


# National Council for Special Education

## Annual Report 2017







# National Council for Special Education **Annual Report 2017**

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## Table of Contents

NCSE Chairperson's Report to the Minister	3
Introduction: Our Strategic Approach	9
Main Achievements	13
Strategic Goal 1: Support schools to enable students with special educational needs achieve better outcomes and ensure a range of educational placement options are available	17
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	27
Strategic Goal 3: Provide independent, expert and evidence-informed policy and practice advice to the Minister for Education and Skills	33
Strategic Goal 4: Review provision and advise on best practice in education and training for adults with special educational needs	37
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	41
Governance	47

### Appendices (1-5)

Appendix 1: Confirmation of Compliance with Requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016)	55
Appendix 2: NCSE Staffing	57
Appendix 3: Statistical Information for Previous Academic Years 2011/12 to 2016/17	59
Appendix 4: Description of Disability Categories	61
Appendix 5: Glossary of Acronyms Used	64



# NCSE Chairperson's Report to the Minister

June 2018  
Mr Richard Bruton, TD  
Minister for Education and Skills  
Department of Education and Skills  
Marlborough Street  
Dublin 1

Dear Minister

As Chairperson of the NCSE, I am delighted to present to you our annual report for 2017, in line with the requirements under the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.

2017 was a particularly exciting year for the NCSE. In March, three services previously part of your Department transitioned to our organisation: the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS); the Special Education Support Service (SESS); and the Visiting Teacher Service for Children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Children who are Blind/Visually Impaired (VTVHI).

The transition of these services into the NCSE is a challenging task, but a worthwhile one. It presents new opportunities for the integrated provision of special education support to students, schools and families, through the development of one unified NCSE support service. Ultimately, it will help to improve outcomes for children with special educational needs. I am grateful to your Department's officials for working with NCSE staff to support the transition and ensure services continued to be delivered as usual through the process.

As required by the EPSEN Act, I now provide you with the NCSE annual report for 2017 reporting on our core activities during 2017.

I am also required under the 2016 Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies to report to you as follows:

- ▶ The NCSE is not a commercial State body. We have no subsidiaries, joint ventures or shareholdings. No commercially significant developments affected the NCSE in 2017 and we do not anticipate any such developments.
- ▶ The financial position of the NCSE is as disclosed in our 2017 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 will include, as required, my report, confirmations to you regarding the NCSE System of Internal Controls and the required governance statement and board members' report.
- ▶ The Council completed an evaluation of performance by reference to the annual plan and budget in December 2017.

- ▶ The NCSE has adopted the 2016 Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. By the end of 2017, the NCSE was compliant with the requirements in the code with one exception for which your Department provided derogation – the Performance Delivery Agreement and its Oversight Agreement with the Department of Education and Skills was not signed until January 2018. The signing of this makes us fully complaint.
- ▶ In this context, I confirm that:
  - ▼ All appropriate procedures for financial reporting, internal audit, travel and asset disposals are being carried out.
  - ▼ The NCSE is adhering to Government policy on public procurement and implementing our current Corporate Procurement Plan. However, in the case of three contracts, we identified non-compliance with guidelines and have disclosed this in our Statement of Internal Control.
  - ▼ 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 or strategies.
  - ▼ NCSE members comply with the NCSE Code of Business Conduct for Members.
  - ▼ 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 with this report.
  - ▼ The NCSE complies with the guidelines for the appraisal and management of capital expenditure proposals.
  - ▼ The NCSE complies with Government travel policy requirements.
  - ▼ The NCSE expects no significant post-balance sheet events.

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

During 2017, we continued to allocate resource teaching and special needs assistant posts to schools for special educational needs. As detailed in this report, by the end of 2016-17 school year over 7,400 resource teaching posts and over 13,000 special needs assistant (SNA) posts were in place in schools to support over 57,000 students with special educational needs. This was the last year for allocating resource teachers. In September 2017, the new model for allocating special education teaching resources to schools, in line with your Department's circular, was implemented. The NCSE was very pleased to support your officials in the rollout of this model.

One of our key roles is to provide you with policy advice on the education of students with special needs. In this context, I am pleased to report that work on the comprehensive review of the SNA scheme continued apace during 2017. Further to submitting a progress report to you in May, I was delighted to lead a working group established as part of the review to examine alternative ways of meeting the care needs of students. The research and consultation aspects of the review also progressed towards their conclusion. We expect the full review to be completed and provided to you in March 2018.

Our research programme continued this year, with two projects continuing and one new project beginning in the area of adult education. Our annual research conference held in November was attended by almost 200 delegates. The conference themes of initial teacher education and assistive technology proved particularly popular.

The NCSE will provide any further information or clarification to you or your officials about any of our activities in 2017 if required.

Yours sincerely

**Eamon Stack**  
*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 co-ordinating the provision of education supports for children with special educational needs.
- ▶ Conducting and commissioning research.
- ▶ Advising the Minister for Education and Skills on policy for special education.
- ▶ Disseminating information, including best practice, on special education to parents, schools and other interested persons.
- ▶ Consulting voluntary bodies to ensure their knowledge and expertise inform the development of NCSE policy.
- ▶ Reviewing and advising on educational provision for adults with disabilities.

2017 was a unique and important year for the NCSE as our role and services expanded. In March, following a previous announcement by the Minister for Education and Skills in 2015, the Visiting Teacher Service for children who are deaf/visually impaired (VTHVI), the Special Education Support Service (SESS) and the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) became part of the NCSE. This development not only expanded the supports we provide in terms of additional teaching and behavioural supports to schools and families but means we now provide professional development opportunities to teachers and schools to build their capacity to support students with special educational needs.

In 2017, we published a new statement of strategy setting out the direction of the organisation over the next five years. The statement identifies the five strategic goals we work towards. This report is structured around these goals, reporting progress under each.

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

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



**Main  
Achievements**



## Main Achievements

Some of our main achievements during 2017 are summarised here.

In the 2016-17 school year, the NCSE:

- ▶ Enabled over 57,000 students with special educational needs to receive additional teaching in mainstream schools.
- ▶ Enabled over 32,500 students with special educational needs who also have significant care needs to access special needs assistant (SNA) support.
- ▶ Processed over 19,000 new applications from primary and post-primary schools for students with special educational needs for additional teaching hours.
- ▶ Processed over 9,500 new applications from schools for students with special educational needs for access to SNA support.
- ▶ Processed over 3,400 new applications for school transport for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Processed over 4,600 new applications for assistive technology/special equipment for students with special educational needs.
- ▶ Had established 1,149 special classes in mainstream schools with places available for 7,455 students.

In addition, in 2017:

- ▶ Three new services successfully transitioned into the NCSE – the Visiting Teacher Service for Children who are Deaf/Visually Impaired, the Special Education Support Service and the National Behaviour Support Service.
- ▶ The NCSE informed schools of their special education teaching supports under the new model for allocating special education teachers to schools in line with DES Circulars 0013/2017 and DES 0014/2017. The new model was selected as the overall winner in the Excellence in Innovation category at Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards.
- ▶ The NCSE commenced a three-year review process of SNA allocations in line with DES Circular 0030/2014.
- ▶ The NCSE continued its Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme, at the request of the Minister for Education and Skills.
- ▶ The NCSE organised and delivered its annual research conference, which this year focused on initial teacher education, and assistive technology and was attended by almost 200 delegates.

## DES Action Plan for Education 2016-19

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

The NCSE will work with the DES to deliver on identified targets and actions within the required timeframe, including supporting the introduction of the new allocation model for special education teachers, reviewing the SNA scheme and developing a new support service.

During 2017, the NCSE worked with the DES to progress:

- ▶ Implementation of the new special education teacher allocation model.
- ▶ The transfer of the National Behaviour Support Service, the Special Education Support Service and the Visiting Teacher Service into the NCSE to begin the development of the new support service.
- ▶ Work on the comprehensive review of the SNA scheme, and provided the Minister with a progress report in May.



## Strategic Goal 1

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



## Strategic Goal 1

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

### Introduction

The NCSE plans, co-ordinates and reviews provision of education supports for schools that enrol students with special educational needs.

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

- ▶ resource teaching support<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ SNA (special needs assistant) support
- ▶ assistive technology/specialist equipment, and/or
- ▶ non-standard school transport arrangements.

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

- ▶ **A mainstream class** where the student with special educational needs may receive additional support from the class teacher through differentiation of the curriculum and/or additional teaching support provided by a special education teacher.
- ▶ **A special class in a mainstream school** with six to 11 students in each special class, depending on the particular special educational need.
- ▶ **A special school** for students with more complex special educational needs with classes ranging from six to 11 students, depending on the particular special educational need.

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<sup>1</sup> From September 2017, mainstream schools no longer apply to the NCSE for individual resource teaching support. A new model of allocating special education teachers directly to schools based on profile and need commenced.

## Resourcing Schools in the 2016-17 School Year

### Applications for Additional Supports

In the 2016-17 school year<sup>2</sup> SENOs processed over 37,000 applications for additional supports for students with special educational needs under four allocation schemes. Details of these schemes and the number of applications processed in 2016-17 are given in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Summary of Applications processed by NCSE for School Year 2016-17**

Scheme	No of Applications
Resource teacher	19,384
SNA	9,553
School transport	3,460
Assistive technology/specialist equipment	4,686
<b>Total</b>	<b>37,083</b>

### Mainstream Classes

The NCSE allocated 7,427 resource teachers to mainstream schools to provide additional teaching capacity for students with special educational needs in 2016-17. This is an increase of 604 whole time equivalent resource teaching posts on the number (6,823) allocated to mainstream schools in the 2015-16 school year.

The overall number of students accessing resource teaching supports rose to over 57,000 (see Appendix 3). This compares with 52,000 students in the 2015-16 school year.

### Special Classes

SENOs sanctioned the establishment of 152 new special classes in the school year 2016-17. By the end of school year 2016-17, there were 1,149 special classes in mainstream schools, with 7,455 places available. This is a net increase of 955 additional places in 2016-17.

**7,455 places  
available in 1,149  
special classes  
in mainstream  
schools**

<sup>2</sup> The 2016-17 school year is from September 2016 to June 2017. A new scheme began in September 2017 as noted above.

## Special Schools

In the 2016-17 school year, there were over 7,700 students enrolled in special schools supported by the NCSE. The NCSE allocated 1,197 teachers and 2,405 SNAs to special schools in 2016-17. The corresponding figures in the previous school year 2015-16 were 1,159 teachers and 2,309 SNAs.

**An additional 1,090  
SNA posts made  
available for  
allocation**

### SNA Supports

By the end of the 2016-17 school year, over 32,500 students were granted SNA support. This was up from the previous year 2016-17 when 29,000 students were granted support.

The number of SNA posts allocated to primary, post-primary and special schools by the end of that school year was 13,006 and this also increased from the previous year (11,984 posts). The number of SNA posts

made available for allocation throughout the full school year was 13,990. This number was also greater than the previous year (12,900 posts).

### SNA Appeals Process

Every year some decisions on SNA allocations are appealed by schools or parents. By the end of December 2017, 47 appeals were received in respect of almost 8,000 SNA decisions for the 2017-18 school year. This was down from 80 appeals the previous year.

#### Analysis of Appeals received by end December 2017

Total number of SNA appeals received	47
Appeals upheld	03
Appeals not upheld	37
Appeals withdrawn	07

### Three-Year Review of Care Needs

In 2017, the NCSE commenced a review of students accessing SNA support for three or more years. This is a requirement under the DES 2014 Circular relating to SNAs, which recognises that the care needs of individual students change over time and will be time bound and subject to a full review of care needs at the end of a three-year period. Nine thousand students in mainstream and a further 1,000 students in special classes and special schools met the review criteria. SENOs began the review process in November 2017 and it will be completed in 2018 before the end of the 2017-18 school year.

## Resourcing Schools in the 2017-18 School Year<sup>3</sup>

### Implementation of New Special Education Teaching Allocation Model

In January 2017, the Minister announced the implementation of a new special education teaching (SET) allocation model for mainstream schools from September 2017. The new model was based on a set of proposals originally put forward by an NCSE working group in 2014. Nine hundred additional teachers were provided to support the model's introduction.

As a result of the introduction of the new allocation model, the NCSE no longer processes individual applications to provide access to teaching supports. However, during 2017 it continued to assist the DES in the implementation process.

**131 schools, or 23.4 per cent of 558 appellant schools, received an increase in their original allocation**

The NCSE established an appeals process for schools wishing to appeal their SET allocation. An independent appeals officer was appointed to oversee the appeals process. Schools could use this process where they considered that the way in which their SET allocation was determined was incorrect or incorrectly applied.

A total of 558 appeals was received and processed by the appeals officer. No SET allocation was altered on the basis of an appeal received. However, based on the information provided by schools in their appeals documentation the appeals officer suggested that further attention should be given by the DES to a number of schools. These were schools where it was considered there was a significant increase in year-

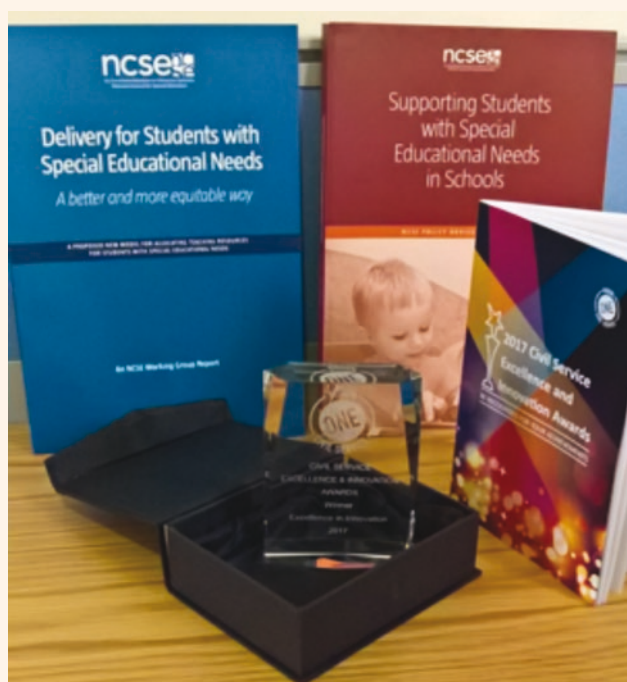
on-year enrolments or where it appeared that the school's social context had changed considerably. As a result, 131 schools, or 23.4 per cent of 558 appellant schools, received an increase in their original allocation.

A further and final review process is available where very exceptional circumstances arise subsequent to the school profile being calculated. This process began in November 2017. Ninety-one requests for appeals were received and are being processed with a view to finalisation in 2018.

<sup>3</sup> The 2016-17 school year is from September 2016 to June 2017. A new scheme began in September 2017 as noted above.

## SET Allocation Model recognised at Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards

Each year, certain initiatives across the civil service are shortlisted for the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards. These initiatives are examples of best practice and innovation across Government Departments and Offices. In 2017, the new SET allocation model was shortlisted, along with a number of other initiatives, and selected as the overall winner in the Excellence in Innovation category.



**New special education teaching (SET) allocation model wins Excellence in Innovation award**

Civil Service Excellence in Innovation Award for new special education teacher allocation model.

## New NCSE Support Service for Schools

On March 20th, 2017, the Visiting Teacher Service for Children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Blind/Visually Impaired (VTHVI), the Special Education Support Service (SESS) and the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) became part of the NCSE<sup>4</sup>. These three services joined those already being provided by the NCSE's SENOs and administrative staff.

<sup>4</sup> The Visiting Teacher Service provides advice and support to ensure the needs of children and young people with hearing and visual impairment are met. This service is available at pre-school, primary, post-primary and at third level. Each visiting teacher is responsible for a particular region and is allocated a case load of pupils.

The SESS co-ordinates, develops and delivers a range of professional development initiatives and support structures for school personnel working with students with special educational needs in mainstream primary and post-primary schools, special schools and special classes.

The NBSS works with schools in addressing students' social, emotional, academic and behavioural needs. This is done at school-wide level for all students; with targeted interventions for some students; and at intensive individualised support for a few students.

## Strategic Goal 1

With the addition of the new services, one new NCSE support service will be provided and will enhance the existing good work and support previously provided to children and their families as well as to teachers and schools. The new support service will build schools' capacity to support students with special educational needs and the aim is to ensure that in the future schools receive a more integrated and comprehensive service. The change is consistent with recommendations of previous NCSE policy advice and with the review of the Visiting Teacher Service.

It is intended that administrative arrangements currently providing supports to these services within the education centres will continue to the end of the 2017-18 school year.

Throughout 2017, the management structure of the new service was consolidated with work ongoing to integrate work practices and build regional teams.

In addition to the services provided to schools outlined above, the following supports were provided under the developing NCSE support service.

- ▶ 7,211 courses or events delivered
- ▶ 15,608 participants (school management and teachers) received external Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
- ▶ 22,210 participants received in-school support (visits and presentations)

In addition, families and schools of children who are deaf/hard of hearing or who are blind/visually impaired received support from 43 visiting teachers around the country.

## NCSE Sponsors Special Award at 2017 BT Young Scientist Exhibition

### Special Award at the 2017 BT Young Scientist Exhibition

The NCSE again sponsored a Special Award at the 2017 BT Young Scientists Exhibition. The NCSE award is for the best project that promotes an awareness and understanding of children and young people with special educational needs and /or has a direct impact on their lives.

This year's NCSE special award was presented to: Roisin Foley, Coláiste Treasa, Kanturk, Co Cork. Roisin's project was titled Spotting Dyslexia: A Quantitative Survey to Investigate Dyslexia Symptom Recognition Among Irish Primary School Teachers of Children Aged 5-7 Years. The study's aim was to investigate Irish primary school teachers' recognition of the symptoms of dyslexia in children aged 5-7.



Eamon Stack, chairperson, NCSE, presenting the NCSE Award to winner Roisin Foley from Coláiste Treasa, Cork.



The graphic consists of two overlapping circles. The top circle is orange and contains the text 'Strategic Goal 2'. The bottom circle is red and contains a detailed description of the goal. The circles overlap in the center.

## 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**

### Introduction

The NCSE's programme of research plays an important role in furthering our knowledge, enhancing our understanding and generating an evidence base on a range of special education issues. It enables us to provide the Minister for Education and Skills with evidence-informed policy advice, as well as to disseminate the latest special education information to the research, policy and practice communities.

Work continued on research projects in 2017, including a suite of research relating to the Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme, while new research in the area of adult education began. We also responded throughout 2017 to numerous requests for information on special educational needs statistics, research data and reports.

### Ongoing Research in 2017

#### Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion

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

The first report of this project to be published in 2018 identifies a number of interesting findings. It shows that student teachers are positive in their approach to inclusive teaching and are well prepared in terms of values and attitudes. However, they do not feel confident in using their knowledge and skills to implement inclusive practices in schools. While teacher educators report being supportive of the promotion of inclusive practices in schools, they often feel such practices are not covered sufficiently in ITE programmes and that they do not have sufficient knowledge of inclusive practices/special education.

The study continues and will feature findings on how students' views and skills emerged and changed after qualifying as practising teachers in schools.

**2017 research activity included five ongoing pieces of research and one newly commissioned study on adult education**

### Educational Experiences and Outcomes for Students with Special Educational Need: From age nine to age 13

This research study analyses data from the Growing Up in Ireland longitudinal study and assesses how students with special educational needs are faring at age 13 and how they have progressed since they were aged nine.

The report will be published in early 2018 and provides new insights into students' education progress in several areas, including: reading and maths test results; attitudes towards school; attendance rates; experience of being bullied; moods and feelings; and wellbeing. It notes that some positive progress has been made in certain areas for students with special educational needs between the ages of nine and 13, compared to their peers without special educational needs, including in relation to average wellbeing and reading/verbal reasoning scores, where the gap between the two groups has narrowed. However as 13-year-olds, students with special educational needs are still faring worse than their peers without special educational needs in a number of areas. Twice as many students with special educational needs than without reported being bullied. Students with special educational needs also adjusted less well to post-primary school than students without special educational needs. They also had significantly lower wellbeing scores.

### Suite of Research relating to Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme

In support of the development of policy advice for the Minister for Education and Skills on the special needs assistant (SNA) scheme, we undertook and commissioned a number of pieces of research and analyses, which progressed throughout 2017 as set out below.

- ▶ A review of the research evidence on the impact of different types of support relating to paraprofessional activity for students with additional needs. Specifically, this element of the work searched academic literature published between 2000-2016 that examined outcomes for students with additional needs of paraprofessional support, interventions they delivered or the training they received.
- ▶ A cross-country review of schemes akin to the SNA scheme used by administrations in other countries. The review examines how other administrations support students with additional needs through their use of non-teaching adult support, how such support is allocated, delivered and reviewed, and the outcomes for students of such support.
- ▶ A study jointly commissioned by the NCSE and the National Disability Authority (NDA) on how well young people with disabilities who accessed SNA support are prepared for life after school.
- ▶ The evaluation of the Altered Provision Pilot Project was finalised, which was a DES project that involved the allocation of a teacher, rather than an SNA, to support students with emotional and behavioural difficulties at post-primary level.
- ▶ An analysis of the outcomes for 291 students who had access to SNA support over a five year period.

- ▶ An analysis of over 300 stakeholder submissions.
- ▶ A review of the operation of the scheme in 25 schools.
- ▶ A review of over 200 professional reports used as the basis for allocating access for SNA support.

In undertaking this research, the relative paucity of published high quality, outcome focused studies on the use of paraprofessionals in the classroom for students with disabilities was noteworthy; and while all administrations surveyed are attempting to meet the additional needs of students with disabilities through the provision of non-teaching adult support, there is an acute lack of available administrative data on outcomes for students accessing such support.

## New Research

### Review of Educational Provision for Adults with Disabilities in Day Services

The NCSE has a specific role to review generally the provision of different education and training opportunities for adults with disabilities and to advise education providers concerning best practice. As part of this work, we commissioned a new piece of research in 2017 reviewing the provision of education for adults with disabilities in day services. Currently, little is known of the range of educational services provided in day services, the standard and quality of such provision and the outcomes for adults receiving it. The research aims to begin to fill this gap in knowledge and identify lessons for the future for education providers and other stakeholders.

### Research Conference 2017

Our 2017 research conference took place on November 21st in the Croke Park Conference Centre in Dublin. As in previous years, delegates were a mix of teachers, principals, parents, researchers, academics, disability advocacy group representatives, educational psychologists, department and agency officials and union representatives. Approximately 200 delegates attended the one-day event.

The conference was opened by the director of the Teaching Council and addressed two themes on the day. The morning sessions focused on teacher education for inclusion. Dr Marleen Pugach spoke about the importance of creating the right conditions for enabling the application of teacher knowledge and skills in the classroom. This was followed by a presentation from our longitudinal research on teacher education for inclusion. The morning session was brought to a close with a lively panel discussion on the topic of teacher education for inclusion, with panel participants comprising two newly qualified teachers, representatives of two teacher education providers and the director of the Teaching Council.

## Strategic Goal 2

In the afternoon, we had two presentations in relation to assistive technology. The first, by Dr Dave Edyburn, looked at the benefits and issues arising for schools and students from the latest developments in assistive technology. The second presentation by Paul Nisbet, looked at the latest applications of assistive technology in schools.



At the NCSE Research Conference in November: from left, Dave Edyburn, University of Central Florida; Peter Hick, Manchester Metropolitan University; Eamon Stack, NCSE; Paul Nisbet, CALL Scotland/University of Edinburgh; Marleen Pugach, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; Sheelagh Drudy, NCSE.



At the NCSE Research Conference in November: Front row (from left), Teresa Griffin, NCSE; Eamon Stack, NCSE; Sheelagh Drudy, NCSE; Sinéad Duggan, Coláiste Choilm, Ballincollig, Cork; Marleen Pugach, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; Finian O'Shea, NCSE.

Back Row (from left): Peter Hick, Manchester Metropolitan University; Tomás Ó Ruairc, The Teaching Council; Dave Edyburn, University of Central Florida; Michael Shevlin, Trinity College Dublin; Sarah Beecher, Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire, Bawnmore, Claregalway; Paul Nisbet, CALL Scotland/University of Edinburgh.



## Strategic Goal 3

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



## Strategic Goal 3

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

### NCSE Role

One of the NCSE's key roles is to provide the Minister for Education and Skills with expert, independent, evidence-informed policy advice on the education of children who have special educational needs.

### NCSE Makes Good Progress on its Review of the SNA Scheme

During 2017, the NCSE placed considerable emphasis on its review of the SNA scheme. An extensive process involved over 30 consultation meetings with educational partners and stakeholders and consideration of over 330 responses received through an electronic survey along with a number of separate written submissions.

Research strands included analyses of: outcomes for students who had access to SNA support over a five-year period; operation of the SNA scheme in 25 schools; professional reports as the basis for allocation of care supports. In addition, literature and cross-country reviews were conducted along with a joint NCSE/NDA (National Disability Authority) qualitative review of how well students with SNAs are being prepared for life after school.

In May 2017, the NCSE provided a progress report to the Minister. We reported that it was possible to devise a better model of support and informed the Minister of our intention to establish an NCSE-led working group comprising relevant stakeholders to assist in developing a proposal for an improved model for providing care supports. The Minister

requested that the working group be chaired by the NCSE chairperson, Eamon Stack. The group's term of reference was to 'identify and develop a proposal for a model of support to provide better outcomes for students with special education needs who have additional care needs'.

The working group met 18 times between July and December 2017. In line with its term of reference, it reported to the NCSE Council at the end of December 2017 and set out a proposal for a better model of support for students with additional care needs and made a number of recommendations to give effect to its proposals.

**During 2017, the NCSE placed considerable emphasis on its review of the SNA scheme**

The NCSE was also represented on a working group set up by the cross-sectoral team (Departments of Health, Education and Children and Youth Affairs) to develop a proposal for supporting students with complex medical needs – to include nursing supports. The report from this group will inform the NCSE's overall review given its focus on a small number of students with very specific needs.

## International Work

This year, the NCSE continued to support the work of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE). EASNIE is an independent organisation that acts as a platform for collaboration for its member countries, working towards ensuring more inclusive education systems.

During 2017, the NCSE benefited from EASNIE membership by:

- ▶ Engaging with national coordinators on the use of paraprofessional support in classrooms in member countries;
- ▶ Continuing to use the EASNIE profile of inclusive teachers to underpin our research on initial teacher education for inclusion – in the Irish context;
- ▶ Continuing to provide information on special and inclusive education to prepare a picture of provision across member-states.

The graphic consists of two overlapping circles. The top circle is orange and contains the text 'Strategic Goal 4'. The bottom circle is red and contains the text '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



## Strategic Goal 4

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

#### Introduction

Under the EPSEN Act the NCSE's role includes reviewing generally the provision made for people with disabilities to avail of further and higher education and training provision after they have completed school. We continued our work throughout 2017 in cooperation and consultation with the responsible authorities, service providers, people with disabilities and other stakeholders in the sector.

#### Consultative Forum Discusses Adult Education

During 2017 we again met with the NCSE Consultative Forum to discuss planning in schools for transitions to post-school education, training and employment for students with disabilities, including in particular those who require a high level of support. The forum and our other consultations have highlighted for us the concerns many people with disabilities and their families have about post-school provision. In particular, many fear provision may not fully meet their needs and they can also be unsure about how to access the available options and supports when leaving school and afterwards.

Having regard to these concerns, we have continued to work to help clarify these options and ensure information is available on the options and supports for students with disabilities when they start preparing to leave school. This information is also important when people with disabilities return to education or training as adults. The post-school options for students with disabilities include higher education, further education and training (FET), rehabilitative training and adult day support services.

#### NCSE Participation on Sectoral Groups Continues

The NCSE participated in the work of the Department of Education and Skills steering committee which oversees implementation of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2016-19. This plan includes a range of agreed actions and targets to increase participation in higher education by under-represented groups, including people with disabilities. The actions, under the plan, focus on mainstreaming equity of access in all higher education institutions, assessing the impact of these access initiatives, developing access data for management and planning purposes, building access pathways and developing regional and community partnerships.

A review of the fund for students with disabilities in the higher education and the post Leaving Certificate (PLC) sectors was commissioned by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and following consultation with stakeholders, including the NCSE, the report of this review was published in 2017.

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The NCSE responded to the Department of Education and Skills/ Department of Public Expenditure and Reform consultation paper on an exchequer-employer investment mechanism for higher education and further education and training (FET) through an increase in the national training levy.

We also engaged in an Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) working group for the development of an ETBI position paper on meeting the needs of learners with disabilities in the further education and training (FET) sector. This position paper will assist in the ongoing progress in the FET sector for more development of strategies for the inclusion of people with disabilities.

### **Engagement with the HSE on School Leavers**

We continued to engage with the Health Service Executive (HSE) disability services in clarifying and reviewing the range of provision funded by the HSE throughout the State for school leavers and adults with disabilities and the significant change process underway in accordance with the HSE strategy, 'New Directions'. Approximately 400 students are moving from schools to rehabilitative training and 700 are starting in adult day support services.

### **Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities**

The NCSE has continued on an ongoing basis to support and implement, along with the other responsible bodies, identified key strategic actions under the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-24. These actions are primarily under the strategic priority to build skills, capacity and independence of people with disabilities. We also engaged with the National Disability Authority (NDA) during 2017, providing an input to the development by an inter-departmental working group of an effective co-ordinated policy approach to assist individuals with disabilities, including those who require a high degree of support, to obtain and retain employment.

The graphic consists of two overlapping circles. The top circle is orange and contains the text 'Strategic Goal 5'. The bottom circle is red and contains a detailed description of the goal. The circles overlap in the center.

## Strategic Goal 5

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



## Strategic Goal 5

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

In 2017 the NCSE continued to maintain our organisation to ensure we operate effectively and in compliance with all our statutory, regulatory and governance requirements. A key role for the NCSE is to provide information to parents, schools and all our stakeholders on matters relating to special education. Throughout the year, we continued to engage with our stakeholders and developed new ways and platforms for communicating, such as through our new Twitter account.

### Information for Parents

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

In 2017, our SENOs delivered 35 sessions to over 600 parents who were very positive in their overall rating of the session they received. The full evaluation will be completed when this programme ends in spring 2018.

### NCSE on Twitter

The NCSE established a Twitter account, @ncseirl, that went live in October 2017. The account aims to inform our education partners, stakeholders, parents, students and the general public about NCSE activities, such as application deadlines, research and policy publication, events and press releases.

## Customer Charter

Our customer charter required updating in 2017. All new charters must now be up to three years in duration. However, in light of the transition of the new services into the NCSE and the developing nature of the NCSE support service during the year, a new customer charter was developed for the organisation in 2017 but for an interim period to cover to the end of 2018. This are on our website.

The process of developing the three-year customer charter and action plan, in line with guidelines from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, was initiated in late 2017. It is anticipated that this will be completed in late 2018.

## Consultative Forum

The Consultative Forum, appointed under the EPSEN Act, is a forum that the NCSE engages with on special education matters. The Council appoints up to 17 members following a prescribed consultation process. In addition, three members are appointed by the Minister. Members were appointed from December 2016 and their term is due to expire at end December 2018. They met twice in 2017. In May, the forum discussed the NCSE's ongoing work programme and how the NCSE support service would develop. In October, it explored the different aspects of adult education and identified topics for it to consider at its 2018 meetings. Forum membership is detailed in the appendix.

Membership of the body is listed below.

<b>NCSE Consultative Forum</b>		
<b>Council-appointed members</b>		<b>Attendance</b>
Fidelma Brady <sup>5</sup>	Education Officer, Down Syndrome Ireland	1
Michael Byrne	National Disability Children and Families Team, Social Care Division, HSE	1
Breda Corr	General Secretary, National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education	2
Noelle Connolly	Head of Local Services, National Council for Special Education	2
Padraig Flanagan	Principal, Post-Primary School	2
Margaret Flood <sup>6</sup>	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment	1
Marie Therese Kilmartin <sup>7</sup>	Principal, Post-Primary School	1
Gerard Gallagher	Disability Advisor, NUI, Maynooth	0
Adam Harris	Chief Executive, AsIAM	1
Julie Helen	Advocacy Project Worker for People with Disabilities	2
Ann Higgins	Principal, Special School	2
Siobhan Long	Enable Ireland Disability Services	2
Matt Melvin	Principal, Primary School	2
Teresa McDonnell	Chairperson of a support organisation for parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children	2
Deirbhile Nic Craith	Assistant General Secretary, Irish National Teachers' Organisation	2
Carmel O'Shea	National Parents Council	2
Donie O'Shea	Senior Policy Advisor, National Disability Authority	2
<b>Members appointed by Minister for Education and Skills</b>		<b>Attendance</b>
Michael Cullinane	Regional Director, National Educational Psychological Service	2
Eamon Clavin	Divisional Inspector, Department of Education and Skills	2
Catriona Hanevy	Assistant Principal Officer, Department of Education and Skills	2

<sup>5</sup> Fidelma Brady was appointed as replacement for Patricia Griffin who resigned.

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Flood was appointed as replacement for Denise Kelly who resigned

<sup>7</sup> Marie Therese Kilmartin was appointed as replacement for Paddy O'Neill who resigned





**Governance**



## Governance

### Performance Management

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

### Annual Accounts

The 2017 annual accounts were presented to the Minister in June 2017. 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 were required to comply with the code's full requirements by September 2017 and to seek derogations from parent departments where full compliance would not be possible within that time. Throughout 2017, we conducted a review of our compliance against the code and sought derogations as required from the Department of Education and Skills. By the end of December 2017, the NCSE was compliant with code requirements with one exception: our Performance Delivery Agreement and its Oversight Agreement had not been signed with the Department. Derogation had been received for this and it was subsequently signed in January 2018. Appendix 1 details the confirmations of compliance with the code.

## Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015

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

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

## The Council of the NCSE



NCSE Council 2016-18 with the CEO: Back row (from left): Marion Meany, Áine Lynch, Anne Tansey, Johnny Murphy, Joe Hayes, Helen Guinan, Antoinette Nic Gearailt and CEO Teresa Griffin.

Front row (from left): Tom O'Sullivan, Eithne Fitzgerald, Finian O'Shea, chairperson Eamon Stack, Sheelagh Drudy and Don Mahon.

The NCSE governance authority is the Council of the National Council for Special Education. The Council is appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills under Section 21 of the EPSEN Act, 2004. The term of office of the Council expires on December 31st, 2018.

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

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

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

The Council is responsible for preparing the annual plan and financial statements for the organisation. Confirmation that the financial statements provide a true and fair view of the NCSE's financial performance and its financial position in 2017, is provided in the NCSE audited annual accounts which are published separately.

As required under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, the Council reviewed its performance and that of its committees throughout the year using the self-assessment framework provided in the code. The Council also approved the process for an external evaluation to be completed in 2018.

The Council met on seven occasions during 2017. Details of individual members and their attendances are given in the following table.

Membership of the Council of the NCSE during 2017		
Name	Details	Attendance
Eamon Stack*, Chairperson	Former Chief Inspector in the Department of Education and Skills (DES)	7
Sheelagh Drudy* Deputy Chairperson	Emeritus Professor of Education at University College Dublin and former Head of the UCD School of Education	7
Eithne Fitzgerald*	Retired Head of Policy and Research, National Disability Authority	7
Helen Guinan*	Chairperson of the National Disability Authority. Former Principal of St Paul's Special School, Montenotte, Cork	7
Joe Hayes	Former Irish Ambassador to China, Denmark and Iceland, the Czech Republic, Ukraine and latterly to Singapore	6
Áine Lynch	CEO of the National Parents Council Primary	7
Don Mahon	Former Assistant Chief Inspector in the Department of Education and Skills (DES)	7
Marion Meany	Assistant National Director in the HSE for Disability Services (which operates within the Social Care Division) and member of the Social Care Management Team, HSE	6
Johnny Murphy*	Divisional Inspector, Department of Education and Skills	7
Antoinette Nic Gearailt	President of the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)	7
Finian O'Shea	Former Lecturer at Church of Ireland College, Dublin where he worked primarily on the post graduate diploma in learning support and special educational needs	7
Tom O'Sullivan*	Former Assistant General Secretary, INTO. Former principal of St. Senan's Boys National School, Limerick	7
Anne Tansey	Director of National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)	7

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

## Council Committees

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

Audit and Risk (four meetings)	Attendance
John Fitzgerald, Chairperson	4
Sheelagh Drudy	4
Helen Guinan	4
Don Mahon	4
Eamon Stack	2

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

Finance (nine meetings)	Attendance
Don Mahon, Chairperson	9
Joe Hayes	8
Marion Meany	6
Antoinette Nic Gearailt	8

Research (five meetings)	Attendance
Sheelagh Drudy, Chairperson	5
Johnny Murphy	5
Finian O'Shea	4
Anne Tansey	4

## Governance

Strategy and Policy (four meetings)	Attendance
Helen Guinan, Chairperson	4
Eithne Fitzgerald	4
Aine Lynch	4
Tom O'Sullivan	4



# APPENDICES



## Appendix 1

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

#### 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. Confirmation of the annual review of effectiveness of the NCSE System of Internal Control by the Council in 2017 is provided in the NCSE audited annual 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.

#### 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 those procured by the Office of Government Procurement.

#### Disposal of Assets

Disposal of assets by the NCSE fully complies with requirements set down by the code of practice.

### Confidential Disclosures

The NCSE has an agreed policy and procedures for dealing with protected disclosures in line with the Protected Disclosures Act (2014). No issues were raised under this procedure in 2017.

### Child Protection

The NCSE has developed procedures and guidelines for staff on child protection and welfare matters as part of the new requirements enacted in 2017 under the Children First Act, 2015. The NCSE guidelines are available on our website at [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie). Any matters drawn to attention in 2017 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 2016, the NCSE reported the organisation's energy performance in 2015 to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland as required under EU regulations. The NCSE continues to track progress towards the 2020 target outlined in the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2014 which underpins commitment to a 33 per cent energy saving for the public sector by 2020. The data for 2016 is provided below and compared with the previously reported 2015 figures.

#### Overview of NCSE Energy Usage 2016 and 2015

	2016	2015
MWh of electricity	147.34	139.31
MWh of fossil fuels	219.90	273.32
MWh of renewable fuels	0	0

## Appendix 2

### NCSE Staffing

Grade	Staff in post end 2017
Chief Executive	1
Principal	4
Head of Local Services	1
Assistant Principal	4
Senior Special Educational Needs Organiser	8
Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO)	70
Visiting Teachers <sup>8</sup>	44
Higher Executive Officer	5
Executive Officer	5
Staff Officer	0
Clerical Officer	2
Temporary Clerical Officer	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>

8 Visiting Teachers who came under the NCSE's remit on the 20th March 2017

Tables below of former SESS and NBSS staff who transitioned into the NCSE from March 20th, 2017.

Former SESS Staff Grade	Staff in post end 2017
Director/Specialist Lead	1
Deputy Directors	2
Assistant National Coordinators	5
Advisors	21
Associates	3.8
Local Facilitors	9
Education Centre – Cork (administrative staff)	6.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>48.2</b>
Former NBSS Staff Grade	Staff in post end 2017
National Cordinator	1
Deputy National Cordinator	1
Assistant National Cordinator	2
Advisors	19
Speech and Language Therapist	2
Occupational Therapist	2
Researcher	1
Clerical – Grade 3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

## Appendix 3

### Statistical Information for Previous Academic Years 2011/12 to 2016/17

Tables 1- 3 provide trend data for school years 2011/12 to 2016/17 in respect of NCSE resource allocation activity. There is an upward trend across all areas. A growing student population partly explains the increase but as can be seen from Table 2 the increase in students accessing additional supports is growing at a faster rate. In September 2017 a new way of allocating Special Education Teachers was introduced by the Department of Education & Skills. Information about the new model and related statistics are provided at end.

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

Type of Posts	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
SNA	10,320	10,503	10,671	11,174	11,924	13,006
Low Incidence Teachers	5,265	5,265	5,722	6,204	6,823	7,427
Special School Teachers	1,056	1,078	1,060	1,135	1,159	1,197
Special Class Teachers	602	695	823	956	1,136	1,304

**Table 2 Numbers of Students supported by NCSE Allocations**

Students	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
SNA Mainstream	12,150	13,268	13,907	15,101	16,874	18,513
LITH <sup>10</sup>	29,426	32,480	35,763	38,414	42,931	47,065
Special Classes	3,286	3,684	4,353	4,706	5,472	6,393
Special Schools	6,848	7,077	7,299	7,459	7,607	7,739
<i>All students in school (inc PLCs)</i>	<i>875,505</i>	<i>889,269</i>	<i>903,495</i>	<i>916,992</i>	<i>931,383</i>	<i>942,885</i>

10 There are more teachers in special classes than classes because while one teacher is allocated to a special class in a primary school there is 1.5 teachers allocated to a special class in post primary schools.

11 Low Incidence Teaching Hours were allocated through an application process to students with a SEN diagnosis. This resource allocation process ceased with the introduction of the new SET model.

**Table 3 Special Classes Type by Disability**

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

### Statistics on the SET model

The revised model for allocating Special Education Teachers to schools commenced in September 2017. It is designed to be a fairer and better way to allocate resources. In March 2017 the Department of Education & Skills provided the NCSE with the SET Allocations for schools. The NCSE arranged to publish the list of schools and their allocation on the website. The NCSE then issued a letter to schools providing details around the calculation of those resources and providing access points for further information and an appeals process should it apply. In total, 13,281 teachers have been allocated.

The NCSE received 150 requests from schools for in school support on the Special Education Teaching Allocation Model over the period September to December 2017. These requests were administered by NCSE advisers.

Following the notification of allocations the schools were advised on how to make an appeal. The appeals process considered if the profile had been miscalculated or incorrect data had been used. The NCSE received 558 appeals. An Independent Appeals Officer was appointed to process the appeals. No SET allocation was altered on the basis of an appeal received. However, based on the information provided by schools in their appeals documentation the Appeals Officer suggested that further attention should be given by the Department of Education and Skills to a number of schools. These were schools where he considered that there was a significant increase in year on year enrolments or where it appeared that the school's social context had changed considerably. As a result 131 schools, or 23.4% of the 558 appellant schools, received an increase in their original allocation.

A further and final review process is available under the circular where very exceptional circumstances arise subsequent to the school profile being calculated. This process commenced in November 2017. 91 requests for appeals were received and are being processed with a view to finalisation in 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Early Intervention classes established for students of pre-school age with autism in mainstream schools.

## Appendix 4

### Description of Disability Categories<sup>13</sup>

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

Low Incidence Disabilities	
Disability category	Description
Autism/autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)	A psychiatrist or psychologist will have assessed and classified such pupils as having autism or autistic spectrum disorder according to DSM-IV, DSM-V, or ICD-10 criteria.
Emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems	Such pupils are being treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist for such conditions as neurosis, childhood psychosis, hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and conduct disorders that are significantly impairing their socialisation and/or learning in school.
Hearing impairment	Such pupils have a hearing disability that is so serious it impairs significantly their capacity to hear and understand human speech, thus preventing them from participating fully in classroom interaction and from benefiting adequately from school instruction. Most of them have been prescribed hearing aids and are availing of the services of a visiting teacher.
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.

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

Low Incidence Disabilities	
Disability category	Description
Multiple disabilities	Pupils assessed with multiple disabilities meet the criteria for two or more of the low incidence disabilities described.
Pupils with special educational needs arising from an assessed syndrome	Such pupils with an assessed syndrome, e.g. Down syndrome, William’s syndrome and Tourette’s syndrome in addition to any of the other low-incidence disabilities.
Physical disability	<p>Such pupils have permanent or protracted disabilities arising from such conditions as congenital deformities, spina bifida, dyspraxia, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, brittle bones or severe accidental injury. Because of the impairment of their physical function, they require special additional intervention and support if they are to have available to them a level and quality of education appropriate to their needs and abilities.</p> <p>Many require the use of a wheelchair, mobility or seating aid or other technological support.</p> <p>They may suffer from a lack of muscular control and co-ordination and may have difficulties in communication, particularly in oral articulation, as for example severe dyspraxia.</p>
Severe and profound general learning disability	Such pupils have been assessed by a psychologist as having a severe or profound general learning disability. The pupil’s full scale IQ will have been assessed as being below 35. In addition, such pupils may have physical disabilities.
Severe emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems	The criteria for severe EBD are that the pupil is in the care of a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist for a severe clinical disorder. A very small number of pupils would be expected to fall within this category.
Specific speech and language disorder	<p>Such pupils should meet each of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Non-verbal or performance ability that must be within the average range or above, that is, non-verbal or performance IQ of 90 or above.</li> <li>▶ Assessed by a speech and language therapist and found to be at two or more standard deviations (SD) below the mean, or at a generally equivalent level (–2 SD or below, or below a standard score of 70) in one or more of the main areas of speech and language development.</li> </ul> <p>Two assessments, a psychological assessment and a speech and language assessment, are necessary.</p>

Low Incidence Disabilities	
Disability category	Description
Visual impairment	Such pupils have a visual disability which is so serious as to impair significantly their capacity to see, thus interfering with their capacity to perceive visually presented materials, such as pictures, diagrams and the written word. Some will have been diagnosed as suffering from such conditions as congenital blindness, cataracts, albinism and retinitis pigmentosa. Most require the use of low-vision aids and are availing of the services of a visiting teacher.

## Appendix 5

### Glossary of Acronyms Used

ACCS	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
CPD	Continuing professional development
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DSM	Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders
EASNIE	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
EBD	Emotional disturbance/behavioural disorder
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004
HSE	Health Service Executive
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
ITE	Initial teacher education
IQ	Intelligence quotient
NBSS	National Behaviour Support Service
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NUI	National University of Ireland
SESS	Special Education Support Service
SD	Standard deviation
SENO	Special educational needs organiser
SIC	System of internal controls
SNA	Special needs assistant
UCD	University College Dublin

