



What Parents Can Expect from the Education Therapy Service (ETS)

The Education Therapy Service (ETS) is a therapy service delivered in schools by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). Its goal is to support children and young people to participate and engage in school life by providing therapy supports that are linked to their learning needs. The ETS will initially include support from Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists.

Why is ETS being developed?

The Programme for Government 2025 announced the establishment of a National Therapy Service for schools. This builds on the Education Therapy Support Service established in the NCSE in 2024.

Therapy supports have historically played an important role in special schools. Growing evidence has highlighted the need for occupational therapy and speech and language therapy interventions to be undertaken in a child's natural context and focused on tasks relevant to classroom participation.

ETS is being developed through ongoing engagement with parents, schools, therapists, the NCSE, the HSE and Government Departments to ensure it is safe, coordinated and effective.

What should parents expect next?

The ETS is actively being developed and rolled out.

- Recruitment is underway, with interviews taking place to appoint the first cohort of 90 Occupational Therapists and Speech & Language Therapists that will support schools in the initial phase of ETS rollout.
- Therapists will support a cluster of schools, to ensure supports are delivered effectively and efficiently.
- As recruitment progresses, the service will roll out on a phased basis, with the intention that all schools will benefit over time, subject to available resources.

Will ETS replace my child's current supports?

No. There will never be a situation where a child loses support because of ETS. ETS is an additional support for children with special educational needs.

It does not replace Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs), Primary Care or any other HSE provided service. It is designed to work alongside existing health and education services.

Engagements are ongoing between health and education to ensure seamless access to supports across both the school and the home environments.

How will parents stay informed?

A clear communications plan is in place to support the phased roll out of the ETS.

- ❖ Schools included in the first phase, and those not included, will be contacted directly.
- ❖ The same approach will be used as the service expands on a phased basis.
- ❖ Up to date information and FAQs will be available on the NCSE website, with wider updates shared via gov.ie.

How will therapy supports work in schools?

Therapists working as part of the ETS provide support through a multi-tiered model, ensuring therapy support is matched to the needs of the school community. The examples below offer a brief overview of the types of supports parents may see in practice.

Tier 1 - Universal supports

These supports benefit all children by strengthening everyday routines and learning environments. *Example: Therapists may help the school introduce clear and consistent visual supports, such as visual schedules or symbols, to make daily routines easier to understand and to support smoother transitions for all children.*

Tier 2 - Targeted supports

These supports are designed for groups of children who may need some additional help beyond whole school approaches. *Example: Teachers may deliver small group activities, such as Lego based communication groups, with guidance from the Speech and Language Therapist to help children develop social, communication, language and problem solving skills.*

Tier 3 - Individualised supports

These supports focus on the needs of individual children who require a more tailored approach. *Example: An Occupational Therapist may work with school staff to adjust routines or the classroom environment to support a child who finds certain tasks or transitions challenging, providing practical strategies that help the child participate more comfortably in school life.*

