

Provision of Special Education PMB

That Dáil Éireann:

Recognises:

- The fundamental right of every child to access education.
- The growing current and projected demand for special education placements.
- The current shortage of special classes and appropriate school places, leaving children, particularly those with additional needs, without access to suitable education.
- The trauma and absolute heartbreak endured by parents and families due to the lack of suitable school places.
- The failure of successive Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael governments to adequately plan for and invest in the expansion of special education.
- The lack of coordination between the Department of Education, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and schools, resulting in a fragmented and inefficient system.
- The disproportionate impact on children from disadvantaged backgrounds, who face even greater barriers to accessing appropriate education.
- The current state of special education is unacceptable and fails to uphold the rights of children with additional needs.

Calls on the Government to:

- Immediately expand the number of special school places, special classes and special education teaching hours across the state.
- Ensure every child currently without a suitable school place, and all those due to start primary or secondary school in September 2025, have access to a suitable school place within a reasonable distance from their home.
- Enact the Education (Inclusion of Persons) Bill 2023 and the Education (Amendment) Bill 2024 to identify demand, gaps in provision and to develop a long-term strategy for special education.
- Ensure meaningful consultation and greater collaboration between education authorities and school leaders in special education planning and delivery, and to address the shortage in special school and special class placements.
- Streamline the process for opening new special classes and provide additional funding and resources for schools opening new special classes.
- Invest in recruitment and continuous professional development for teachers and special needs assistants (SNAs) to ensure they are supported to meet the diverse needs of students in special classes. This must include addressing the root causes of the recruitment and retention crisis in the education and disability sectors.
- Expand the Educational Therapy Support Service to help build the capacity of school communities to meet student's needs.