

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

AN CHOMHAIRLE NÁISIÚNTA UM OIDEACHAS SPEISIALTA

**Report and Financial Statements
For year ended 31 December 2022**

National Council for Special Education
Report and Financial Statements

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National Council for Special Education

Information

Members of the Council of the National Council for Special Education:

2019-2022*¹

Mr. Joseph Hayes (Chairperson)

Mr. Don Mahon (Deputy Chairperson)

Ms. Áine Lynch

Ms. Anne Tansey

Ms. Antoinette Nic Gearailt

Ms. Clodagh Ní Mhaoilchiaráin

Dr. Deirbhile Nic Craith

Mr. Dharragh Hunt

Mr. Eamon Clavin

Ms. Eileen Daly

Mr. Pat Goff

Dr. Peter Archer

Ms. Angela O'Neill

Chief Executive:

Ms. Teresa Griffin (Retired in January 2022)

Mr. John Kearney (Appointed in March 2022)

Head Office:

1-2 Mill Street, Trim, Co. Meath

Accountants:

Crowe Ireland, 40 Mespil Road, Dublin 4

Auditors:

The Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, 3A Mayor Street Upper, Dublin 1

Bankers:

Bank of Ireland, College Green, Dublin 2

¹Details of membership of the new Council is available on page 7.



Ard Reachtaire Cuntas agus Ciste Comptroller and Auditor General

Report for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas

National Council for Special Education

Opinion on the financial statements

I have audited the financial statements of National Council for Special Education for the year ended 31 December 2022 as required under the provisions of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004. The financial statements comprise

- the statement of income and expenditure and retained revenue reserves
- the statement of comprehensive income
- the statement of financial position
- the statement of cash flows and
- the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In my opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the Council at 31 December 2022 and of its income and expenditure for 2022 in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102 — *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland*.

Basis of opinion

I conducted my audit of the financial statements in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) as promulgated by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions. My responsibilities under those standards are described in the appendix to this report. I am independent of the Council and have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the standards.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Report on information other than the financial statements, and on other matters

The Council has presented certain other information together with the financial statements. This comprises a governance statement and Council members' report, and a statement on internal control.

My responsibilities to report in relation to such information, and on certain other matters upon which I report by exception, are described in the appendix to this report.

I have nothing to report in regard to those matters.

Mary Henry
For and on behalf of the
Comptroller and Auditor General

20 December 2023

Appendix to the report

Responsibilities of Council members

The members are responsible for

- the preparation of annual financial statements in the form prescribed under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
- ensuring that the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with FRS102
- ensuring the regularity of transactions
- assessing whether the use of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate, and
- such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Responsibilities of the Comptroller and Auditor General

I am required under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 to audit the financial statements of the Council and to report thereon to the Houses of the Oireachtas.

My objective in carrying out the audit is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement due to fraud or error. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with the ISAs, I exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. In doing so,

- I identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements whether due to fraud or error; design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks; and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- I obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal controls.
- I evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures.
- I conclude on the appropriateness of the use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, on whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast

significant doubt on the Council's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Council to cease to continue as a going concern.

- I evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

I report by exception if, in my opinion,

- I have not received all the information and explanations I required for my audit, or
- the accounting records were not sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited, or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records.

Information other than the financial statements

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information presented with those statements, and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, I am required under the ISAs to read the other information presented and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or with knowledge obtained during the audit, or if it otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

Reporting on other matters

My audit is conducted by reference to the special considerations which attach to State bodies in relation to their management and operation. I report if I identify material matters relating to the manner in which public business has been conducted.

I seek to obtain evidence about the regularity of financial transactions in the course of audit. I report if I identify any material instance where public money has not been applied for the purposes intended or where transactions did not conform to the authorities governing them.

National Council for Special Education

Governance Statement and Council Members' Report

Governance

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was established as an independent statutory body by order of the then Minister for Education and Science in December 2003. It was formally established under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (EPSEN Act) with effect from 1st October 2005.

The functions of the Council are set out in section 20 of the EPSEN Act. The Council is accountable to the Minister for Education and is responsible for ensuring good governance. The CEO manages and controls generally the staff, administration and business of the Council as set out in section 24 of the EPSEN Act. The regular day-to-day management, control and direction of the NCSE are the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the senior management team. The CEO and the senior management team follow the strategic direction as set out in the Statement of Strategy (2023- 2026) approved by the Council and ensure that all Council members have a clear understanding of the key activities and decisions related to the entity, and of any significant risks likely to arise.

Council Responsibilities

The work and responsibilities of Council are set out in the EPSEN Act and Corporate Governance Guide for Council Members, which specifically set out matters reserved for Council. Council business and duties are further outlined in the Council Terms of Reference and Standing Orders. Standing items considered by Council include:

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

Section 29 of the EPSEN Act requires the Council of the NCSE to keep, in such form as may be approved by the Minister for Education with consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, all proper and usual accounts of money received and expended by it. In preparing these financial statements, the Council of the NCSE is required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that it will continue in operation
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

The Council is also responsible for keeping adequate accounting records which disclose, with reasonable accuracy at any time, its financial position and enables it to ensure that the financial statements are in keeping with the requirements of the EPSEN Act. The NCSE adheres to government accounting procedures in the preparation of the financial statements and the Financial Reporting Standard 102 (Financial Reporting Standard Applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland).

National Council for Special Education

Governance Statement and Council Members' Report

The Council is responsible for approving the annual plan and budget. The annual evaluation of the performance of the NCSE by reference to the annual plan took place on 8 December 2022 and was finalised at the Council meeting on 24 February 2023. The Council is also responsible for safeguarding the NCSE's assets and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities. The Council also undertakes an appropriate assessment of NCSE's principal risks, including a description of these risks where appropriate and associated mitigation measures.

The Council considers that the financial statements of the NCSE give a true and fair view of the financial performance and the financial position of the NCSE at 31 December 2022.

Council Structure

The Council consists of a Chairperson and twelve ordinary members, all of whom are appointed by the Minister for Education for a four year term. In 2022, seven members of the Council were female and six were male. Membership of the Council expired for all members on 31st December 2022.

The Council is obliged to meet a minimum of six times a year. In 2022 the Council met nine times. The table below details the role appointment period for all members:

NCSE Council membership 2019-2022

Council Member	Role	Period of Appointment
Joseph Hayes*	Chairperson	21 December 2018-31 December 2022
Don Mahon*	Deputy Chairperson	21 December 2018-31 December 2022
Dr Peter Archer	Ordinary member	19 February 2019-31 December 2022
Eamon Clavin	Ordinary member	19 February 2019-31 December 2022
Eileen Daly	Ordinary member	19 February 2019-31 December 2022
Pat Goff	Ordinary member	19 February 2019-31 December 2022
Dharragh Hunt	Ordinary member	19 February 2019-31 December 2022
Aine Lynch*	Ordinary member	21 December 2018-31 December 2022
Clodagh Ni Mhaoilchiaráin	Ordinary member	19 February 2019-31 December 2022
Dr Deirbhile Nic Craith	Ordinary member	19 February 2019-31 December 2022
Antoinette Nic Gearailt*	Ordinary member	21 December 2018-31 December 2022
Angela O'Neill	Ordinary member	20 July 2021-31 December 2022
Anne Tansey*	Ordinary member	21 December 2018-31 December 2022

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

National Council for Special Education

Governance Statement and Council Members' Report

The appointment of a new Council commenced on the 1st January 2023. The table below details the role and appointment period for all members:

NCSE Council membership 2023-2026

Council Member	Role	Period of Appointment
Dr Fergal Lynch	Chairperson	22 August 2023-31 December 2026
Pat Goff*	Deputy chairperson	1 January 2023-31 December 2026
Dr Peter Archer*	Ordinary member	1 January 2023-31 December 2026
Eamon Clavin ²	Ordinary member	20 April 2023-31 December 2026
Catherine Cross	Ordinary member	1 January 2023-31 December 2026
Eileen Daly*	Ordinary member	1 January 2023-31 December 2026
Diarmuid Dullaghan	Ordinary member	20 April 2023-31 December 2026
Dharragh Hunt*	Ordinary member	1 January 2023-31 December 2026
Dr Yvonne Kennedy	Ordinary member	20 April 2023-31 December 2026
Dr Deirbhile Nic Craith*	Ordinary member	1 January 2023-31 December 2022
Angela O'Neill*	Ordinary member	1 January 2023-31 December 2022
Caroline Quinn	Ordinary member	1 January 2023- 31 December 2026
Dr Michael Redmond	Ordinary member	1 January 2023- 31 December 2026

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

The Council established five Committees under Section 33 of the EPSEN Act. The Committees report to Council in accordance with their terms of reference and governance guidelines as determined by the Council. Council members serve on one or more Committees. In the case of the Audit & Risk Committee, the Council has appointed an external Chairperson with relevant experience.

² Was a member of the last Council and term ended on 31st December 2022 and was appointed on 20th April 2023 under a different process.

National Council for Special Education

Governance Statement and Council Members' Report

The Committees are as follows:

1. Audit and Risk Committee

The Committee comprises three Council members and includes an external Chairperson. The role of the Audit and Risk Committee is to support the NCSE Council in its responsibilities for issues of risk, control and governance by reviewing the comprehensiveness of assurances in meeting the Council's assurance needs and reviewing the reliability and integrity of these assurances.

The Committee is independent in the performance of its functions and responsibilities and in the determination and monitoring of its work programme. It is not subject to direction or control from any other party which could impair the carrying out of its functions. The Committee meets at least four times a year and minutes are circulated to all members of Council. The Audit and Risk Committee reports to the Council after each Committee meeting.

The members of the Audit and Risk Committee were: Lisa Campbell (independent Chairperson), Peter Archer, Don Mahon and Antoinette Nic Gearailt. There were four meetings of the Audit and Risk Committee in 2022. A new committee was established in 2023 with Lisa Campbell (Chair) and Peter Archer being re-appointed, while Pat Goff and Deirbhile Nic Craith were new appointments to the committee.

2. CEO Performance Committee

The CEO Performance Committee comprises three Council members including the Council Chairperson. The Committee's role is to review the performance of the CEO in relation to the organisational Business Plan. There are at least two meetings each year. The members of the CEO Performance Committee were: Joseph Hayes (Chairperson), Peter Archer and Antoinette Nic Gearailt. There were two meetings of the CEO Performance Committee in 2022. A new committee was established in 2023 with Peter Archer being re-appointed, while Fergal Lynch (Chair) and Pat Goff were new appointments.

3. Finance Committee

The Finance Committee comprises four Council members. The role of the Finance Committee is to update and advise the Council on its financial position. The Committee's role is advisory, to report and make recommendations, in order to support Council financial decision making. The members of the Finance Committee were: Antoinette Nic Gearailt (Chairperson), Eileen Daly, Deirbhile Nic Craith and Pat Goff. There were six meetings of the Finance Committee in 2022. A new committee was established in 2023 with Deirbhile Nic Craith (new Chair) and Eileen Daly being re-appointed and the new appointments were Caroline Quinn and Dermot Dullaghan.

4. Research Committee

The Research Committee comprises four Council members. The Research Committee advises Council on the research policy and programme and makes appropriate expert inputs into the strategic development of the Council's research policy including its multi-annual research programme. The members of the Research Committee were: Peter Archer (Chairperson), Dharragh Hunt, Áine Lynch and Anne Tansey. There were three meetings of the Research Committee in 2022. A new committee was established in 2023 with Peter Archer (remaining as Chair) and Dharragh Hunt being re-appointed and Catherine Cross and Yvonne Kennedy being the new appointments to the committee.

5. Strategy and Policy Committee

The Strategy and Policy Committee comprises four Council members. Its role is to make appropriate inputs into the development of policy advice and ongoing NCSE strategic activities. The members of the Strategy and Policy Committee were: Don Mahon (Chairperson), Eamon Clavin and Clodagh Ni Mhaolchiaráin and Angela O'Neill. There were six meetings of the Strategy and Policy Committee in 2022. A new committee was established in 2023 with Angela O'Neill being re-appointed while Pat Goff (new Chair), Eamon Clavin and Michael Redmond were new appointments to the committee.

National Council for Special Education

Governance Statement and Council Members' Report

Schedule of Attendance, Fees and Expenses

A schedule of attendance at the Council and Committee meetings for 2022 is set out below, including the fees and expenses received by each member for their Council duties.

	Council	Audit & Risk Committee	CEO Performance Committee	Finance Committee	Research Committee	Strategy & Policy Committee	Fees 2022 €	Expenses 2022 €
Number of meetings								
Joseph Hayes	8		2					692
Don Mahon	8	4				6		
Peter Archer	7	4	2		3			363
Eamon Clavin	8					6		137
Eileen Daly	5			4				466
Pat Goff	9			6				
Dharragh Hunt	9				3			
Áine Lynch	7				2			
Clodagh Ni Mhaoilchiaráin	7					6		911
Deirbhile Nic Craith	8			6				373
Antoinette Nic Gearailt	8	4	2	6				
Anne Tansey	7				2			
Lisa Campbell* ³	N/A	4						
Angela O'Neill	7					3		
Total	9	4	2	6	3	6	-	2,942

Council members are not paid fees in respect of their role as Council members of the NCSE.

Key Personnel Changes

Two Principal Officers transferred out and were replaced by grade equivalents.

Disclosures Required by Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016)

The Council is responsible for ensuring that the NCSE has complied with the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies ("the Code"), as published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in August 2016. The disclosures overleaf are required by the Code.

³ Lisa Campbell is not a member of the Council. She was appointed as an external chairperson with relevant experience to the Audit and Risk Committee."

National Council for Special Education

Governance Statement and Council Members' Report

Employee Short-Term Benefits Breakdown

Employees' short-term benefits in excess of €60,000 are categorised into the following bands:

Range of total employee benefits		Number of employees	
From	To	2022	2021
€60,000 -	€69,999	37	66
€70,000 -	€79,999	31	11
€80,000 -	€89,999	7	5
€90,000 -	€99,999	3	2
€100,000 -	€109,999	-	1
€110,000 -	€119,999	2	2
€120,000 -	€129,999	-	-
€130,000 -	€139,999	-	-
€140,000 -	€149,999	-	-
€150,000 -	€159,999	-	1
€160,000 +		-	-

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is a civil service Assistant Secretary General. Total CEO remuneration for the financial period was €122,023 (2021: €154,597).

The total remuneration for key management personnel for 2022 amounted to €558,947 (2021: €539,169). Key management personnel consist of the CEO and the Principal Officers who report directly to the CEO.

Consultancy Costs

Consultancy costs include the cost of external advice to management and exclude outsourced 'business-as-usual' functions.

	2022	2021
	€	€
IT Consultancy	55,634	9,274
Business Process Improvement	-	70,467
Communications Advice	<u>4,463</u>	<u>14,117</u>
Total Consultancy Costs	<u><u>60,097</u></u>	<u><u>93,858</u></u>

Legal Costs and Settlements

The table below provides a breakdown of amounts recognised as expenditure in the reporting period in relation to legal proceedings. The NCSE is the named respondent in a small number of ongoing legal cases which may result in additional costs being incurred by the NCSE, however it has not been possible to estimate these costs accurately.

	2022	2021
	€	€
Legal Costs	<u><u>185,498</u></u>	<u><u>181,920</u></u>

National Council for Special Education

Governance Statement and Council Members' Report

Travel and Subsistence Expenditure

Travel and subsistence expenditure are categorised as follows :

	2022	2021
	€	€
Domestic:		
Council ¹	2,942	34
Employees	1,071,863	411,770
International:		
Council	Nil	Nil
Employees	6,503	1,369
Total	<u>1,081,308</u>	<u>413,173</u>

Travel and subsistence for participants attending professional development initiatives is recorded separately in Note 4 - Expenditure.

Hospitality Expenditure:

The hospitality expenditure is as follows:

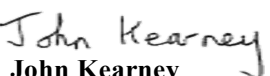
	2022	2021
	€	€
Hospitality	-	-

Statement of Compliance

The Council has adopted the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016) and has put procedures in place to ensure compliance with the Code. The NCSE has complied with the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies in 2022.

Signed:


Dr. Fergal Lynch
Chairperson


John Kearney
Chief Executive Officer

Date: 19th December 2023

Date: 19th December 2023

¹ Council expenditure relates to Council business related expenses only.

National Council for Special Education

Statement on Internal Control

Scope of Responsibility

On behalf of the Council of the NCSE, I acknowledge the Council's responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal control is maintained and operated. This responsibility takes account of the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).

Purpose of the System of Internal Control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a tolerable level rather than to eliminate it. The system can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or detected in a timely way.

The system of internal control, which accords with guidance issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was in place in the NCSE for the year ended 31 December 2022 and up to the date of approval of the financial statements except for one item outlined below in the paragraph on internal control issues.

Capacity to Handle Risk

The NCSE Council has an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) comprising three Council members and one external member, with financial and audit expertise, who is the Committee Chairperson. The ARC met four times in 2022.

The NCSE Council has also established an internal audit function which is adequately resourced and conducts a programme of work agreed with the ARC and approved by the NCSE Council.

The ARC has developed a risk management policy which has been approved by the NCSE Council and which sets out the NCSE risk appetite, the risk management processes in place and details the roles and responsibilities of staff in relation to risk. The policy has been issued to all staff who are expected to work within the NCSE's risk management policies, to alert management on emerging risks and control weaknesses and assume responsibility for risks and controls within their own area of work.

Risk and Control Framework

The NCSE has implemented a risk management system which identifies and reports key risks and the management actions being taken to address and, to the extent possible, to mitigate those risks.

A risk register is in place which identifies the key risks facing the NCSE and these have been identified, evaluated and graded according to their significance. The register is reviewed and updated by the ARC on an annual basis and an update on the 5 highest risks is provided at each ARC meeting. The outcome of these assessments is used to plan and allocate resources to ensure risks are managed to an acceptable level.

The risk register details the controls and actions needed to mitigate risks and responsibility for operation of controls assigned to specific staff. I confirm that a control environment containing the following elements is in place:

- procedures for all key business processes have been documented, financial responsibilities have been assigned at management level with corresponding accountability;
- an appropriate budgeting system with an annual budget which is kept under review by senior management;

National Council for Special Education

Statement on Internal Control

- systems aimed at ensuring the security of the information and communication technology systems; and
- systems in place to safeguard the assets.

Ongoing Monitoring and Review

Formal procedures have been established for monitoring control processes and control deficiencies are communicated to those responsible for taking corrective action and to management and the Council, where relevant, in a timely way.

I confirm that the following ongoing monitoring systems are in place:

- key risks and related controls have been identified and processes have been put in place to monitor the operation of those key controls and report any identified deficiencies;
- reporting arrangements have been established at all levels where responsibility for financial management has been assigned; and
- there are regular reviews by senior management of periodic and annual performance and financial reports which indicate performance against budgets/forecasts.

Financial Management and Reporting

The Code of Practice requires the ARC to review draft accounts before recommending their adoption by Council in advance of submission for audit. The ARC reviewed the draft accounts on the 21 February 2023 and recommended their adoption by Council. Council adopted the draft accounts at its meeting on 23 February 2023.

Procurement

I confirm that the NCSE has procedures in place to ensure compliance with current procurement rules and guidelines. Matters arising regarding controls over procurement are highlighted under internal control issues below.

Review of Effectiveness

I confirm that the NCSE has procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and control procedures. The NCSE's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control is informed by the work of the internal and external auditors, the Audit and Risk Committee which oversees their work, and the senior management within the NCSE responsible for the development and maintenance of the internal financial control framework, which took into consideration that NCSE staff commenced working from home to deliver services in early 2020 in order to comply with Government guidelines on Covid, see note 15 for further details.

I can confirm that Council conducted its annual review of effectiveness of internal controls at its meeting on 29 March 2023.

The Council is satisfied that the controls in place within the NCSE continue to operate satisfactorily and effectively.

National Council for Special Education

Statement on Internal Control

Internal Control Issues

During 2022, expenditure to the value of €236,952 involving 20 cases with 13 suppliers was incurred in relation to goods and services where the procedures employed did not comply with procurement guidelines.

- In four cases, involving expenditure of €207,117, the contract was continued after expiry. The procurement processes are being reviewed and new procurement processes are being initiated;
- In one case, involving expenditure of €25,371, non-compliance was noted on the basis of cumulative spend and procurement guidelines were clarified with the relevant section;
- In four cases, involving expenditure of €3,194, once-off procurement was undertaken and non-compliance arose where three quotes were not sought. Procurement processes were reviewed and compliance with procurement guidelines were clarified with relevant sections;
- In the remaining eleven cases, involving expenditure of €1,270, non-compliant procurement was completed on time sensitive basis and the relevant procedures were clarified with all staff in procurement-facing roles.

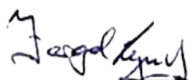
There was an improvement in procurement practices through 2022, with a focus on management and renewal of existing contracts and application of appropriate procurement processes. The updates introduced to procurement monitoring have been effective in identifying non-compliance in the organisation, at all levels including expenditure at or below €1,000. Furthermore, internal workshops and external training sessions for all staff in procurement-facing roles was rolled out throughout 2022 and will continue on an ongoing basis.

Protected Disclosures

An anonymous report was received in March 2023 containing a number of allegations. No documentary evidence was provided with the report. The allegations in the report were independently assessed by a third party and determined not to meet the criteria of a protected disclosure.

In line with Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016, Section 1.9, it is confirmed that procedures are in place for the making of protected disclosures in accordance with section 21 (1) of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 and that the annual report required under section 22 (1) of the Act has been published.

Signed:



Dr. Fergal Lynch
Chairperson
National Council for Special Education

Date: 19th December 2023

National Council for Special Education


Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves for the year ended 31 December 2022

		2022	2021
	Notes	€	€
Income			
State grant	2	15,379,725	14,783,750
Transfer from capital account	11	206,096	184,875
Other income	3	—	—
Total income		<u>15,585,821</u>	<u>14,968,625</u>
Expenditure	4	<u>(15,763,826)</u>	<u>(15,038,648)</u>
Deficit for the year		<u>(178,005)</u>	<u>(70,023)</u>
Retained revenue reserves at beginning of year		<u>(4,485)</u>	<u>22,078</u>
Retained revenue reserves at end of year		<u>(182,490)</u>	<u>(47,945)</u>

All items of income and expenditure relate to continuing activities.

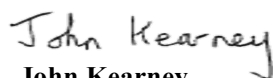
Notes 1 to 18 form part of these financial statements.

Signed:



Dr. Fergal Lynch
Chairperson

Date: 19th December 2023



John Kearney
Chief Executive Officer

Date: 19th December 2023

National Council for Special Education

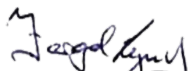
Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 31 December 2022

	Notes	2022 €	2021 €
Deficit for the year		(178,005)	(70,023)
Actuarial gain/loss on pension liabilities	7	851,000	(249,000)
Adjustment to deferred pension funding asset	7	<u>(851,000)</u>	<u>249,000</u>
Total comprehensive deficit for the year		<u>(178,005)</u>	<u>(70,023)</u>

All items of income and expenditure relate to continuing activities.

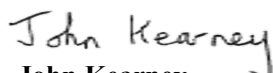
Notes 1 to 18 form part of these financial statements.

Signed:



Dr. Fergal Lynch
Chairperson

Date: 19th December 2023



John Kearney
Chief Executive Officer

Date: 19th December 2023

National Council for Special Education

Statement of Financial Position at 31 December 2022

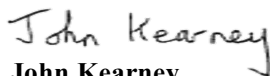
	Notes	2022 €	2021 €
NON CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment	8	<u>288,800</u>	<u>494,896</u>
CURRENT ASSETS			
Receivables	9	340,008	331,103
Cash and cash equivalents		<u>292,720</u>	<u>515,789</u>
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		<u>632,728</u>	<u>846,892</u>
CURRENT LIABILITES			
Amounts falling due within one year	10	<u>(858,678)</u>	<u>(894,837)</u>
NET CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>(225,950)</u>	<u>(47,945)</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>62,850</u>	<u>446,951</u>
NON CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Retirement benefit obligations	7	(1,069,000)	(1,106,000)
Deferred retirement benefit funding asset	7	<u>1,069,000</u>	<u>1,106,000</u>
TOTAL NET ASSETS		<u>62,850</u>	<u>446,951</u>
CAPITAL AND RESERVES			
Retained revenue reserves		(225,950)	(47,945)
Capital account	11	<u>288,800</u>	<u>494,896</u>
		<u>62,850</u>	<u>446,951</u>

Notes 1 to 18 form part of these financial statements.

Signed:



Dr. Fergal Lynch
Chairperson



John Kearney
Chief Executive Officer

Date: 19th December 2023


Date: 19th December 2023

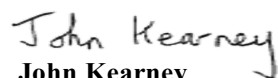
National Council for Special Education
Statement of Cash Flows
for the year ended 31 December 2022

	Notes	2022 €	2021 €
Reconciliation of operating deficit to net cash (outflow)/inflow from operating activities			
Operating (deficit) for year		(178,005)	(70,023)
Depreciation	8	163,686	215,837
Loss on disposal of tangible fixed assets	8	42,410	32,519
Transfer from capital account	11	(206,096)	(184,875)
(Increase) in receivables	9	(8,905)	(24,933)
(Decrease)/Increase in payables	10	<u>(36,159)</u>	<u>182,793</u>
 Net cash (outflow)/inflow from operating activities		 (223,069)	 151,318
Cash flow from investing activities			
Payments to acquire property, plant and equipment	8	<u> -</u>	<u>(66,225)</u>
 (Decrease)/Increase in cash and cash equivalents		 <u>(223,069)</u>	 <u>85,093</u>
 Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January		 515,789	 430,696
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December		<u>292,720</u>	<u>515,789</u>
(Decrease)/Increase in cash and cash equivalents		<u>(223,069)</u>	<u>85,093</u>

Notes 1 to 18 form part of these financial statements.

Signed:


Dr. Fergal Lynch
Chairperson


John Kearney
Chief Executive Officer

Date: 19th December 2023

Date: 19th December 2023

National Council for Special Education

Notes (forming part of the financial statements)

These notes form an integral part of and should be read in conjunction with the accompanying financial statements.

1. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The significant accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all years presented unless otherwise stated.

1.1 Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in compliance with Financial Reporting Standard 102 “The Financial Reporting Standard Applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland” (“FRS102”). The financial statements have been prepared on the accrual basis of accounting, with the exception of income as detailed in Note 1.5 below, and in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles under the historical cost convention.

1.2 Reporting currency

The financial statements of NCSE are presented in Euro (“€”) which is also the functional currency of NCSE. Transactions denominated in foreign currencies are recorded at the rate of exchange ruling at the dates of the transactions. Monetary assets and liabilities denominated in foreign currencies are translated into euro at year end rates. The resulting exchange differences are dealt with in the determination of income and expenditure for the financial year.

1.3 Going Concern

The NCSE meets its day-to-day working capital requirements through its funding activities and cash balances. The Council have a reasonable expectation that the NSCE has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Therefore, these entity financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis.

1.4 Accounting period

The Financial Statements cover the year 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022.

1.5 Income

Income is on a cash receipts basis and represents the amount paid directly to the NCSE:

- by the Department of Education for the year by way of grant in accordance with Section 43 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004;

1.6 Property, plant and equipment

Property, plant and equipment are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation and any accumulated impairment losses. Historical cost includes expenditure that is directly attributable to bringing the asset to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management.

National Council for Special Education

Notes (forming part of the financial statements)

1. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES (*continued*)

1.6 Property, plant and equipment (*continued*)

Depreciation is provided on a straight-line basis at rates which are estimated to write off the cost of the assets less their residual value over their expected useful lives as follows:

Furniture & fittings	10 years
Office equipment	5 years
Computer equipment	5 years
Leasehold refurbishment	20 years
Computer software/website	3 years

The carrying values of property, plant and equipment are reviewed for impairment when events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value may not be recoverable. The estimated useful lives, residual values and depreciation methods are reviewed, and adjusted as appropriate, at the end of each financial year.

Gains and losses on disposals are determined by comparing the proceeds with the carrying amount and are recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves.

NCSE policy on procurement and disposal of NCSE fixed assets is set out in its Financial Policies and Procedures Manual which is in line with Department of Finance/DPER circulars, the Public Financial Procedures, and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016.

NCSE's fixed asset policy is to capitalise assets with a life of more than one year and a value greater than €10,000 from 1 January 2021 in line with DPER Circular 21/2020.

1.7 Capital account

The capital account represents the unamortised value of the income used to finance fixed assets.

1.8 Employee benefits

The Council provides a range of benefits to employees, including paid holiday arrangements.

Short term benefits

Short term benefits, including holiday pay, are recognised as an expense in the period in which the service is received.

Retirement benefit cost

Section 25 (5) of the EPSEN Act, provides that staff of the National Council for Special Education are civil servants. The Civil Service Superannuation Schemes are defined benefit schemes which are unfunded and administered by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. There is no charge in the financial statements for any liabilities which may arise in respect of these staff. Benefit entitlements of staff will be a function of their service with the Council and of their previous service in the civil or public service, where appropriate. The Council is not funded in respect of such benefit entitlements. As a result, the requirements in FRS 102 with regard to defined benefit plans are not deemed to apply and no further disclosures are considered necessary.

National Council for Special Education

Notes (forming part of the financial statements)

1. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES *(continued)*

1.8 Employee benefits *(continued)*

Retirement benefit cost (continued)

New entrant staff employed by the Council after 1 January 2013 are members of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme in accordance with Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012. The Council makes the necessary deductions from salaries for staff who are part of the scheme. See Note 7 for further details.

1.9 Use of judgements and estimates

In preparing these financial statements, management has made judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the application of the entity's accounting policies and the reported amounts of assets, liabilities, income and expenses. Actual results may differ from these estimates. Estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to estimates are recognised prospectively.

2.	INCOME	2022	2021
		€	€
	The Department of Education made the following funds available to the Council:		
	Grant to the Council	12,813,563	14,522,250
	SIM/ISTP ³	<u>2,566,162</u>	<u>261,500</u>
		<u>15,379,725</u>	<u>14,783,750</u>
3.	OTHER INCOME	2022	2021
		€	€
	Freedom of Information	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
	Total other income	<u><u>-</u></u>	<u><u>-</u></u>

³ Income in 2021 relates to ISTP income only whereas in 2022 the income relates to both the SIM and ISTP Project

National Council for Special Education

Notes (forming part of the financial statements)

4. EXPENDITURE	2022	2021
	€	€
Printing, postage and stationery	241,582	163,041
Rent and rates	967,245	915,836
Telephone	209,621	299,387
Light and heat	77,832	77,642
Repairs and maintenance	156,865	211,144
Training and development	812,855	1,113,534
Training participants (CPD) ⁴	534,694	289,883
Travel and subsistence expenses ⁵	1,081,308	413,173
Travel and subsistence participants ⁶	74,667	3,431
Meeting expenses	74,165	6,357
General expenses	31,856	29,946
Recruitment fees	41,037	2,509
Research expenditure	197,183	77,019
IT expenses	829,024	679,781
Consultancy fees ⁷	60,097	93,858
Outsourced services ⁸	23,826	25,440
Professional services & intervention ⁹	382,672	510,076
Internal audit fee	10,701	16,488
External audit fee	26,600	24,200
Accountancy fees	22,141	26,334
Legal fees	185,498	181,920
Loss on Disposal of Fixed Assets	42,410	32,519
In School Therapy Project contract	47,901	34,413
Wages & salaries (Note 5)	8,649,827	8,776,982
Employers PRSI	818,533	817,898
Depreciation (Note 8)	<u>163,686</u>	<u>215,837</u>
Total Expenditure	<u>15,763,826</u>	<u>15,038,648</u>

⁴ This reflects the training costs associated with providing CPD for participants such as venue costs, lecturer costs and course fees.

⁵ Travel and subsistence expenses increased in 2022 due to staff back travelling since the Covid-19 pandemic. Foreign travel and subsistence expenses in the year amounted to €6,503 (2021: €1,369). All other travel and subsistence expenses were domestic.

⁶ This reflects the travel and subsistence costs incurred by participants attending CPD courses.

⁷ Consultancy fees were incurred in relation to IT and communication services.

⁸ This reflects the administration costs associated with the outsourced payroll

⁹ This reflects costs incurred from the provision of services such as occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, literacy and numeracy interventions, behaviour improvement interventions and professional assessments.

National Council for Special Education

Notes (forming part of the financial statements)

5. WAGES AND SALARIES

Government policy in relation to the pay of the chief executive and all state body employees is being implemented. The number of staff employed by the NCSE at year end 2022 was 145 (2021: 142), made up of 102 Local Services staff (2021: 101) and 43 Head Office staff (2021: 41).

Expenditure on salaries for Local Services staff amounted to €5,562,239 (2021: €6,109,072), In School Therapy Project Staff €873,972 (2021: €630,191) and Head Office staff salaries of €2,213,616 (2021: €2,037,719) giving a total of €8,649,827 (2021: €8,776,982). These totals include €78 (2021: nil) paid as overtime and €27,298 (2021: €41,513) paid as higher duty allowances.

Superannuation contributions of €330,374 were deducted from staff salaries during the year (2021: €334,562). The NCSE remitted €330,374 to the Department of Education during the year (2021: €334,562).

Pension related deductions of €405,466 were made from staff salaries during the year (2021: €402,565). The NCSE remitted €403,146 to the Department of Education during the year (2021: €402,426).

The cost of staff providing a range of services for which the NCSE is responsible for but for which the staff are employed by DE or boards of management is not charged to the NCSE accounts.

6. EXPENSES, COUNCIL MEMBER FEES AND CEO REMUNERATION

Council members are not paid fees in respect of their role as Council members of the NCSE. Council members are entitled to claim travel & subsistence expenses. In 2022 this amounted to €2,942 (2021: €34).

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is a civil service Assistant Secretary General. CEO remuneration was €122,023 in 2022 (2021: €154,597). The CEO is a member of the superannuation scheme for Established Civil Servants and pension entitlements do not extend beyond the standard entitlements of the scheme – see also Note 1.8. Employee Benefits.

The total remuneration for key management personnel for 2022 amounted to €558,947 (2021: €539,169). Key management personnel consist of the CEO and the Principal Officers who report directly to the CEO.

National Council for Special Education

Notes (forming part of the financial statements)

7. RETIREMENT BENEFIT COSTS

A defined benefit superannuation scheme applies to the staff of the NCSE. The Civil Service Superannuation Schemes are defined benefit schemes which are unfunded and administered by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Benefits are financed on a “pay-as-you-go” basis, there are no assets held in respect of the accrued pension liabilities of NCSE staff, and there is no charge to the Statement of Income and Expenditure.

The NCSE also operates the Single Public Service Pension Scheme (the “Plan”) which applies to 65 (2021: 53) staff members who joined the public sector as new entrants on or after 1st January 2013. It is a defined benefit pension scheme which the NCSE has accounted for in estimating its defined benefit retirement obligations in accordance with FRS 102. All employee retirement benefit contributions for this scheme are paid to a State retirement benefit account. The scheme operates on a pay-as-you-go basis payable from the NCSE’s core funding. Superannuation entitlements arising under this scheme are charged to the Income and Expenditure Account in the year in which they are earned.

The evaluation methodology used has been based on a full actuarial valuation made by a qualified independent actuary considering the requirements of FRS 102 in order to assess the schemes’ liabilities as at 31 December 2022.

The financial assumptions used to calculate scheme liabilities were as follows:

	2022	2021
Discount Rate	3.54%	1.28%
Price Inflation	2.75%	2.30%
Salary Increases	3.75%	3.30%
State Pension Increases	2.75%	2.30%
Assumed Pension Increases	2.75%	2.30%

Life expectancy

The mortality basis explicitly allows for improvements in life expectancy over time, so that life expectancy at retirement will depend on the year in which a member attains retirement age. The table below shows the life expectancy for members attaining age 66 in 2022 and 2021.

Year of attaining age 68

	2022	2021
Life expectancy - male (in years)	21	19.1
Life expectancy - female (in years)	23.4	21.3

National Council for Special Education

Notes (forming part of the financial statements)

7. RETIREMENT BENEFIT COSTS *(continued)*

(a) Analysis of the amount charged to operating profit

	2022	2021
	€	€
Current service costs	803,000	447,000
Interest on defined benefit liabilities	14,000	3,000
Costs of termination benefits	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>817,000</u>	<u>450,000</u>
Funding recoverable in respect of current year retirement costs	<u>817,000</u>	<u>450,000</u>

(b) Deferred retirement benefit funding asset

The NCSE recognises this amount as an asset corresponding to the unfunded deferred liability for pensions on the basis of the set of assumptions described above and a number of past events. These events include the statutory basis for the establishment of the Plan, and the policy and practice currently in place in relation to funding public service pensions including contributions by employees and the annual estimates process.

The NCSE has no evidence that this funding policy will not continue to meet such sums in accordance with current practice. In the case that a future asset is established for the SPSS obligations, the payment of these obligations will be funded centrally.

(c) Movement in defined benefit obligations

	2022	2021
	€	€
Net retirement benefit obligation as at 1 January	(1,106,000)	(407,000)
Employee full service cost	(803,000)	(447,000)
Net interest on net defined liability	(14,000)	(3,000)
Pensions paid in the year	3,000	
Actuarial profit/(loss) during the year	<u>851,000</u>	<u>(249,000)</u>
Net retirement benefit obligation as at 31 December	<u>(1,069,000)</u>	<u>(1,106,000)</u>

(d) Actuarial loss

	2022	2021
	€	€
Gain/(loss) in the year		
Actuarial gain/(loss) during the year	<u>851,000</u>	<u>(249,000)</u>
Total actuarial gain/(loss) for the year ended 31 December	<u>851,000</u>	<u>(249,000)</u>

National Council for Special Education

Notes (forming part of the financial statements)

8. PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

	Leasehold refurbishment	Office equipment	Furniture & fittings	Computer equipment	Computer software/ website	Total
Cost	€	€	€	€	€	€
At 1 January 2022	610,351	154,248	691,431	1,005,324	446,126	2,907,480
Additions	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	<u>-</u>	<u>(34,204)</u>	<u>(21,593)</u>	<u>(101,173)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(156,970)</u>
At 31 December 2022	<u>610,351</u>	<u>120,044</u>	<u>669,838</u>	<u>904,151</u>	<u>446,126</u>	<u>2,750,510</u>
Accumulated depreciation						
At 1 January 2022	546,105	139,565	585,012	695,776	446,126	2,412,584
Charge for the year	32,124	7,773	15,650	108,139	-	163,686
Disposals	<u>-</u>	<u>(33,557)</u>	<u>(21,452)</u>	<u>(59,551)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(114,560)</u>
At 31 December 2022	<u>578,229</u>	<u>113,781</u>	<u>579,210</u>	<u>744,364</u>	<u>446,126</u>	<u>2,461,710</u>
Net book value						
At 31 December 2021	<u>64,246</u>	<u>14,683</u>	<u>106,419</u>	<u>309,548</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>494,896</u>
At 31 December 2022	<u>32,122</u>	<u>6,263</u>	<u>90,628</u>	<u>159,787</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>288,800</u>

National Council for Special Education

Notes (forming part of the financial statements)

		2022	2021
		€	€
9.	RECEIVABLES		
	Prepayments	240,449	253,418
	Receivables	<u>99,559</u>	<u>77,685</u>
		<u>340,008</u>	<u>331,103</u>
	All receivables are due within one year.		
10.	CURRENT LIABILITIES	2022	2021
	Amounts falling due within one year	€	€
	Supplier payables	76,744	37,915
	Deferred income	-	-
	VAT	30,369	20,035
	Payroll deductions	36,476	25,484
	Provision for holiday pay	464,563	434,723
	Accruals	231,558	357,684
	Other payables	<u>18,968</u>	<u>18,996</u>
		<u>858,678</u>	<u>894,837</u>
11.	CAPITAL ACCOUNT	2022	2021
		€	€
	Opening balance	494,896	679,771
	Income used to acquire assets	-	66,225
	Released on disposal of assets	(42,410)	(35,263)
	Amortisation in line with asset depreciation	<u>(163,686)</u>	<u>(215,837)</u>
	Transfer to income and expenditure account	<u>(206,096)</u>	<u>(184,875)</u>
	Closing balance	<u>288,800</u>	<u>494,896</u>

12. COMMITMENTS UNDER OPERATING LEASES

The NCSE operates a network of 35 offices throughout the State including its Headquarters in Trim, County Meath. The majority of offices are rented from Government funded entities. Eight offices are operated through lease agreements between the NCSE and commercial bodies.

National Council for Special Education

Notes (forming part of the financial statements)

12. COMMITMENTS UNDER OPERATING LEASES (continued)

The NCSE have letting agreements with 6 commercial bodies:

- Lease 1 in Carlow for 3 years commencing 1 December 2019, annual rent and service charge €11,660
 - This lease was replaced by Lease 8
- Lease 2 in Trim for 2 years commencing 1 November 2021, annual rent €28,782
- Lease 3 in Dublin for 1 year commencing 26 August 2021, annual rent €162,592
 - This lease was replaced by Lease 5
- Lease 4 in Carlow for 3 years commencing 1 January 2020, annual rent and service charge €7,786
- Lease 5 in Dublin for 1 year commencing 26 August 2022, annual rent €162,592
- Lease 6 in Tullamore for 1 year commencing 1 January 2022, annual rent €15,129
- Lease 7 in Fermoy for 5 years commencing 1 May 2020, annual rent €10,000
- Lease 8 in Carlow for 3 years commencing 1 December 2022, annual rent and service charge €11,660
- Lease 9 in Tralee for 1 year commencing 1 January 2022, annual rent and service charge €24,493

The annual rental and service charge charged to the Income & Expenditure account for lease agreements amounted to €260,442 (2021: €250,613).

At the year end, the Council has minimum lease payments under operating leases that fall due as follows:

	2022	2021
	€	€
Within 1 year	151,218	175,638
During the years 2 to 5	35,681	47,318
Expiring thereafter	—	—
	<u>186,899</u>	<u>222,956</u>

13. PREMISES

The NCSE occupies premises at 1-2 Mill Street, Trim, Co. Meath under a rental agreement with OPW. This agreement which commenced in 2004, is for a term of 20 years with an annual rental charge of €87,646. In addition, the NCSE has rental arrangements in place with the OPW on 19 other properties. There is no current written agreement between OPW and NCSE in relation to this and OPW have advised that they are looking into this as part of their overall remit of supplying office rental to Government bodies/agencies.

NCSE occupies premises in 7 Education Centres. There are written agreements in place for each Centre in 2022. In addition, NCSE occupies a premise in 1 primary school and there is a written agreement in place in 2022.

The NCSE has 8 letting agreements with 6 commercial bodies and also rents a premises from another commercial body where there is no letting agreement in place.

The total annual rental and service charge included in the financial statements for 2022 is €967,245 (2021: €915,836).

National Council for Special Education

Notes (forming part of the financial statements)

14. FUNDING POSITION

NCSE income comprises a grant from the Department of Education which is provided to meet liabilities maturing during the year, as opposed to expenditure incurred during the year. Any deficit is met by future funding provided to the NCSE by the Department of Education. On this basis the Council considers it is appropriate to continue to adopt the going concern basis for the preparation of the financial statements.

The NCSE is required to accrue for the cost of unused annual leave entitlements at the end of each reporting period (Note 10). €464,563 was accrued at the year ended 31 December 2022 (2021: €434,723). All annual leave accumulated at year end is subject to the rules of Circular 27/03 and Circular Letter 06/2011. These allow for the carryover of some annual leave subject to limits, and also forfeiture of excessive annual leave accrued by staff members.

15. NCSE RESPONSE TO DEALING WITH COVID-19 AND REMOTE WORKING

In relation to the Covid-19 global pandemic which emerged in early 2020, the NCSE responded to the crisis in line with government guidance. Staff had been working from home, with the support of IT systems, using various tools to continue their work. The organisation had made more resources available online for students, parents, and teachers. We continued to explore opportunities to enhance our online offerings. In line with the announcement of the lifting of restrictions in January 2022 by the Government, a phased return to the office for staff commenced towards the end of February. We maintained our regular meetings of Council, which also reverted to face to face meetings in 2022. Management continued to meet as required, to discuss any responses to challenges as they arose. Any risks associated with Covid were monitored by the Audit and Risk Committee and reported to Council. In addition, the ARC reviewed the controls in place as part of the SIC and internal and external audit and reviewed the effectiveness of controls in place, which were deemed adequate to manage the risks. A blended working policy for staff was agreed towards the end of 2022.

16. NCSE EXPANSION AND ADDITIONAL FUNDING

In September 2022, the Department of Education announced that funding for an additional 161 new staff would be provided to the NCSE across a number of areas. An additional €4 million was allocated in 2023 to facilitate the commencement of the recruitment process for these staff.

17. COUNCIL MEMBERS – DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

The Council has adopted procedures in accordance with the Department of Finance Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 in relation to the disclosures of interests of Council Members.

18. APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The financial statements were approved by the Council at its meeting on the 23 February 2023 on the recommendation from the ARC at its meeting on 21 February 2023.