

ncse 

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta um Oideachas Speisialta
National Council for Special Education



ncse 
An Chomhairle Náisiúnta um Oideachas Speisialta
National Council for Special Education

National Council
for Special Education
Annual Report 2022

© NCSE 2023

National Council for Special Education

1-2 Mill Street
Trim
Co. Meath

T: 01 6033200

www.ncse.ie

Contents

NCSE Chairperson's Report to Ministers	2
CEO Foreword	7
Introduction: Our Strategic Approach	11
Main Achievements	12
Strategic Goal 1	16
1.1 Introduction	16
1.2 Resourcing Schools in the 2021/22 School Year	17
1.3 Resourcing Schools in the 2022/23 School Year	19
1.4 NCSE Teacher Professional Learning (TPL)	21
1.5 Assessment of Need	23
1.6 Implementation of the School Inclusion Model Pilot	25
1.7 Comprehensive Employment Strategy (CES) – Transition Pilot Study	29
1.8 Activity Update	30
Strategic Goal 2	38
2.1 Progress on Policy Advice on Special Schools and Special Classes	38
2.2 European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education	38
2.3 Development of the NCSE Behaviour Framework	38
2.4 Research Programme	39
2.5 Research Conference 2022	41
Strategic Goal 3	48
3.1 Introduction	48
3.2 Staff Conference	48
3.3 Consultative Forum	48
3.4 The Council of the NCSE	50
3.5 Governance	54
Appendices	
Appendix 1 – Confirmation of Compliance with Requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016	58
Appendix 2 – NCSE Staffing	61
Appendix 3 – Statistical Information on Allocations and Special Classes for Academic Years 2011/12 to 2021/22	62
Appendix 4 – Glossary of Acronyms Used	65
Appendix 5 – Infographic on Main NCSE Statistics	66

NCSE Chairperson's Report to Ministers

June 2023

Ms Norma Foley, TD
Minister for Education
Department of Education
Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 RC96

Ms Josepha Madigan, TD
Minister of State with responsibility for Special Education and Inclusion
Department of Education
Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 RC96

Dear Ministers,

In line with the requirements of the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, as Acting Chairperson of the National Council Special Education (NCSE), I am honoured to present you with our annual report for 2022.

At the start of 2022, we welcomed Mr. John Kearney as the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the NCSE. John took up post in March, succeeding Teresa Griffin, who recently retired following 10 years in the role – we wish Teresa all the best in her retirement. At the end of 2022, the term of Council ended. I would like to extend a special thanks to outgoing Chairperson, Joe Hayes, and six outgoing members of the Council, for their time and valued input to the work of the NCSE over their term of appointment.

In line with the NCSE's vision for a society where children and adults with special educational needs are supported to achieve better outcomes in their education, our key focus was on planning and coordinating the provision of education supports for children with additional needs. At the end of 2022, there were a total of 2,152 special classes in mainstream schools with places available for 13,464 students, and over 19,000 SNA posts, up from 18,000 at the end of Dec 2021. Over 8,000 students were enrolled in special schools supported by the NCSE at the end of 2021/22 school year, supported by over 1,250 teachers and over 2,700 SNAs. In light of Government decision to retain sanctioned allocations into 2022, the NCSE continued to work on exceptional reviews of SNA and SET allocations.

In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, supports have been provided to Ukrainian children with special educational needs arriving in Ireland with their families. In collaboration with the Department of Education, the NCSE provided additional SNA and SET allocations to schools to support the arrival of Ukrainian students in our schools. In late 2022, the NCSE procured Ukrainian/Russian written translation services, to facilitate efficient access to SEN services. In December 2022, 2,909 Ukrainian enrolments were recorded across school settings.

A range of materials and supports were provided by the NCSE to support parents, teachers and schools. These included expanded parental information seminars, leaflets for parents and students from Ukraine on accessing supports in Ireland, and a suite of resources for school and home-based children under the Summer Programme 2022. Professional learning opportunities for teachers continued to be delivered in-person and online; more than 5,000 teachers participated in these seminars in 2022.

Elements of the School Inclusion Model (SIM) continued to be rolled out during the year. Over 2,000 teachers were supported through TPL events with schools participating in In-School Therapy Project as part of SIM, and over 650 teachers were supported through Enhanced Regional Teams via seminars delivered by therapists and behaviour practitioners. The national training programme for SNAs continued to roll out, with over 800 students graduating in November 2022 and a further 961 enrolled in September 2022. A new National Nursing Pilot was launched in October 2022 to support children with complex healthcare needs.

Advising the Minister through independent, expert and evidence-informed policy advice is one of the strategic goals of the NCSE. To this aim, the NCSE submitted an updated policy advice paper on special schools and special classes to the Department of Education, after delays during the COVID-19 pandemic. This included an updated literature review and recent reports and publications to 2022. We look forward to the publication of this policy advice in 2023.

Our research programme continued throughout 2022, with fieldwork on several commissioned projects progressing over the year. The project mapping and tracking students after they leave school collected the first round of data from students and schools as they prepare to leave school in 2022. A second round of data collection will take place in early 2023. A report arising from the study on the impact of COVID-19 for students with special educational needs was finalised and is due to be published in 2023. We look forward to sharing the outcomes of these reports arising from the studies with your Department.

A new study was commissioned in 2022, to externally evaluate how the NCSE delivers its frontline services to determine the impact it is having in classrooms on school staff, students and parents. This exciting study will guide us in developing a framework for the future and understand what benefits and impact our services are having and to highlight areas for improvement.

The annual research conference was held in November 2022 at Croke Park, with over 250 delegates attending in-person or online via the livestream. The themes 'post-pandemic education' and 'experiences of transition: entering the Irish system and leaving school' were discussed by a range of national and international experts. The presentations were well-received, and included an early glimpse of an NCSE-commissioned book on a century of special education in Ireland due to be formally launched in 2023.

In 2022, the country and the special education sector emerged from the unprecedented difficulties arising from the pandemic. There was a renewed effort to plan our current and future supports and services for children and their families, in conjunction with schools, your Department and other key stakeholders. The announcement of significant additional investment in Budget 2023, with a total full-year investment of €13 million and over 160 additional staff, is welcome. The NCSE is grateful to you and the work of your Department in securing this additional funding. This will enable us to deliver on our mission to provide an inclusive and response continuum of educational provision for children and adults with special educational needs. We look forward to outlining further progress in this area in 2023.

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 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 2022. We do not anticipate any such developments.
- ▶ The financial position of the NCSE is as disclosed in our 2022 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 confirmations to you regarding the NCSE System of Internal Controls and the required governance statement and board members' report.
- ▶ The NCSE adheres to Circular 25/2016 for standards and timelines in responding to Oireachtas members' queries. The NCSE does not publish responses to Oireachtas members' queries at this time.
- ▶ The NCSE Council completed an evaluation of NCSE performance by reference to the annual plan and budget in December 2022.
- ▶ 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 following an internal review of our compliance with the Code in 2022.
- ▶ 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, and plan to revise this in 2023. We identified non-compliance with guidelines with 13 suppliers in 2022 and have disclosed this detail 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 Council 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.
- ▼ As at 31 December 2022, the Council has 7 (54%) female and 6 (46%) male members. The gender balance of the Council is in line with the requirements outlined in the EPSEN Act. Furthermore, the Council meets the Government target of a minimum of 40% representation of each gender in the membership of State Boards.
- ▼ The NCSE is committed to the promotion of diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation.

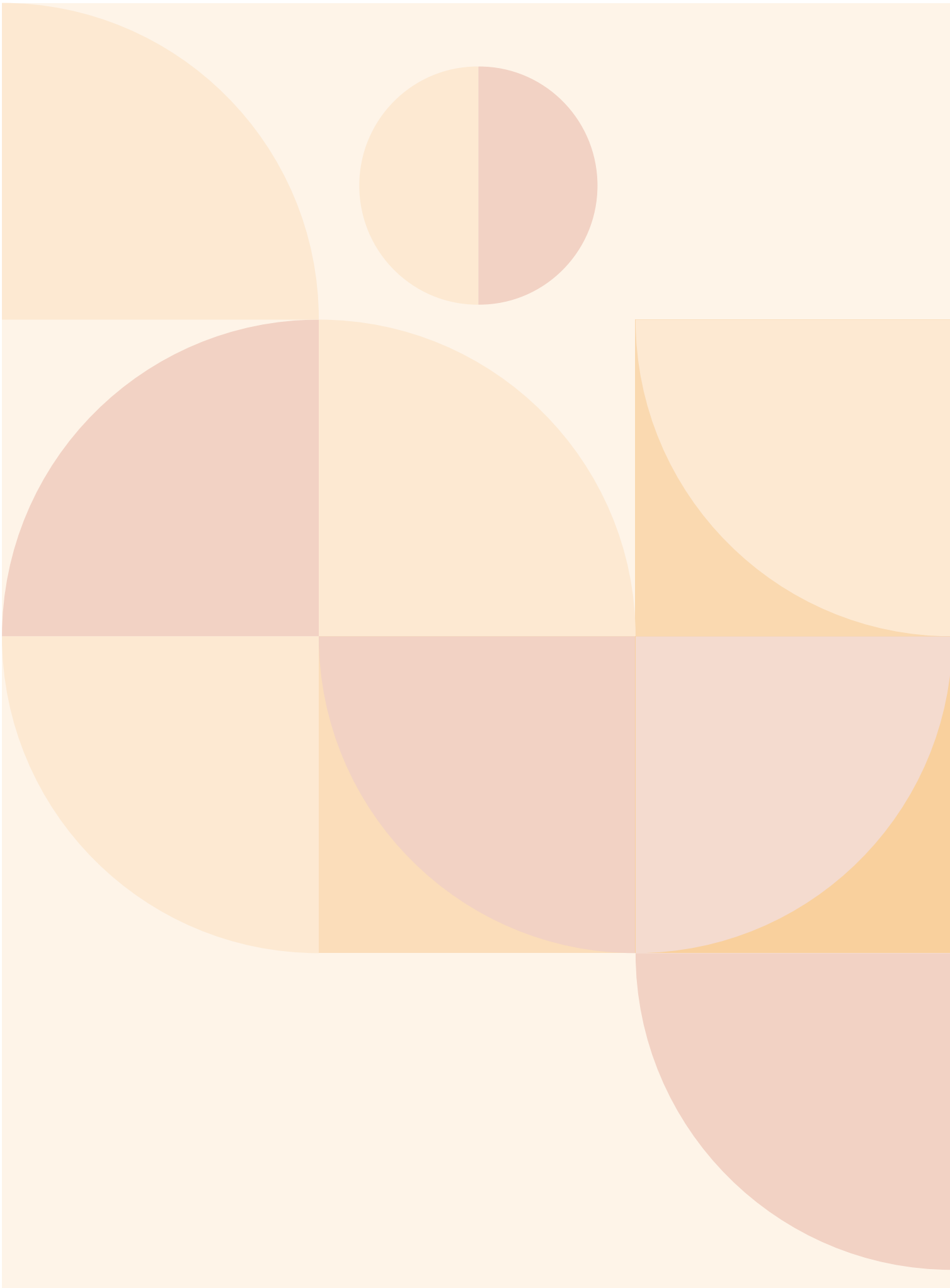
Further confirmations of compliance with the requirements of the Code are set out in Appendix 1.

Our annual report identifies the main achievements for 2022 and the activities undertaken in pursuance of our three strategic goals for the year. The NCSE can, if required, provide any further information or clarification to you or your officials.

Yours sincerely



Pat Goff
Acting Chairperson,
National Council for Special Education



CEO Foreword

June 2023

I am pleased to introduce the 2022 Annual Report of the National Council for Special Education, which documents the progress of the organisation over the last 12 months.

The report captures the extent of the work accomplished by Council and the staff of the NCSE over the course of the year under the goals of our Statement of Strategy.

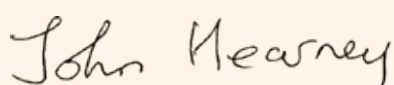
Since my appointment in March 2022, I have strived to support and enrich the learning experiences for children with special educational needs – it is a task that I do not take lightly, and along with excellent staff across our regional and head office teams, we are committed to responding to the needs of those engaging with our services. I would like to express my gratitude to the staff of the NCSE for their work this year, continually striving to support students, families and school communities throughout all aspects of their work.

I wish to acknowledge the contribution of Ms. Teresa Griffin, former Chief Executive Officer who retired from the NCSE in January 2022. I would also like to sincerely thank the outgoing Chairperson, Joe Hayes, and members of the Council, Eamon Clavin, Clodagh Ní Mhaoilchiaráin, Antoinette Nic Gearailt, Anne Tansey, Aine Lynch, Don Mahon, for their significant contributions to the NCSE over their term of appointment. Eamon Clavin will re-join the Council, after appointment through the StateBoards process in 2023.

In 2022, some of our major work achievements included opening over 2,150 special classes, initiating a process for the NCSE's obligations under the Assessment of Need (AoN) in relation to education needs, commissioning a new external evaluation of the NCSE frontline support services and the submission of an updated policy advice paper on special schools and special classes to the Department of Education. We look forward to the publication of this important work in 2023.

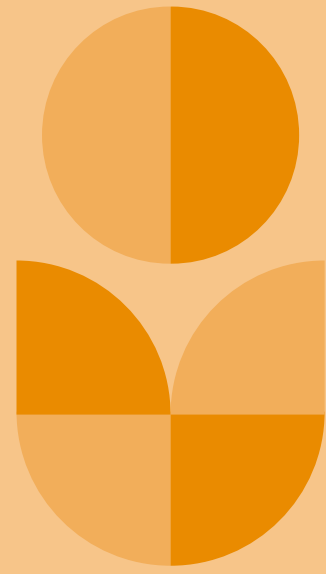
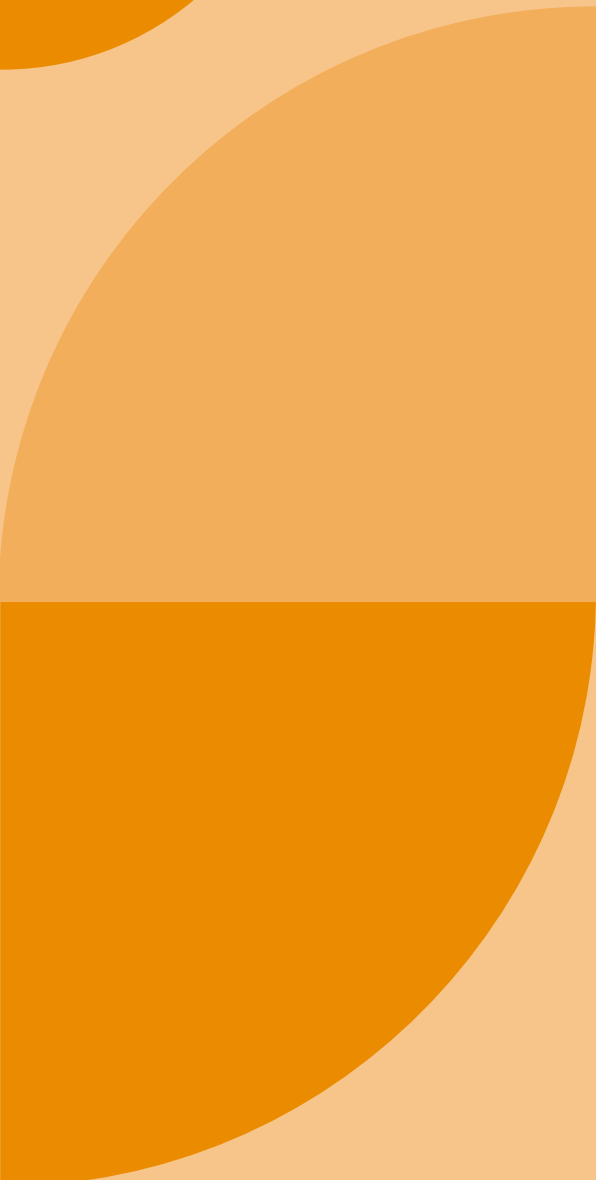
Lastly, after considerable engagement with the Department of Education, significant additional investment has been provided by the Government for 2023 as part of the budget announcement in 2022 to fund the much needed expansion of NCSE. A total full-year investment of €13 million and over 160 additional staff was allocated. Looking to 2023 and the years ahead, I am confident this investment will support the NCSE to meet the increased need in our education system and provide students, schools and parents with a coordinated service relevant to the best outcomes for students in Ireland.

Yours sincerely

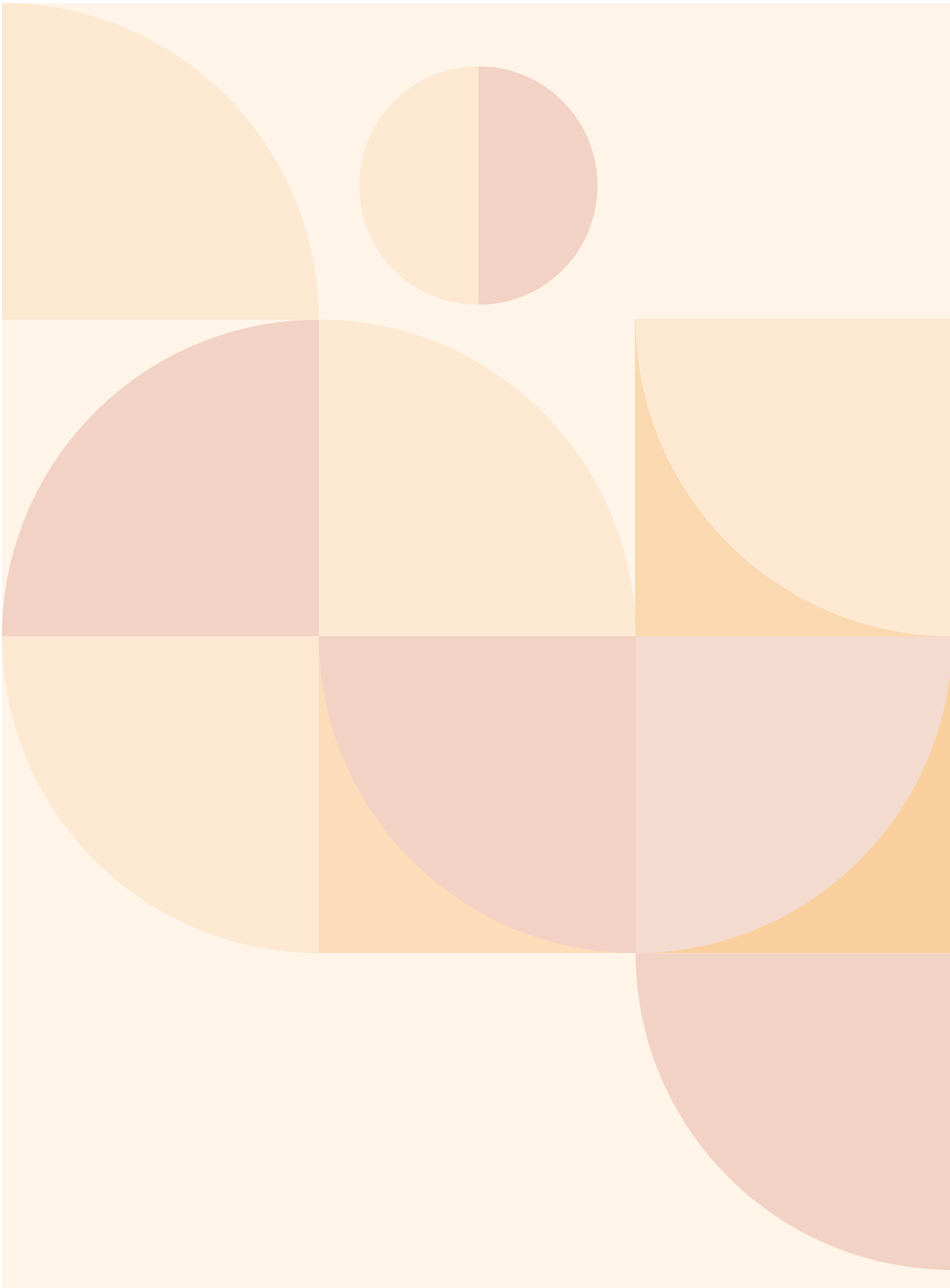


John Kearney
Chief Executive Officer,
National Council for Special Education





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 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 Statement of Strategy 2022-24¹, Strategic Goals

- ▶ **Goal 1:** Support students, parents and schools to enhance the educational participation, learning experience of and outcomes for students with SEN.
- ▶ **Goal 2:** Provide independent, expert and evidence-informed policy advice to the Minister for Education that is underpinned by a comprehensive research programme.
- ▶ **Goal 3:** Develop and maintain an effective organisational culture that complies with all corporate governance and regulatory requirements and support the delivery of services.

¹ NCSE Statement of Strategy (2022-24) was approved by Council in 2022. With the Government announcement of additional funding to support the expansion of NCSE services in November 2022, the Statement of Strategy is currently under review and a new version will be published in 2023.

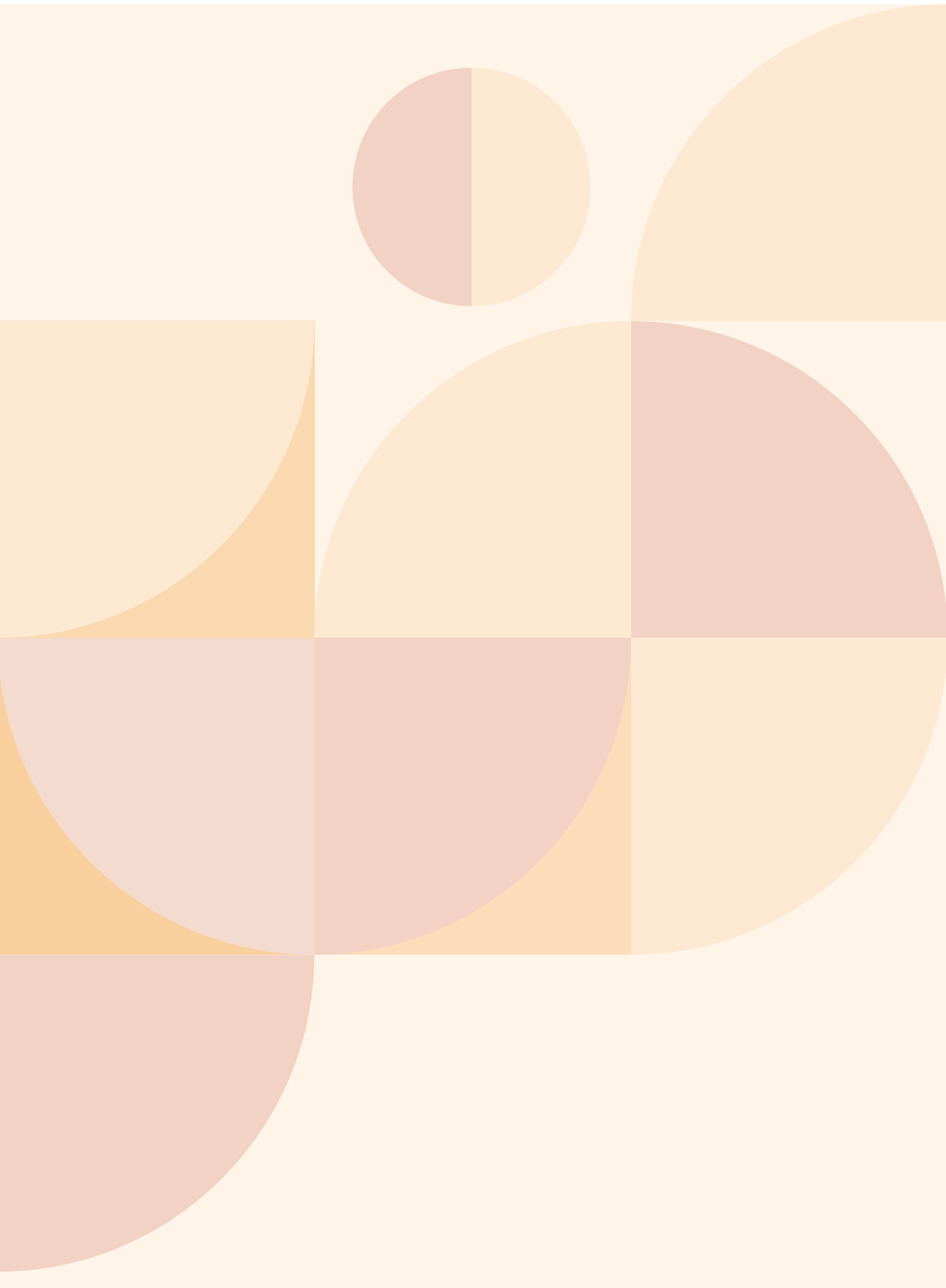
Main Achievements

Some of our main achievements during 2022 are summarised below. In the 2021/22 school year, the NCSE:

- ▶ Processed applications from 924 schools for an exceptional review of their allocation of mainstream Special Needs Assistants (SNA) resources.
- ▶ Processed over 5,400 new applications for school transport for students with special educational needs. The increase reflects the number of new special class places.
- ▶ Processed over 6,600 new applications for assistive technology/special equipment for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Had established a total of 2,152 special classes in mainstream schools with places available for 13,464 students.

In 2022, the NCSE also:

- ▶ Submitted an updated policy advice paper on special schools and special classes to the Department of Education, after delays during the COVID-19 pandemic. This included an updated literature review and recent reports and publications to 2022.
- ▶ Commissioned a new external evaluation on the NCSE's Frontline Support Services.
- ▶ Supported Ukrainian students with special educational needs joining schools across Ireland, through accessing relevant supports, translated leaflets for parents/guardians and translation services for assessments. In December 2022, 2,909 Ukrainian enrolments were recorded across school settings.
- ▶ Provided a comprehensive programme of TPL seminars offering professional learning opportunities for teachers to support the teaching of children with special education needs. In 2022, 5,226 teachers participated in professional development and learning in NCSE TPL seminars, including 278 online seminars.
- ▶ Provided a national SNA training programme, facilitating SNAs to avail of training free of charge. The training is delivered by UCD, and students receive a Certificate in Inclusive School Support upon completion of the course. Two cohorts of students (1,332) graduated in 2022, while a third cohort of 961 students commenced their studies in September 2022.
- ▶ Held a range of In-School Therapy Project (ISTP) events, supporting 65 SIM pilot schools and 2,160 teachers.
- ▶ Hosted our Annual Research Conference which enabled over 280 delegates through in-person and online live stream to attend this year. The conference explored the themes, 'Post-pandemic Education and Experiences of Transition: Entering the Irish system and leaving school'.







Strategic Goal 1

Support students,
parents and schools to
enhance the educational
participation, learning
experience of and
outcomes for students
with SEN.

Strategic Goal 1

Support students, parents and schools to enhance the educational participation, learning experience of and outcomes for students with SEN.

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 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. These resources include the following:

- ▶ SNA (special needs assistant) support through the *SNA Exceptional Review (SER)* process
- ▶ Assistive technology/specialist equipment, and/or
- ▶ School transport arrangements for students with additional needs.

Most students with special educational needs are now educated in mainstream classes. However, provision ranging from full-time enrolment in the latter 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, the application of Universal Design for learning adaptations and/or additional teaching support provided by a special education teacher.
- ▶ **A special class in a mainstream school** with 6 to 11 students in each special class, depending on the particular special educational need.
- ▶ **A special school** for students with complex special educational needs with classes ranging from 6 to 11 students, depending on the designation of the special educational needs of students enrolled.

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 from birth through to pre-school, primary and post-primary levels.

A comprehensive programme of Teacher Professional Learning seminars offers professional learning opportunities for teachers to support the teaching of children with special education needs. This programme covers a range of topic areas including, autism, behaviour, assessment preparation, deployment of SNAs, sensory support, therapy and support for diverse students.

The NCSE provides in-school support for whole staff, group and individual teacher supports. Supports may be in the form of telephone support, email support, video conferences, a school visit or a whole school seminar. Applications can be made via the NCSE School Support Portal, and can be requested throughout the year.

The Assessment of Need (AoN) team, established in September 2022, coordinates the process of organising an assessment of a child's or young person's education needs as part of the Health Service Executive's (HSE) AoN process. Under the Disability Act (2005), the NCSE is responsible for nominating an appropriate person to carry out the assessment of education needs, when requested by the HSE.

This section details our activities in resourcing schools in 2021/22 and 2022/23 school years, our Teacher Professional Learning events, provision of in-school support/advice, Assessment of Need process, our work to implement the School Inclusion Model pilot, developments on the Transition Study pilot under the Comprehensive Employment Strategy (CES) and a general update on activities and resources provided by the NCSE.

1.2 Resourcing Schools in the 2021/22 School Year²

Applications for Additional Supports

In the 2021/22 school year, SENOs processed over 12,000 applications for additional supports for students with special educational needs under two 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 2021/22

Scheme	No of Applications
School transport	5,418
Assistive technology/specialist equipment	6,642
Total	12,060

² The 2021/22 school year was from September 2021 to June 2022.

Special Classes

13,464 places available in 2,152 special classes in mainstream schools at the end of 2021/22 school year.

SENOs sanctioned the establishment of an additional 313 special classes in the school year 2021/22. By the end of the school year there were 2,152 special classes in mainstream schools with 13,464 places available. This is a net increase of 1,884 places on the previous year.

Special Schools

In the 2021/22 school year, 8,183 students were enrolled in special schools supported by the NCSE. The NCSE allocated 1,282 teachers and 2,775 SNAs to special schools in 2021/22. The corresponding figures in the previous school year 2020/21 were 1,240 teachers and 2,650 SNAs.

Special Education Teacher (SET) Allocation Model

A new model for the allocation of special education teachers was introduced with effect from September 2017. The list of schools and their SET allocation is provided on the NCSE website.

The NCSE has continued to support the model's implementation in 2022 through its local staff engaging with schools. Further information about the SET review process is set out in Department of Education Circulars 0013/2017, 0014/2017, 007/2019, and 008/2019, 0020/2022. NCSE Guidelines 03/2022 sets out the exceptional review application procedure.

SNA Support

The SNA allocations were maintained at their current level for the 2021/22 school year from the date of Department of Education Circular 0029/2021. Exceptional circumstances in a school is provided for by the DE, via an application for an exceptional review. Further information is set out in DE Circular 0029/2021 and NCSE Circular 03/2021.

1.3 Resourcing Schools in the 2022/23 School Year³

SET Teacher Allocations

Special Education Teacher (SET) Allocations for schools were re-profiled during 2022 and came into effect in September 2022 for two years. The Department of Education re-profiled schools SET allocations for September 2022/23 with additional allocations being provided to developing schools.

14,418 special education teachers allocated to schools by end of 2022.

Schools continued to have access to a review of their SET allocation in light of exceptional circumstances. 362 schools applied for an exceptional circumstance allocation review during the calendar year. Of those, 60 were put forward for review, of which 39 schools were allocated an increase in SET hours.

The total number of special education teachers in schools by December 31st, 2022 was 14,418.

SNA Support

SNA allocations to the majority of primary and post-primary mainstream classes was maintained at their current level for the 2022/23 school year from the date of Department of Education Circular 0035/2022. Further information is set out in NCSE Circular 02/2022.

The number of SNAs allocated to schools at the end of the 2021/22 school year and as at the end of December 2022, is set out in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Number of SNA Posts

	End 2021/22 School Year	End December 2022
SNA Posts	18,113.23	19,219.35

Under the SNA Exceptional Review process established for the 2022/23 school year, 924 schools applied to the NCSE for a review of their 2021/22 mainstream SNA allocation by 31st May 2022. 336 schools received an increased allocation. This equated to an additional 240.3 SNA posts being allocated to those schools during the 2022/23 school year.

³ The 2022/23 school year is from September 2022 to June 2023.

Schools wishing to appeal the outcome of their SNA Exceptional Review application could do so by submitting an application for appeal. By May 31st, 2022, 78 schools had submitted a valid appeal. Table 4 provides a brief overview of the outcomes to those concluded appeals.

Table 4: Outcome of SNA Exceptional Review Appeals processed by NCSE for the 2022/23 school year

No of Appeals	Outcome as of Dec 2022
61	Not Upheld
1	Being processed
16	Upheld
78	Total

Supports for Ukrainian Children with SEN

In collaboration with the Department of Education, the NCSE communicated revised SNA and SET allocations to schools in relation to the arrival of Ukrainian students. These allocations are specifically aimed at supporting Ukrainian students with special needs in 2022/23.

Recognising that a proportion of Ukrainian children will require special education support, the NCSE agreed to facilitate efficient access to SEN services by providing a translation service. To that end, the NCSE procured Ukrainian/Russian written translation services in late 2022. The service is now available to all schools and families of children with SEN.

In December 2022, 2,909 Ukrainian enrolments were recorded across school settings.

1.4 NCSE Teacher Professional Learning (TPL)



The NCSE provides a comprehensive programme of TPL seminars offering professional learning opportunities for teachers to support the teaching of children with special education needs. In 2022, 5,226 teachers participated in professional development and learning in NCSE TPL seminars, including 278 online seminars.

The seminars are provided across a range of topic areas including, autism, behaviour, assessment preparation, deployment of SNAs, sensory support, therapy and support for diverse students.

The NCSE offers a postgraduate qualification to 25 students teaching in the area of autism for primary, post-primary, and special schools, via a contract with St Angela's College, NUIG. Students can avail of a postgraduate certificate, diploma or Masters in special education. In 2022, seven students graduated with a Postgraduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs (Autism) and seven students graduated with a Post Graduate Certificate in Special Educational Needs (Autism). Two students graduated with a Master in Arts Special Educational Needs Autism. NCSE also facilitates teachers working with pupils with autism in accessing specific courses through Middletown Centre for Autism.

In-School Support

The NCSE provides in-school support for whole staff, group and individual teacher supports. Supports may be in the form of telephone support, email support, video conferences, a school visit or a whole school seminar. In 2022, 3,534 applications were received from schools for in-school support via the NCSE School Support Portal.

In 2022, the most frequently requested in-school supports were related to behaviour (1,238 applications) and autism (1,222 applications). Commonly requested areas of support included:

- ▶ Training and support for staff to identify and manage behaviours of concern.
- ▶ Support around social behaviour, emotional behaviour, mental health and language after the return to school post-Covid school closures.
- ▶ Difficulties with social interactions with peers.
- ▶ Newly diagnosed children and/or newly enrolled children.
- ▶ Newly established special classes/staff training for autism.
- ▶ Support visits for PGSEN students.
- ▶ Support for inclusive education in school.

Visiting Teacher Service

Our visiting teachers (VTs) support children (and their families) who are deaf/hard of hearing and who are blind/visually impaired. This support is provided both 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 time of referral through to the end of post-primary education.

The VT supports children/young people, alongside parents, guardians, teachers and other professionals involved with the child/young person. The frequency and nature of support takes into account a range of factors based on the individual's needs. The VT's work 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 2022, 14 Visiting Teachers for the blind/visually impaired provided support to over 1,300 children, and 29 (whole time equivalent) visiting teachers for the deaf/hard of hearing provided support for over 5,000 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	99	700
Primary school	543	2,281
Post-primary school	442	1,631
Special school	253	697
Total children	1,337	5,309

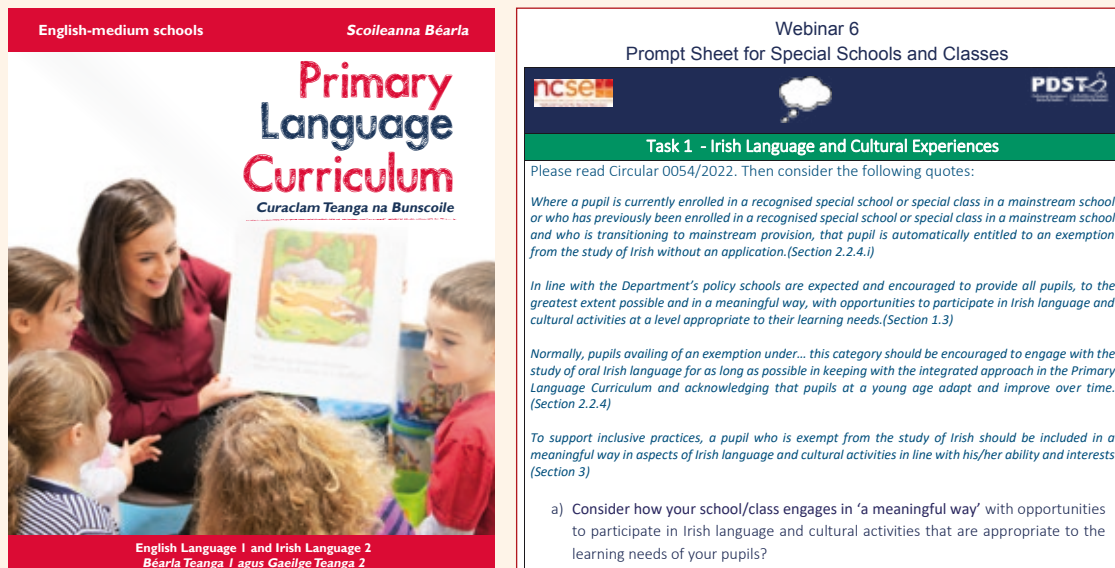
Primary Language Curriculum (PLC)

Primary Language Curriculum Sustained Support for Special Schools 2022

A team of six NCSE PLC Advisors provided support to teachers and school leaders in special schools on the implementation of the *Primary Language Curriculum* (Government of Ireland, 2019) and the *Preparation for Teaching and Learning Guidance for all Primary and Special Schools* (Government of Ireland, 2021). Special schools are entitled to receive up to six support visits from an NCSE PLC Advisor under the scheme, as set out by the DE.

In 2022, 72 special schools applied to the NCSE for PLC Sustained Support, with applications being accepted on an on-going basis.

Figure 1: Primary Language Curriculum, 2019 and PLC seminar sheet for special schools and classes.



Primary Language Curriculum TPL Seminars and School Support 2022

In 2022, five Teacher Professional Learning PLC seminars were provided online for teachers and school leaders in primary and special schools. NCSE PLC Advisors also responded to requests for in-school support for PLC submitted by primary and special schools. Two seminars on PLC were provided for teachers undertaking the Postgraduate Diploma in Continuing Professional Development for Special Education Teachers, following requests from the School of Education, University College Dublin and the School of Special and Inclusive Education, Dublin City University.

1.5 Assessment of Need

Following a legal judgement in 2021, the NCSE is required to assist the HSE in organising an assessment of a child's or young person's education needs as part of the HSE's Assessment of Need (AoN) process. Under the Disability Act (2005), the NCSE is responsible for nominating an appropriate person to carry out the assessment of education needs, when requested by the Health Service Executive (HSE). Note. A diagnosis or an assessment of educational needs is no longer required to access teaching and care supports in mainstream schools.

Since September 2022, the NCSE has had a dedicated AoN Team working to coordinate the process with the HSE and with schools. A trial period was initiated with 17 schools. The DE and the NCSE engaged in extensive consultation with education stakeholders (schools, management bodies, unions and advocacy groups) to finalise a process for the assessment of education needs based on current education policy and best practice.

Following this stakeholder engagement, the DE and NCSE extended the trial period of the AON process and provided additional support through support teams led by the NCSE, and supported by the DE. The extended trial included a further 63 schools. This process was completed in December 2022 with feedback from the schools involved and stakeholders taken on board and changes incorporated into forms and guidance.

At the end of December 2022, the NCSE had received 1,771 referrals from the HSE, with 132 of these resolved across a range of school settings.

Table 6: Record of AoN referrals recorded* by NCSE from September to the end of December 2022

Setting	Referrals received from HSE	Referral resolved
Primary school	963	114
Post-primary school	142	15
Special school	14	1
Other	652	2
TOTAL	1,771	132

* Referrals were received from HSE from 2021 but recorded by AoN Section from Sept 2022.

In addition, the NCSE, in conjunction with the DE have also finalised a process of referrals in respect of applicants availing of DE (SEN) Home Tuition Grant funding and remains actively engaged with both the DE and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) around the development of a process for a cohort of pre-school children.

The NCSE continues to work with the HSE and DE to review and develop the various processes required in order to address obligations related to the AoN processes. The NCSE will continue to monitor how the assessment of education needs process is working, with a review planned at the end of the 2022/23 school year with education stakeholders.

1.6 Implementation of the School Inclusion Model Pilot

Following the publication of a Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Scheme⁴ by the NCSE, in 2019 the DE established a pilot of a new School Inclusion Model (SIM) for children with special educational and additional care needs.

The SIM project involves a number of supports for schools to help all students, particularly those with special educational and additional care needs, to have a better school experience. Building teacher capacity has a key role to play in implementing this model. The model supports effective collaboration between professionals working together by developing the skills set of all staff to support students with additional needs.

SIM includes six strands, and in 2022, five of these strands are operational with four of these under the responsibility of the NCSE - In-School Therapy Project; Supports through Enhanced Regional Teams; National SNA Training Programme; and National Nursing Pilot Programme. The fifth strand sits under the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), and since September 2022, NEPS psychologists have been invited to join school leaders and NCSE therapists at Inclusion Team meetings, with a view to planning collaborative practice in schools.

Figure 2: The Six Strands of the School Inclusion Model Pilot.



* SIM strand on the frontloaded allocation of SNAs was not in place in 2022.

Two strands of SIM under the responsibility of the NCSE – the In-School Therapy Project and Support through Enhanced Regional Teams, are being piloted in two regions covering South Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow. Two other strands involve the delivery of programmes nationwide - the National SNA Training Programme and the National Nursing Pilot Programme. Developments in these four strands are outlined below.

4 <https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/NCSE-PAP6-Comprehensive-Review-SNA-Scheme.pdf>

An important goal of NCSE therapy and behaviour practitioners practice in the School Inclusion Model Pilot and across the NCSE, is the collaboration with colleagues from other disciplines and organisations to build knowledge, skills and confidence to support students and build inclusive school environments. As standard, therapists and behaviour practitioners co-deliver seminars with NCSE advisors (who are seconded, fully qualified teachers) to ensure a teacher's perspective is an integral part of training.

In-School Therapy Project (ISTP)

The In-School Therapy Project runs within 75 SIM pilot schools in the areas of Dublin South, Kildare and West Wicklow. NCSE occupational therapists and speech and language therapists work in these 75 schools alongside students, school staff, parents/ guardians to support all students, including those with additional needs, to participate in school life and to build the capacity of the school and its staff to plan, implement and evaluate educationally relevant, evidence-informed structured programmes or strategies. Implementation of this project strand was particularly impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic over 2020 and 2021. However, in-school support resumed in January 2022, following the recruitment of therapists the previous year.

NCSE therapists primarily build teacher capacity in three ways: Teacher Professional Learning events, ISTP interventions and school visits. The information presented below is related to the January to December 2022, when in-school support resumed.

Teacher Professional Learning events are training and support events for teachers that can involve drop-in clinics and extend to events that include coaching, practice and implementation. Events of this nature can be held with individual schools or groups of schools. In 2022, ISTP TPL events were held across a range of primary, post-primary and special school contexts, supported 65 schools and 2,160 teachers.

Table 7: ISTP TPL events, 2022

	Number of ISTP TPL events held	Number of SIM pilot schools participating in TPL events	Number of teachers supported
Total	193	65	2,160

ISTP Interventions are focused on teachers and therapists working in partnership to plan, implement and evaluate strategies to influence the inclusive educational experience for students within their learning environment. Interventions can be designed to impact the whole school, whole class, or identified groups of students of larger or smaller size. The implementation of an intervention usually takes place over a prolonged period, often involving the combination of multiple methodologies or approaches, for example, a specific piece of training followed by in-class coaching, modelling and student consultation. The table below provides details of ISTP interventions in 2022, with 41 schools taking part in 77 interventions with a total of 237 participating teachers.

Table 8: In-School Therapy Interventions, 2022

	Number of interventions	Number of teachers	Number of students supported
Completed in 2022	53	175	949
Ongoing at end 2022	24	62	242
Total	77	237	1,191

As part of the ISTP model, therapists working in the SIM pilot regularly visit their assigned schools. During these visits therapists may provide advice, coaching, and tools to teachers in the implementation of universal learning strategies to support inclusion in the classroom and whole school environment. In 2022, 752 school visits were made involving contact with teachers and/or school leadership.

Supports through Enhanced Regional Teams

A team of behaviour practitioners, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists work as Enhanced Regional Teams (ERT) within two NCSE regions as part of the SIM pilot. These teams work to build teacher skills and capacity in schools through a range of seminars, post-seminar workshops, teacher resources and in-school support.

In 2022, Enhanced Regional Teams delivered 29 seminars to 662 teachers.

These TPL events are in addition to the many training events and supports delivered by NCSE advisors during the year. The TPL events are delivered by behaviour practitioners and therapists.

Over the course of 2022, the team delivered 29 seminars and workshops to 662 teachers in the two SIM pilot regions⁵. The courses aimed to build teacher capacity to support their students in areas such as speech, language and communication needs; sensory needs; organisational skills and promoting positive behaviour. Where appropriate, schools and teachers received follow up in-school support visits to further build their capacity to embed the learning from the seminars and workshops in the classroom.

⁵ In addition to the SIM pilot, occupational therapy support is available on a national basis through a contract with the University of Limerick. In 2022, two occupational therapists hosted five TPL events supporting 168 teachers.

Table 9: Enhanced Regional Teams (ERT) TPL Events, 2022

	Number of TPL events held	Number of teachers supported
Total	29	662

National SNA Training Programme

A national SNA training programme commenced in 2021, and is delivered by the UCD School of Education, in conjunction with UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems. The programme consists of four intakes of students between 2021 and 2024, facilitating up to 3,500 SNAs employed in all recognised schools (primary, post-primary and special) to avail of training, free of charge. Students graduating from the programme will receive a Certificate in Inclusive School Support.

The online programme consists of five modules delivered over a ten-month period covering inclusion, communications and language, and a range of special needs and information on caring for students with additional care needs. The training emphasises the need for students to develop independence and resilience.

The inaugural class of 493 students completed the course in December 2021 and a ceremony was hosted by UCD in O'Reilly Hall on 25 February 2022 to celebrate their completion of the programme. The event was attended by senior Department of Education and NCSE officials, including incoming NCSE CEO John Kearney. Feedback gathered from students indicates there has been a very high level of engagement and satisfaction with the course.

A second award ceremony was held on 3 November 2022, to recognise the achievement of a second intake of 839 students in the 2021/22 programme. Minister of State with responsibility for Special Education and Inclusion, Josepha Madigan TD, NCSE CEO John Kearney and Ombudsman for Children, Dr Niall Muldoon, were among the speakers on the day. A third cohort of 961 SNA students commenced the training programme in September 2022.



Students and staff at National SNA Training Programme graduation, 3rd November 2022, UCD O'Reilly Hall.

On 8th December 2022, Ministers Foley and Madigan announced⁶ the accreditation of the programme as a Level 6 Special Purpose Award on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

National Nursing Pilot Programme

A pilot national nursing scheme to support children with complex healthcare needs was launched⁷ on 21 October 2022, based on the recommendations of a cross agency planning group. The purpose of the pilot is to provide nursing supports to allow children with complex healthcare needs attend school. It will complement current provision provided through community-based services.

HSE Primary Care currently fund Paediatric Home Care Packages (PHCPs) for children with complex healthcare needs, through which preferred private healthcare providers deliver nursing care in the home environment. Under the nursing pilot the care hours delivered by PHCPs are extended into the school setting, for those children already in receipt of 20 or more PHCP hours.

Many schools, in particular special schools, currently have nurses on-site funded through a variety of arrangements. The pilot service does not displace existing nursing services or supports in schools. The pilot is due to be evaluated to inform the provision of nursing support for students with complex healthcare needs into the future.

1.7 Comprehensive Employment Strategy (CES) – Transition Pilot Study

The Adult Education and the Comprehensive Employment Strategy (CES) is a cross Government approach bringing together actions by different Departments and State agencies, including the NCSE, in a concerted effort to address the barriers and challenges affecting employment of people with disabilities. The ten-year strategy, published in 2015, identified a number of actions to be implemented to achieve its objectives.

A pilot programme to support the transition for young people with disabilities to improve access to, and opportunities for, post-school options, arising from one of the actions of the Strategy, was announced by Minister Foley and Minister Madigan on the 10th November 2022 at the NCSE's Annual Research Conference.

The aim of the pilot is to identify skills gaps and supports that students require for a positive transition after school to enable schools to differentiate a transition plan that will target the specific key skills required. The resources assigned are to be used to identify and support specifically those with the greatest level of need to improve the transition opportunities into post-school life. The young person's post-school choices may include decisions on accessing day services, accepting a placement in apprenticeships, further education, higher education, employment and other personal life choices they may wish to plan for.

6 [gov.ie – Ministers Foley and Madigan announce accreditation of the national online training programme for special needs assistants \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/news/2022/12/ministers-foley-and-madigan-announce-accreditation-of-the-national-online-training-programme-for-special-needs-assistants/)

7 [gov.ie – National Nursing Pilot for Children with Complex Healthcare Needs Pilot Scheme \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/news/2022/10/national-nursing-pilot-for-children-with-complex-healthcare-needs-pilot-scheme/)

The focus of this work is on the needs of the young people in the selected schools and falls under two core themes:

- ▶ Skills for Post-School Life
- ▶ Making Informed Decisions.

The pilot commenced pre-planning in 2022, with two project sites identified in North County Dublin and Galway City and County, covering a total of 20 schools and including approximately 100 students (the total number of students varies school to school). Each participating school has obtained a further teaching resource for this project, an additional 12 hours per week to support the transition of students with disabilities to post-school options to June 2024. Participating schools are drawn from a cross-section of school types and contexts including mainstream and special schools. The DE have requested the NCSE to commission an external evaluation of this pilot programme, to commence in 2023.

1.8 Activity Update

Information for Parents

One of our key roles is to provide information to parents, schools and all our stakeholders on special education matters. Each year our SENOs deliver the NCSE's parental information programme which aims to inform parents and guardians of children starting school of the educational services and supports available in their areas. During 2022, a total of 28 parental seminars delivered to over 353 parents.

In recent years, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the parental seminars moved to on-line delivery making them accessible to a greater number of parents. The NCSE continued this practice in 2022 and delivered parental information seminars taking a blended approach offering both online and in-person opportunities to parents to attend.

Figure 3: Information video, Getting Extra Help in Mainstream Schools, in Irish Sign Language and in Irish.



The NCSE also expanded parental information seminars to include a specific seminar for parents of students with special educational needs transitioning from primary to post-primary school. The NCSE website now contains a section for parents which contains, along with a range of useful resources, helpful information which focuses on the needs of parents:

- ▶ Contact information for SENOs and Visiting Teachers
- ▶ Information on the services provided by the NCSE
- ▶ Information on special classes and on choosing a school.

Supports for Ukrainian Students

As many Ukrainian students joined schools across Ireland in 2022, the NCSE supported students with special educational needs through the translation of a series of leaflets for parents/guardians. These leaflets included Getting Extra Help in Mainstream Schools, Starting (Primary) School, and Post-primary Transitioning, to provide guidance and information to parents/guardians of Ukrainian students navigating the Irish education system and inform them of available resources. These leaflets were made available on the NCSE website, and were also printed and distributed through our regional teams.

Figure 4: Leaflets to support parents and students from Ukraine accessing supports in the Irish education system.



In addition, 56 classroom resources were translated into Ukrainian and Russian. These resources were made available on the NCSE website. They included simple activities and games Ukrainian students.

Summer Programme 2022

In 2022, the NCSE continued to provide support to schools and tutors by developing a flexible, child-centred approach to planning and implementing the summer programme, which prioritised key learning needs, physical and emotional well-being, and the development of resilience and confidence among students.

Figure 5: School-based summer programme resources – Learning to learn, including 'Art/Drawing Barrier Games for Summer' and 'What Time is it Mr Wolf?'.

Art/Drawing Barrier Games for Summer
A resource for tutors/teachers to support the Home or School Based Summer Programme

Learning objectives:
This activity builds skills in 'Learning to Learn' specifically developing effective task and organisational skills as well as 'Literacy' skill development. Key skills include:

- Oral language – discussion and vocabulary development (summer themed vocabulary- this may need to be pre-taught to children who are deaf and hard of hearing or visual supports could be used)
- Art – Line drawing

Introduction
This activity can be used across the age ranges. Choose instructions and pictures that are suitable for student's ages, abilities and interests. This lesson plan is based on drawing and a summer theme but alternatives are linked in the alternative options section

- Start with a general discussion about the game using modelling of the instructions.
- Discuss the method the children wish to use e.g. drawing or different materials (this will be dependent on ability – see further information and resources section for options for deaf and hard of hearing children and those with SEN)

Development

- Gather drawing materials, a barrier and paper (get 2 sets which are identical)

Play the game

- Allow the children to play the barrier game and provide support where needed

Conclusion

- Remove the barrier and discuss the images by pointing out the similarities and differences
- The game could be played again allowing the other student to give the instructions

****See resources section for detailed instructions on how to model the game, discuss and explore language that can be used in the game and how to end the game****

What Time is it Mr Wolf?
A resource for teachers to support the School Based Summer Programme

This is a simple game which can help students practice their counting of number and basic understanding of time concepts.

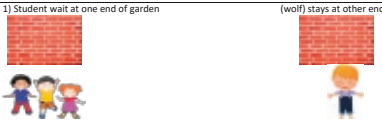
- You can use visuals such as the example on page 2 to support students understanding of the vocabulary and rules.

Instructions for the game:


- To begin, model the game for the students.
- The Person who is telling the time (the wolf) stands at one end of the garden and all of the other participants stand and wait at the other end of the garden.
- The students must ask the wolf "What time is it Mr Wolf?"
- The wolf then says a time e.g. "It is 3 o Clock", the students take three steps towards the wolf.
- The students repeat the question "What time is it Mr. Wolf?" and move forward each time.
- When the wolf says "Its dinner time" the wolf tries to catch one of the students who are running back to the wall at the start of the game.
- If the wolf catches one of the students then that student is the wolf and the game starts again.

Example supporting visual


1) Student wait at one end of garden (wolf) stays at other end



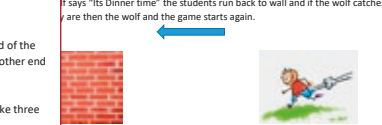
"What time is it Mr Wolf?" "Its 3 o Clock"



3 steps forward towards the wolf.



If says "Its Dinner time" the students run back to wall and if the wolf catches any are then the wolf and the game starts again.



Our comprehensive suite of online resources for teachers and tutors was reviewed and updated for the 2022 programme. These included 67 engaging and interactive activities, along with guidance documents, to assist teachers in providing stimulating and fun learning experiences for students with special education needs. The resources were structured across several categories, including student well-being, literacy, numeracy, academic core skills, and learning to learn, with a particular focus on school routines, social skills, self-regulation, communication skills, and building on successes.

Additionally, home-based resources were made available for students with complex needs who could not participate in the school-based programme. To support the process, the NCSE provided an overview document for schools, application forms and a listing for parents to find available tutors.

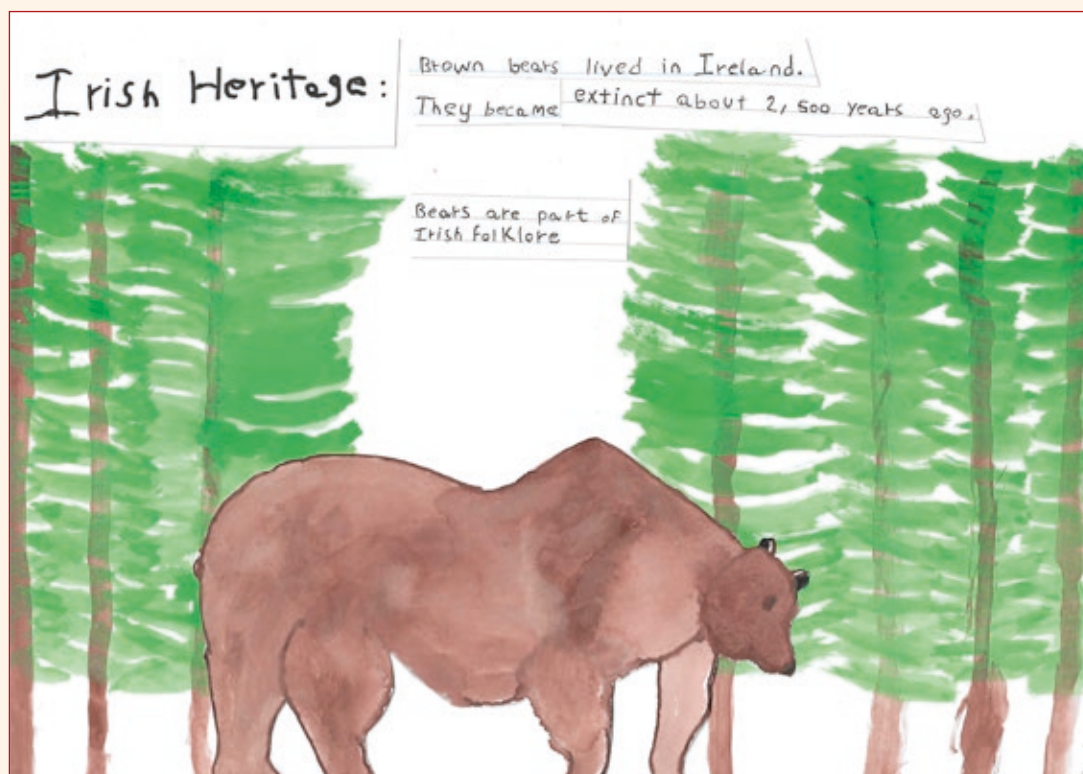
Summer Creations

The NCSE's online art competition, *Summer Creations*, returned for its second year in 2022. The competition is open to all students participating in the home-based and school-based summer provision programme. This year's theme was 'heritage' and we were thrilled to see the student's creativity in producing their entries.

Students were encouraged to submit their entries using any medium they liked. The competition was designed to help students develop their artistic skills while exploring the theme of heritage.

The winner of Summer Creations 2022 was Godwill, a student from St. Vincent's School, Lisnagry, Co. Limerick; the exceptional entry captured the theme of heritage. Godwill was rewarded with a package of art supplies to recognise their achievement.

Figure 6: 'Irish Bears' by Godwill, a student in St. Vincent's School, Lisnagry – the winning entry of the Summer Creations competition 2022.



Thank you to all the students who entered Summer Creations. We hope that the competition has encouraged students to continue developing their artistic skills and to explore creative ways of expressing themselves; we look forward to more of your creativity in the future.



Science Blast

The NCSE participated in the 2022 ESB Science Blast, an educational program for primary school students in 3rd to 6th Class. The programme encourages students to investigate scientific questions through hands-on projects and present their results. Students' presentations were judged by a panel including STEM professionals, who discussed the investigation with the students and provided feedback on their project.

Marking DLD Day 2022

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) Awareness Day 2022 was held on 14th October. The theme this year was "Growing with DLD", and focused on supporting people with DLD across their lifespan.

NCSE Speech and Language therapists supported the occasion by holding information webinars with teachers, NEPS psychologists and NCSE staff. Thirty-four teachers attended their webinar, and 37 NEPS psychologists participated.

DLD is the most prevalent childhood disability with an average of 2-3 students presenting with DLD in every Irish classroom. A student with DLD experiences difficulties with language and communication that can significantly impact learning, literacy, behaviour and well-being. DLD also prevails into adulthood, with a prevalence rate of 7.5% across the population.

As educators it is important to be aware of DLD and its impact on students, teachers and school communities.



Video Resource – Developmental Co-ordination Disorder Video

In October 2022, the NCSE published a short informational video on Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD). The video provides an overview of DCD and explains how it can affect students in the school environment. It is available for viewing on the NCSE's YouTube channel and through our website.

Figure 7: Information video on Developmental Coordination Disorder – NCSE YouTube Channel.







Strategic Goal 2

Provide independent, expert and evidence-informed policy advice to the Minister for Education that is underpinned by a comprehensive research programme.

Strategic Goal 2

Provide independent, expert and evidence-informed policy advice to the Minister for Education that is underpinned by a comprehensive research programme.

2.1 Progress on Policy Advice on Special Schools and Special Classes

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

During 2022, significant progress was made towards the finalisation of the NCSE's advice paper on special schools and special classes, after delays during the COVID-19 pandemic. An updated literature review was completed in 2022 to incorporate more recent research evidence available. Additions were made to the policy advice reflecting reports and publications to 2022. The paper was submitted to the Department of Education at the end of 2022 and is expected to be published in 2023.

2.2 European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

The NCSE continued to support the work of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE). This independent organisation, facilitating collaboration for departments of education in its member countries, supports the progression of more inclusive education systems. This is facilitated through key areas of policy, practice and research – providing an evidence base for the implementation of inclusive education.

During 2022, 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 classes;
- ▶ Providing information on special and inclusive education in Ireland to EASNIE and individual member-states.

2.3 Development of the NCSE Behaviour Framework

Throughout 2022, work progressed on the NCSE Behaviour Framework. Developments on the framework, including case studies, were presented to and discussed by the NCSE Consultative Forum, and a series of stakeholder engagements were held.

The development of the Behaviour Framework will be further reviewed and a phased roll-out is anticipated in 2023, alongside the DE's Guidelines developed to support schools, with special schools being prioritised in the initial phase.

2.4 Research Programme

In 2022, we commissioned a new study evaluating the NCSE's frontline services.

Research into special education is one of the NCSE's core statutory functions. Our research programme expands our knowledge and understanding of best practice and actively contributes to the work plan of the NCSE. Research gives us an insight into complex processes, involves relevant stakeholders from across the education system and can highlight what works best in other jurisdictions. Deriving knowledge from research provides us with a strong evidence base to inform our policy advice to the Minister for Education and we continue to disseminate our work through our website, publications and our research conference.

In 2022, we commissioned a new study evaluating the NCSE's frontline support services. This section provides an overview of our ongoing work as well as highlighting newly commissioned research.

2.4.1 Ongoing Research in 2022

Mapping and Tracking of Students with Special Educational Needs after They Leave School

This research project was commissioned in 2020 to examine the experience and destination of young people with special educational and learning needs leaving the school system. The objective is to enhance our understanding of the experiences and destinations of young people leaving school with a view to supporting the NCSE's role in planning and coordinating education services for adults with disabilities.

The research firstly mapped relevant data sources to identify gaps in current knowledge of where students go to. Covid-19 delayed the commencement of the second phase of the study tracking the range of pathways taken for young people with special educational needs after they leave school, to identify and examine the reasons for their post-school destinations and their experiences of them. Work began on this in the spring of 2022, to coincide with decision-making on transitions from schooling. An interim report on the both phases was prepared late in 2022 and will be published in 2023.

Preparation for follow up work with these students across a range of post-school settings got underway in 2022 with the data collection to take place in spring and autumn 2023.

Research Relating to the Policy Advice on Special Schools and Special Classes

Work was completed on a second phase literature review in 2022 to update the research evidence relating to policy advice on special schools and special classes initially completed in 2020. The literature review will be published alongside the Policy Advice on Special Schools and Special Classes in 2023.

The literature review covered different aspects of educational provision in special and inclusive settings to identify evidence of outcomes and experiences for students with and without special educational needs.

Impact of COVID-19 on Students with Special Educational Needs

Work progressed through 2022 on the study commissioned to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the education of students with special educational needs. This research explores the impact on students' academic, social, emotional and behavioural outcomes in the short and longer term. The considerations are two-fold - how best the needs of students after the pandemic can be addressed and how to design and prepare for a more resilient education system in the future. The study involves three core elements: a review of international literature on the impact of school closures on children with special educational needs; a quantitative component involving analysis of data from primary and post-primary schools and special schools; and a qualitative component, involving case study primary, secondary and special schools. Initial findings from the first phase the research study was presented at the 2022 NCSE Research Conference, with the report due to be published in 2023. The study has been extended to include a second phase through 2023.

Documenting the History of Special Education in Ireland over 100 Years

Work is ongoing on a commissioned documentary book on a century of special education in Ireland, 1922-2022, and will be formally launched in autumn 2023. The project has involved a systematic review of data sources and features interviews with a range of key stakeholders. The book will provide an engaging overview of the special educational landscape over the last 100 years to the current day, including key dates, statistics, legislative frameworks and milestones. The book focuses on primary and post-primary levels, with an emphasis on provision in recent decades and includes reflection on the current context.

2.4.2 New Research

Evaluation of the NCSE's Frontline Services

A new research study was commissioned to externally evaluate how the NCSE delivers its frontline services to determine the impact it is having in classrooms on school staff, students and parents. The aim of this evaluation is to understand what benefits and impact our services are having and to highlight areas for improvement. The project involves intensive engagement with a range of stakeholders, including school management, school staff, children/young people and their parents, health and education professionals, and staff from the NCSE itself. We expect the evaluation to guide us in developing a framework for the future and on-going measurement and evaluation of the impact of the services we provide. Most of the fieldwork will take place in 2023 and we look forward to exploring the findings in more detail then.

2.5 Research Conference 2022



NCSE Head of Research Jennifer Doran; NCSE Chairperson Joe Hayes; Minister for Special Education and Inclusion Josepha Madigan; Chief Executive Officer John Kearney at the NCSE Research Conference 2022.

The annual NCSE research conference was held at the Croke Park Conference Centre, Dublin, on the 10th November 2022. The event was primarily an in-person event, with an online livestream available for delegates to attend virtually. The conference looked at two themes: 'Post-pandemic Education and Experiences of Transition: Entering the Irish system and leaving school'.



NCSE Chairperson Joe Hayes introduced the conference and Minister for Special Education and Inclusion Josepha Madigan provided the conference welcome address. NCSE CEO, John Kearney, addressed the delegates on the topic of 'New Horizons the NCSE', in line with forthcoming expansion of NCSE services. An early highlight of our forthcoming book was provided by Professor Emer Ring of Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, entitled, 'Charting a Century of Special Education in Ireland, 1922-2022'. This book will be published by the NCSE in 2023.



NCSE CEO John Kearney and Minister for Special Education and Inclusion Josepha Madigan addressing the NCSE Research Conference 2022.

Over 180 people registered to attend the event and good attendance was noted online, with 179 active online streams in total. The majority were in Ireland (162), the rest came from the UK, Switzerland, and the United States. Conference delegates included principals and teachers, researchers, parents, educational psychologists, advocacy groups, departmental officials, access officers, teacher union representatives and therapists.



Professor Emer Ring, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, sharing excerpts from her forthcoming book on a century of special education in Ireland, 1922-2022, commissioned by the NCSE.



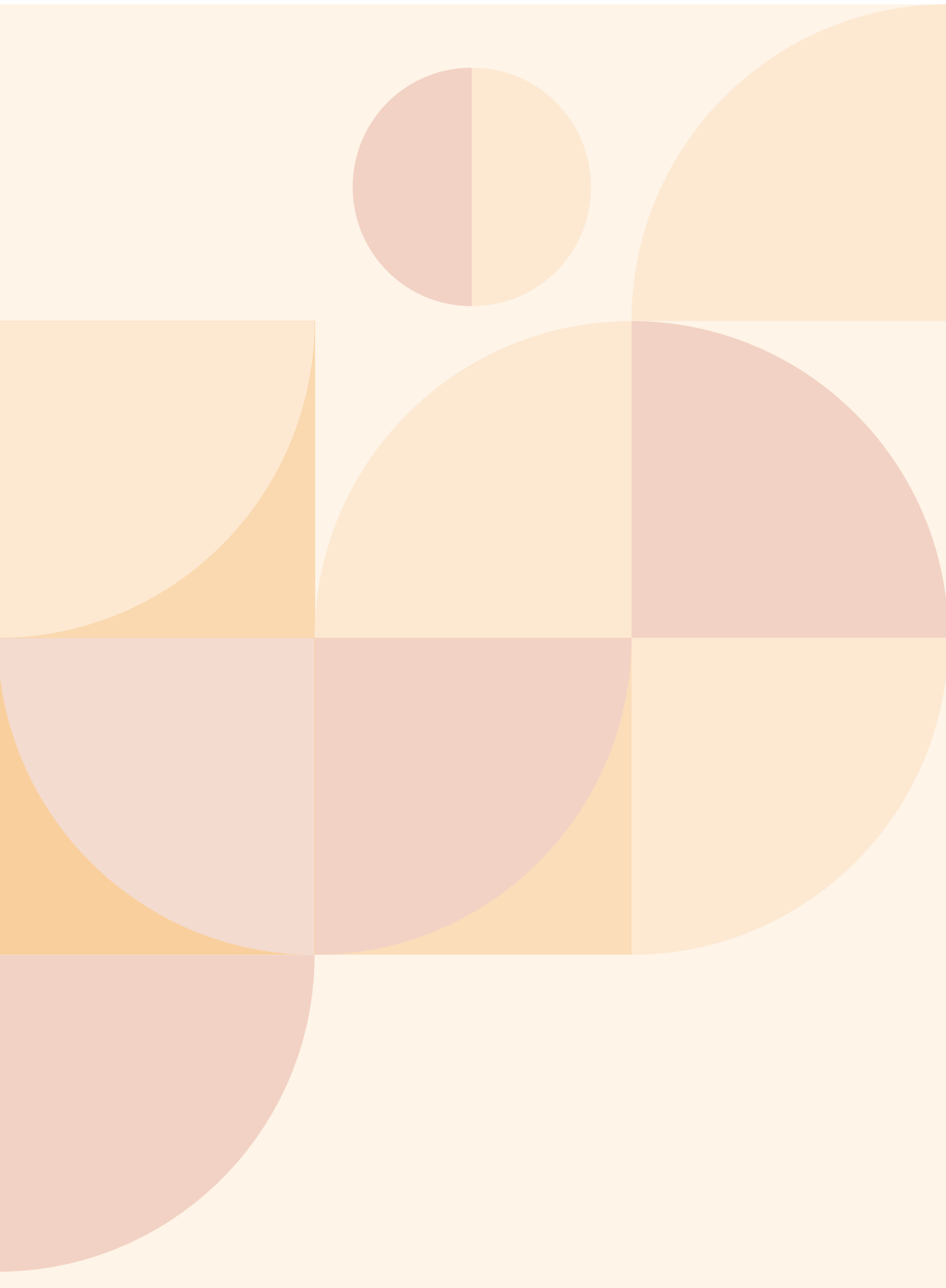
Dr. Jennifer Symonds and Professor William Kinsella UCD School of Education, Dr. Margarita Bilgeri, European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, and Chair of the Research Committee, Dr. Peter Archer, at the NCSE Research Conference 2022.

The morning session included two presentations from national and international experts on aspects of research and policy for education in a post-pandemic content. Initial findings from a study commissioned by the NCSE on the impact of COVID19 on the learning and educational experiences of children with special educational needs was presented, alongside an overview of inclusive education and the pandemic from a European perspective.



Professor Selina McCoy and Dr. Eamonn Carroll, ESRI, presenters at the NCSE Research Conference 2022.

The afternoon session focused on experiences of transition, entering the Irish system and leaving school. Three presentations covered various aspects of transition for students with special educational needs. First, an NCSE-commissioned research study shared the initial findings mapping and tracking students with special educational needs after they leave school. Further presentations included welcoming and responding to the educational needs of refugees, asylum seekers and Ukrainian children arriving in Ireland, with a particular emphasis on those with special educational needs.







Strategic Goal 3

Develop and maintain an effective organisational culture that complies with all corporate governance and regulatory requirements and support the delivery of services.

Strategic Goal 3

Develop and maintain an effective organisational culture that complies with all corporate governance and regulatory requirements and support the delivery of services.

3.1 Introduction

Across 2022, the NCSE continued to develop our organisation to ensure we were operating effectively and in compliance with all our statutory, regulatory and governance requirements. This section outlines our activities in these areas across the year.

In November 2022, Minister Madigan announced a significant investment of nearly €13 million to support the expansion and development of the NCSE in supporting special education in this country. This will lead to exciting changes being progressed across the NCSE over the coming 12 – 18 months, including the recruitment of over 160 additional staff. In late 2022, the NCSE commenced the planning for the expansion programme which will allow the NCSE to deliver a more enhanced and expanded service to students, parents and schools.

3.2 Staff Conference

The first in-person staff conference since the COVID-19 pandemic was held 20th and 21st September 2022, with over 220 staff in attendance. The conference theme was 'Reflecting back and looking forward' and included presentations from a range of NCSE staff and external stakeholders, including sessions on lessons from the special education inspection model, a facilitated discussion with members of the NCSE Council, a range of training sessions for staff and presentations on the NCSE-commissioned research programme.

3.3 Consultative Forum

The NCSE engages with the Consultative Forum, appointed under the EPSSEN Act, 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. The deputy chairperson of the Council, Don Mahon, acts as the Chairperson of the Consultative Forum.

The forum met twice in 2022 – on June 9th and November 15th. The meeting of the forum in June 2022 was the first time the forum has met in-person since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At these meetings a wide and varied number of topics were considered: embedding the voice of children and young people in schools; the positive support behavioural framework as a tool for schools; the review of EPSSEN by the Department of Education; consultation for a new NCSE customer charter and action plan; reflections on innovation in 21st century deaf education with a focus on Universal Design for Learning in the classroom; and school building design standards incorporating Universal Design for Learning.

Forum membership and attendance at the 2022 meetings are listed below.

NCSE Consultative Forum		
Council-appointed Members		Attendance
Fidelma Brady	Head of Education, Down Syndrome Ireland	2
Feargal Brougham	Former President, Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)	1
Miriam Colum	Senior Lecturer & Head of Department of Inclusion, RE & Student Life, Marino Institute of Education	1
Marina Cusack	Special educational needs coordinator in a post-primary school	1
Lorraine Dempsey	Chairperson of Inclusion Ireland	1
Padraig Flanagan	Principal, post-primary school	0
Margaret Flood	Education officer ⁸ , National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	1
Martin Gallen	Senior educational psychologist, Donegal Education and Training Board	2
Paddy Greally	Retired children's services manager, Brothers of Charity	2
Ann Higgins	Principal, special school	1
Patricia McCarthy	Inclusion in education and society research team, Trinity College Dublin	1
Anne Melly	Specialist in Disability Services, Health Service Executive (HSE)	2
Anna Ní Chartúir	Special educational needs coordinator, Gaeltacht primary school	0
Gerard O'Carroll	Lecturer in inclusion, Institute of Technology, Tralee	0

⁸ Since 2022, Lecturer in inclusive and special education in Maynooth University.

NCSE Consultative Forum		
Council-appointed Members		Attendance
Maeve O'Reilly	Senior policy and public affairs advisor, National Disability Authority (NDA)	2
Tracie Tobin	Principal, DEIS primary school	1
Madeline Hickey	Specialist Lead - Sensory, Policy and Practice, NCSE	2
Members Appointed by Minister for Education		Attendance
Christine Chapple	Regional Director Special Education and Inclusion Policy, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)	0
Kenny Noonan*	Assistant principal officer, Department of Education	2
Paul Stevens	Divisional inspector, Department of Education	1

* Brendan Doody, Principal Officer, Department of Education attended one meeting on behalf of Kenny Noonan.

3.4 The Council of the NCSE



NCSE Council 2019-22: Back row (from left): Antoinette Nic Gearailt, Dharragh Hunt, Eamon Clavin, Angela O’Neill, Anne Tansey, and Pat Goff. Front row (from left): Don Mahon, Peter Archer, Deirbhile Nic Craith, Joe Hayes (chairperson), Clodagh Ní Mhaoilchiaráin, and Áine Lynch. Inset: Eileen Daly.

Our governance authority is the Council of the National Council for Special Education. It is appointed by the Minister for Education under Section 21 of the EPSEN Act, 2004. The term of office of chairperson and ordinary Council members expired on December 31st, 2022.

The Council, whose functions are set out in section 20 of the EPSEN Act, is accountable to the Minister for Education and 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 the body. Its 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 generally manages and controls staff, administration and Council business as set out in section 24 of the EPSEN Act. Regular day-to-day management, control and direction of the NCSE are the responsibility of the chief executive officer and senior management team.

The Council is responsible for preparing the annual plan and financial statements. Confirmation that the latter provide a true and fair view of the NCSE's financial performance and position in 2022 is provided in our 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. The NCSE engaged an external evaluation of the effectiveness of the NCSE Council and its Committees. The evaluation included desk-based review, a survey of members and meetings with members, with a report provided to Council for consideration.

The Council met on nine occasions during 2022 and the following table contains details of individual members and their attendance.

Membership of the Council of the NCSE during 2022		
Name	Details	Attendance
Joe Hayes,* <i>Chairperson</i>	Former Irish ambassador to China, Denmark and Iceland, to the Czech Republic and Ukraine and latterly to Singapore, Indonesia, The Philippines, Brunei and Timor Leste	8
Don Mahon,* <i>Deputy Chairperson</i>	Former assistant chief inspector in the Department of Education (DE)	8
Peter Archer	Former chief executive officer of the Educational Research Centre	7
Eamon Clavin	Former divisional inspector in the Department of Education (DE)	8
Angela O'Neill	General Manager Mental Health Services, Health Service Executive	7
Eileen Daly	Further and higher education disability officer and career guidance practitioner	5
Pat Goff	Deputy chief executive of the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN)	9
Dharragh Hunt	Senior policy and public affairs adviser, National Disability Authority	9
Áine Lynch*	Chief executive, the National Parents' Council Primary	7
Clodagh Ní Mhaoilchiaráin	Príomhoide, Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín	7
Deirbhile Nic Craith	Former Assistant general secretary and director of education and research with the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO).	8
Antoinette Nic Gearailt*	Former president of the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)	8
Anne Tansey*	Director of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the psychological service of the Department of Education (DE)	7

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

Council Committees

The Council created five Committees (Audit and Risk Committee, Finance Committee, Chief Executive Performance Committee, Research Committee, Strategy and Policy Committee) under Section 33 of the EPSEN Act. These Committees report in accordance with their terms of reference and governance guidelines as determined by the Council. Members each serve on one or more Committees. In the case of the Audit and Risk Committee, Council has appointed an external chairperson with relevant experience.

Audit and Risk (four meetings)	Attendance
Lisa Campbell, <i>chairperson</i>	4
Peter Archer	4
Don Mahon	4
Antoinette Nic Gearailt	4

Finance (six meetings)	Attendance
Antoinette Nic Gearailt, <i>chairperson</i>	6
Eileen Daly	4
Pat Goff	6
Deirbhile Nic Craith	6

Chief Executive Performance (two meetings)	Attendance
Joe Hayes, <i>chairperson</i>	2
Peter Archer	2
Antoinette Nic Gearailt	2

Research (three meetings)	Attendance
Peter Archer, <i>chairperson</i>	3
Dharragh Hunt	3
Áine Lynch	2
Anne Tansey	2

Strategy and Policy (six meetings)	Attendance
Don Mahon, <i>chairperson</i>	6
Eamon Clavin	6
Angela O'Neill*	3
Clodagh Ní Mhaoilchiaráin	6

* Angela O'Neill was appointed to the S&P committee at a meeting of Council on 23rd February 2022.

3.5 Governance

Performance Management

The NCSE Statement of Strategy covers the period 2022-24⁹. An annual work plan for 2022 based on the strategy was developed and approved by Council in December 2021 with progress reviewed quarterly, alongside associated risks. A Risk Register for 2022 was agreed by Council, on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, after the annual review of our 2021 Risk Register.

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. The annual accounts are presented and published separately from this report. The 2021 Accounts were published on our website in 2022.

The 2022 annual accounts are expected to be presented to the Minister in 2023 pending the audit's completion.

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, including recent annexes, remuneration and gender balance, diversity and inclusion. Appendix 1 details the confirmations of NCSE compliance with the code.

Furthermore, in 2022, the NCSE undertook an internal review of compliance with the Code, which was noted by the Council. The NCSE continues to be compliant with the Code. There

⁹ NCSE Statement of Strategy (2022-24) was approved by Council in 2022. With the Government announcement of additional funding to support the expansion of NCSE services in November 2022, the Statement of Strategy is currently under review and a new version will be published in 2023.

is one item that requires an update - the current Customer Charter and Action Plan expired at the end of 2021. We are working on a new Charter and Plan, which will reflect the expanded organisation and initial findings from the evaluation of NCSE frontline services.

Regulation of Lobbying Act, 2015

The NCSE's chief executive is a designated public official under this Act.

Data Protection

Nine data subject access requests were processed by NCSE in 2022, in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the NCSE Data Protection Statement at <http://www.ncse.ie/ncse-data-protection>. The NCSE data protection policy and procedures were updated in 2022, and are currently subject to ongoing internal audit.

Three data incidents were reported to the NCSE Data Protection Officer related to inadvertent emailing to unintended recipients: mitigating steps were taken and the risk level was deemed low to minimal. This issue was addressed as part of a staff training session during our staff conference.





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, is in place in the NCSE for the year ended December 31st, 2022. Confirmation of the annual review of effectiveness of the NCSE System of Internal Control in 2022 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. Both of these schedules were updated in 2022; more detail is available in the audited accounts published separately and in the Corporate Governance Guide Appendices for Council members available on the NCSE website.

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). The guidance and procedures was last updated in December 2021. No issues were raised under this procedure in 2022.

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 2022 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.

Gender Balance of Council

In 2022, 7 of the 12 Ordinary Members of the NCSE Council were female. This is in accordance with the 40% gender balance requirement, as set out in the new Annex on Gender Balance, Diversity and Inclusion (2020), supplementary to the existing Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).

Annual Energy Efficiency Reporting

In 2022, the NCSE reported the organisation’s energy performance in 2021 to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland as required under EU regulations. The NCSE achieved energy savings of 31% in 2021. The NCSE continues to track progress towards the 2030 target outlined in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. The Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP 23) provides a detailed plan for taking decisive action to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 as committed to in the Programme for Government and legislation.

The NCSE continues to liaise and work together with our colleagues in the OPW and the SEAI to achieve this target.

The data for 2021 is provided below and is compared with the previously reported 2020 figures.

Table A1.1: Overview of NCSE Energy Usage 2021 and 2020

Energy Type	Units	2021	2020
Electricity	MWh	112	192
Thermal	MWh	165	210
Renewable	MWh	0	0

Appendix 2

NCSE Staffing

Grade	Staff in Post End 2022
Civil Servants	
Chief executive	1
Principal	5
Regional managers	5
Specialist lead	5
Assistant principal	7
Team managers	10
Behaviour practitioners	4
Occupational therapists	4
Speech and language therapists	10
Therapist Manager	2
Special educational needs organisers (SENO)	60.5
Higher executive officers	8
Administrative officer	1
Executive officers	8
Clerical officers	14
Intern	0
Sub-total (civil servants)	144.5
Advisers	44
Visiting teachers	42
Sub-total (public servants)	86
TOTAL	230.5

Appendix 3

Statistical Information on Allocations and Special Classes for Academic Years 2011/12 to 2021/22

Statistical Information for 2012/13 to 2021/22

Tables A3.1-4 provide the trend data for school years 2012/13 to 2021/22, in respect of NCSE resource allocation activity.

- ▶ Data on special school enrolments have been provided by the Department of Education Primary Online Database (POD).
- ▶ Data on SET allocations have been provided by Special Education Section, Department of Education.
- ▶ All other data is provided by the NCSE Special Education Administrative System (SEAS).

Table A3.1: Applications received from schools for access to additional resources

Type of Applications	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Transport	2,520	2,787	3,289	3,423	3,460	3,597	3,847	4,302	4,366 ¹⁰	5,417
Assistive Technology	2,721	2,882	2,928	3,564	4,686	4,157	4,453	5,510	5,481	6,572
Total Applications	5,241	5,669	6,217	6,987	8,146	7,754	8,300	9,812	9,847	11,989

Table A3.2: Special education resources allocated to schools by the NCSE

Type of Posts	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
SNA	10,503	10,671	11,174	11,984	13,006	14,063	15,030	16,125	17,117	18,113
Special Education Teaching	–	–	–	–	–	13,395	13,436	13,529	13,620	13,765
Special school teachers	1,078	1,060	1,135	1,159	11,979	1,205	1,223	1,231	1,240	1,282
Special class teachers	695	823	956	1,136	1,304	1,480	1,663	1,865	2,103	2,456

¹⁰ A small number of applications for school transport for the 2020/21 school year were recorded for the 2019/20 school year. Therefore, the applications for transport are to a small extent over-reported in 2019/20 and under-reported in 2020/21. This also applies to data reported for the 2019/20 school year in the NCSE Annual Report for 2020.

Table A3.3: Numbers of students supported in Special Class and Special School placements

Students	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Special classes	3,684	4,353	4,706	5,472	6,393	7,390	8,410	9,259	10,436	12,289
Special school	7,023	7,127	7,170	7,350	7,426	7,519	7,722	7,856	7,899	8,183

Table A3.4: Primary Special classes by Type

Primary Schools Class Type	Number of Special Classes by Year				
	2010	2015	2020	2021	2022
<i>Autism Early Intervention</i>	21	71	135	133	151
<i>Autism</i>	214	482	1,000	1,217	1,463
<i>Emotional/behavioural disorders</i>	1	4	7	6	5
<i>Deaf, Hard of Hearing</i>	7	9	13	14	17
<i>HI Early Intervention</i>	0	1	1	1	1
<i>Mild General Learning Disability</i>	28	35	39	39	37
<i>Moderate General Learning Disability</i>	7	11	23	25	24
<i>Multiple Disabilities</i>	8	13	19	23	24
<i>Severe/Profound General Learning Disability</i>	5	7	9	9	8
<i>Specific Learning Needs</i>	13	13	13	13	13
<i>Developmental Language Disorder¹¹</i>	52	59	63	64	64
Total	356	705	1,322	1,544	1,807

11 Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) was previously known as Specific Speech and Language Disorder (SSLD).

Table A3.5: Post-Primary Special Classes by Type

Post-Primary Class Type	Number of Special Classes by Year				
	2010	2015	2020	2021	2022
<i>Autism</i>	65	189	435	524	653
<i>Emotional/behavioural disorders</i>	2	2	3	3	3
<i>Deaf, Hard of Hearing</i>	2	5	5	5	7
<i>Mild General Learning Disability</i>	9	11	14	14	14
<i>Moderate General Learning Disability</i>	11	25	45	46	49
<i>Multiple Disabilities</i>	3	5	12	13	13
<i>Severe/Profound General Learning Disability</i>	0	0	1	1	1
<i>Blind/Vision Impaired</i>	0	0	2	2	2
Total	92	237	517	608	742

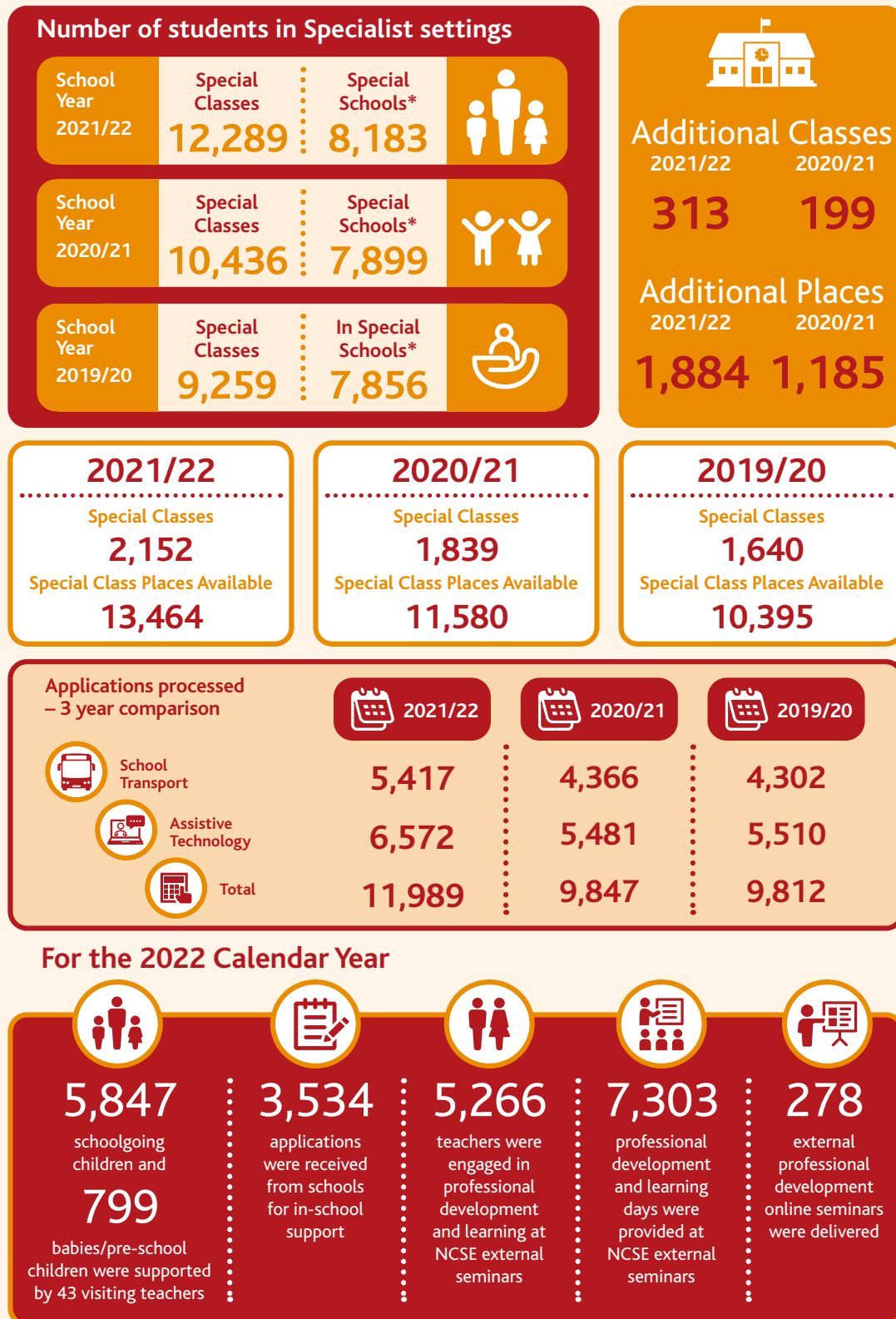
Appendix 4

Glossary of Acronyms Used

ACCS	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
AoN	Assessment of Need
CES	Comprehensive Employment Strategy
CPD	Continuing professional development
DE	Department of Education
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
EASNIE	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
EBD	Emotional disturbance/behavioural disorder
ELC	Early learning centre
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004
ERT	Enhanced Regional Teams
HSE	Health Service Executive
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
ISTP	In-School Therapy Support
ITE	Initial teacher education
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
OT	Occupational therapist
PLC	Primary Language Curriculum
SENO	Special educational needs organiser
SER	SNA Exceptional Review
SET	Special Education Teacher
SIC	System of Internal Control
SIM	School Inclusion Model
SNA	Special needs assistant
SLT	Speech and language therapist
TPL	Teacher Professional Learning
VT	Visiting Teacher

Appendix 5

Infographic on Main NCSE Statistics



* Data included for NCSE supported Special Schools



Notes

Blank lined area for notes.

© NCSE 2023

National Council for Special Education

1-2 Mill Street
Trim
Co. Meath

T: 01 6033200

www.ncse.ie