

# Meeting the educational needs of children with special needs in Ireland

Presentation - Vilnius

November, 2019

# Summary

- ▶ Role of the Department of Education & Skills
- ▶ Legislation
- ▶ Policy of Inclusion
- ▶ Continuum of provision
- ▶ Education Supports for students with SEN
- ▶ Role of NCSE
- ▶ Role of NEPS
- ▶ Investment
- ▶ Challenges and future policy developments

# Role of The Department of Education and Skills

- ▶ The Department provides a policy, legislative and funding framework for, and supports, education and skills development in early childhood settings, primary and post primary schools, higher education institutions, further education providers, and adult and second chance education.
- ▶ The Department is not involved in the direct delivery of education and works in partnership with schools and other education and training providers, parents, students, patrons, staff and communities to achieve its objectives.

# Legislation

- ▶ **Education Act 1998:** Education Providers must have regard to children with disabilities and other special needs in relation to: school plans, enrolment policies, curriculum.
- ▶ **EPSEN Act 2004:** Sections on inclusive education and establishment of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) enacted.
- ▶ **Disability Act 2005:** Disability Act provides for assessment/statement of services and liaison with NCSE regarding education services
- ▶ **United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) Article 24 Education**
- ▶ **Equality Legislation - Prevention against Discrimination**
- ▶ **School Admissions Act 2018 - Prevents enrolment discrimination**

# Policy of Inclusion

- ▶ Legislative provision for inclusive education is set out in Section 2 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 which requires that:
- ▶ *“A child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with:*
- ▶ *The best interests of the child as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out under this Act*
- ▶ *The effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated.”*

# Continuum of Provision

DES provides for a range of placement options and supports for schools to ensure that, wherever a child is enrolled, s/he will have access to an appropriate education.

Children with special educational needs may be enrolled in

- 1. mainstream school and attend all mainstream classes and receive additional teaching support through the Special Education teacher.**
- 2. A mainstream school and attend a special class - this provides an option of partial inclusion in mainstream classes in line with the child's abilities**
- 3. Special school placement with smaller classes and specialist support - there is little or no options for inclusion with mainstream**

# Educational supports for SEN Students

Main supports provided are:

- ▶ 1. Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)
- ▶ 2. Special Education Teaching support in Mainstream schools
- ▶ 3. Lower pupil teacher ratios for special schools and classes (ranging from 6:1 to 11:1), and enhanced levels of capitation.

# SNA Support

17,000 whole time equivalent SNA posts available for allocation to schools to assist with significant care needs of pupils:

- ▶ Assistance with feeding
- ▶ Administration of medicine
- ▶ Assistance with toileting and general hygiene
- ▶ Assistance with mobility and orientation
- ▶ Assisting teachers to provide supervision in the class, playground and school grounds
- ▶ Non-nursing care needs associated with specific medical conditions
- ▶ Care requiring frequent intervention or withdrawal pupil from a classroom
- ▶ Assistance with moving and lifting of children, operation of hoists and equipment.
- ▶ Assistance with severe communication difficulties



# Special Education Teachers in Mainstream Schools

- ▶ Every school receives a single allocation for additional special education teaching support
- ▶ Role of the special education teacher is to provide additional teaching to pupils with learning needs of special educational needs
- ▶ Over 13,500 special education teachers allocated to schools
- ▶ Average of 1 Special Education teacher for 4 primary school teachers or 1 teacher for every 100 mainstream primary pupils

# Special Education Teachers in Mainstream Schools

- ▶ New model introduced in 2017 moved away from individual diagnosis
- ▶ Children can be supported immediately rather than having to wait for a diagnosis.
- ▶ Children not required to be unnecessarily labelled
- ▶ Resources linked to learning needs in schools
- ▶ Schools can deploy resources taking into account of pupils' individual learning needs.
- ▶ Reduces the administrative burden on schools to source and submit assessments
- ▶ Ends the annual application process

# Special Education Teachers

Allocations made to schools based on school profiles composed of:

- ▶ **Baseline component based on enrolment.** to support inclusion, prevention of learning difficulties and early intervention
- ▶ **Students with Complex Special Educational Needs**
- ▶ **Percentage of students performing below a certain threshold on standardised tests**
- ▶ **The schools' social context** which includes educational disadvantage
- ▶ **Gender**

# Special Class Places

- ▶ For pupils who cannot attend mainstream classes all of the time, special classes are available in mainstream schools
- ▶ Approximately 7,500 pupils in special classes **(0.8% pupils)**  
(921,000 children in almost 4000 schools)

Since 2011, the number of special classes in mainstream schools has increased by almost 200% from 548 to 1,621 for 2019/2020 school year.

# Special School Places

- ▶ For pupils with the most complex special needs special school places are available
- ▶ 124 special schools in Ireland
  - 114 special schools for Special Needs
  - 7 Hospital Schools
  - 3 schools attached to Child & Adolescent Mental Health Units
- ▶ 8,110 pupils and 1,490 teachers (**0.9% of pupils**)

# Staffing Ratios for Special Schools and Classes

- ▶ 10-1 Physical Disability
- ▶ 7-1 Hearing impairment
- ▶ 7-1 Visual Impairment
- ▶ 8-1 Emotional Disturbance
- ▶ 6-1 Severe Emotional Disturbance
- ▶ 11-1 Mild General Learning Disability
- ▶ 8-1 Moderate General Learning Disability
- ▶ 6-1 Severe/Profound General Learning Disability
- ▶ 6-1 Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders
- ▶ 9-1 Specific Learning Disability
- ▶ 7-1 Specific Speech and Language Disorder
- ▶ 6-1 Multiple Disabilities

# Other Additional Supports

- ▶ Special School Transport Scheme/ Bus Escorts
- ▶ Enhanced levels of school capitation for special schools and special classes
- ▶ Assistive Technology Scheme
- ▶ Early educational intervention for children with autism from 2½ years of age.
- ▶ Extended school Year (July Provision) scheme (Severe and Profound/ASD)
- ▶ Home Tuition
- ▶ School Buildings and modifications
- ▶ Special arrangements for State Examinations
- ▶ ESF Aided Fund for Students with Disabilities at 3<sup>rd</sup> level
- ▶ Vocational Training for people with disabilities.
- ▶ Adult Education - once off projects for disability in education.

# NCSE

- ▶ **The National Council for Special Education** was established in 2005 to plan and co-ordinate the provision of special education services and to allocate resources to schools
  
- ▶ Local network of Special Education Needs Officers (SENOs)
  
- ▶ The NCSE Support Service has brought under its control:
  1. Special Education Support Service (SESS),
  2. National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) and
  3. Visiting Teacher Service for children who are deaf/hard of hearing and for children who are blind/visually impaired (VTSVHI).



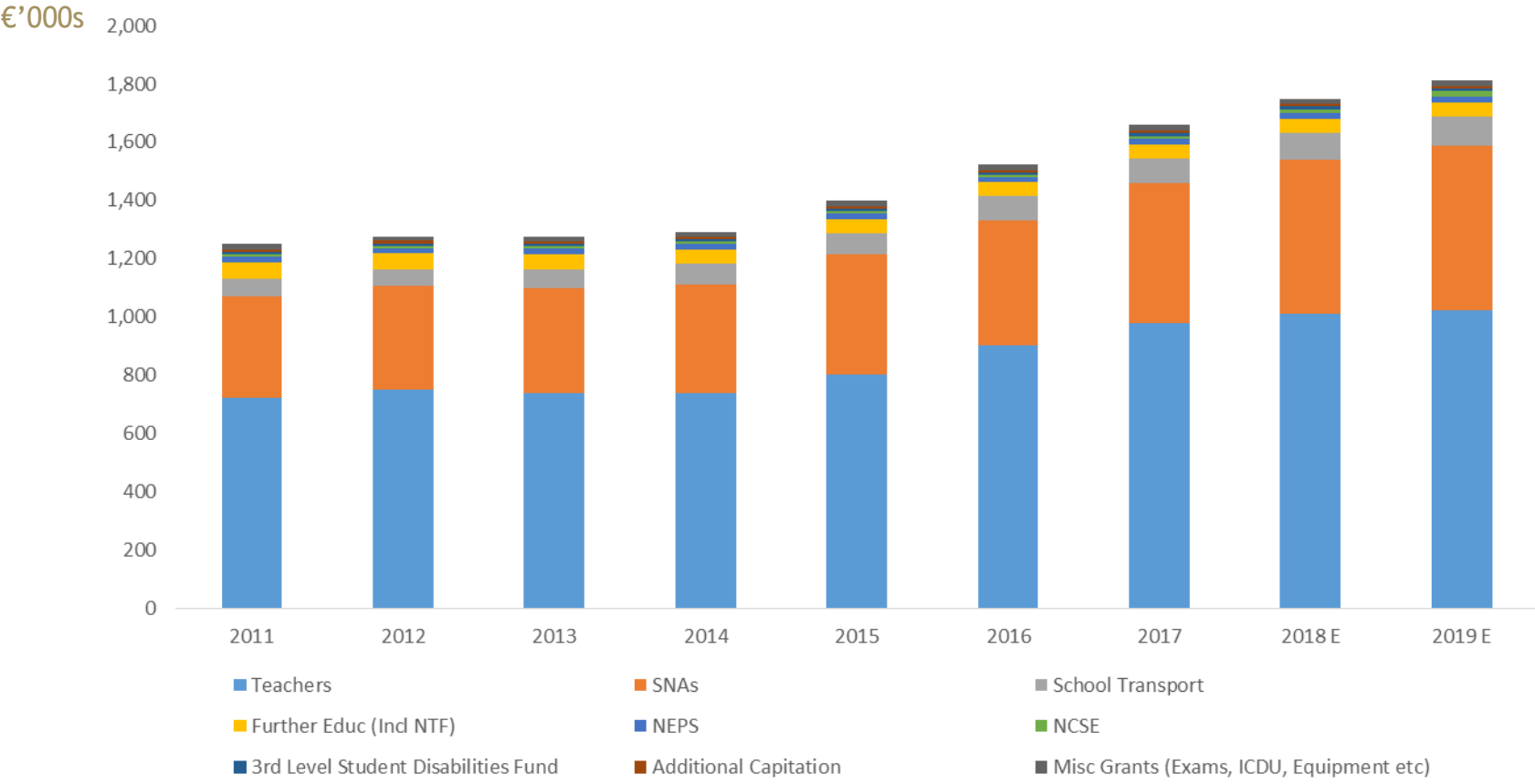
# NEPS

- ▶ **National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS)** delivers a consultative, tiered service delivery model to schools, in line with international best practice for the effective and efficient delivery of educational psychological services.
- ▶ The service delivery model allows NEPS psychologists to support schools to provide an effective continuum of support to meet the needs of pupils/students.

# Investment

- ▶ Some €1.9 billion - will be spent in 2019 providing services for children with Special Educational Needs.
- ▶ This represents **one fifth or approximately 20%** of the entire budget of the Department of Education and Skills

# Special Education Needs Expenditure 2011 to 2019e



## ► Challenges & future policy developments

- Increasing demand for supports
- Future of Special Schools and Classes (UNCRPD)
- Policy papers from NCSE
  - A Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme (School Inclusion Model Pilot, allocation of SNAs, Therapeutic & Other Supports in schools)
  - Policy Advice on ASD