

Education Therapy Service expands to a further 19 special schools across nine counties

Press Release: Tuesday 01 September 2026

Minister for Education and Youth, Hildegard Naughton, and Minister of State for Special Education and Inclusion, Michael Moynihan, have today (Tuesday) announced the expansion of the Education Therapy Service (ETS), with a further 19 special schools to benefit from the service.

The Education Therapy Service (ETS) is expanding to a further 19 special schools across nine counties, marking the next significant phase in the Government's commitment to strengthening therapy supports for children and young people with special educational needs.

The ETS is a standalone commitment under the Programme for Government and represents a major cross-departmental initiative to embed therapy supports within school communities. The service is being delivered by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

Today's announcement means the ETS is now extending into all counties with a special school. The additional 19 schools are located in Cavan, Clare, Donegal, Kerry, Mayo, Offaly, Roscommon, Sligo and Waterford.

In line with available therapy resources, it is envisaged that these schools will have access to therapy supports by the end of the first school term of the 2026/27 academic year.

This expansion builds on the initial rollout of the ETS announced in February 2026, which saw 45 special schools across clusters in Carlow, Cork, Dublin, Galway, Kildare, Kilkenny, Louth, Laois, Limerick, Longford, Meath, Monaghan, Tipperary, Westmeath, Wexford and Wicklow included in the first phase of the service.

The first cohort of therapists assigned to schools in the initial rollout were onboarded by the NCSE in May 2026, with further therapists continuing to join the ETS over the coming months to support the schools involved in the first phase.

The Department of Education and Youth and the NCSE continue to work together to progress delivery of the ETS, with further expansion to all special schools planned throughout 2027.

Announcing the expansion of the Education Therapy Service, Minister for Education and Youth, Hildegard Naughton, said:

“Every child and young person should have the support they need to participate, learn and thrive in their school community. For children with special educational needs, access to the right therapeutic supports can make a real and lasting difference to their educational experience and to their ability to reach their full potential.

“Today’s announcement is an important step forward in delivering on the Government’s commitment to bring therapy supports closer to children, their families and the schools that support them every day. I am delighted that a further 19 special schools across nine counties will now benefit from the Education Therapy Service.

“This expansion means the service will now extend into every county with a special school. It reflects our ambition to build a more inclusive education system, where therapeutic expertise is an integral part of the supports available within school communities, rather than something that children and families have to navigate separately.

“I want to acknowledge the work of the NCSE, schools, therapists, families and education partners in making this service a reality. We will continue to build on the progress made this year, with further expansion planned throughout 2027, so that children and young people attending special schools can access high-quality therapy supports as part of their educational journey.”

Minister of State for Special Education and Inclusion, Michael Moynihan, said:

“With today’s announcement, the Education Therapy Service will now have a presence in 64 of our special schools across the country. The ETS strengthens the supports available to special schools by bringing therapy expertise right into the school community. Having therapists in schools supporting children and working with staff will greatly bolster the school day. It also means families can be assured their child has the opportunity to participate fully in school and access the supports they need to thrive.

“It is really important for me, Minister Naughton and the Department that we continue to expand the ETS and we will be working to achieve this over the coming months.”

Engagement with schools included in this expansion will take place in the coming weeks ahead of therapist assignment. Further information, including FAQs, is available on the NCSE website and Gov.ie

John Kearney, Chief Executive Officer of the National Council for Special Education, said:

"The onboarding of therapists and the establishment of dedicated therapy leadership within the NCSE have been significant achievements to date, and we are pleased to begin working with additional schools as the service expands.

"The NCSE remains committed to working closely with schools, families and our therapy staff to ensure children and young people receive the support they need to participate and succeed in education."

Notes to Editor

- Under the Education Therapy Service (ETS), therapy is delivered through a multi-tiered model of support that responds to children's individual needs while also fostering inclusive environments where all learners can meaningfully participate. The model recognises the importance of supporting individuals, whole classes and wider school communities.

- The ETS is designed to supplement, not replace, existing children's health and disability services and will operate in a coordinated and complementary manner alongside NEPS, Primary Care, Children's Disability Services and CAMHS.
- The Enhanced In-School Therapy Supports Pilot, and associated recruitment, will continue during the 2026/27 school year, in the identified 16 special schools in Cork, Dublin and Galway.
- The NCSE also provides sustained in-school therapy supports to schools for defined periods, as well as regional therapy supports, including Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) and implementation support for school staff.
- The Department of Education and Youth, NCSE and HSE continue to work closely together to support integrated working across education and health services and to ensure clarity for schools, families and services.
- Rolling recruitment campaigns will continue to support the ongoing expansion of the Education Therapy Service, including the planned recruitment of Therapy Manager posts.