

An Roinn Oideachais agus
Eolaíochta
Rannóg Múinteoirí
Iarbhunioideachais
Corn a Madadh,
Átha Luain,
Co. Na hIarmhí



Department of Education
And Science
Post Primary Teachers Section
Cornamaddy,
Athlone,
Co. Westmeath

Circular PPT 01/05

To: The Management Authorities of Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools, and the Chief Executive Officers of Vocational Education Committees

The National Council for Special Education (N.C.S.E.)

1. Purpose of this Circular

The purpose of this circular is to advise the authorities of schools of the establishment of and the transfer of certain functions to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

2. Background

The level of resources allocated to schools in recent years to meet the special educational needs of children with disabilities has grown very significantly. Notwithstanding this development, the Department has been concerned for some time at its lack of capacity to deliver the required level of service to schools, parents/ guardians and pupils under current structures. An internal review highlighted the over-centralised structure of the Department and its lack of any locally-based capacity for service delivery and co-ordination as key deficiencies in the system. As a result of findings of the review, the Government approved the establishment of a National Council for Special Education, hereafter referred to as the NCSE.

3. Functions of the NCSE

The NCSE has been established as an independent statutory body with responsibilities as set out in the National Council for Special Education (Establishment) Order, 2003. This Order, made pursuant to the Education Act, 1998, gives the Council the authority to:

- a) carry out research and provide expert advice to the Minister for Education and Science on the educational needs of children with disabilities and the provision of related services,
- b) provide for a range of services at local and national level in order that the educational needs of children with disabilities are identified and provided for, and

- c) co-ordinate, with health authorities, schools and other relevant bodies, the provision of education and related support services to children with disabilities.

A detailed list of functions as specified in the Order is at Appendix 1. Once the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 is commenced, the functions of the NCSE as set out in the Order will be superseded by the functions of the NCSE as set out in the Act. These functions are set out at Appendix 2.

4. Special Educational Needs Organisers

The local service delivery aspect of the Council's operation will be the responsibility of Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs). Approximately 70 SENOs have been employed, all of whom have a qualification and previous work experience relating to service delivery to children with disabilities. The SENOs will be responsible for co-ordinating and facilitating delivery of educational services to children with disabilities at local level. In particular, the SENOs will be a focal point of contact for parents/guardians and schools, and will process applications for resources for children with disabilities who have special educational needs. This will also involve regular and detailed engagement with organisations such as health authorities and the Department, including administrative divisions, the Inspectorate and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

5. Transfer of Functions

The transfer of functions from the Department of Education and Science to NCSE is effective from 1 January, 2005.

6. Processing of Applications for Resources

With effect from 1 January 2005 the NCSE, through the local SENO, will process resource applications for children with disabilities who have special educational needs. In doing so, the Council will be required to observe Departmental policy. The following functions are the responsibility of the NCSE with effect from 1 January 2005:

- a) processing applications for teacher support in respect of children with disabilities and deciding on the level of support for special educational needs appropriate to the school;
- b) processing applications for special needs assistant support in respect of children with disabilities and deciding on the level of support for special educational needs appropriate to the school;
- c) examining applications for special equipment/assistive technology;
- d) examining applications for transport arrangements for children with disabilities and making recommendations to the Department of Education and Science;

- e) identifying appropriate educational settings for individual children with special educational needs.

With effect from 1 January 2005 applications in relation to any of the above should be submitted to the local SENO. In relation to (a) and (b) above, following consideration of the application including consultations with schools and parents/guardians as necessary the SENO will decide on any adjustments to be made in the special needs assistant support and teaching support for special educational needs in the school. The decision will be confirmed by the SENO in writing to the school. The appointment of any additional staff arising from this decision will be subject to the provisions of Section 8 of this circular.

In the case of applications relating to c), d) and e) above, the SENO will process these applications in conjunction with the Department.

The National Council for Special Education intends to adopt similar procedures and timescales for applications as adopted by the Department last year i.e.;

[Form SN1 05/06](#) - [Form SN1 05/06 VEC](#)

This will apply to special needs pupils who have not already been allocated additional teaching support or special needs assistant support in 2004/05 or whose requirements have since changed. Applications in respect of pupils already enrolled in the school should be submitted by **31 March 2005 to the local SENO.**

Copies of form SN1 05/06 enclosed.

[Form SN2 05/06](#) - [Form SN2 05/06 VEC](#)

This will apply to special needs pupils (individuals or groups) who already have additional teaching and/or special needs assistant support in 2004/05 and which the school certifies will continue to require this support in 2005/06. Such applications should be submitted by **25th February 2005 to the local SENO.**

Copies of form SN2 05/06 enclosed.

7. Departmental Policy in relation to the allocation of resources

The criteria set out in the policy circulars applying in the primary sector namely Circular Letter [M 08/99](#), Circular [SP ED 07/02](#), Circular [SP. Ed 08/02](#), will form the basis for the determining if a child has a special educational need.

The level of teaching and special needs assistant support for special educational needs will be determined by the SENO by reference to

- the level of support for the particular disability as set out in the relevant primary circulars viz. Circular Letter [M 08/99](#), Circular [SP ED 07/02](#), Circular [SP. Ed 08/02](#), and
- the relevant professional reports/assessments

- the overall level of special needs resources available to the school
- the special needs pupils already attending the school
- the feasibility and desirability of maximising group teaching approaches in catering for special needs students

A copy of the relevant Circulars is available on the Department of Education and Science Website www.education.ie .

8. Appointments of additional resource teachers and special needs assistants

In regard to special needs assistant support:

The school authority may proceed to make the necessary staffing adjustments on receipt of the decision from the SENO.

In regard to additional teaching support:

- (i) School authorities within their teacher quota may proceed to make the necessary staffing adjustments on receipt of the decision of the SENO. For this purpose the teacher quota is as determined at the date of the **initial** Schedule of Department Supported Posts (normally issued in January/February). Schools within quota are those who do not have permanent posts in excess of the school's entitlement on the initial schedule.
- (ii) All other schools, including those where the surplus position changes subsequent to the date of the initial schedule, should await the direction of the Department of Education and Science before making any teacher staff adjustments

9. Contacting the NCSE and SENOs

A letter will issue to each school giving the contact details for the SENO attached to each School.

10. Communications

Any communication with the Department in relation to the content of this letter should be e-mailed by the school authority to allocations@education.gov.ie

A. Barrett
Principal Officer
January 2005

Functions of the National Council for Special Education as set out in S.I. 270 of 2004

- a) Conduct and commission research on matters relevant to its functions and, as it considers appropriate, to publish in such form and manner as it thinks fit the findings arising out of such research,
- b) Advise the Minister for Education and Science in relation to any matter relating to the education of children and others with disabilities on being requested by the Minister to do so,
- c) Make available to the parents of children with disabilities information in relation to the provision for their children regarding education,
- d) Consult with schools, health boards and other relevant bodies in relation to the provision of education and support services to children with disabilities,
- e) From time to time carry out general assessment and review of the provision of education and related support services to children with disabilities,
- f) Monitor the educational progress of children with disabilities and ensure that it is reviewed at regular intervals, and
- g) Disseminate to schools and to parents information relating to best practice, nationally and internationally, concerning the education of children with disabilities.

In carrying out these functions, the Council and its employees shall act in accordance with any policy direction issued by the Minister.

**Functions of the National Council for Special Education
as set out in the
Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004**

(a) to disseminate to schools, parents and such other persons as the Council considers appropriate information relating to best practice, nationally and internationally, concerning the education of children with special educational needs;

(b) in consultation with schools, health boards and such other persons as the Council considers appropriate to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs;

(c) in consultation with schools and with such persons as the Council considers appropriate to plan for the integration of education for students with special educational needs with education for students generally;

(d) to make available to the parents of children with special educational needs information in relation to their entitlements and the entitlements of their children;

(e) to ensure that the progress of students with special educational needs is monitored and that it is reviewed at regular intervals;

(f) to assess and review the resources required in relation to educational provision for children with special educational needs;

(g) to ensure that a continuum of special educational provision is available as required in relation to each type of disability;

(h) to review generally the provision made for adults with disabilities to avail of higher education and adult and continuing education, rehabilitation and training and to publish reports on the results of such reviews (which reviews may include recommendations as to the manner in which such provision could be improved);

(i) to advise all educational institutions concerning best practice in respect of the education of adults who have disabilities;

(j) to advise the Minister in relation to any matter relating to the education of children and others with disabilities;

(k) to consult with such voluntary bodies as the Council considers appropriate, (being bodies whose objects relate to the promotion of the interests of, or the provision of support services to, persons with disabilities) for the purposes of ensuring that their knowledge and expertise can inform the development of policy by the Council and the planning and provision of support services, and

(l) to conduct and commission research on matters relevant to the functions of the Council and, as it considers appropriate, to publish in such form and manner as the Council thinks fit the findings arising out of such research.