

Report of Special Education Needs Sub-Committee 2019/2020

Members: Mr. Paul Fiorentini, President, Ms. Brenda Kelly, Chairperson, Ms. Mary Jackson, Mr. Adrian Jackson, Mr. Craig Petrie, Mr. Patrick McVicar, Ms. Antoinette Nic Gearailt, Ms. Dorothy Butterly, Mr. Gary O'Sullivan, Ms. Áine O'Sullivan, Assistant General Secretary and Mr. John Irwin, General Secretary.

Allocation of Teaching Resources to Support Students with SEN

In September 2017 the Department of Education and Skills introduced a new model for the allocation of teaching resources to support students with special educational needs. This new model and the organisation, deployment and use of special education teachers was detailed in Circular letter 14/2017 and the *Guidelines for Post Primary Schools Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*. Under the new model the allocation to each school was based on the school's individual profile. The allocation to schools remained in place for two years. Then the profiles of all schools were reviewed to re-determine the level of need in relation to students with special educational needs and the allocation of teaching resources for September 2019. The updated profiles were determined using the following criteria: Baseline date 20%, Complex Needs 63%, Gender 2.15%, Standardised Tests 11.6% and Disadvantage 3.1%. The allocation that issued to schools following this review will remain in place for a period of two years. Circular letter 08/2019 sets out the full details in relation to profiling and allocations.

SEN Inspections

Until 2018 the Inspectorate evaluated provision for students with special educational needs in post-primary schools through the Subject Inspection model. In February 2019 the Inspectorate completed development of a new evaluation model entitled the Evaluation of Provision for Students with Additional and Special Educational Needs in Post Primary Schools (SEN-PP). This new evaluation model is linked to a number of different developments: the introduction of the new model for the allocation of teaching resources to support students with special educational needs, the publication of *Guidelines for Post Primary Schools Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools* and *Looking at Our School 2016* and an increased emphasis on the continuum of support framework. Inspectors conducted the first evaluations in March 2019.



Shirley B. Murphy, Post-Primary SEN Inspector and Antoinette Nic Gearailt, Former President, ACCS.

Demonstration Project

Access to therapy support has been identified as a need and a difficulty in schools. In May 2018 the Government announced an initiative to provide speech and language and occupational therapy support in 75 schools and 75 preschools during the 2018/2019 school year. The NCSE are managing the delivery of this Demonstration Project. Therapists are working with NCSE support service staff to ensure that the therapy support provided complements other resources in the school. The 75 schools, randomly selected and inclusive of Community and Comprehensive Schools, are in West Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow.

Review of SNA Scheme and Allocation Model

In May 2018 the NCSE published the findings of a comprehensive review of the SNA scheme. A range of recommendations have emanated from the report including a broader range of supports provided through 10 regional support teams, the title SNA be replaced by that of Inclusion Support Assistants and training to be provided for Inclusion Support Assistants, teachers and the wider school community. ACCS and the other management bodies have been invited to participate in a consultation process on the SNA scheme.

A Review of SNA allocations to schools is being carried out in accordance with Circular 0031/2014. The process involves schools with students receiving SNA support for 3 or more years.

ACCS Support

ACCS supported schools in the implementation and evaluation of the new model through its CPD programme and its Special Education Needs Seminar held in October 2019, in Mount Wolseley Hotel. The aim of the seminar was to inform and support schools in providing quality inclusive education in line with guidelines and developments in the area of special education provision. Presenters from the NCSE, NEPS, MIC and the DES Inspectorate shared their expertise on policy, best practice, supports, developments and evaluation in special education provision. The feedback from participants was very positive. All presentations from this seminar are available on www.accs.ie.



Dr. Finn Ó Murchú, Head of School, MIC St. Patrick's Campus, Thurles, Dr. Johanna Fitzgerald, Head of Educational Psychology, Inclusive and Special Education, MIC, Antoinette Nic Gearailt, Former President, ACCS and Paul Fiorentini, President ACCS.

ACCS continues to seek the allocation of a stand-alone SENCO position (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) in every school.

Finally, the Management Bodies Representative Group, (MRG) has recently been re-established to liaise with the NCSE and the DES in relation to Special Education. Antoinette Nic Gearailt and Paul Fiorentini represent ACCS on this group.

*Ms. Brenda Kelly,
Chairperson.*