



# What Special Schools 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.

## What does ETS mean for my special school?

ETS will begin in 45 special schools later in the 2025/26 school year. These schools will be contacted directly and supported to prepare for therapists coming into the school. During Phase 1, each participating school will have:

- ❑ An Occupational Therapist and a Speech and Language Therapist assigned to their school.
- ❑ Direct engagement to understand the school's context, priorities and needs
- ❑ Webinars, information sessions and onboarding support to prepare staff and answer practical questions
- ❑ As the ETS expands, every school joining in later phases will receive the same level of communication and preparation.

## How will therapists support my special school?

The ETS will assign an Occupational Therapist and a Speech and Language Therapist to special schools. Therapists will work with a cluster of schools to ensure supports are delivered effectively and efficiently. Therapists will be employed by the NCSE and will work within a robust structure for clinical and operational governance through the NCSE therapy structure. Engagements with schools to ensure clarity on roles, responsibilities and day to day operations will take place. School communities will have an opportunity to co-design these operations and service pathways as appropriate.

## Will ETS replace a child's current supports?

The ETS is an additional support for children with special education needs. It supplements, and does not replace existing children's health and disability services, and will work in a complementary manner with existing children's services. This is the initial phase of the ETS and the intention is to extend support to all special schools as soon as possible.

Work is ongoing with existing children's services to ensure that supports are provided in a manner that is context specific, aligned and integrated.

## How will my school be kept informed?

- ❖ A communications plan is in place to support all phases of roll out.
- ❖ Schools included in Phase 1, and those not yet included, will be contacted directly later this academic year to ensure they remain updated on developments.
- ❖ Information, guidance and updated FAQs will be available on [ncse.ie](http://ncse.ie), with wider updates shared via [gov.ie](http://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.*

