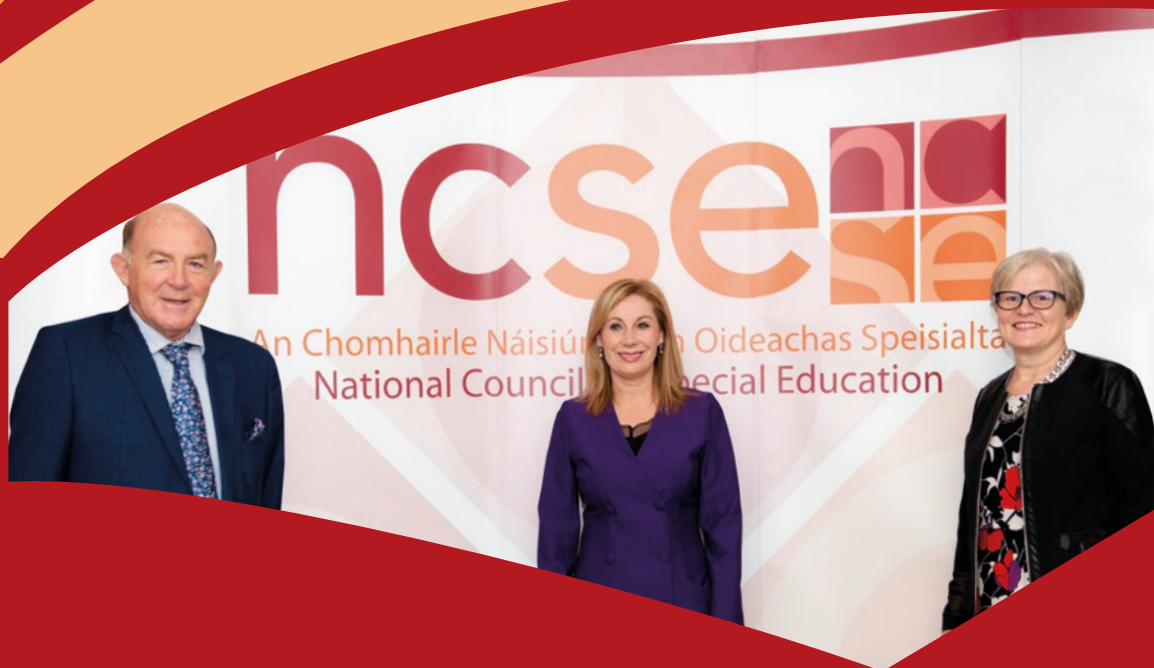


National Council for Special Education Annual Report 2021



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NCSE Chairperson's Report to Ministers

June 2022

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 Chairperson of the National Council for Special Education, I am honoured to present you with our annual report for 2021.

Following on from the unprecedented difficulties of 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, challenges remained in 2021 for the special education sector.

The NCSE continued to be responsive and to find alternative ways of providing supports and information to ensure that, insofar as possible, parents were supported with home schooling and teachers were provided with resources enabling them to deliver remote learning.

In January 2021, we set up two dedicated phone lines for parents and teachers in specialist settings. They could receive advice directly from Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) and Advisors on a range of topics. As the schools re-opened on a phased basis across February and March, there remained a need to deliver our resources remotely. A range of short videos were produced with tips and strategies for engaging learners with online learning and advice on supporting student wellbeing. A suite of guidance documents was also provided on Sensory Spaces for Schools; Practical Strategies for Behaviour in the Classroom; and Autism and Promoting Positive Behaviour.

Throughout 2021, elements of the School Inclusion Model (SIM) were rolled out. Significant progress was made with the commencement of the first dedicated national training programme for Special Needs Assistants – the 'Certificate in Inclusive School Support'.

I am pleased to report that the first class of 500 students completed the fully online course in December 2021. A second cohort of 1,000 students started the course in September 2021.

During 2021, we continued to allocate SNA posts to all schools for the 2020-21 school year. By the end of the 2020-21 school year over 17,000 SNA posts were in place. This rose to over 18,000 posts by the end of December 2021.

With the continued deferral in implementing the new frontloading model for mainstream SNA allocations, and the Government decision that such allocations would be retained at the level sanctioned for the 2019-20 school year, the NCSE facilitated an exceptional review process. This allowed schools to apply for additional SNA allocations in exceptional circumstances. In addition, throughout 2021, the NCSE continued to work on the implementation of the Special Education Teacher (SET) Allocation process. SET allocations were maintained at the re-profiling level of 2019 to allow for the continuation of allocations during the pandemic. Schools could apply for a review of their SET allocation in light of exceptional circumstances.

A key role for the NCSE is the provision of policy advice. While the submission of our latest piece of policy advice on special schools and special classes was delayed by the pandemic, we look forward to progressing this in 2022.

The Review of Educational Provision in Adult Day Services was published in December 2021. This research produced a framework for reviewing education and lifelong learning in day services. It highlighted evidence of good practice in many areas, such as good person-centred approaches and a focus on outcomes. The review also outlined areas for improvement and development, such as the provision of greater staff training opportunities.

Our research programme continued throughout 2021. The fieldwork on some commissioned projects was postponed to 2022 due to pandemic-related school closures. In late 2021, we commissioned a new research study to investigate the impact of COVID-19. We look forward to sharing the outcomes of the study with your Department.

For the second time our annual research conference in November 2021 was held online. Given the prevailing context of the pandemic, the conference themes of continuity of education, dealing with regression post-pandemic, and education for adults with disabilities was timely and well-received.

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 2021. We do not anticipate any such developments.
- ▶ The financial position of the NCSE is as disclosed in our 2021 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 Council completed an evaluation of NCSE performance by reference to the annual plan and budget in December 2021.
- ▶ 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. We conducted an internal review of our compliance with the Code in 2021, and the NCSE continues to be compliant with the Code.
- ▶ 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. However, we identified non-compliance with guidelines in six cases in 2021 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 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 2021, the Council has 6 (50%) female and 6 (50%) male members, with 1 position vacant. 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 2021 and the activities undertaken in pursuance of our five strategic goals for the year. The NCSE can, if required, provide any further information or clarification to you or your officials.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Hayes', written in a cursive style.

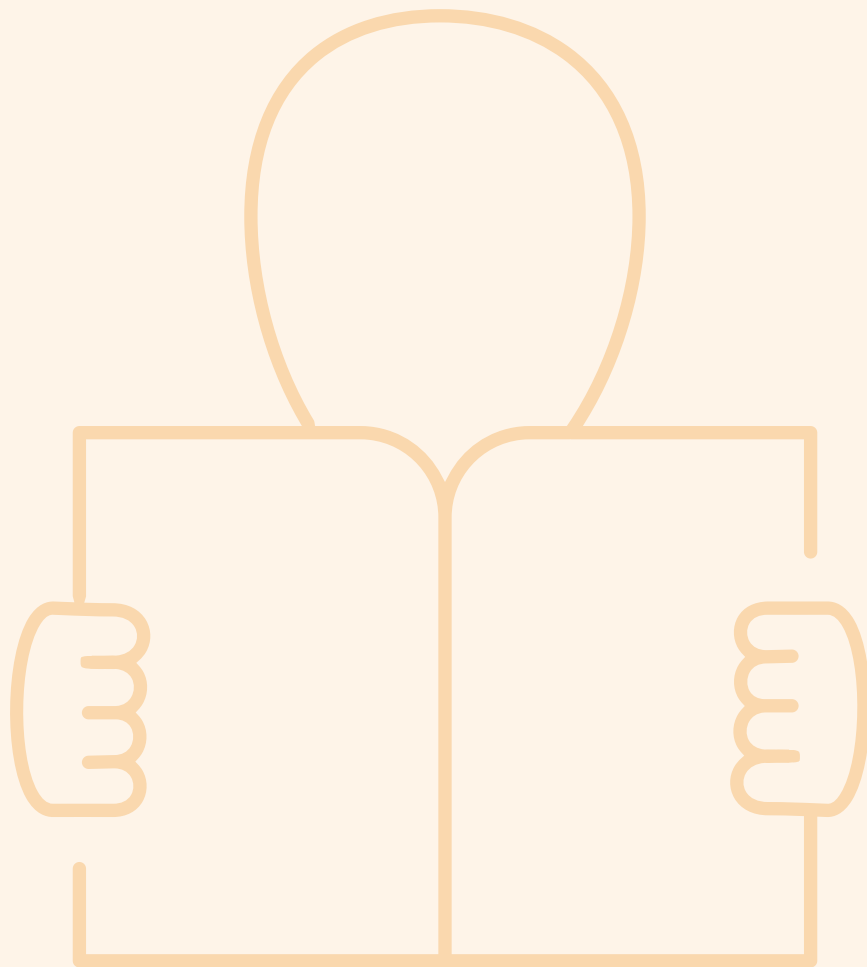
Joe Hayes
Chairperson
National Council for Special Education





Introduction

Our Strategic Approach



Introduction: Our Strategic Approach

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

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

- ▶ Planning and coordinating the provision of education supports for children with special educational needs.
- ▶ Conducting and commissioning research.
- ▶ Advising the Minister for Education 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 informs the development of NCSE policy.
- ▶ Reviewing and advising on educational provision for adults with disabilities.

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

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

Main Achievements

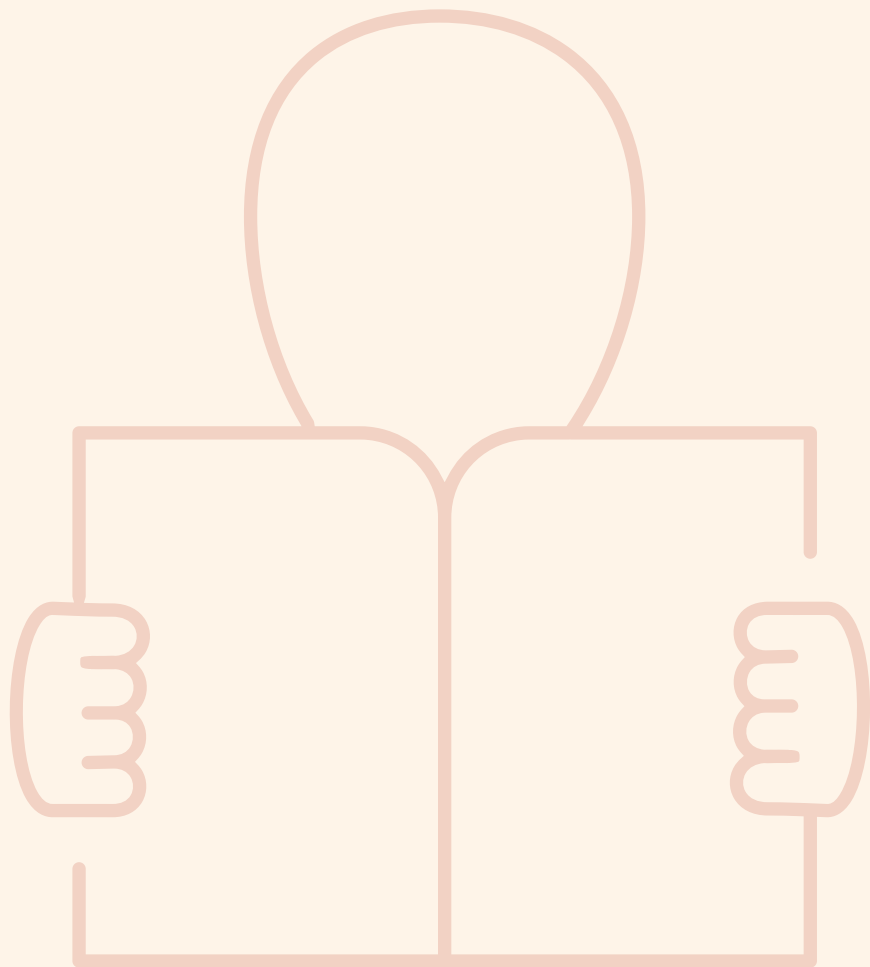
Some of our main achievements during 2021 are summarised below.

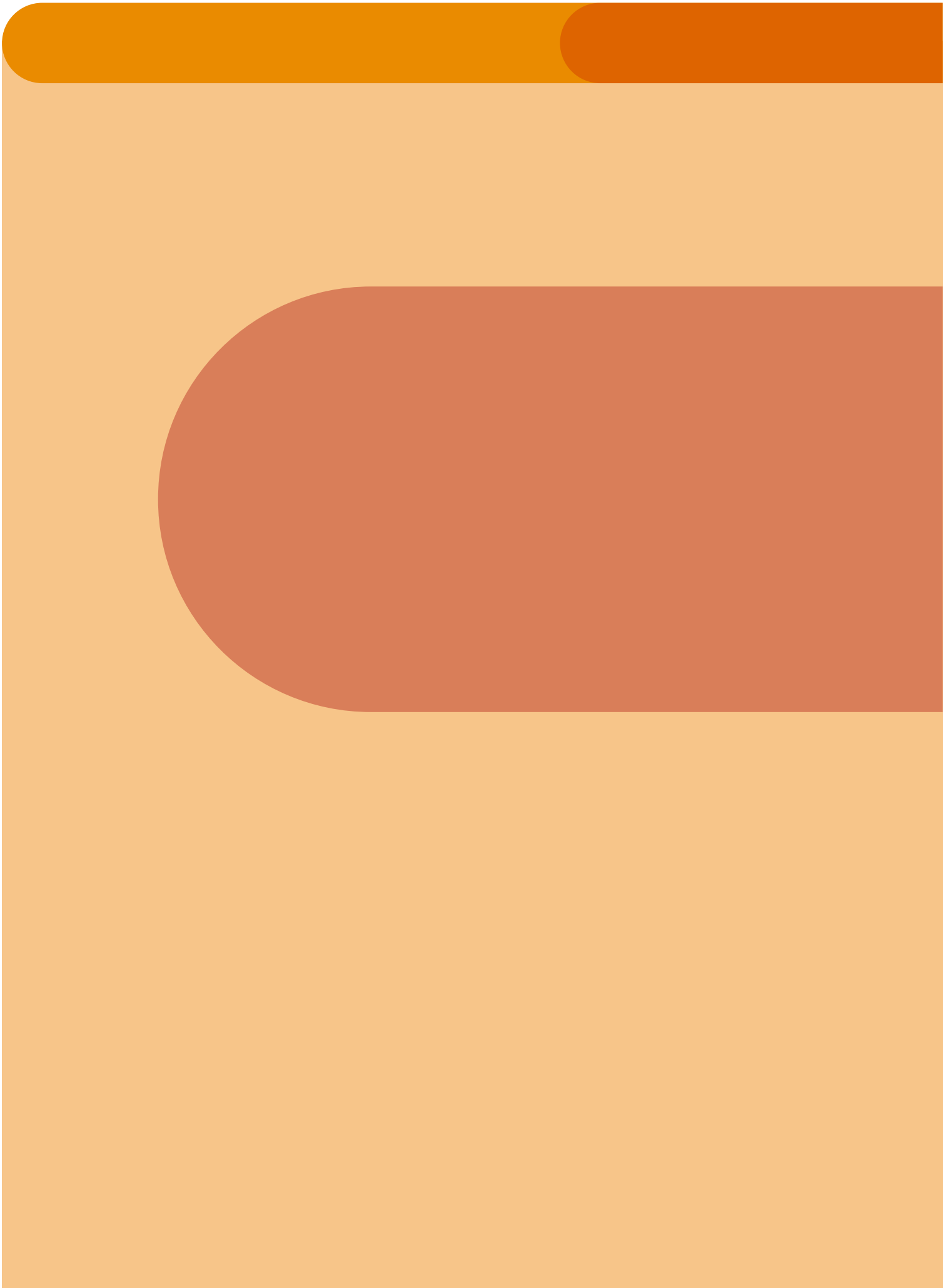
In the 2020-2021 school year, the NCSE:

- ▶ Processed over 800 applications made by schools for an exceptional review of their allocation of mainstream Special Needs Assistants (SNA) resources.
- ▶ Processed over 4,300 new applications for school transport for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Processed over 5,400 new applications for assistive technology/special equipment for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Had established a total of 1,839 special classes in mainstream schools with places available for 11,850 students.

In 2021, the NCSE also:

- ▶ Published our report on the Review of Education in Adult Day Services.
- ▶ Re-established the School Inclusion Model (SIM) in CHO area 7. By the end of 2021, 12 of the 31 therapists had been recruited to provide in-school support and capacity building to teachers in 75 schools.
- ▶ The first dedicated national training programme for special needs assistants commenced in January 2021 and the first cohort of 500 students completed the online course in December 2021.
- ▶ Hosted our annual research conference online which enabled over 250 delegates attend this year. The conference theme explored the continuity of education and dealing with regression post-pandemic, and education for adults with disabilities.







Strategic Goal 1

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



Strategic Goal 1

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

1.1 Introduction

The NCSE plans, coordinates and reviews provision of additional education supports for schools that enrol students with special educational needs in line with Department of Education policy.

Each year over 4,000 schools can apply to their locally based NCSE special educational needs organiser (SENO) for a variety of resources depending on the needs in the school. They are:

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

Most students with special educational needs are now educated in mainstream classes. However, provision ranging from full-time enrolment in 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 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 more complex special educational needs with classes ranging from 6 to 11 students, depending on the particular 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.

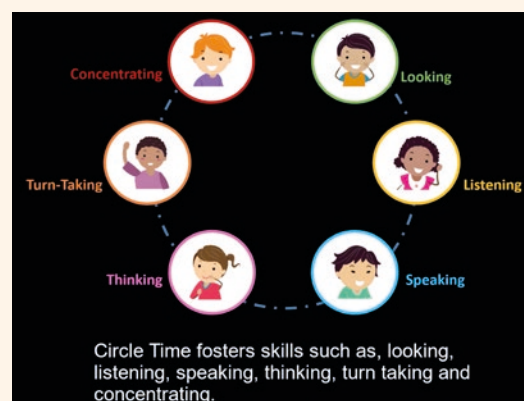
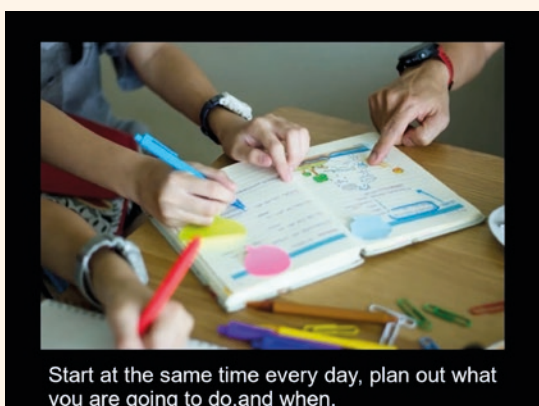
This section details our activities in resourcing schools in 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years, the work of the NCSE, and our work to implement the School Inclusion Model pilot project.

1.2 Continuity of Support through the COVID-19 Pandemic

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continued throughout 2021, creating challenging times for students and their parents. The NCSE continued to move quickly to review and change how we supported schools and families during this time.

In January 2021, the NCSE set up two dedicated phone lines for parents and for teachers in specialist settings. Parents and teachers could receive advice directly from SENOs and Advisors on a range of topics via these phone lines.

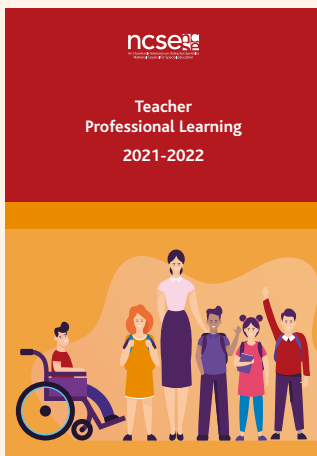
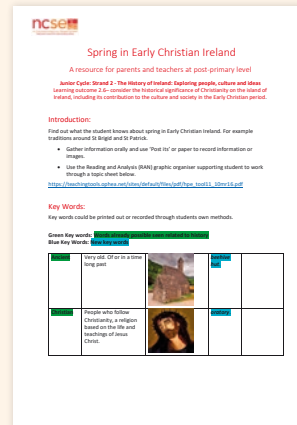
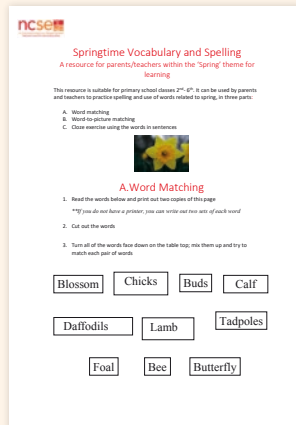
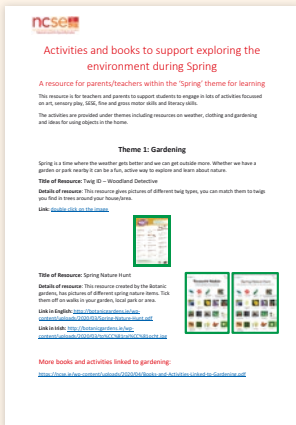
The NCSE also created a brand new suite of short videos for teachers and parents on how best to support children and young people with special education needs when they were learning remotely. The short videos covered a range of topics with tips and strategies for engaging learners with online learning as well as more general advice about supporting the wellbeing of students. Topics included using mind maps, advice for engaging autistic students, supporting vocabulary development using visual schedules, practical strategies, movement breaks etc. These videos were initially published via twitter @ncseirl and later via the NCSE YouTube channel.



In February, a video entitled Starting Primary School was released. The video supports children with special educational needs who are transitioning to primary school by providing their parents and teachers with information about starting primary school including information on placements, available resources to students, as well as advice for preparing a student's transfer.



In early March, the Themes for Learning resources were published on the NCSE website. These resources for parents and teachers were developed by NCSE staff to support learning at home through the theme of 'spring'. They were categorised under – literacy and language resources; outdoor and active learning resources; sensory-based resources; and curriculum-based resources.



The NCSE continued to deliver support services to schools. These services were delivered in-person where essential. All teacher professional learning seminars were delivered online for 2021. These seminars were postponed from late November 2021 as requested by the Department of Education.

1.3 Resourcing Schools in the 2020-21 School Year¹

Applications for Additional Supports

In the 2020-21 school year, SENOs processed over 9,800 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 2020-21

Scheme	No of Applications
School transport	4,366
Assistive technology/specialist equipment	5,481
Total	9,847

Special Classes

11,580 places now available in 1,839 special classes in mainstream schools.

SENOs sanctioned the establishment of an additional 199 special classes in the school year 2020-21. By the end of the school year there were 1,839 special classes in mainstream schools with 11,580 places available. This is a net increase of 1,195 places on the previous year.

Special Schools

In the 2020-21 school year, just over 8,100 students were enrolled in special schools supported by the NCSE. The NCSE allocated 1,240 teachers and 2,650 SNAs to special schools in 2020-21. The corresponding figures in the previous school year 2019-20 were 1,231 teachers and 2,597 SNAs.

SNA Support

COVID-19 restrictions delayed the roll-out in the 2020-21 school year of the new frontloading model for mainstream SNA allocation whereby schools would no longer have to apply for SNA support for individual students in a mainstream setting. Instead, all mainstream SNA allocations were retained at the level sanctioned for the 2019-20 school

¹ The 2020-21 school year was from September 2020 to June 2021.

year. Schools could instead apply for an exceptional review of their mainstream SNA allocations where they believed they were unable to cater for significant new or emerging additional care. Further information on the SNA exceptional review process is set out in Department of Education Circular 0030/2020.

SNA allocations for special classes and special schools were not impacted by this interim arrangement and SNA provision in these special education settings continued to be allocated as usual.

Special Education Teacher (SET) Allocation Model

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

The NCSE has continued to support the model's implementation in 2021 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. NCSE Guidelines 04/2019 sets out the exceptional review application procedure.

1.4 Resourcing Schools in the 2021-22 School Year²

13,747 special education teachers allocated to schools by end of 2021.

Special Education Teacher (SET) Allocations for schools were reprofiled during 2019 and that profile remained in effect for two years. In order to minimise disruption for schools in 2021 during COVID and to provide for continuation of allocations, the Minister for Education and the Minister for Special Education and Inclusion agreed to maintain the existing Special Teacher Allocations for schools for the 2021-22 school year, with reprofiling of allocations due to be made for September 2022.

Schools continued to have access to a review of their SET allocation in light of exceptional circumstances. 220 schools applied for an exceptional circumstance allocation review during the calendar year. Of those, 34 were put forward for review. Reviews were delayed during the closure of schools due to COVID-19 measures in spring.

² The 2021-22 school year is from September 2021 to June 2022.

In 2021, a total of 310 schools received an increase in their SET hours in recognition of their status as developing schools or as a result of their significantly increased enrolment year-on-year. Of these, 59 were primary and 251 were post-primary schools. The total number of special education teachers in schools by December 31st, 2021 was 13,747.

The number of SNAs allocated to schools is set out in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Number of SNA posts

	End 2020-21 School Year	End December 2021
SNA Posts	17,117.02	18,003.25

Under the SNA Exceptional Review Process established for the 2021-22 school year, 820 schools had applied to the NCSE for a review of their 2020-21 mainstream SNA allocation by December 31st, 2021. Of the applications completed by that date, 292 schools received an increased allocation. This equates to an additional 188.58 SNA posts being allocated to schools by that date.

Schools wishing to appeal the outcome of their SNA Exceptional Review application could do so by submitting an application for appeal. By December 31st, 2021, 147 schools had submitted an appeal, of which 111 were concluded by that date. Table 4 provides a brief overview of the outcomes to those concluded appeals.

Table 4: Outcome of SNA Exceptional Review Appeals processed by NCSE as at 31st December 2021

No of Appeals	Outcome
30	Not Upheld
74	Otherwise invalid
7	Upheld

In 2021, 6 appeals were referred to the Appeals Advisory Committee (AAC) at the request of the respective schools. The AAC reviewed each case and made recommendations specific to the referred cases as well as providing feedback on the appeals process in general.

1.5 NCSE Teacher Professional Learning

For the 2021 calendar year

- ▶ 264 external professional development online seminars were delivered;
- ▶ 5,099 teachers were engaged in professional development and learning at NCSE external seminars;
- ▶ 8,301 professional development and learning days were provided by NCSE external seminars to teachers;
- ▶ 367 whole of school seminars were delivered;
- ▶ 1,968 applications were received from schools for in-school support³ of which, 1,521 were from primary schools, 362 from post-primary schools and 85 from special schools.

Since March 2020 the NCSE has a contract in place for a post-graduate certificate/diploma in special education with St Angela's College, NUIG. This offers a post-graduate qualification to 25 students teaching in the area of autism for primary, post-primary, and special schools. In 2021, twenty-two students graduated with a Post-Graduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs (Autism) and six students graduated with a the Post-Graduate Certificate in Special Educational Needs (Autism), while four graduated with a Master of Arts in Special Educational Needs (Autism). The NCSE also facilitates teachers working with pupils with autism in accessing specific courses through Middletown Centre for Autism⁴: 218 teachers were trained in Middletown seminars in 2021.

Visiting Teacher Service

Our Visiting Teachers' (VTs) support children who are deaf/hard of hearing and who are blind/visually impaired and their families. This support is provided in the home and in schools. The VTs are qualified teachers with particular skills and knowledge of the development and education of children with varying degrees of hearing loss and/or visual impairment. They offer longitudinal support to children, their families and schools from time of referral through to the end of post-primary education. The VT supports children/young people, parents, guardians, teachers and other professionals involved with the child. The frequency and nature of support takes into account a range of factors based on the individual's needs. The 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 staff and parents.

In 2021, 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 5,300 children.

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

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

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	113	658
Primary school	533	2,405
Post-primary school	438	1,721
Special school	271	607
Total children	1,355	5,391

Primary Language Curriculum Seminars for Special Schools 2021

In line with the interagency agreement between the Teacher Education Section (TES) of the Department of Education, the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and the NCSE, a team of six NCSE PLC Advisors provided Sustained Support to teachers and school leaders in special schools. In 2021, a total of 75 special schools applied to the NCSE for Sustained Support, of these 61 schools received support. The PLC Sustained Support was paused during the period of school closures in 2021. In addition a total of 6 PLC afternoon seminars called The Primary Language Curriculum: An Inclusive Curriculum for All Children in All School Contexts, were delivered online by the NCSE PLC team in 2021 reaching a total of 82 teachers.

1.6 Implementation of the School Inclusion Model Pilot

Following the publication of a Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Scheme⁵ by NCSE, Government decided in early 2019 to establish a pilot of a new School Inclusion Model (SIM) for children with special educational and additional care needs.

SIM will test a support model for schools that provides for a range of additional assistance, such as behavioural support, added psychological support services and therapy services. These will build teacher capacity, augment SNA training and assist schools in building an inclusive culture. Activities in 2021 are set out below.

- ▶ 12 of the 31 therapists had been recruited to re-establish SIM in CHO area 7 to provide in-school support and capacity building to teachers in 75 schools.
- ▶ Two of the NCSE regional teams had 2 SLTs, 1 OT and 2 behaviour practitioners who worked to build school capacity to support students.

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

- ▶ Additional resources were provided to the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) to deliver a greater level of support. Additional psychologists have been recruited for the pilot giving greater access to the full range of in-school supports for students with complex educational needs.
- ▶ SNAs have been offered a new national training programme designed to equip them with the skills and knowledge to support students with additional care needs arising from significant medical, physical, emotional/behavioural, sensory, communication and other significant difficulties that pose a barrier to participating in school life. The training will emphasise the need for students to develop independence and resilience.
- ▶ Work on developing a new national nursing service for children with complex medical needs in schools was progressed. A cross agency planning group was established to develop its scope, develop an application procedure for schools and plan how the service will be delivered. It will complement current provision provided through community-based services.

The NCSE continued to provide support to schools during the pandemic in 2021. In response to this, and to support teachers and parents during the period of remote teaching and learning, the SIM team worked with other NCSE staff to devise new resources such as videos and resource booklets.

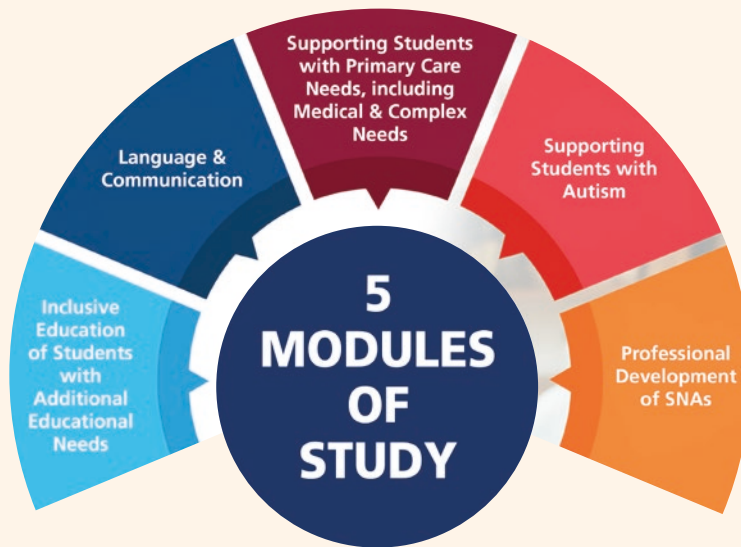
Activity update

In January 2021, the UCD School of Education, in conjunction with UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems, commenced delivery of the Certificate in Inclusive School Support under the national training programme for SNAs. Over a 4-year period, 3,500 places will be available. The programme is open to all SNAs employed in all recognised schools (primary, post-primary and special) free of charge. 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 first cohort of 500 SNAs completed the course in December 2021. A second cohort of 1,000 students started the course in September 2021 and will complete it by summer 2022.

By the end of 2021, feedback gathered from students indicates there has been a very high level of engagement and satisfaction with the course. The data will be valuable in assessing the success of the programme.

A team of behaviour practitioners, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists worked within two NCSE regions to build teacher skills and capacity in schools through a range of seminars, post-seminar workshops, teacher resources and in-school support.

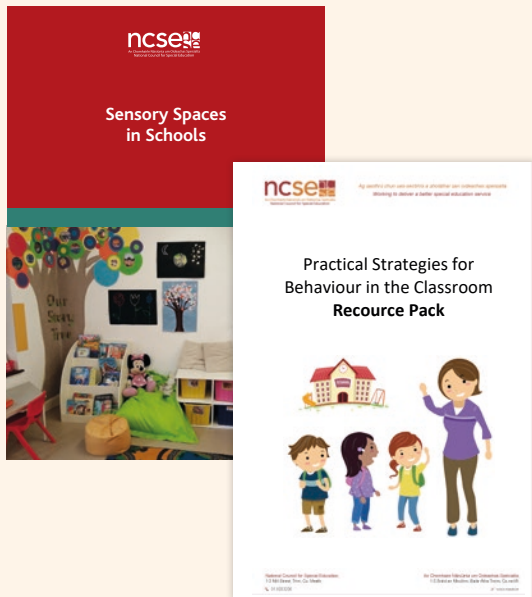


Modules of study available through the Certificate in Inclusive School Support.

Over the course of 2021, the team delivered 33 seminars to 491 teachers. The courses, augmented by 14 follow-on workshops, 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 requested 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.

The team continued to produce innovative resources and materials to promote understanding of student needs, support teachers in their classroom role and build NCSE support capacity. In 2021 a series of videos relating to Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) were published on YouTube. These resources are now integrated into school training for delivery by advisors to schools nationwide.

A resource book for schools titled, "Sensory Spaces for Schools", was developed by NCSE School Inclusion Model (SIM) therapists and distributed to Primary Schools nationally.



This book enables schools to build their capacity to provide a student-centred approach to creating and utilising sensory spaces in schools. Access to these spaces support students to develop their skills in self-regulation and addresses their sensory sensitivities. This publication provides an introduction to sensory processing and sensory spaces, and offers guidelines on how a space might be used and key considerations for schools when developing sensory spaces. The resource also includes visual examples of sensory spaces that have been created in Irish schools. These resources were reproduced with the kind permission from Ransboro Primary school, Sligo.

Above, left: "Sensory Spaces in Schools", a resource published by NCSE in 2021⁶. Image used with permission from Ransboro National School, Sligo.

Behaviour Practitioners developed resources to support the implementation of strategies covered in the *Practical Strategies for Behaviour in the Classroom* and *Autism and Promoting Positive Behaviour* seminars.

Practical Strategies for Behaviour in the Classroom

Resources for this seminar include blank templates for teachers to use and to amend to meet the needs of their own environment. These resources have also been put together in booklet format to guide practice.

Autism and Promoting Positive Behaviour

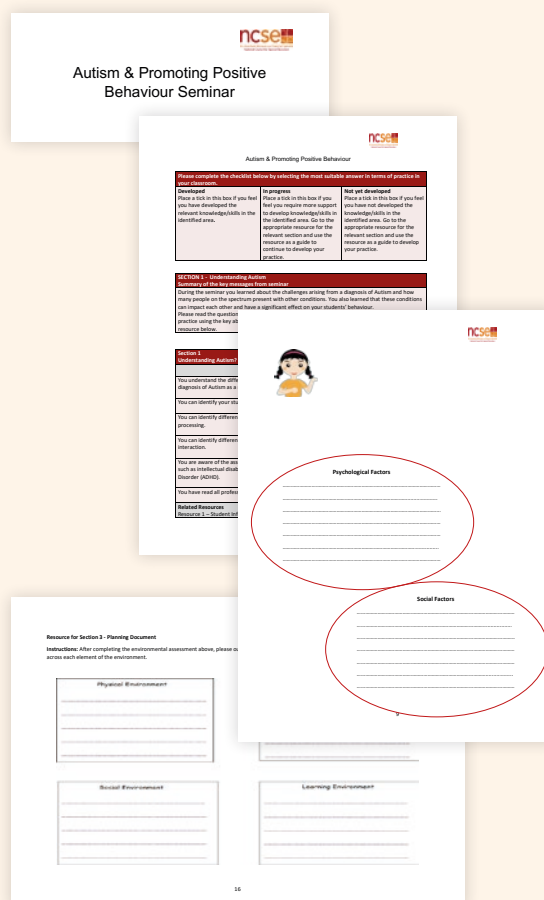
Resources for this seminar include an Autism and Promoting Positive Behaviour checklist and accompanying resource packs. Both the checklist and resources can be used as a guide to support practice in the classroom.

6 <https://ncse.ie/resources-for-teachers-on-occupational-therapy-support>.

1.7 Summer Programme 2021

To support the Department of Education’s Summer Programme 2021, the NCSE developed a suite of online resources designed to assist teachers to provide engaging learning experiences for their students. There were 67 resources along with guidance documents published on our website and on ScoilNet for tutors, across the following areas:

- ▶ Student Well-being
- ▶ Using Technology
- ▶ Learning to Learn including, *school routines; social skills and self-regulation; task and organisational skills; communication skills; building on successes and how do I learn.*
- ▶ Literacy
- ▶ Numeracy
- ▶ Academic Core Skills.



A webinar and additional resource pack was developed in collaboration with Dr Sinead Smyth from Dublin City University, to build the capacity of teachers working with students in special schools/classes and focused on supporting students to engage in their social environments (e.g. classroom, school yard, playgrounds) post-COVID. The webinar was delivered in June 2021 and was made available on the NCSE website.

1.8 The 23rd Congress on the Education of the Deaf 2021

Three NCSE staff members attended the 23rd International Congress on the Education of the Deaf (ICED) Conference, held virtually in July 2021, having originally been scheduled for July 2020 in Brisbane, Australia. The theme of the conference was ‘The Power of Connection’. The conference took a broad view of development and considered the whole child in the context of families, languages, and settings. The inclusiveness of the conference was underlined, with the range of delegates’ roles and international nature of the presentations, available in a variety of sign languages as well as captioned English.

1.9 Summer Creations

The inaugural Summer Creations Art Competition was launched in June that enabled students participating in the Summer Programme to explore their creativity. Students were invited to submit an entry on a medium of their choice based on the theme of 'summer'. Entries were displayed on ArtSteps, a virtual gallery that was accessible via the NCSE website. In total, 42 entries from nine schools were received. NCSE staff were involved in the adjudication, with three overall winners selected, along with four highly commended entries and one group prize.



Ava, an overall winner for her entry 'Monkey Business'.

1.10 Science Blast

The NCSE participated in the 2021 ESB Science Blast. Primary school classes were invited to research a scientifically based question and present their results. Students' presentations are judged by STEM professionals who discussed the investigation with the students and provided feedback on their project.



Presentation from Scoil Chiarain Special School, Glasnevin, Dublin 11.





Strategic Goal 2

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



Strategic Goal 2

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

2.1 Introduction

Research into special education is a statutory role of the NCSE. 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 on special education matters and we continue to disseminate our work to the research, policy and practice communities.

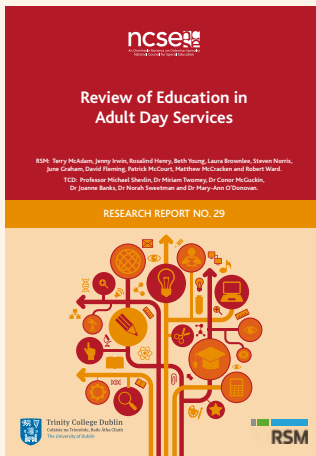
In 2021, we published a report on the review of educational provision in adult day services. We also commissioned a new research study on the impact of COVID-19 on students with special educational needs and a documentary book on the history of special education in Ireland over the last 100 years. This section provides an overview of our published and ongoing work as well as highlighting some newly commissioned research. It concludes with a summary of our research conference held in November.

In 2021, we published our report on the review of education in adult day services, and commissioned a book on the history of special education in Ireland and a new study on the impact of COVID-19 on students with special educational needs.

2.2 Our Publications

Review of Educational Provision in Adult Day Services

The Review of Educational Provision in Adult Day Services was published online in December 2021. The project focused on examining the provision of education and lifelong learning in adult day services delivered and/or funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE).



The review demonstrated an extensive and diverse range of educational provision in settings, ranging from the most common programmes on personal care that helped to develop life skills for adult users, to supporting access to mainstream education or formal learning. This research has been novel in producing a framework for reviewing education and lifelong learning in day services. The review of sites visited in the study highlighted that there was strong evidence of good practice consistent with the framework in many areas, such as good person centred approaches in sites and a focus on outcomes for users. However, there was scope for improvement and development in other areas, such as providing greater staff training opportunities. This report offers an initial snapshot of how adults are experiencing education supports in day service provision in Ireland, with scope to further develop the framework by consulting with people with disabilities and seeking the views of parents/carers directly.

2.3 Ongoing Research in 2021

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 exiting the school system. The objective is to enhance our understanding of the data sources available on 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 will map those data sources to identify gaps in current knowledge. It will also track cohorts of young people about whom less is known after they leave school (for example, those who remain at home), identifying and examining the reasons for their post-school destinations and their experiences of them.

Wave 1 fieldwork with students was due to take place in the spring of 2021 to coincide with decision-making on transitions from schooling. This was postponed to the spring of 2022 given the situation with pandemic-related school closures.

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

Work commenced on a second phase literature review in 2021 to update the research evidence relating to policy advice on special schools and social classes completed in 2020. The literature review covers 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. The findings from the first phase of the literature review noted that while some evidence was found in undertaking this research, there is a relative dearth of high-quality, outcome-focused published studies.

Evaluation of the School Inclusion Model (SIM)

As part of the NCSE's management of the School Inclusion Model, a comprehensive evaluation of the project was commissioned in late 2019 to examine its development, implementation and outcomes. The project implementation delay imposed a natural delay on the evaluation to ensure that data is only captured as the project progresses. It is expected to recommence in 2022.

2.4 New Research

Impact of COVID-19 on Students with Special Educational Needs

A new research study was commissioned to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the education of students with special educational needs. This research will explore the impact on students' academic, social, emotional and behavioural outcomes in the short and longer term. It will consider how best these needs 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.

Documenting the History of Special Education in Ireland over 100 Years

The NCSE have commissioned a documentary book on the history of special education in Ireland. The book will overview the special educational landscape over the last 100 years to the current day, including key dates, statistics, legislative frameworks and milestones. The book will focus on primary and post-primary levels, with an emphasis on provision in more recent decades. The project will involve a systematic review of data sources and feature interviews with key stakeholders.

2.5 Research Conference 2021



NCSE Chairperson Joe Hayes; Minister for Special Education and Inclusion Josepha Madigan; Chief Executive Officer Teresa Griffin at the NCSE Research Conference.

The annual NCSE research conference was planned as an in-person conference at the Clayton Hotel Burlington Road, Dublin on November 18th, 2021, with an online livestream also available from the NCSE website. A decision was taken on Tuesday 16th November to hold the conference as an online only event, due to the evolving COVID-19 situation at the time.

All speakers and panellists presented from the Clayton Hotel, with Chairperson Joe Hayes introducing the conference and Minister for Special Education and Inclusion Josepha Madigan providing the conference welcome address.



Minister for Special Education and Inclusion Josepha Madigan's opening address at the NCSE Research Conference 2021.

On the day of the conference, there were 265 unique visits to the research conference webpage, with attendance lower than in previous years. The majority of the viewers came from Ireland, in addition to delegates from 10 other countries including the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States, and India. Registered conference delegates included a mix of teachers, adults with disabilities, parents, researchers, principals, academics, disability advocacy group representatives, psychologists, government department and agency officials and union representatives.

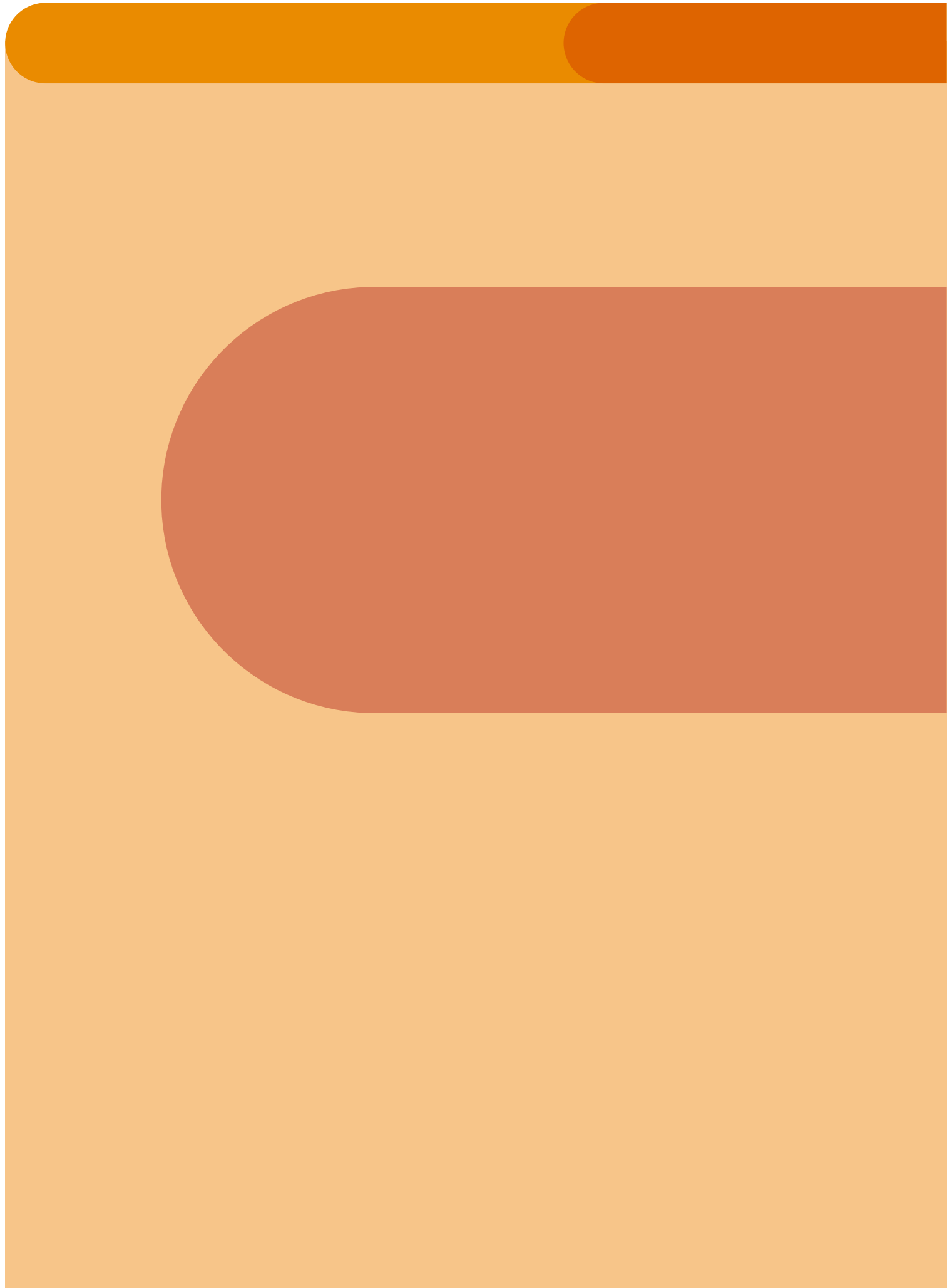


Professor Brahm Norwich, Exeter University, United Kingdom, speaking at the NCSE Research Conference.

The conference looked at the theme, 'Continuity of Education and Dealing with Regression Post-Pandemic & Education for Adults with Disabilities'. The morning session heard from international experts on research from the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic and included a panel discussion of Irish educators, highlighting the challenges for educators, students and parents in ensuring learning continued when schools closed, what the future might look like as we learn to live with COVID-19, and what methods and practice worked best in managing continuity of education. The afternoon session focused on education in day services and further education and training opportunities for school leavers and adults with disabilities.



Dr. Verena Letzel, University of Trier, speaking at the NCSE Research Conference.





Strategic Goal 3

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



Strategic Goal 3

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

3.1 Introduction

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. This section details the progress made on the policy advice on special schools and classes as well as our international work to learn from and share knowledge of special and inclusive education matters in other countries. The expanding area of our practice development role is also noted here.

3.2 Progress on Policy Advice on Special Schools and Special Classes

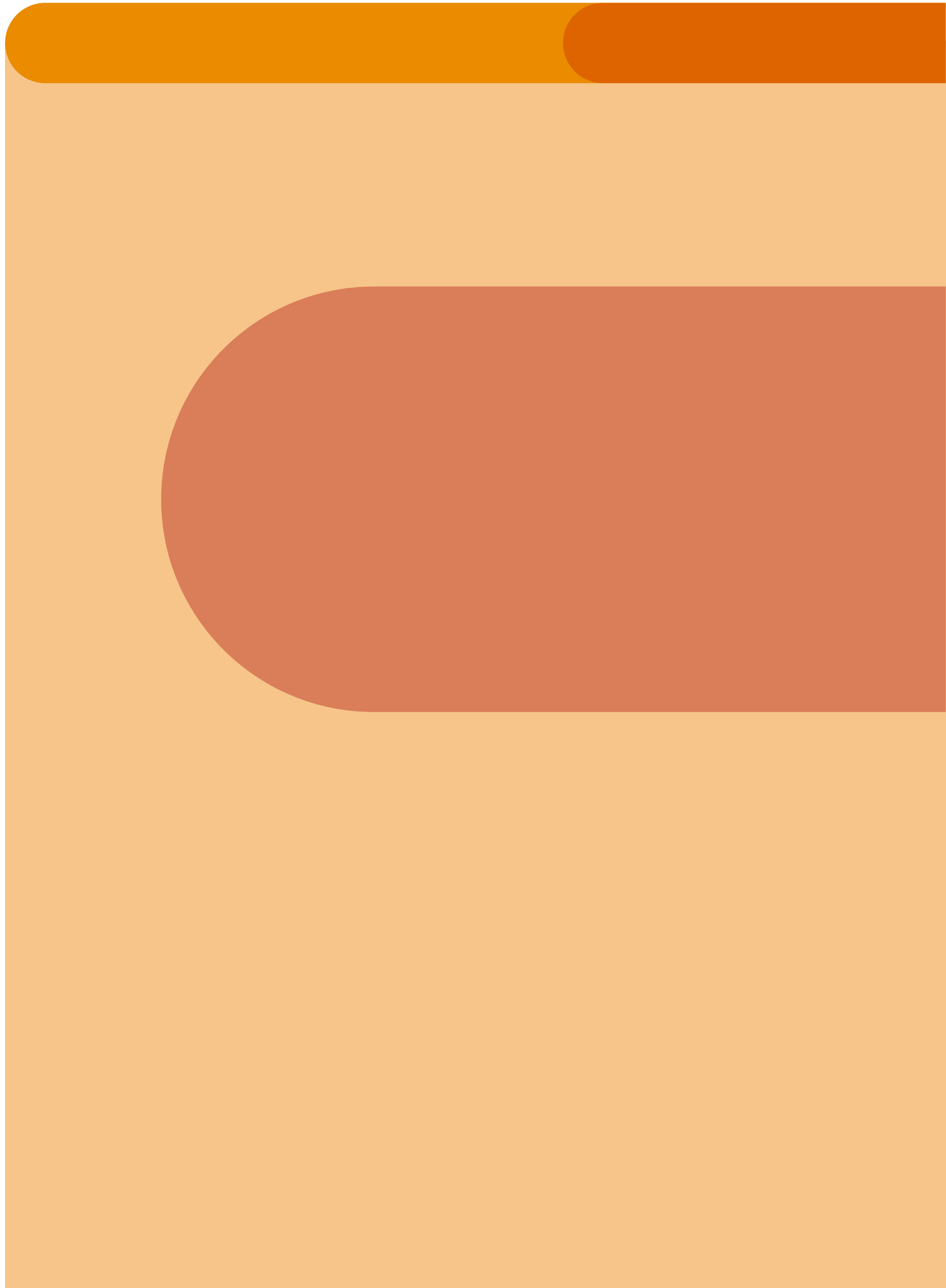
During 2021, the NCSE intended to publish its advice paper on special schools and special classes. However, the completion of this advice paper and its publication was significantly delayed, mainly due to the pressures on the educational system brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. An updated literature review was initiated in 2021. Additions have also been made to the policy advice that reflect reports that were published in 2021. The paper is expected to be submitted to the Department of Education in 2022.

3.3 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, essentially a platform for collaboration for its member countries, works towards ensuring more inclusive education systems by building an evidence base through research and collaboration that informs its work.

During 2021, the NCSE both benefited from and contributed to the work of EASNIE by:

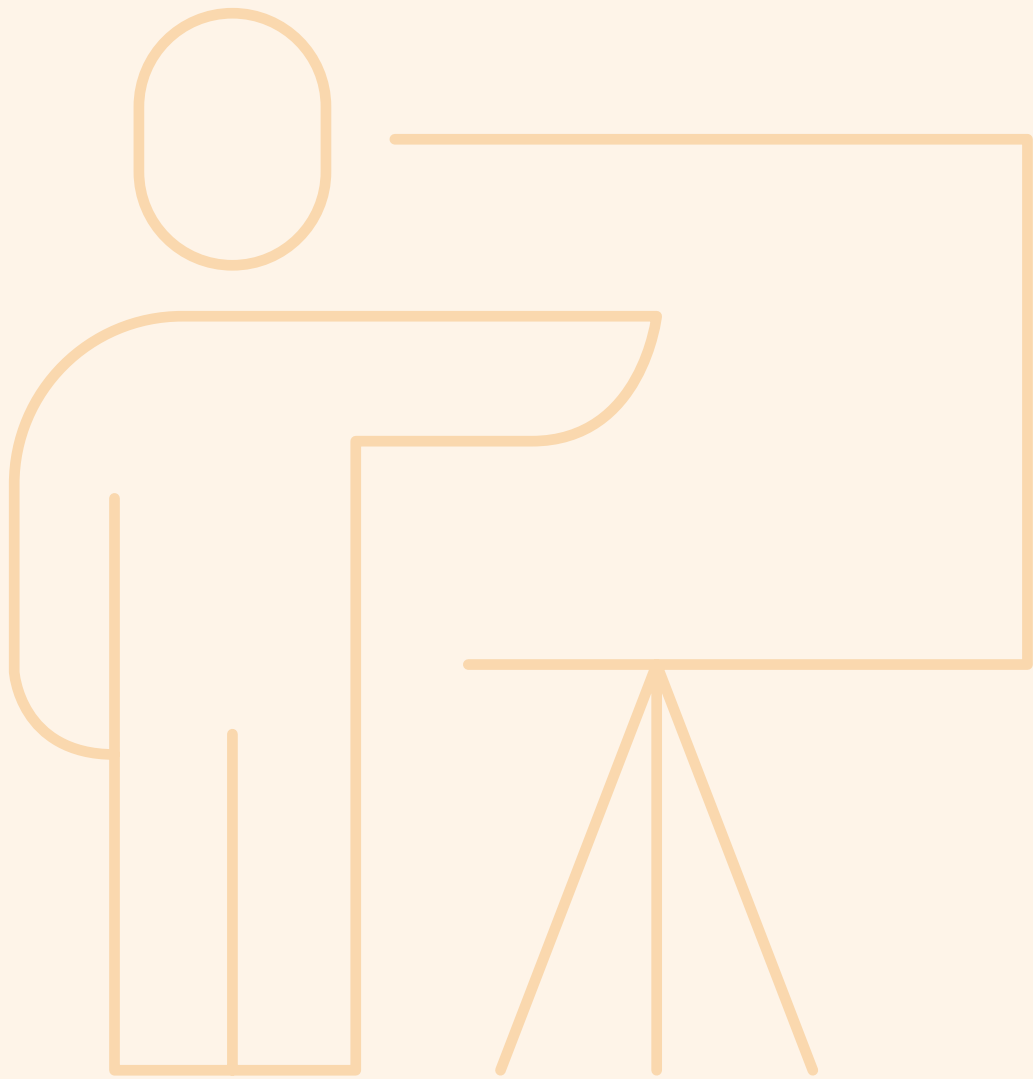
- ▶ Continuing to engage with representative board members and national coordinators on research work to support the development of our policy advice on special schools and classes;
- ▶ Providing information on special and inclusive education in Ireland to EASNIE and individual member-states.





Strategic Goal 4

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



Strategic Goal 4

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

4.1 Introduction

Under the EPSEN Act, 2004 the NCSE's role includes reviewing generally the provision made for people with disabilities to avail of further and higher education and training provision after they have completed school.

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

The Adult Education and the Comprehensive Employment Strategy (CES) is a cross Government approach 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.

One target of building skills, capacity and independence for young people with disabilities involves a commitment by the HSE and NCSE to develop a transition programme to meet their needs when leaving school and starting a career. The NCSE and HSE transition project group was established in 2019 and made a commitment to explore a holistic approach to transition. In collaboration with the HSE, an oversight group was established with representatives from SOLAS, the Education and Training Board Ireland (ETBI) and Department of Education who met on several occasions in 2021 to identify a plan to progress this work. A plan to provide access to school leavers requiring transition supports was developed and is scheduled to be progressed in 2022.

4.3 Disability Act 2005

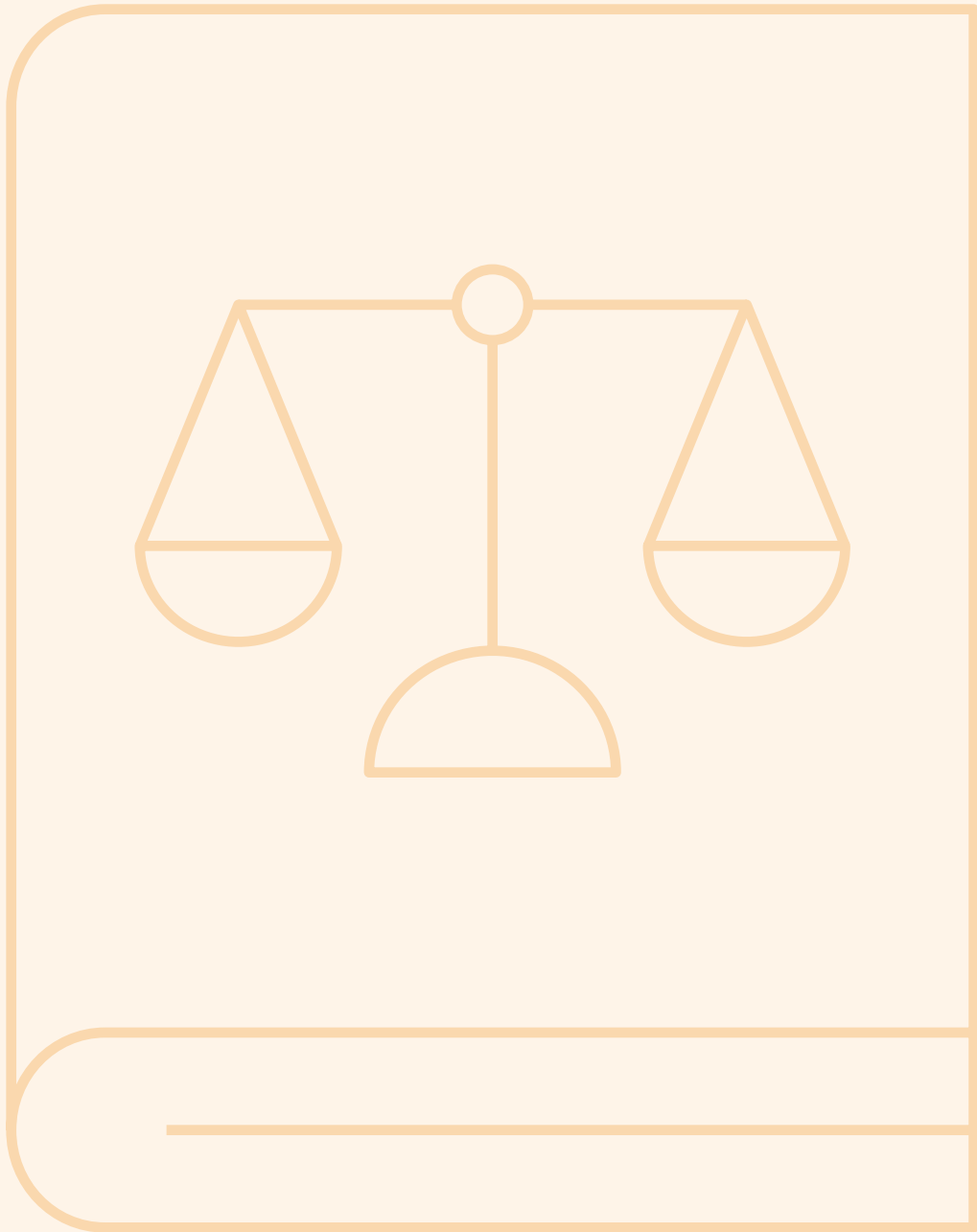
During 2021, the NCSE engaged with relevant stakeholders on the implications of Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005 with reference to sections that began for adults aged 18 in June 2020. However, the pandemic affected this engagement with stakeholders and engagement remains ongoing.





Strategic Goal 5

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



Strategic Goal 5

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

5.1 Introduction

In 2021, the NCSE continued to develop our organisation to ensure we were operating effectively and in compliance with all our statutory, regulatory and governance requirements. One of our key roles is to provide information to parents, schools and all our stakeholders on special education matters. Throughout the year, we engaged with our stakeholders in different ways, including through our staff, our website and social media. This section outlines our activities in these areas across the year.

5.2 Information for Parents

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. In 2020, due to COVID-19, parental seminars moved to online delivery making them accessible to a greater number of parents. 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.

During the course of 2021, a total of 49 parental seminars were delivered to over 900 parents. This is a higher level of delivery than recorded in any previous year.

5.3 Data Protection

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

In 2021 we processed six Data Access Requests, in accordance with the regulations.

5.4 Consultative Forum

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

The forum met twice online in 2021 – on February 22nd and November 25th – due to COVID-19 restrictions. At these meetings, a number of topics were considered: supporting online and remote learning for students with SEN; NCSE’s Statement of Strategy 2022-2026; supporting schools and parents – online and in-person; Behavioural Support Framework; Life after school – young adults transitioning.

Forum membership and attendance at the 2021 meetings are listed below.

Membership of the NCSE Consultative Forum during 2021

Council-appointed Members		Attendance
Fidelma Brady	Education officer, Down Syndrome Ireland	2
Feargal Brougham	Former President, Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO)	1
Miriam Colum	Lecturer in special educational needs, Marino Institute of Education	2
Marina Cusack	Special educational needs coordinator in a post-primary school	2
Lorraine Dempsey	Chairperson of Inclusion Ireland	2
Padraig Flanagan	Principal, post-primary school	1
Margaret Flood	Education officer, 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

Council-appointed Members		Attendance
Patricia McCarthy	Inclusion in education and society research team, Trinity College Dublin	1
Anne Melly	Disability specialist, Health Service Executive (HSE)	2
Anna Ní Chartúir	Special educational needs coordinator, Gaeltacht primary school	1
Gerard O'Carroll	Lecturer in inclusion, Institute of Technology, Tralee	2
Maeve O'Reilly	Policy and public affairs advisor, National Disability Authority (NDA)	2
Tracie Tobin	Principal, DEIS primary school	0
Madeline Hickey	Sensory lead, policy and practice development, NCSE	2

Members Appointed by Minister for Education		Attendance
Christine Chapple	Senior psychologist, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)	2
Kenny Noonan	Assistant principal officer, Department of Education	2
Paul Stevens	Divisional inspector, Department of Education	1

5.5 Governance

Performance Management

The NCSE Statement of Strategy covers the period 2017-21. An annual work plan for 2021 based on the strategy was developed and approved by Council in December 2020 with progress reviewed quarterly, alongside associated risks. We conducted the annual review of our 2020 risk register and Council agreed an updated version for 2021 on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee.

Annual Accounts

The 2021 annual accounts are expected to be presented to the Minister in 2022 pending the audit's completion. The NCSE annual accounts are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General and, following audit, are submitted to the Minister and then laid before the Oireachtas and published on the NCSE website. The annual accounts are presented and published separately from this report.

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

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

Furthermore, in 2021, 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.

Regulation of Lobbying Act, 2015

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

5.6 The Council of the NCSE



NCSE Council 2019-22 with the chief executive officer:

Back row (from left): Eamon Clavin, Anne Tansey, Peter Archer, Antoinette Nic Gearailt, Dharragh Hunt, Pat Goff and Don Mahon.

Front row (from left): Teresa Griffin, chief executive officer, Áine Lynch, Joe Hayes (chairperson), Deirbhile Nic Craith, Clodagh Ní Mhaoilchiaráin, Eileen Daly. Inset: Carol Cuffe (retired from Council in 2020).

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 expires 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 as set out in the Council-approved Statement of Strategy (2017-21).

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 2021 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 Council met on six occasions during 2021 and the following table contains details of individual members and their attendance.

Membership of the Council of the NCSE during 2021

Name	Details	Attendance
Joe Hayes*, chairperson	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	5
Don Mahon*, deputy chairperson	Former assistant chief inspector in the Department of Education (DE)	6
Peter Archer	Former chief executive officer of the Educational Research Centre	6
Eamon Clavin	Divisional inspector in the Department of Education (DE)	6
Carol Cuffe**	Head of social care, CHO 7, Health Service Executive	–
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)	6
Dharragh Hunt	Policy and public affairs adviser, National Disability Authority	6
Áine Lynch*	Chief executive, the National Parents' Council Primary	6
Clodagh Ní Mhaoilchiaráin	Príomhoide, Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín	4
Deirbhile Nic Craith	Assistant general secretary and director of education and research with the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)	6
Antoinette Nic Gearailt*	Former president of the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)	6
Anne Tansey*	Director of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the psychological service of the Department of Education (DE)	6

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

** Carol Cuffe retired from Council during 2020.

Council Committees

The Council created five committees under Section 33 of the EPSEN Act. These 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, chairperson	4
Peter Archer	3
Don Mahon	4
Antoinette Nic Gearailt	2

Finance (six meetings)	Attendance
Antoinette Nic Gearailt, chairperson	6
Eileen Daly	5
Pat Goff	6
Deirbhile Nic Craith	6

Chief Executive Performance (three meetings*)	Attendance
Joe Hayes, chairperson	3
Peter Archer	3
Antoinette Nic Gearailt	3

* December 2020 meeting took place in Feb 2021.

Research (five meetings)	Attendance
Peter Archer, chairperson	5
Dharragh Hunt	5
Áine Lynch	4
Anne Tansey	4

Strategy and Policy (six meetings)	Attendance
Don Mahon, chairperson	6
Eamon Clavin	6
Carol Cuffe	0*
Clodagh Ní Mhaoilchiaráin	3

* Carol Cuffe retired from Council during 2020.







Appendices



Appendix 1

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

NCSE System of Internal Control (SIC)

The Council is responsible for ensuring that an effective system of internal control is maintained and operated in accordance with Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 and for reviewing annually the effectiveness of the internal controls, including financial, operational and compliance controls and risk management processes and procedures. The system of internal control, which accords with guidance issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, has been in place in the NCSE for the year ended December 31st, 2021. Confirmation of the annual review of effectiveness of the NCSE System of Internal Control in 2021 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. More detail on these is available in the audited accounts published separately and in the Corporate Governance Guide for Council members.

Tax and Regulatory Compliance

There have been no communications concerning non-compliance with requirements of regulatory or tax authorities regarding any matter. The NCSE is not aware of any actual or possible non-compliance with laws or regulations that could affect our financial statements.

NCSE Travel Policy

Government policy on business travel is being complied with in all respects. The NCSE has developed and maintains its travel policy and procedures in accordance with Government requirements.

Procurement Policy

Government policy on public procurement is being applied in the NCSE together with adherence to the rules and procedures of the public spending code.

The NCSE avails of shared service arrangements and central drawdown contracts, including where possible those established by the Office of Government Procurement.

Disposal of Assets

Disposal of assets by the NCSE fully complies with requirements set down by the Code of Practice.

Confidential Disclosures

The NCSE has an agreed policy and procedures for dealing with protected disclosures in line with the Protected Disclosures Act (2014). No issues were raised under this procedure in 2021.

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 were updated again in June 2020 and are available on our website at www.ncse.ie. Any matters drawn to our attention in 2021 were processed in accordance with our procedures.

Audit

The NCSE has established an internal audit function and has agreed an internal audit charter. Council has appointed an Audit and Risk Committee with agreed terms of reference including oversight of the internal audit function, risk management and review of the draft annual accounts.

Annual Energy Efficiency Reporting

In 2021, the NCSE reported the organisation's energy performance in 2020 to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland as required under EU regulations. The NCSE achieved energy savings of 31% in 2020. The NCSE continues to track progress towards the 2030 target outlined in the Climate Action Plan 2021, which underpins commitment to a 50% improvement in energy efficiency. The NCSE is liaising with colleagues in OPW in relation to how best to achieve this target. The data for 2020 is provided below and is compared with the previously reported 2019 figures.

Table A1.1 Overview of NCSE Energy Usage 2020 and 2019

Energy Type	Units	2020	2019
Electricity	MWh	192	208
Thermal	MWh	210	256
Renewable	MWh	0	0

Appendix 2

NCSE Staffing

Grade	Staff in Post End 2021
Civil Servants	
Chief executive	1
Principal	4
Regional managers	5
Specialist lead	5
Assistant principal	7
Team managers	8
Behaviour practitioners	5
Occupational therapists	4
Speech and language therapists	9
Therapist Manager	2
Special educational needs organisers (SENO)	61
Higher executive officers	6
Administrative officer	1
Executive officers	8
Clerical officers	13
Intern	0
Sub-total (civil servants)	139
Advisers	46
Visiting teachers	42
Sub-total (public servants)	88
TOTAL	227

Appendix 3

Statistical Information for Academic Years 2012-13 to 2020-21

Tables A3.1-A3.4 provide the trend data for school years 2012-13 to 2020-21, in respect of NCSE resource allocation activity.

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
SNA ⁷	7,454	8,703	8,656	8,621	9,553	8,781	9,855	12,275	N/A
Transport	2,520	2,787	3,289	3,423	3,460	3,597	3,847	4,302	4,366 ⁸
Assistive Technology	2,721	2,882	2,928	3,564	4,686	4,157	4,453	5,510	5,481
LITH ⁹	13,935	15,952	16,209	18,177	19,384	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total applications	26,630	30,324	31,082	33,785	37,083	16,535	18,155	22,087	9,847

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
SNA	10,503	10,671	11,174	11,984	13,006	14,063	15,030	16,125	17,117
Low Incidence teachers	5,265	5,722	6,204	6,823	7,427	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Special school teachers	1,078	1,060	1,135	1,159	1,1979	1,205	1,223	1,231	1,240
Special class teachers	695	823	956	1,136	1,304	1,480	1,663	1,865	2,103

⁷ The application process for SNA support was replaced by the new model for allocating SNA resources in 2021.

⁸ A small number of applications for school transport for the 2020/2021 school year were recorded for the 2019/2020 school year. Therefore, the applications for transport are to a small extent over-reported in 2019/2020 and under-reported in 2020-2021. This also applies to data reported for the 2019/2020 school year in the NCSE Annual Report for 2020.

⁹ The application process for low incidence teaching hours was replaced by the new model for allocating special education teacher for school year 2017-18.

Table A3.3: Numbers of students supported by NCSE allocations

Students	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21
SNA ¹⁰ mainstream	13,268	13,907	15,101	16,874	18,513	19,571	20,550	22,628	N/A
LITH	32,480	35,763	38,414	42,931	47,065	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Special classes	3,684	4,353	4,706	5,472	6,393	7,390	8,410	9,259	10,436
Special school	7,077	7,299	7,459	7,607	7,739	7,954	7,921	7,923	8,144

Table A3.4: Type of Special class by disability

Type of special class	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21
ASD EI	49	72	96	118	127	130	132	132	135
ASD	364	439	531	647	762	917	1,067	1,241	1,435
Specific Speech and Language Disorder*	64	64	63	65	65	65	65	63	63
Mild GLD	71	67	65	64	62	57	59	57	53
Moderate GLD	28	39	39	48	58	59	62	62	68
Hearing	16	16	15	17	16	16	16	18	19
EBD/SEBD	7	8	11	10	10	10	11	11	10
Other	29	32	35	41	49	50	51	56	56
Total	628	737	855	1,008	1,149	1,304	1,463	1,640	1,839

* There was an error in the 2020 annual report – this disability was described as *Spelling and Language* instead of *Specific Speech and Language Disorder*.

10 The application process for SNA support was replaced by the new model for allocating SNA resources in 2021.

Appendix 4

Description of Disability Categories¹¹

High Incidence Disabilities

Disability Category	Description
Borderline mild general learning disability	Such pupils have been assessed by a psychologist as having a borderline mild general learning disability. The pupil's full scale IQ will have been assessed in the range of 70 to 79.
Mild general learning disability	Such pupils have been assessed by a psychologist as having a mild general learning disability. The pupil's full scale IQ will have been assessed in the range 50 to 69.
Specific learning disability	Such children have been assessed by a psychologist as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Being of average intelligence or higher. ▶ Having a degree of learning disability specific to basic skills in reading, writing or mathematics which places them at or below the second percentile on suitable, standardised, norm-referenced tests.

Low Incidence Disabilities

Disability category	Description
Autism/autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)	A psychiatrist or psychologist will have assessed and classified such pupils as having autism or autistic spectrum disorder according to DSM-IV, DSM-V, or ICD-10 criteria.
Emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems	Such pupils are being treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist for such conditions as neurosis, childhood psychosis, hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and conduct disorders that are significantly impairing their socialisation and/or learning in school.

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

Disability category	Description
Deaf/Hard of hearing	Such pupils have a hearing disability that is so serious it impairs significantly their capacity to hear and understand human speech, thus preventing them from participating fully in classroom interaction and from benefiting adequately from school instruction. Most of them have been prescribed hearing aids and are availing of the services of a visiting teacher.
Moderate general learning disability	Such pupils have been assessed by a psychologist as having a moderate general learning disability. The pupil's full scale IQ will have been assessed in the range 35 to 49.
Multiple disabilities	Pupils assessed with multiple disabilities meet the criteria for two or more of the low incidence disabilities described.
Pupils with special educational needs arising from an assessed syndrome	Such pupils with an assessed syndrome, eg Down syndrome, William's syndrome and Tourette's syndrome in addition to any of the other low-incidence disabilities.
Physical disability	<p>Such pupils have permanent or protracted disabilities arising from such conditions as congenital deformities, spina bifida, dyspraxia, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, brittle bones or severe accidental injury. Because of the impairment of their physical function, they require special additional intervention and support if they are to have available to them a level and quality of education appropriate to their needs and abilities.</p> <p>Many require the use of a wheelchair, mobility or seating aid or other technological support.</p> <p>They may suffer from a lack of muscular control and coordination and may have difficulties in communication, particularly in oral articulation, as for example severe dyspraxia.</p>
Severe and profound general learning disability	Such pupils have been assessed by a psychologist as having a severe or profound general learning disability. The pupil's full scale IQ will have been assessed as being below 35. In addition, such pupils may have physical disabilities.
Severe emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems	The criteria for severe EBD are that the pupil is in the care of a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist for a severe clinical disorder. A very small number of pupils would be expected to fall within this category.

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

Appendix 5

Glossary of Acronyms Used

ACCS	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
CPD	Continuing professional development
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
HSE	Health Service Executive
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
ITE	Initial teacher education
IQ	Intelligence quotient
NBSS	National Behaviour Support Service
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
OT	Occupational therapist
SESS	Special Education Support Service
SD	Standard deviation
SENO	Special educational needs organiser
SIC	System of Internal Control
SIM	School Inclusion Model
SNA	Special needs assistant
SLT	Speech and language therapist

Appendix 6

Infographic on Main NCSE Statistics

Number of students supported by SNAs

End of school year	SNA Posts	In Mainstream	In Special Classes	In Special Schools	
2020-21	17,117	n/a*	10,436	8,144	
2019-20	16,125	22,628	9,259	7,953	



The NCSE opened

199

new special classes in 2020-21 compared to

189

new special classes in 2019-20

2020-21

Number of special classes

1,839

Number of special class places

11,580

2019-20

Number of special classes

1,640

Number of special class places

10,395

Number of Applications Processed in 2021 Compared to 2020

School Year	SNA	School Transport	Assistive Technology/ Specialist Equipment	Total
2020-21	4,366	5,481	9,847	N/A*
2019-20	12,275	4,302	5,510	22,087

For the 2021 Calendar Year



5,975

schoolgoing children and

771

babies/pre-school children were supported by 43 visiting teachers



1,968

applications were received from schools for in-school support



5,099

teachers were engaged in professional development and learning at NCSE external seminars



8,301

professional development and learning days were provided at NCSE external seminars



264

NCSE external seminars and 367 whole staff seminars were delivered

* The application process for SNA support was replaced by the new SNA Exceptional Review process; allocations are to schools rather than to individual students.

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