

Ministers Naughton and Moynihan announce first phased roll-out of Education Therapy Service (ETS)

Press release

Friday 6 February

Minister for Education and Youth, Hildegard Naughton, and Minister for Special Education and Inclusion, Michael Moynihan, have today announced details of the first phased roll-out of the new Education Therapy Services (ETS)

The Education Therapy Service (ETS), a standalone commitment under the Programme for Government, represents a major cross departmental initiative to strengthen supports for children with special educational needs. The new therapy service will be delivered by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

The initial clusters will be based in Carlow, Cork, Dublin, Galway, Kildare, Kilkenny, Louth, Laois, Limerick, Longford, Meath, Monaghan, Tipperary, Westmeath, Wexford and Wicklow. Details of the individual schools can be found [here](#).

Announcing the first 45 special schools to benefit from the Education Therapy Service, Minister for Education and Youth, Hildegard Naughton, said:

“The Education Therapy Service represents a major step forward in how we support children with additional needs in our schools. By embedding therapists directly within school communities, we are ensuring that children can access timely, practical and joined-up support in the place where they learn every day.

“Today’s announcement marks the first phase in delivering this important service. The roll-out will continue throughout 2026, with further recruitment planned across Offaly, Sligo, Clare, Mayo and Roscommon in March 2026, followed by Donegal, Kerry, Cavan and Waterford by the end of June 2026. A rolling national recruitment campaign will continue to ensure therapy needs across the school system are met.

“I want to sincerely thank the schools, families and professionals who are helping to shape and strengthen this service. Their commitment is central to ensuring that every child who needs support can get the best possible start in life.”

Minister for Special Education and Inclusion, Michael Moynihan TD, said:

“Ensuring that every child can access the support they need to thrive at school is a core commitment of this Government. Today marks a real milestone in the delivery of the Education Therapy Service, which will truly make a real difference to children, particularly those in our special schools and special classes, by strengthening the link between therapy and education.

“The new therapy service provides an additional layer of support for children and young people with additional educational needs. The delivery of therapies in schools will be a major support to children and their families and is another way to ease the stress families can sometimes face in accessing therapy supports. It is designed to **supplement, not replace**, existing children’s health and disability services, and will operate in a coordinated and complementary manner alongside NEPS, Primary Care, Children’s Disability Services and CAMHS. I look forward to the continued expansion of this vital service throughout 2026 and beyond.”

Therapy supports will continue to be provided to 16 schools through the Enhanced In-School Pilot and to 3 special schools currently receiving support from the NCSE through sustained in-school therapy provision

Engagements with all schools in this first phase will take place in the coming weeks and ahead of therapist assignment. Further information, including FAQs, is available on the [NCSE website](#) and [Gov.ie](#)

These initial clusters have been determined following robust engagement with the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE), the HSE, and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

Notes to Editor:

- The NCSE has recently completed a recruitment campaign for Senior and Staff Grade Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists, with interviews scheduled for this month.
- The recruitment of therapists and the recent appointment of the Head of Therapy represent significant steps toward full rollout of ETS in special schools and in special classes within mainstream settings. It is expected that future campaigns will also recruit additional therapy grades, including Therapy Managers, Clinical Specialists, and Therapy Assistants.

- Under the ETS, therapy is delivered through a multi-tiered model of support that responds to children's individual needs while also fostering inclusive environments where all learners can meaningfully participate. The model recognises the importance of supporting individuals, whole classes, and wider school communities.
- The department continues to work closely with the HSE to ensure alignment and integrated working across all services, including coordinated workforce planning. These measures aim to ensure the safe and effective delivery of Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy services in schools, while maximising available resources.
- The department has undertaken extensive stakeholder engagement throughout the design of the ETS, including discussions with schools, families, and professionals to gather insights and inform how therapy supports can be best integrated in the school system. Engagement with special schools is ongoing through a series of focus groups, which will continue throughout the rollout and expansion of the service.