



IRELAND'S AUTISM CHARITY

## New Measures for Planning and Providing Special Education

Circular 0080/2024 from the Department of Education, outlines new measures to improve the planning and provision of special education, with a specific focus on special classes and schools, including those for children with autism. These measures will be carried out by the NCSE (National Council for Special Education).

- » Parents will now notify the NCSE by 1 February
- » The NCSE will review the consent form and application
- » The NCSE will provide parents with a Letter of Eligibility



### New powers for NCSE

The NCSE can now:



- » Access school waiting lists (primary and secondary) for specialist placements, such as autism class placements
- » Obtain information about children currently attending mainstream schools who are seeking a place in an autism class or special school

This should lead to better planning and resource allocation to meet students' needs efficiently.

### Parents Notify Process

Parents must now notify the NCSE by 1 February of the year before their child requires a special class or school placement. This early notification allows for better forward planning and ensures the NCSE can review eligibility criteria before schools begin making decisions regarding placement.

### How to complete the process

1. Visit the NCSE website <https://ncse.ie> and click on the 'Notify NCSE' tile.
2. Scroll to the bottom of the page and download the consent form (review guide on how to complete the form if required <https://ncse.ie/how-to-submit-the-consent-form-and-reports>).
3. Attach the completed consent form and your child's assessment report to an email and send to [parentsnotify@ncse.ie](mailto:parentsnotify@ncse.ie).
4. You will get an automated response email to confirm receipt of your application.
5. When NCSE has reviewed your application, they will forward it to the relevant county team, who will reach out to you directly in due course.
6. The NCSE will issue you with a letter confirming that your child's report meets the eligibility criteria of the placement being sought.

## The Letter of Eligibility should:

- » Speed up the process of applications for special school and autism class placements.
- » Provide both the parent and the school being applied to with early clarity on a child's eligibility.

## How to get a print consent form:

If you need a printed version of the consent form, you can ask your local SENO to send a hard copy by post. Once received, complete the form and return it along with a copy of your child's assessment report.

## If in contact with SENO

If you are already in contact with your local SENO, you can request a letter of eligibility directly from them.

### *Important information regarding Letter of Eligibility*

- » The letter does not guarantee a placement but confirms your child's eligibility for a special school or autism class.
- » The letter does not replace the standard school application procedures for placement but can be included in support of the application.



### *Should be read with designation of special school*

- » If the letter of eligibility confirms that your child qualifies for a special school placement, it will not specify what type of special school you are applying to.
- » The letter must be read with the designation of the special school that is specific to your child's needs. For example, autism and complex needs.
- » This eligibility does not extend to schools with different designations, such as those for children with learning disabilities, unless your child also has diagnoses that match those criteria.

### *If you do not have a letter*

- » Parents should not be disadvantaged during the admissions process due to the absence of a letter of eligibility from the NCSE.
- » If you are waiting to receive a letter of eligibility, the schools should continue to waitlist your child for a placement in the meantime.
- » If a child is offered a place in a school but does not have a letter of eligibility, and the school is uncertain about the child's eligibility for the placement, the school may, with parental consent, request that the child's report be forwarded to the local SENO to verify their eligibility.

### *Use of clear language*

- » The language used in your child's report can affect their eligibility for a placement. Terms like "may," "could," or "might" are not definitive enough.
- » The NCSE requires more explicit language, such as "requires," "necessary," or "essential," to issue a letter of eligibility.
- » If the language in your child's report does not meet the eligibility criteria, you should contact your local SENO or the professional who completed the assessment to request an amendment.

### *School transport*

The letter does not determine a child's eligibility for school transport. You or the SENO must complete a separate application form for this.