



0039/2025

**To: Patron bodies, Managerial Authorities, Principals and Teachers of
Recognised Primary, Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools
and
The Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards.**

**Title: Approach and key measures to support the Forward Planning for
Special Education Provision for the 2026/2027 school year and beyond**

1. Summary of Circular

There are two main aspects to this Circular Letter.

The first relates to key measures to enhance our forward planning arrangements for special education provision for the 2026/27 school year which include:

- Indicative timelines for identifying and establishing new special classes and special school provision;
- Approach for prioritising schools for opening new special classes and expanding special school provision;
- Role of School Patrons;
- Direct engagement by National Council for Special Education (NCSE) with schools on new special classes as part of regular visits and contact;
- Strengthened forward planning through improved data sharing and notification arrangements including requirement for NCSE to be notified by **1 October 2025** when seeking a special class or special school placement;
- Updated eligibility criteria for enrolment in special classes and special schools;
- Streamlined arrangements to support the re-purposing of existing accommodation to facilitate opening new special classes and
- Requirements in relation to Admissions and the need to review admission policies for special schools and mainstream schools with special classes.

The second aspect of the Circular Letter is to provide an overview on work being undertaken by the Department of Education and Youth ('the Department') and NCSE to enhance the inclusive and integrated aspects of our school system over the medium term. This work includes:

- NCSE supporting a common application trial for special class enrolments in a number of areas;
- The Department working to pilot a Single Application System for admission to first year and to special classes at post-primary schools in certain areas as a



step towards a nationwide common application system as included in the Programme for Government;

- Commencement of work on developing a new process for how children access special schools which is based on educational needs;
- Consideration of the designation of our special schools;
- Providing guidelines for schools on reviewing special class placements and
- Progress in developing a new roadmap to provide a more inclusive education system in line with the NCSE policy advice where the majority of children with special educational needs can be supported to attend their local school.

2. Purpose and Context

Working in collaboration with the Department and schools and patrons/trustees, the NCSE seeks to provide the opportunity for inclusive educational experiences for all children and young people with special educational needs, which respond to each child and young person's needs and abilities. As set out in legislation, schools, boards of management and patron bodies are required to collaborate with the NCSE in the provision of special education places.

Whilst the vast majority of children and young people with special educational needs are supported in mainstream classes with their peers, the requirement for additional provision in special classes and special schools continues to increase annually. In order to plan and prepare for this increasing need, the requirement to introduce new measures as described below to enhance collaboration and support between schools, the Department and the NCSE is acknowledged.

This Circular Letter builds on the information set out in the Departments letter of 4th June 2024 (available at: [Strategic Capacity Planning 2025 and Beyond \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)) to all schools on forward planning and replaces Circular Letter 0080/2024 which set out a range of measures to support the forward planning of special education provision for the 2025/2026 school year. This Circular Letter focuses on the forward planning of special education provision for the 2026/2027 school year and beyond.

The Department and the NCSE understand the desire of schools, boards of management, patron bodies and trustees for greater clarity and involvement in the forward planning of new special class and special school provision. This Circular Letter aims to provide such clarity in relation to planning for the 2026/2027 school year. The support of schools, boards of management, patron bodies and trustees in progressing new special class and special school provision for the 2025/2026 is acknowledged by the Department and the NCSE. Work will continue with stakeholders, building on the strong collaboration of recent years, to ensure that children with special educational needs can access the specialist placements they require.

It is the collective desire of all stakeholders and indeed the parents of children with special educational needs that we progress the provision of additional special class and special school provision even earlier for the 2026/2027 school year. This will help



to ensure that there is earlier clarity for families and indeed more time for schools to prepare and plan to provide new places and arrange repurposing works, recruit staff, run admission processes and access relevant training and supports.

It is aim of the Department and the NCSE that the majority of new special classes for the 2026/2027 school year will be sanctioned by 31 December 2025. This is an ambitious target, but one which we think can have significant benefits for both families and schools. To achieve this target will require significant work and collaboration between all stakeholders. This work will require:

- A collective buy-in from all stakeholders to make this target a reality,
- Engagement by the NCSE and the Department with school patron bodies to agree on schools to be approached to open new special classes,
- Direct engagement by NCSE regional teams with schools in relation to new special classes as part of regular visits and contact,
- Support for schools from the NCSE on planning and preparing for a new special class,
- Timely decisions from boards of management confirming agreement to open new special classes, which may require an emergency board of management meeting if required. The NCSE will also copy request to open letters to schools to patron bodies as well going forward,
- An agreed process whereby the NCSE can escalate matters to school patron level if a school is not responding positively to a request to open a new special class,
- Streamlined Department supports and funding for any repurposing works to existing accommodation or the provision of modular accommodation (where considered by the Department to be necessary) and
- Tailored training, guidance and supports for schools opening new special classes.

The Department and the NCSE are proposing an indicative timeline that should provide greater clarity for schools and families in relation to the forward planning of new special classes for the 2026/2027 school year. This timeline is set out in detail in Appendix 1 and underpins the aim to have the majority of new special classes for the 2026/2027 school year sanctioned by 31 December 2025.

3. Prioritising schools to be approached to open new special classes for the school year 2026/2027

Building on the arrangements for the current school year, the Department and the NCSE propose to continue with a more targeted approach to the forward planning of new special class provision for the 2026/2027 school year. The NCSE will be meeting with school patron bodies in the coming weeks to discuss this approach in more detail. Essentially, the NCSE will be primarily focusing on:



- the remaining medium to larger primary schools (at least principal + 8 teachers) who will not have a special class for the 2025/2026 school year;
- medium and larger primary schools who have 1 or 2 special classes, but based on their enrolments, could provide additional special classes and
- post-primary schools who do not have a special class for the 2025/2026 school year.

This approach will continue to ensure that there is greater equity and fairness in the provision of special classes across more medium and larger primary schools and across all post-primary schools.

Where there is a need for special class places in a local area, and there is no available school to meet this need using the criteria above, the NCSE can approach other schools to open special classes. This is particularly the case in rural areas where there may be a large number of smaller primary schools.

It is the intention of both the Department and the NCSE that schools that have a number of existing special classes (3 at primary and 4 at post-primary) will not be requested to open further special classes for the 2026/2027 school year. This is to ensure an equitable distribution of special classes can be achieved across a greater number of schools.

4. Role of school patron body to support forward planning

The Department and the NCSE acknowledge the key role of a school patron body in relation to supporting the provision of new special classes in schools. To support greater patron body involvement in the process of providing new special classes, the NCSE intends to meet with school patron bodies before the end of this 2024/2025 school year and early in the coming 2025/2026 school year to discuss and identify the schools that the NCSE should approach in relation to the establishment of new special classes for the 2026/2027 school year and beyond. These meetings will have due regard to the priorities outlined above and the patron bodies' knowledge of their schools.

In areas of pressure on mainstream school enrolments, patron bodies should work with schools to manage enrolments across schools to ensure that there is sufficient capacity within a local area for children with special educational needs.

Following these initial meetings, the NCSE will keep patron bodies updated on their engagement with schools and will bring to their attention any concerns in relation to schools not responding positively to requests to open new special classes at an early stage.

The NCSE will also ensure that school patron bodies receive copies of letters to schools requesting they open a special class and sanction letters as new special classes are confirmed.



5. NCSE direct engagement with schools on new special classes

The number of Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENO) increased from 65 to 120 at the start of the 2024/2025 school year. At the start of the 2024/2025 school year, the NCSE wrote to all schools informing them of their SENOs. As part of the forward planning of special education provision for the 2025/2026 school year, the NCSE conducted over 1,700 school planning visits to approach schools to open new special classes and to review the resourcing and training needs of schools more generally.

The NCSE will be contacting schools to arrange planning visits for the 2026/2027 school year during September and October 2025. These visits will be part of the NCSE ongoing direct engagement with schools. In terms of planning for new special classes the NCSE will engage with schools on:

- the level of special educational needs in the school,
- the current resources in the school to support children and young people with special educational needs,
- the importance of maximising the accommodation available in the school to facilitate opening new special classes,
- the enrolment trends and teaching allocation for the school,
- the school's awareness of local children due to start school in the next year or two who may require a special class place,
- the NCSE awareness of the local level of need for special education places,
- the NCSE awareness of local children in early years education who may require a special education placement,
- the operation of any existing special classes in the school and the review of placements,
- information on leavers from existing special classes,
- guidance in relation to admission of children and young people with special educational needs and
- supports and training available for schools opening new special classes.

Where the Department is satisfied that schools do not have available accommodation to repurpose as a special class, the NCSE will also discuss the process for provision of modular accommodation to provide special classes. Where schools are provided with modular accommodation, the general preference of the Department is to provide accommodation to facilitate 2 special classes.

The NCSE is also progressing the recruitment of a Buildings Officer which will assist in identifying accommodation solutions for opening new special classes.



6. Strengthening forward planning through better data sharing and notification arrangements

All stakeholders, including parent representative bodies agree that the earlier the NCSE are aware of the level of need for special class places in an area the better in terms of forward planning. The Department and the NCSE acknowledge the work of parent representative bodies and special education advocacy groups and schools to support the new parents notify process introduced under Circular Letter 0080/2024.

The Department and the NCSE consider that to support better forward planning and to provide earlier clarity for families of children with special educational needs, the timeline by which parents are to notify the NCSE that a child requires a special class or special school place for the 2026/2027 school year should be brought forward to **1 October 2025**. This timeline will apply to the following school years in turn as well.

Parents/guardians can notify the NCSE via the parents notify system which is outlined on the NCSE website at <https://ncse.ie/notify-ncse-special-class-special-school>.

Parents/guardians engaging with this process will be provided with a letter from the NCSE confirming the outcome of the NCSE's review of the supporting evidence provided which they can then give to the school/s as part of their application for enrolment in a special class or special school.

NCSE will also be cognisant in their forward planning of children otherwise known to them for example, those on home tuition and transitioning from a primary special class to a post-primary special class.

Schools who receive applications for enrolment to a special class or special school should advise parents to notify the NCSE if they haven't already done so.

In addition, where schools are aware that parents of a child or young person already enrolled in a mainstream class in their school is seeking a special class or special school place, these schools should advise the NCSE of these children before 1 October. These children should also be discussed at SENO planning meetings with schools.

Where the NCSE is advised of a need for a special class or special school place for the next school year after 1 October of the existing school year, it will continue to support the family secure a special class or special school placement in new special classes or special schools being established or in existing special classes and special schools as possible.

Where the NCSE is advised of a need for a special class or special school place for the next school year after 1 October of the existing school year, and where it is not possible to provide such a placement, the NCSE will support any existing mainstream setting that a child or young person is attending through the use of special education teaching and special needs assistant resources as necessary. The NCSE will be available to support the school and family in these instances. Where a child is transitioning from early years, the NCSE will work to support that child's placement in a



junior infant mainstream class. At all times, the NCSE will continue to work to secure an appropriate placement as soon as is possible.

NCSE work to ensure parents are aware of notification requirement

The NCSE is planning a targeted engagement and communications strategy to ensure the requirement for parents/guardians seeking a special class or special school to notify the NCSE is made known.

This will include:

- Finalising a data sharing agreement with the Early Years Sector to ensure that children accessing the highest levels of support under the Access and Inclusion Model in the Early Years and Care sector are known to the NCSE,
- Organising dedicated parent/guardian information sessions,
- Meeting with local HSE Children's Disability Network Teams to discuss children who may require a special education placement,
- Engaging with parents of children progressing from Early Intervention classes,
- Contacting parents of pre-school children who are accessing additional home tuition supports and
- Supporting children's transition from primary to post-primary.

A dedicated communications strategy will also be developed by the NCSE to ensure that parents have information on mainstream, special class and special school supports. The NCSE is currently redesigning its website, which will be more accessible and user-friendly for families wishing to access information and details in relation to special education provision in their local area.

7. Eligibility criteria for enrolment in a special class or special school

Given the ongoing growth in the number of special classes and special school places being provided for children and young people with special educational needs, the Department and the NCSE is slightly revising the eligibility criteria for enrolment in a special class or special school for the 2026/2027 school year and beyond. One additional criterion is being added in relation to a NCSE letter. **There are no changes to the existing criteria relating to diagnosis or reports.**

While it is acknowledged that there are many types of special classes and special schools, given the significant increase in autism special classes in recent years, the following section looks at eligibility for enrolment in an autism special class as an example.

Children and young people are eligible for enrolment in a special class for autism when the following is provided in support of such an application:

Professional report(s) outlining:

.....



- Diagnosis of Autism: DSM IV/V or ICD 10/11 (psychologist, psychiatrist, multi-disciplinary report)

AND

- A demonstration of the understanding of complexity of the child's overall level of need/s evidenced in the professional reports

AND

- Given the severity or complexity of the child's support needs, a clear professional recommendation as to what educational placement type would be most appropriate to best meet the child's needs, along with the rationale for same

AND

- A letter from the NCSE confirming that the child is known to them and that the child has the required diagnosis and recommendation for a special class for autism.

The revised eligibility criteria will provide greater clarity for families and schools that a child has the required diagnosis and professional requirement for a special class for autism. The NCSE will allocate teaching and SNA resources to schools for new special classes once a school returns the notification of enrolments and the applicants meet the eligibility criteria as outlined.

Schools must now reflect this revised eligibility criteria for enrolment in an autism special class in their admission policies.

The new eligibility requirement for a NCSE letter is also a prerequisite for enrolment in other types of special classes and in special schools and must be reflected in those admission policies also.

8. Arrangements to support the re-purposing of existing accommodation to facilitate opening new special classes

Over 80% of new special classes are being established in existing accommodation for the 2025/2026 school year and this remains the objective for the 2026/27 school year. This is likely to continue for the foreseeable future with the downward trajectory in overall enrolments at primary level and with First Year enrolments in most post-primary schools now having peaked. Maximising the use of existing accommodation is important to facilitate the timely opening of additional special classes that are established by the NCSE.

At primary level, any reduction in the mainstream teacher allocation due to falling enrolments will be expected to free up classroom accommodation. Additionally, special class provision, where needed, will take precedence over non-core educational usage of rooms such as use by third-party organisations, or room usage that is outside the standard accommodation provided to primary schools.

At post-primary level, the capacity of existing accommodation can be maximised through the use of staggered breaks, consideration of base class sizes, high utilisation of classroom accommodation and efficient timetabling practices



The utilisation of existing special class accommodation should be considered as part of this exercise – inclusive practices involve good integration of students with special educational needs in mainstream classes with their peers and this can facilitate the support of more than 6 children from a special class base classroom.

In assessing applications for additional accommodation at post primary level, for special education or for mainstream, the Planning and Building Unit will be examining the capacity utilisation at the school.

The following streamlined arrangements were put in place in 2024 by the Department's Planning and Building Unit to support the re-purposing of existing accommodation to facilitate opening new special classes and these will continue for the 2026/2027 school year:

1. A start-up grant of €30,000 will be paid to each school that is approved by the NCSE to open a new special class for the 2025/26 school year. This grant payment relates to each new special class and does not require an application from the relevant schools - it will be paid by the Department's Planning and Building Unit based on notification to it from the NCSE on lists of schools that are opening new special classes for the 2026/27 school year. This grant will provide good flexibility to schools to facilitate the opening of a new special class and encompasses the existing start-up grant, sensory room fit out grant/creation of a quiet space and also Furniture & Equipment grant and ICT grant all of which have been updated to an overall total of €30,000. Further details on this grant can be accessed at this link [Guidance Note on Enhanced Grant \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie).

2. Some schools may require small-scale re-purposing works to facilitate the establishment of a new special class in existing accommodation. For these schools, a new simplified application process is also being put in place to support delivery of same in a timely manner. The level of funding involved will depend on the nature of small-scale works to be undertaken and will be up to a maximum of €70,000 for each new special class being opened for the 2026/27 school year. This grant funding will provide good flexibility to schools to facilitate the opening of a new special class and is in addition to the €30,000 start-up grant referenced at No.1 above. The grant funding will be provided to schools for devolved procurement and delivery and includes flexibility to prioritise the nature of the necessary small-scale works to facilitate the opening of the new special class for the 2026/27 school year. Further technical guidance and details on the application process can be accessed at this link [Guidance Note on Enhanced Grant \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie).

3. A minority of schools may require more significant works relating to the opening of a new special class in existing accommodation. On receipt of such applications, a more detailed technical assessment will be undertaken to validate the scope of necessary works. It is envisaged that this will also determine the initial phase of works needed to facilitate the opening of the special class for the 2026/27 school year. Any other works will be considered as appropriate as part of the wider capital programme and prioritised accordingly. It is envisaged that such projects will generally be delivered as devolved projects. Project Management supports will be targeted at special schools and mainstream schools that involve more complex projects. Schools that are approved for more significant works will not be separately granted funding under No.2 above.

4. The Department will provide modular accommodation as necessary where it is satisfied there is insufficient capacity within existing accommodation to facilitate the



opening of a new special class that is sanctioned by the NCSE. However, given the longer lead in periods involved, it is envisaged that contingency arrangements may need to be put in place at local school level in consultation with the NCSE to facilitate the early opening of new special classes.

Again, the earlier that new special classes are sanctioned, preferably before 31 December, the more time that is available to undertake any repurposing works or provide modular accommodation.

9. Guidance in relation to admissions

On foot of a recent Inspectorate report on admission policies for special classes (available at: [Inspectorate publications \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)), the Minister for Education and Youth wrote to all patron bodies asking them to urgently review the admission policies of their schools with special classes. This review should consider the extent to which any references to the following four criteria in an admission policy are contained which can act as a barrier to children accessing a special class place and can be considered not in accordance with the Admissions to School Act, 2018 and NCSE guidelines:

- Category of special educational needs that is not in line with the NCSE guidelines for the operation of special classes,
- Ability to participate in a mainstream class,
- Prioritisation of children and young people who are already enrolled in the school who are not notified to and verified by the NCSE for admission to a special class (the revised eligibility criteria at section 7 above deals with this matter) and
- Preventing children and young people with a recommendation for placement in a special class or a special school from accessing a place.

The review should also remove barriers that prevent applicants who have the category of special educational needs from accessing a special class in line with the school's admission policy. These barriers could include

- references to prospective students' potential behaviour,
- Additional requests for reports and documentation over and above a diagnosis and professional reports confirming eligibility for the special class and
- Reference to admission to the special class being contingent on resources.

For clarity, children and young people already enrolled in mainstream who require a special class place and meet the eligibility criteria for enrolment in the special class (which now includes the NCSE letter), can be considered by a school for a place in a new special class. Schools must have due regard to any relevant existing waiting list and the admission policy for the school.

As a follow on to the recent report, the Inspectorate of the Department will also be preparing an annual written report on the implementation of admission policies in



primary and post primary schools with special classes for autistic children and young people.

The Department will provide additional information on the language permitted in admission policies in relation to special classes in a separate note to be made available at: [School admissions/enrolments \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie).

Rolling waiting lists

Where a special class is oversubscribed, the Admissions to School Act 2018 requires schools to compile a waiting list for a special class in accordance with their admissions policy. The school must use this list to fill any vacancies arising during the school year in question only. If the school receive late applications for the special class, these applicants should be added to the bottom of the waiting list. These late applicants, even if they are already enrolled in the mainstream classes of the school or are local children and young people, cannot be prioritised over those on the existing waiting list for the special class.

Balancing mainstream and special class provision

In considering admission policies, patrons should examine the extent to which the policy and the planned admission notice for 2026/2027 are appropriately balancing mainstream and special class provision at the school and across the area. In the first instance, the policy, and the outcomes of previous admissions processes, should be reviewed to establish whether the school place needs of local children, including local children with special educational needs, are being appropriately prioritised.

Effective coordination between patrons and schools in an area will be an important element of ensuring that there is a balanced approach to meeting the overall school place needs and ensuring children are not travelling significant distances to access a special class place.

10. Other work being progressed and initiatives to improve the forward planning for Special Education provision

The Department and the NCSE would also like to take the opportunity to provide a summary update on other initiatives being progressed or initiated to support and enhance the development of an inclusive education system which will meet the needs of all students. This will also enable more targeted forward planning for provision for students with special educational needs.

Follow on from the NCSE policy advice on inclusive education

In respect of the publication of the NCSE policy advice on the development of a more inclusive education system in early 2024, the Department secured European funding to support the development of a roadmap for inclusive education in Ireland.



This funding has allowed for external consultancy to be provided by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE). It is worth noting that the European Commission's DG Reform Office included a stipulation in the funding approval which requires collaboration with Finland in this process.

The programme provides tailor-made technical expertise to increase the capacity to design and implement specialist provision to support inclusive education in mainstream settings, as well as the improved awareness of stakeholders towards inclusive education.

The expected outputs of the project are:

- An in-depth analysis of current legal framework of both countries (Ireland and Finland) and an analysis of national/EU priorities and recommendations regarding specialist provision to support inclusive education in mainstream settings.
- A report on the key findings from the critical analysis of existing stakeholders, as well as existing training programmes and support in place for teachers and school leaders towards inclusive education in each country.
- A report mapping of each system's i) strengths, challenges, and opportunities for quality inclusive education; ii) identified strategies for addressing each system's needs; iii) lessons learnt from European good practice; iv) identification of common challenges and opportunities for both countries.
- Capacity-building pilot actions on key priority areas, identified in the previous outputs, with selected target groups.
- A roadmap for each country detailing goals, actions, responsible actors, and resources needed (including upskilling of teaching profession and other system capacity building and strengthening activities).
- Communication actions and outputs (i.e., kick-off and closing event; social media, news items, project public brief, etc.).

Common application trials

As a step towards the implementation of the Programme for Government commitment to roll out a nationwide common application system, the Department is progressing work on piloting a single application system for admission to post-primary in a number of areas. It is intended that the single application system in these areas will include applications for admission to post-primary special classes in the relevant schools also.

Learnings from this and from other common applications systems, including for primary special classes in Dublin 15, will contribute to the development of a nationwide system.

The NCSE continues to be available to support schools in other regions who may wish to consider operating a common application trial for admission to special classes or special schools.



Designation of special schools

The Department and the NCSE intend to commence work on reviewing the designation of existing special schools to ensure that all special schools respond to the needs of children in their local region, rather than children having to travel past one or more special schools to access a special school placement due to the designation of those schools. Any change to designation will proceed on a gradual phased basis and schools will be supported with training, supports and guidance by the NCSE. It is acknowledged that a large number of special schools have already expanded their enrolment beyond their original designation.

Build on existing good practice and work on developing a new process for accessing special school and class places

Existing guidance provides that children who may be seeking a special class or special school enrolment benefit from targeted intervention and supports that are reviewed and monitored over time. It is very important that this work continues and informs decision-making about future enrolment.

The Department and the NCSE are also working to develop a new process for accessing special school places initially, and subsequently for access to special classes.

This would see a move away from a health or medical based assessment process to a model that considers the educational needs of a child or young person. Further consultation with stakeholders will occur in due course with the aim of introducing a new process for admissions in the 2026/2027 school year.

Review of placements

The Department published Circular Letter 0023/2025 which sets out guidelines for schools on the review of students' placements in special classes. Schools are required to review placements on a regular basis and at least annually.

Pilot programmes

The Department has initiated a number of pilot programmes which are designed to test approaches to the provision of additional supports for students with special educational needs. These include:

- A transitions programme to support young people in their progression from post-primary schools.
- The Towards Inclusion programme which involves collaboration between mainstream and special schools in teaching, learning and assessment.
- The *Saibhriú* programme which is aimed at enhancing provision for students with exceptional abilities.



11. Queries

Any queries in relation to this Circular Letter can be addressed to the Department of Education and Youth at the following email addresses:

special_education@education.gov.ie

Further guidance on the measures outlined in this Circular Letter will be provided via a Frequently Asked Questions document if necessary.

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Appendix 1 – indicative timeline for providing new special classes. e.g a school opening a special class for the first time in 2026/2027

May/June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department and NCSE identify schools to be prioritised for approach to open new special classes - New forward planning Circular Letter to issue to all schools - NCSE to begin meetings with school patrons
School summer holidays	Schools closed. Department and NCSE continue preparatory work on forward planning for 2026/2027
September/October 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NCSE undertake visits to schools as part of normal business to include special class planning, SNA reviews etc - Schools engage with the NCSE in relation to any child/ren within the school who may require access to a special class - NCSE keep patron bodies updated - NCSE formally request boards of management to open special classes - Parents and schools to notify NCSE by 1 October of the need for a special class or special school place for 2026/2027
November 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NCSE engage with boards of management to confirm new special classes. - Boards of management confirm agreement to open special classes with NCSE - NCSE escalate any issues to school patron
December 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NCSE and Department engage with school patron bodies to confirm any outstanding classes - NCSE publish list of new special classes - Department to link in with relevant patrons and schools on accommodation requirements – target is for over 80% of new special classes to be established through repurposing existing accommodation with balance of requirements to be met through modular accommodation.
January 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NCSE consider need for Section 37A if level of need is unmet - NCSE and patron bodies support schools to progress admission processes, recruit staff and prepare for new special classes
February 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All admission processes for new special classes to conclude by end of the month. - Notification of enrolments to be shared with NCSE as they happen but no later than end of February.
March – June 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NCSE to support any children being notified later seeking a special class place - NCSE to confirm staffing after receipt of notifications of enrolment and schools to progress recruitment of staff - NCSE to provide training and supports