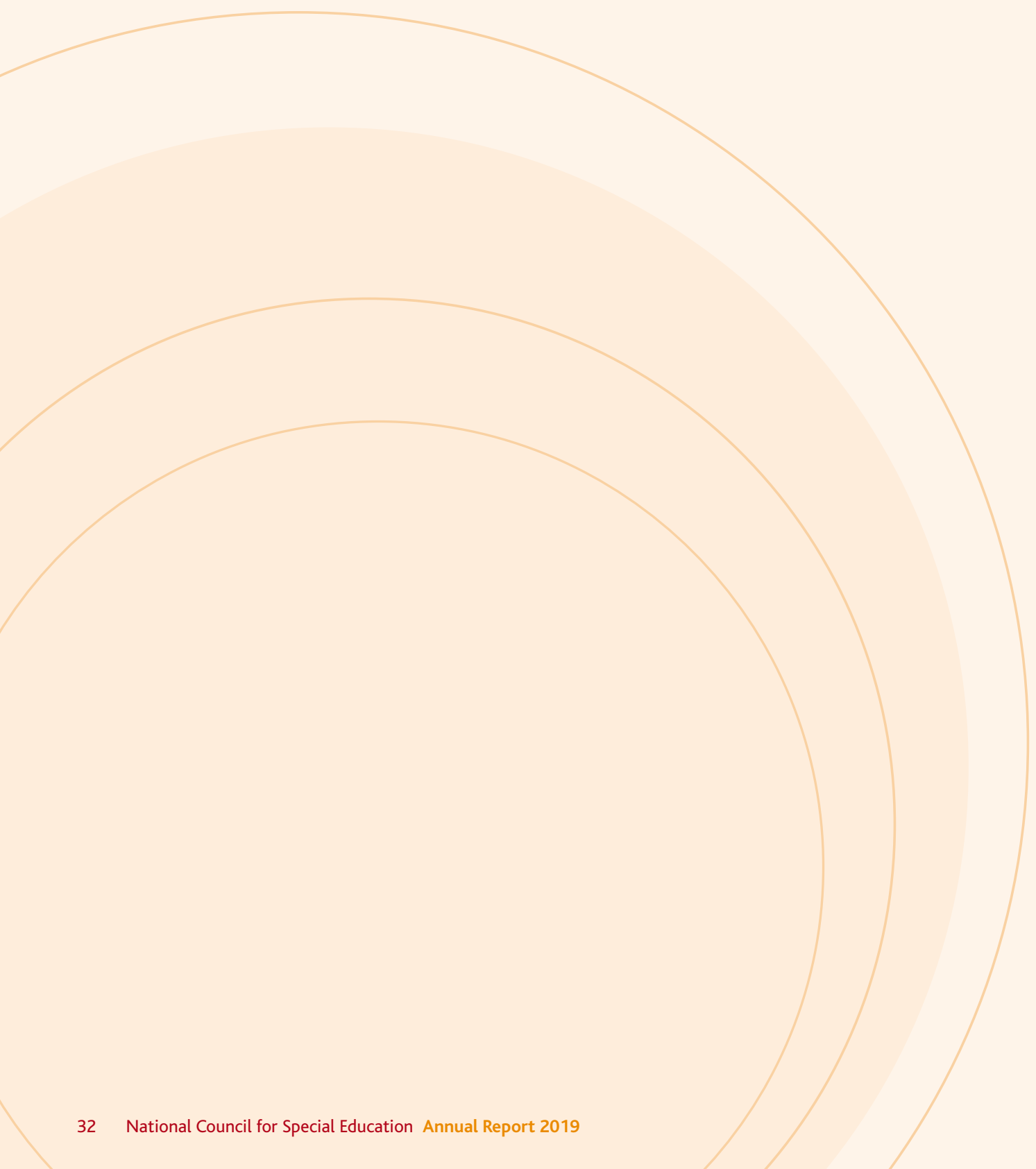
in New Brunswick, then outlined the role played by different groups in making a fully inclusive education system happen in practice. The final presentation of the day was from Portuguese Secretary of State for Education João Costa. He outlined the changes taking place in Portugal since 2018 when it moved to a fully inclusive education system and spoke in particular about how teachers were supported to educate all students together. The secretary general of the Department of Education and Skills, Seán Ó Foghlú, closed the conference with an address that noted the role and importance of research evidence in informing developments in special and inclusive education.



Portugal's Secretary of State for Education, João Costa, speaking at the NCSE Research Conference 2019.

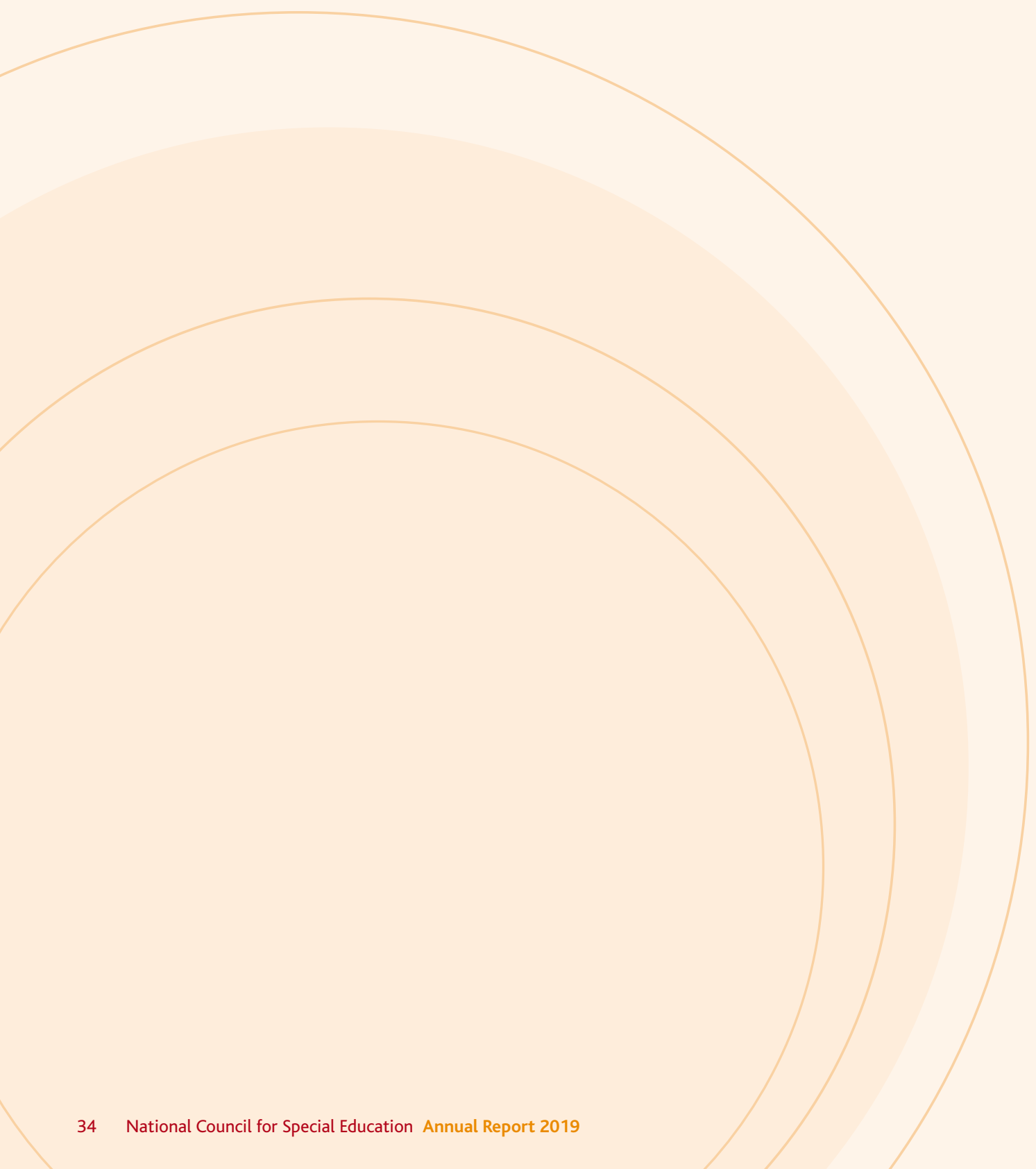


At the NCSE Research Conference 2019 were Joe Mintz, University of London; Kim Korotkov, director, Educational Support Services, New Brunswick, Canada; João Costa, Secretary of State for Education, Portugal; Joe Hayes, Chairperson, NCSE; Teresa Griffin, Chief Executive Officer, NCSE; Jody Carr, Inclusive Education Canada; Órla Ní Bhroin, Dublin City University; and Peter Hick, Manchester Metropolitan University.



## **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

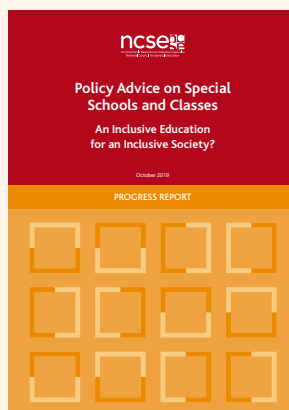
### 3.1 Introduction

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. This section details the progress made on the policy advice on special schools and special classes, as well as our international work to learn from and share knowledge of special and inclusive education matters in other countries.

### 3.2 Progress on Policy Advice on Special Schools and Special Classes

During 2019, the NCSE significantly progressed its policy advice on special schools and special classes. The extensive process continued, with consultation meetings with educational partners, stakeholders and mainstream and special school students. Council members and staff also visited a number of mainstream schools with and without special classes, and special schools.

Research strands included: a wide-ranging literature review covering a number of areas related to education in special schools/classes and inclusive schools; a review of professional reports as the basis for placement in a special school or special class; a review of special school inspection reports produced by the DES Inspectorate; a review of special class provision conducted by the DES Inspectorate; a cross-country review of specialist placement provision; and a survey of schools on the use of their special education teacher (SET) allocation.



In October 2019, the NCSE provided a progress report to the Minister. In it we noted that much is good about the current system. Significant expansion in the availability of additional teaching supports and investment in other resources has brought about a situation where students with special educational needs are generally supported well in schools. Many teachers have undertaken continuous professional development to equip themselves with the requisite skills to work with students with special educational needs. Many schools are very committed to including these students and have established special education teams to support their education in the school.

We expressed concern, however, about the condition of some special school buildings and their unsuitability to accommodate the education of students with very complex needs. We did not feel that students should have to regularly spend lengthy amounts of time, sometimes travelling long distances, to attend school. We noted our concern that placement in special schools and/or special classes appeared to be rarely reviewed, if at all.



Our work will continue in 2020 to finalise the policy advice. In doing so, we are considering the implications of the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and in particular the UN Committee's view that separate special education systems are not compatible with its view of inclusion. The policy advice report will be finalised in 2020.

### 3.3 NCSE Symposium on Inclusive Education

In March, the NCSE hosted a symposium on inclusive education at the Croke Park stadium, Dublin. A delegation of three speakers from New Brunswick, Canada, who are involved in the education sector there, gave a presentation on inclusive education to 65 guests comprising education stakeholders and some NCSE staff.

New Brunswick decided some years ago to actively plan for full inclusion of all children, irrespective of ability, creed, ethnicity or social background, into mainstream schools. New Brunswick currently has no special schools or special classes. All students attend their local school, including those with the most complex learning needs, disabilities and challenging behaviours.

The speakers shared their experiences and perspectives on the successes, opportunities and challenges presented by full inclusion in schools. A discussion session followed which gave all parties an opportunity to put forward their ideas on the subject.

### 3.4 International Work

#### NCSE and DES Visit Portugal to Study Its Inclusive Education System

Following major review and consultation over an 18-month period, Portugal introduced a new law in 2018 to support universal access and inclusion for all as envisaged under the UNCRPD.

A delegation from NCSE and the DES visited Portugal from 21st-24th October 2019 to examine how these changes were introduced and how the system is working there.

The Portuguese system is organised into school clusters that comprise varying numbers and types of schools. Each cluster is managed and administered by one principal.

The delegation visited three schools across two different school clusters and a fourth school that was not part of a cluster. One school visit included a discussion with parents. In addition, the delegation visited a resource centre for inclusion.

Portugal was found to have made very substantial progress in moving towards a system of fully including all students in their local neighbourhood schools.

*Front row, left-right: Dalton Tattan (Assistant Secretary, Department of Education and Skills), Mary Byrne (Head of Special*





The NCSE-DES delegation which visited Portugal. Front row, left-right: Dalton Tattan (Assistant Secretary, Department of Education and Skills), Mary Byrne (Head of Special Education, NCSE), Maria José Saragoça (Directorate General for Education, Portugal), Teresa Griffin (Chief Executive Officer, NCSE), Anne Tansey (Director of NEPS and NCSE Council member).

Back row, left-right: Brendan Doody (Assistant Chief Inspector, DES), Eddie Ward (Principal Officer, DES) and Joe Hayes (Chairperson, NCSE).

NCSE and DES delegation visiting School Cluster Fernando Casimiro Pereira da Silva, Rio Maior, Portugal.



NCSE and DES delegates meeting parents of students with complex needs attending the Antonio Arroio Artistic school in Lisbon.



### NCSE Staff Members Assist in Developing the Special Education System in Georgia

The NCSE received a request from the Georgian embassy for advice in developing their special education system, which is at an early stage of development. NCSE staff members undertook an advisory visit to Georgia's education authorities on October 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019.

The delegation found progress in the development of inclusive education had been underpinned by substantial government investment in supports and many legislative, attitudinal and administrative changes.

The country was found to be moving toward realising greater inclusion and it was recommended that Georgia now needs to develop a clear statement of its policy on the inclusion of all students in education and an accompanying action plan to achieve this policy. The development of a competent, qualified and confident workforce to support these changes was also mentioned.

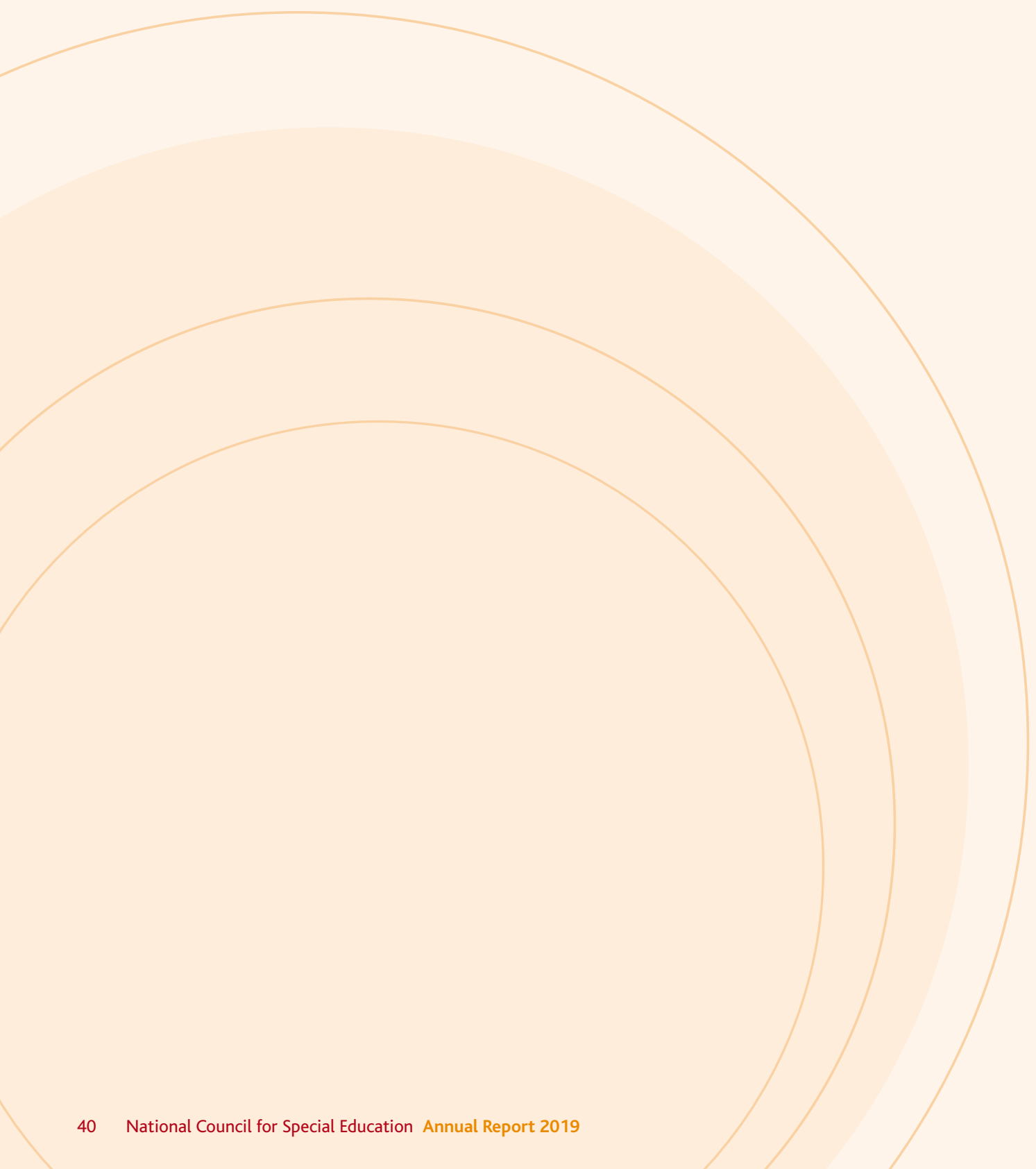
An invitation issued to the Georgian government to send an official to Ireland in 2020 to view the Irish education system, to visit schools and to meet principals, teachers, students and other Irish education stakeholders.

## 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). The agency 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.

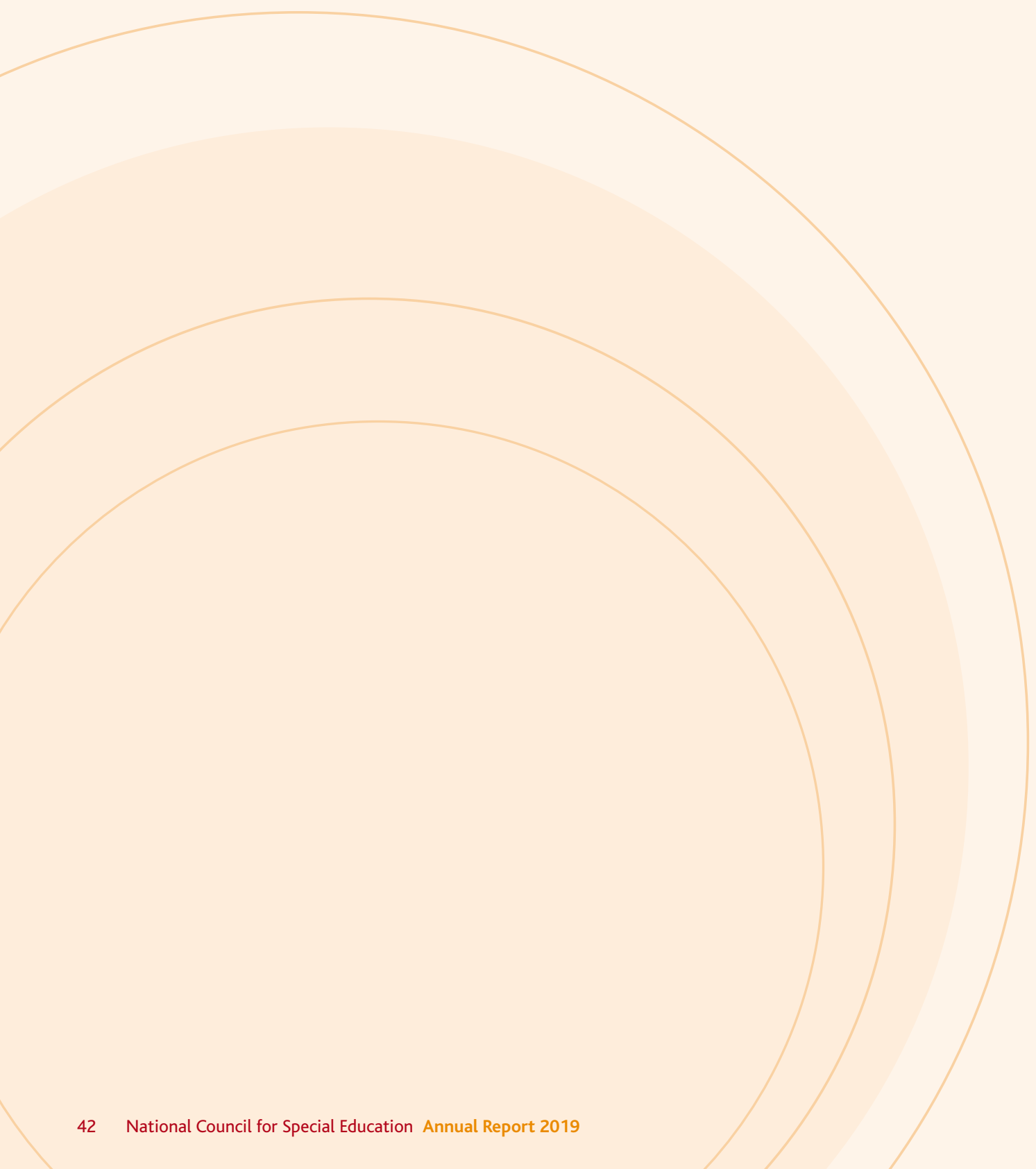
During 2019, the NCSE both benefited from and contributed to the work of EASNIE by:

- ▶ Continuing to engage with representative board members and national coordinators on research work to support the development of our policy advice on special schools and special classes;
- ▶ Publishing research on initial teacher education for inclusion that used the EASNIE profile of inclusive teachers as a core reference and benchmark for the research. This served to further disseminate the agency's work to NCSE stakeholders and research consumers;
- ▶ Providing information on special and inclusive education in Ireland to EASNIE and individual member-states.



## **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

### 4.1 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.

### 4.2 Adult Education and the Comprehensive Employment Strategy (CES) for People with Disabilities (2015-24) Transition Planning

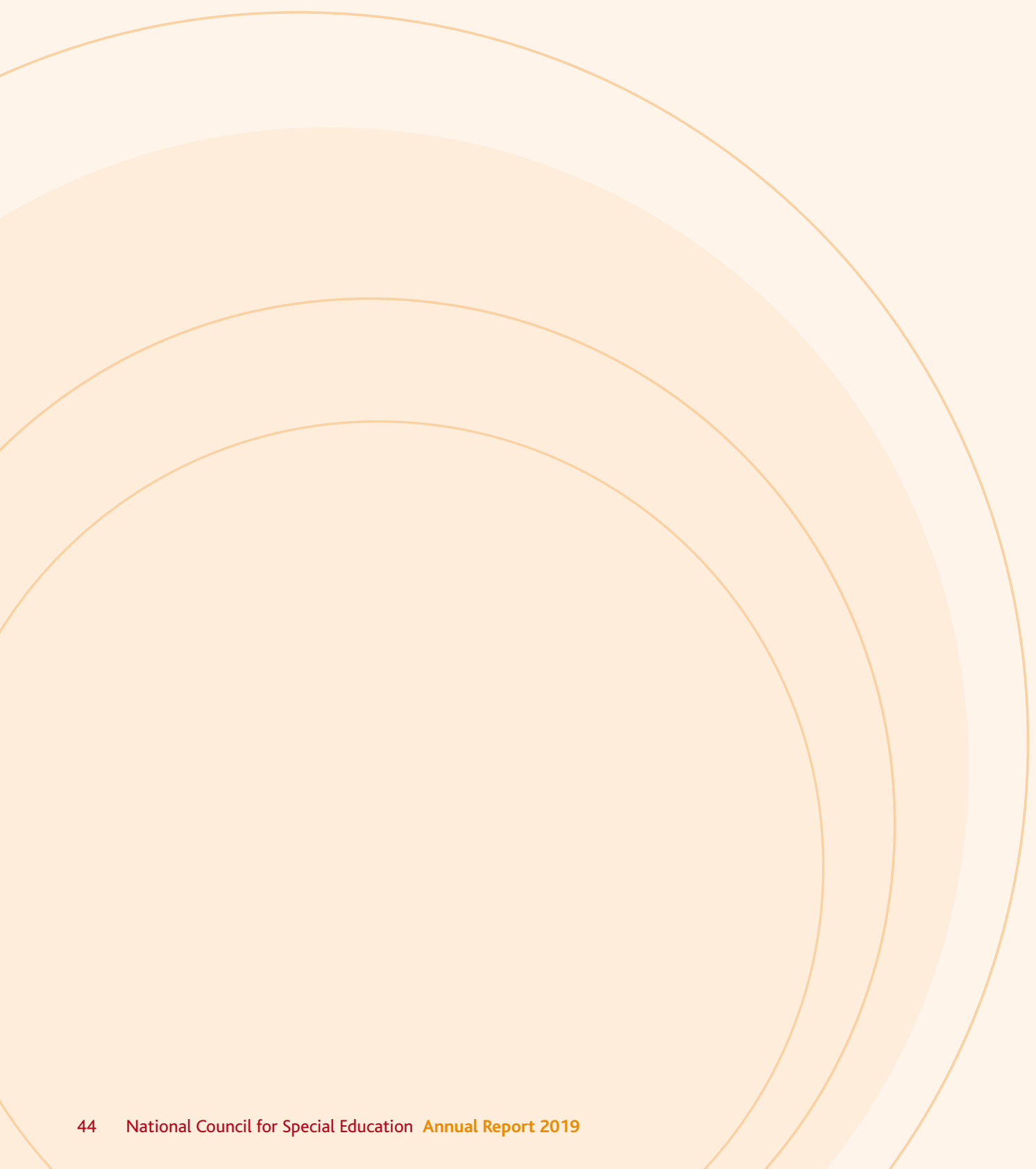
The Adult Education and the Comprehensive Employment Strategy (CES) is a cross-government approach that brings together actions by different Departments and state agencies, including the NCSE, in a concerted effort to address the barriers and challenges that impact on employment of people with disabilities.

One target of building skills, capacity and independence for young people with disabilities involves a commitment by the HSE and NCSE to develop a transition programme to meet their needs when leaving school and embarking on a career pathway.

The NCSE and HSE met and agreed a plan of work to progress the development of effective transitioning to include a more holistic transition model. A joint HSE/NCSE transition workshop took place on 21st May 2019 in the Midlands Park Hotel, Portlaoise, on the theme of supporting students to transition from school to rehabilitative training. Seventy-five people attended the workshop comprising teachers, SENOs, school principals, Department of Health officials, occupational guidance officers and disability managers.

The transition project group has agreed on the merit of exploring the holistic approach to transition. To make further progress, the group will need to incorporate representatives from the other agencies/Departments.

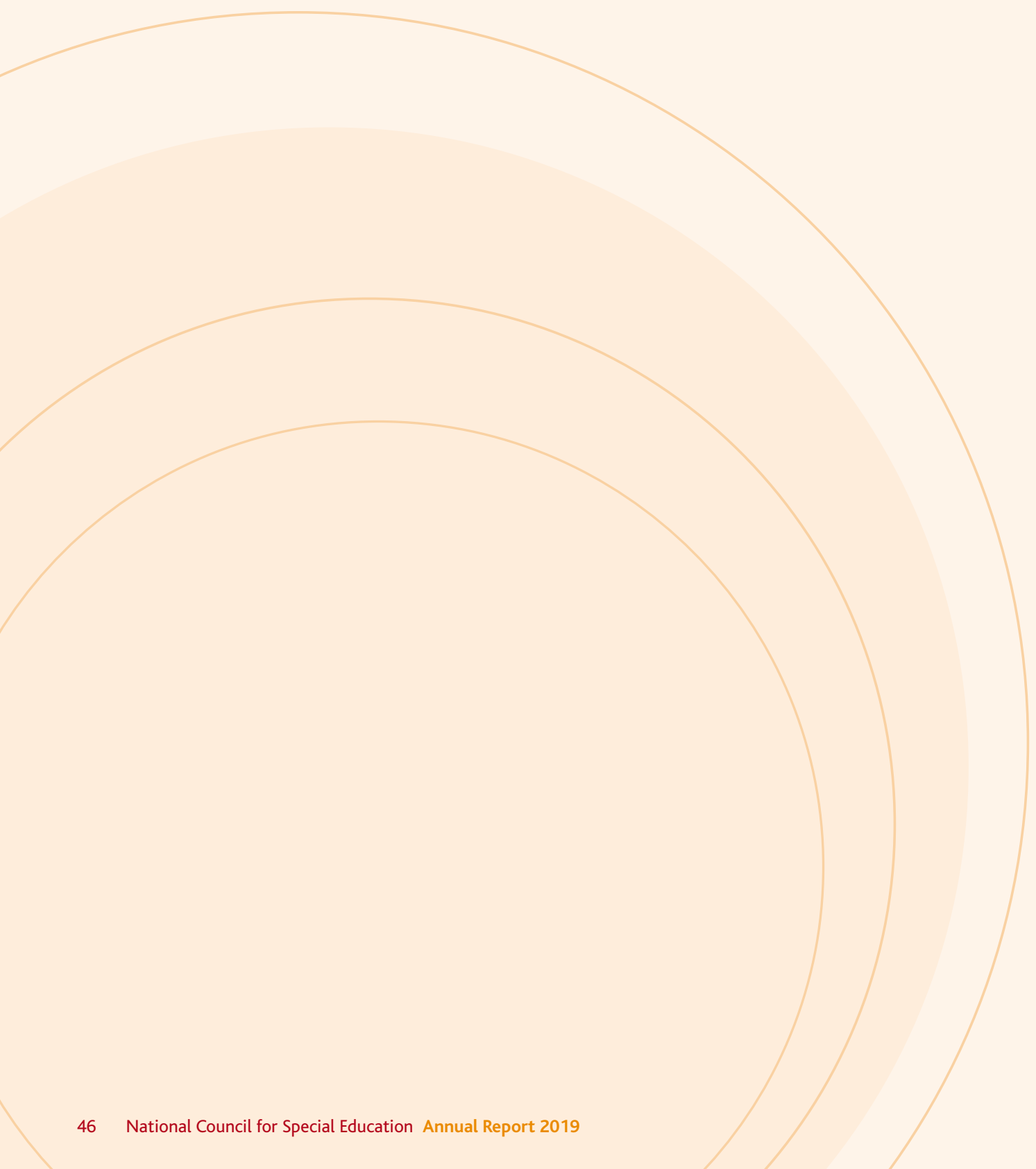
A meeting of the reconstituted oversight group with additional representatives from SOLAS, the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) is to be convened early in 2020 to agree a revised work plan and timelines.





## **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**

### 5.1 Introduction

In 2019 the NCSE continued to develop 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. This section outlines our activities in these areas across the year.

### 5.2 Further Development of the NCSE's Interim Management Structure

The NCSE continued its work in 2019 to integrate the staff and supports of special education services which transitioned to it in March 2017.<sup>6</sup> 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. Once formal DES sanction was received, competitions were advertised in 2019 to fill the team leader and regional manager positions on a permanent basis.

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. One Specialist Lead position has been filled on a permanent basis while a competition to fill the three remaining vacancies was advertised towards the end of the year. At head office, the IT and finance activities of the former organisations have been fully integrated into the NCSE.

Effecting significant change in any organisation is never without its challenges. For NCSE these 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.

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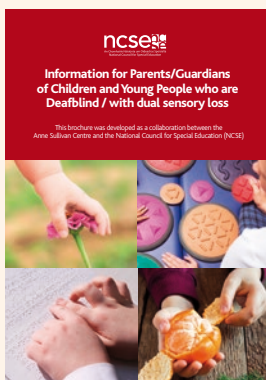
<sup>6</sup> The former Special Education Support Service (SESS), National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) and Visiting Teacher Service.

### 5.3 Information for Parents

Each year, our special educational needs organisers (SENOs) deliver the NCSE's parental information programme. This 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 2019, SENOs delivered 32 parent information sessions to almost 630 parents. Parents were again very positive in their feedback to SENOs on the sessions and the material provided.

The NCSE also published two information booklets to support parents: a general information booklet for parents of children and young people with special educational needs; and Information for Parents of Children and Young People who are Deafblind/with Dual Sensory Loss. Both booklets are available on the NCSE website.

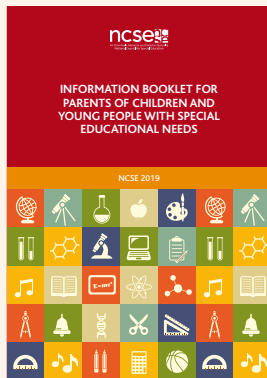


#### Information for Parents/Guardians of Children and Young People who are Deafblind/with Dual Sensory Loss

This brochure was developed as a collaboration between the Anne Sullivan Centre and the NCSE and was officially launched by Minister of State for Higher Education Mary Mitchell O'Connor on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019 as part of the 30-Year Celebration of the Anne Sullivan Centre. Minister O'Connor highlighted the significance of the booklet as an important tool for any parent who can bring it to their local school principal when their children are starting school.

Minister of State  
for Higher Education  
Mary Mitchell O'Connor  
launching the joint  
NCSE-Anne Sullivan  
Centre booklet





## Information Booklet for Parents of Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs

This booklet gives parents information on the full range of educational supports available in schools for children with special educational needs and answers key questions that parents/guardians may have about their child's education. It was developed in consultation with schools, parents and other stakeholders and is focused on the wellbeing and best interests of children with special educational needs.

## 5.4 Data Protection

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

In 2019 we processed two data access requests in accordance with the regulations.

## 5.5 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. A new consultative forum was appointed in 2019 and for the first time the forum is chaired by a Council member – the NCSE's Deputy Chairperson, Don Mahon. Forum members were appointed from July 2019 and their term expires at the end of December 2022.

The forum met once, in October 2019 when it was inducted into its role. It then discussed the role of special schools and classes in Ireland, NCSE support services and parental engagement, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Forum membership and attendance at the 2019 meeting is listed in Table 6 below.

**Table 6: NCSE Consultative Forum Membership and Attendance in 2019**

Council-Appointed Members		Attendance
<b>Fidelma Brady</b>	Education officer, Down Syndrome Ireland	0
<b>Feargal Brougham</b>	President of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)	1
<b>Miriam Colum</b>	Lecturer in Special Educational Needs, Marino Institute of Education	1
<b>Marina Cusack</b>	Special Educational Needs Coordinator in a Post-Primary School	1
<b>Lorraine Dempsey</b>	Chairperson of Inclusion Ireland	1
<b>Ciarán Finlay</b>	Policy and Public Affairs Advisor, National Disability Authority (NDA)	1
<b>Padraig Flanagan</b>	Principal of a post-primary school	1
<b>Margaret Flood</b>	Education Officer, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	0
<b>Martin Gallen</b>	Senior Educational Psychologist, Donegal Education and Training Board	1
<b>Paddy Greally</b>	Retired Children's Services Manager, Brothers of Charity	1
<b>Ann Higgins</b>	Principal of a special school	1
<b>Patricia McCarthy</b>	Inclusion in Education and Society Research Team, Trinity College Dublin	1
<b>Anne Melly</b>	Disability Specialist, Health Service Executive (HSE)	1
<b>Anna Ní Chartúir</b>	Special Educational Needs Coordinator, Gaeltacht primary school	1
<b>Gerard O'Carroll</b>	Lecturer in Inclusion, Institute of Technology, Tralee	1
<b>Tracie Tobin</b>	Principal of a DEIS primary school	1
<b>Madeline Hickey</b>	Sensory Lead, Policy and Practice Development, NCSE	1
<b>Christine Chapple</b>	Senior Psychologist, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)	1
<b>Catriona Hanevy</b>	Assistant Principal Officer, Department of Education and Skills	1
<b>Paul Stevens</b>	Primary Inspector, Department of Education and Skills	1

## 5.6 Governance

### Performance Management

The NCSE Statement of Strategy covers the period 2017-21. An annual work plan for 2019 based on the strategy was developed and approved by Council in December 2018 with progress reviewed quarterly, alongside associated risks. The annual review of our 2018 risk register was also conducted and an updated register of risk for 2019 was agreed by the Council on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee.

### Annual Accounts

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.

It is expected that the 2019 annual accounts will be presented to the Minister in June 2020 pending the completion of the audit.

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 its 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.

## 5.7 The Council of the NCSE

The NCSE governance authority is the Council of the National Council for Special Education. The Council is appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills under Section 21 of the EPSEN Act, 2004. The term of the previous Council ended December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018. The Minister reappointed five members of that Council who were eligible for a second term on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018 and of those, Joe Hayes was appointed as the Chairperson designate. The Minister finalised the Chairperson's appointment on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and appointed eight new members to the Council on the same day.

The term of office of the Chairperson and ordinary members of the Council expires December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022.

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. Its 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 Council-approved Statement of Strategy (2017-21).

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 position in 2019 is provided in the NCSE audited annual accounts which are published separately.

NCSE Council 2019-22 with the Chief Executive Officer: Back row (from left): Eamon Clavin, Anne Tansey, Peter Archer, Antoinette Nic Gearailt, Dharragh Hunt, Pat Goff and Don Mahon.

Front row (from left): Teresa Griffin, Chief Executive Officer; Áine Lynch, Joe Hayes, Chairperson), Deirbhile Nic Craith, Clodagh Ní Mhaoilchiaráin, Eileen Daly. Inset: Carol Cuffe.





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.

The Council met on six occasions during 2019. Details of individual members and their attendances are given in Table 7 below.

**Table 7: Council of the NCSE Membership and Attendance in 2019**

Name	Details	Attendance
<b>Joe Hayes,* Chairperson</b>	Former Irish Ambassador to China, Denmark and Iceland, to the Czech Republic and Ukraine and latterly to Singapore, Indonesia, The Phillippines, Brunei and Timor Leste	6
<b>Don Mahon,* Deputy Chairperson</b>	Former Assistant Chief Inspector in the Department of Education and Skills (DES)	6
<b>Peter Archer</b>	Former Chief Executive Officer of the Educational Research Centre	4 <sup>†</sup>
<b>Eamon Clavin</b>	Divisional Inspector in the Department of Education and Skills (DES)	5 <sup>†</sup>
<b>Carol Cuffe</b>	Head of Social Care, CHO 7, Health Service Executive (HSE)	3 <sup>†</sup>
<b>Eileen Daly</b>	Further and Higher Education Disability Officer and Career Guidance Practitioner	5 <sup>†</sup>
<b>Pat Goff</b>	Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN)	5 <sup>†</sup>
<b>Dharragh Hunt</b>	Policy and public affairs advisor, National Disability Authority	5 <sup>†</sup>
<b>Áine Lynch*</b>	Chief Executive Officer of the National Parents Council Primary	5
<b>Clodagh Ní Mhaoilchiaráin</b>	Príomhoide, Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín	4 <sup>†</sup>
<b>Deirbhile Nic Craith</b>	Assistant General Secretary and Director of Education and Research with the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO).	5 <sup>†</sup>
<b>Antoinette Nic Gearailt*</b>	Former President of the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)	6
<b>Anne Tansey*</b>	Director of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the psychological service of the Department of Education and Skills (DES)	5

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

*Those members whose attendance figures are denoted with an † could only have attended a maximum of five meetings. The first meeting of 2019 occurred before their appointment to the 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.

**Table 8: Audit and Risk Committee Membership and Attendance in 2019**

Audit and Risk (four meetings)	Attendance
Lisa Campbell, Chairperson	4
Peter Archer	4
Don Mahon	4
Antoinette Nic Gearailt	3

**Table 9: CEO Performance Committee Membership and Attendance in 2019**

CEO Performance (two meetings)	Attendance
Joe Hayes, Chairperson	2
Peter Archer	2
Antoinette Nic Gearailt	2

**Table 10: Finance Committee Membership and Attendance in 2019**

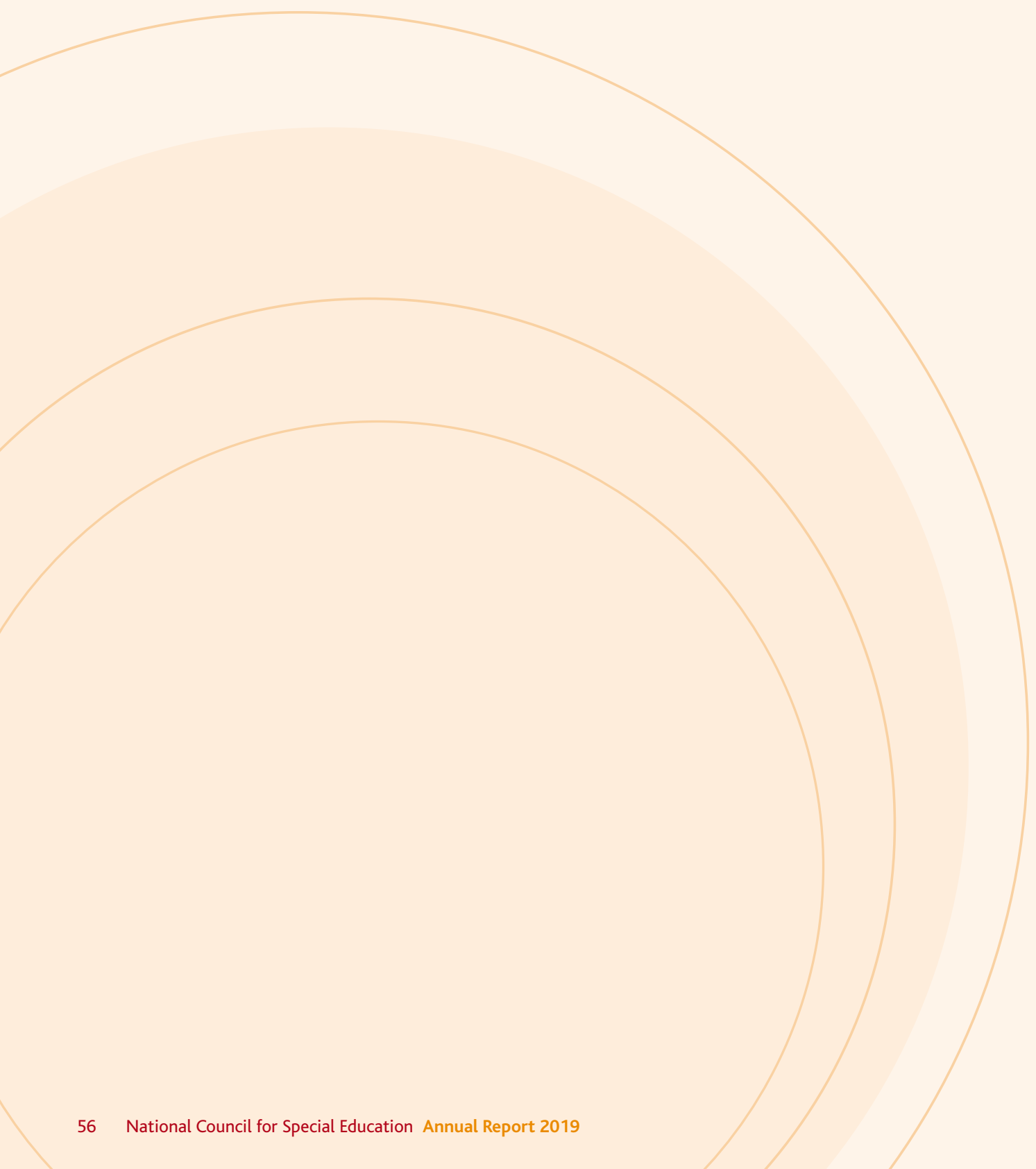
Finance (five meetings)	Attendance
Antoinette Nic Gearailt, Chairperson	5
Eileen Daly	5
Pat Goff	5
Deirbhile Nic Craith	5

**Table 11: Research Committee Membership and Attendance in 2019**

Research (four meetings)	Attendance
Peter Archer, Chairperson	4
Dharragh Hunt	4
Áine Lynch	3
Anne Tansey	3

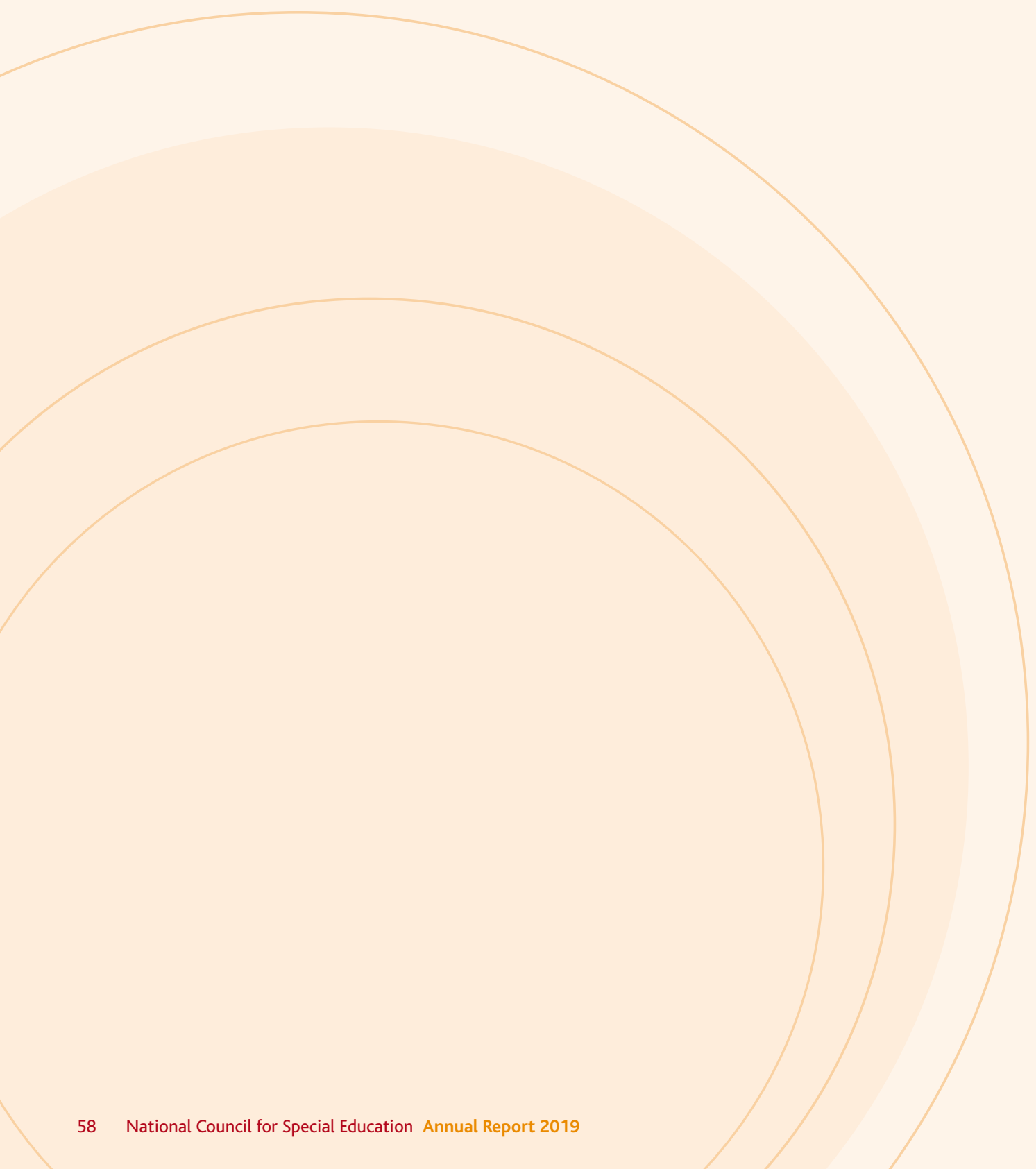
**Table 12: Strategy and Policy Committee Membership and Attendance in 2019**

Strategy and Policy (six meetings)	Attendance
Don Mahon, Chairperson	6
Eamon Clavin	6
Carol Cuffe	4
Clodagh Ní Mhaoilchiaráin	6





# Appendices



## Appendix 1 – Confirmation 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 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019. Confirmation of the annual review of effectiveness of the NCSE System of Internal Control in 2019 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 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 where possible those established 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 2019.

## 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](http://www.ncse.ie). Any matters drawn to our attention in 2019 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 2019, the NCSE reported the organisation's energy performance in 2018 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 2018 is provided below and is compared with the previously reported 2017 figures.

**Table 13: Overview of NCSE Energy Usage 2018 and 2017**

Energy Type	Units	2018	2017
Electricity	MWh	140	135
Thermal	MWh	206	241
Renewable	MWh	0	0

## Appendix 2 – NCSE Staffing

**Table 14: NCSE Staffing at 31st December 2019**

Grade	Staff in Post End 2019
<b>Civil Servants</b>	
Chief executive	1
Principal	4
Regional managers (acting)	5
Specialist lead	1
Assistant principal	6
Team managers	10
Special educational needs organiser (SENO)	64.6
Higher executive officer	7
Administrative officer	1
Executive officer	7
Clerical officer	8
Intern	2
Sub-total (civil servants)	<b>116.6</b>
School Inclusion Model project lead	1
Specialist lead	1
Advisors	51
Visiting teachers	44
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>213.6</b>

## Appendix 3 – Statistical Information for Academic Years 2011-12 to 2018-19

Tables 15-18 below provide trend data for school years 2011-12 to 2018-19 in respect of NCSE resource allocation activity. There is an upward trend across the majority of areas.

**Table 15: Applications Received from Schools for Access to Additional Resources**

Type of Applications	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
SNA	6,500	7,454	8,703	8,656	8,621	9,553	8,781	9,855
Transport	2,310	2,520	2,787	3,289	3,423	3,460	3,597	3,847
Assistive Technology	2,215	2,721	2,882	2,928	3,564	4,686	4,157	4,453
LITH <sup>7</sup>	14,490	13,914	15,952	16,209	18,177	19,384	N/A	N/A
<b>Total Applications</b>	<b>25,515</b>	<b>26,630</b>	<b>30,324</b>	<b>31,082</b>	<b>33,785</b>	<b>37,083</b>	<b>16,535</b>	<b>18,155</b>

**Table 16: 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	18/19
SNA	10,320	10,503	10,671	11,174	11,984	13,006	14,063	15,030
Low incidence teachers	5,265	5,265	5,722	6,204	6,823	7,427	N/A <sup>7</sup>	N/A <sup>7</sup>
Special school teachers	1,056	1,078	1,060	1,135	1,159	1,197	1,205	1,223
Special class teachers	602	695	823	956	1,136	1,304	1,480	1,663

<sup>7</sup> The application process for low incidence teaching hours was replaced by the new model for allocating special education teachers for school year 2017-18.

**Table 17: Numbers of Students Supported by NCSE Allocations**

Students	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
SNA mainstream	12,150	13,268	13,907	15,101	16,874	18,513	19,571	20,550
LITH	29,426	32,480	35,763	38,414	42,931	47,065	N/A <sup>7</sup>	N/A <sup>7</sup>
Special classes	3,286	3,684	4,353	4,706	5,472	6,393	7,390	8,410
Special schools	6,848	7,077	7,299	7,459	7,607	7,739	7,954	7,921

**Table 18: Special Classes Type by Disability**

Type of Special Classes	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
ASD EI <sup>8</sup>	34	49	72	96	118	127	130	132
ASD	296	364	439	531	647	762	917	1,067
Speech and language	64	64	64	63	63	65	65	65
Mild GLD	73	71	67	65	64	62	57	59
Mod GLD	31	28	39	39	48	58	59	62
Hearing	15	16	16	15	17	16	16	16
EBD/SEBD	9	7	8	11	10	10	10	11
Other	26	29	32	35	41	49	50	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>628</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>1,008</b>	<b>1,149</b>	<b>1,304</b>	<b>1,463</b>

8 Early intervention classes established for students of pre-school age with autism in mainstream schools.

## Appendix 4 – Description of Disability Categories<sup>9</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.
Deaf/hard of hearing	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.

9 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 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.
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
Blind/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

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
ETB	Education and Training Board
EBD	Emotional disturbance/behavioural disorder
ELC	Early Learning Centre
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
OT	Occupational therapist
SESS	Special Education Support Service
SD	Standard deviation
SENO	Special educational needs organiser
SIC	System of Internal Control
SIM	School Inclusion Model
SNA	Special needs assistant
SLT	Speech and language therapist
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



## Appendix 6 – Statistics Infographic

### Number of students supported by SNAs

End of School Year	SNA Posts	In mainstream	In special classes	In special schools	
2018-19	15,030	20,550	8,410	7,921	
2017-18	14,063	19,571	7,390	7,954	

  
The NCSE opened  
**164**  
new special classes  
in 2018-19  
compared to  
**174**  
new special classes  
in 2017-18






**2018-19**  
Number of special classes  
**1,463**  
Number of special class places  
**9,336**

**2017-18**  
Number of special classes  
**1,305**  
Number of special class places  
**8,370**

Number of Applications Processed in 2018-19 Compared to 2017-18

School Year	SNA	School Transport	Assistive technology/specialist equipment	TOTAL
2018-19	9,855	3,847	4,453	18,155
2017-18	8,781	3,597	4,157	16,535

### For the 2019 calendar year

-  **5,942** schoolgoing children and **938** babies/pre-school children were supported by 46 visiting teachers
-  **2,266** applications were received from schools for in-school support
-  **16,511** teachers were engaged in professional development and learning at NCSE seminars and whole staff seminars
-  **19,737** professional development and learning days provided for NCSE seminars and whole staff seminars
-  **443** NCSE external courses and 280 whole staff seminars were delivered

