

## JOURNAL OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN IRELAND

### Contents

<b>Editorial</b>	
Anna Logan	83
<b>Getting Special Class Inclusion on the Agenda: Transformational Leadership and Developing a Whole School Approach to Inclusion</b>	
Elizabeth Flanagan	88
<b>An Irish Study of the Perspectives of Special Class Teachers and Special School Teachers of Toileting Differences Experienced by Children and Adolescents on the Autism Spectrum</b>	
Evelyn Skehan and Kathryn O'Mahony	100
<b>Teacher Experiences of Using the Aistear Early Childhood Curriculum Framework to Support Inclusion for Autistic Pupils within Irish Mainstream Primary Schools</b>	
Laura McGrath and Neil Kenny	113
<b>A Critical Interrogation of the Special Education Teacher Allocation Model within the Context of Leadership and Teacher Professional Learning</b>	
Maggie Green	130

## Editorial

The publication of *REACH: Journal of Inclusive Education in Ireland* 35.2 comes at the end of a landmark year in Ireland's decade of centenaries with 2022 marking the centenary of the State and the adoption of the first Irish Constitution which asserted that "All citizens of the Irish Free State (Saorstát Eireann) have the right to free elementary education" (Saorstát Eireann, 1922, Article 10). Since then, the impact of key legislation including the Education Act (Ireland, 1998) and education policy initiatives such as the introduction of free post primary education (O'Malley, 1966) have been widely acknowledged as pivotal in removing barriers and increasing access to education for all.

In relation to inclusive and special education, the 30 years since the publication of the Report of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC) (Department of Education and Science, 1993) has been marked by significant policy developments most recently the introduction of the special education teacher allocation model (SETAM) (DES, 2017). Writing in this journal six years ago, Travers (2017) posed several important questions relating to the need to evaluate SETAM including highlighting the need to consider the interrelationships with special class and special schools and school access to support services. Five years on, it is timely to reflect on the overarching question posed by Travers namely "Will the model lead to a reduction in practices that can act as barriers to inclusive education?" (2017, p. 104). Each of the articles published in this issue of REACH sheds light on diverse aspects of this key concern for all who are involved or interested in inclusive and special education.

Writing in this journal six years ago Travers (2017) posed several important questions relating to the need to evaluate SETAM including highlighting the need to consider the interrelationships with special class and special schools and school access to support services. Five years on from the implementation it is timely to reflect on the overarching question posed by Travers namely "Will the model lead to a reduction in practices that can act as barriers to inclusive education?" (2017, p. 104). Each of the articles published in this issue of REACH sheds light on diverse aspects of this key concern for all who are involved or interested in inclusive and special education.

Notably, this issue features four articles focusing on key dimensions of inclusive education across the continuum of education provision originally proposed by SERC in the context of provision in special classes, special schools and in mainstream classes. In the first of these Flanagan highlights key considerations

relating to the inclusion of pupils in special classes offering insights in relation to the role of school leaders in establishing a culture of inclusion. Flanagan also offers critical analyses of how schools and school leaders might use frameworks such as the Inclusive Education Framework (NCSE, 2011), or the recently published Looking at our schools (DE, 2022a) and Autism Good Practice Indicators (DE, 2022b) to audit inclusive practice. Skehan and O'Mahony turn the spotlight on a highly sensitive yet critically important and under researched aspect of inclusive and special education namely toileting differences experienced by children and young people on the autism spectrum. In this study the perspectives of special class and special school teachers was explored and the authors present key insights relating to the factors which help teachers to support learners who present with toileting differences.

McGrath and Kenny present findings relating to the experiences of teachers using the Aistear Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009) with autistic pupils in early intervention settings, and in special and mainstream classes, to highlight the importance of collaborative whole-school approaches in supporting inclusion and transition within schools. In the final article, Green critically analyses the SETAM in the context of leadership and professional learning. This consideration of the barriers and solutions leads to a presentation of an action plan to support the future development of the model in schools.

It is noteworthy that the author or first author of each of the articles above is a teacher. Moreover, all the research published in this issue was conducted by teachers as part of their postgraduate studies evidencing a snapshot of the commitment and investment of so many teachers to their own professional learning relating to inclusive and special education. Amid calls from many quarters for system reform (Aslam, 2022; Children's Rights Alliance, 2022; Inclusion Ireland, 2022), with the *Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act* currently under review (Department of Education, 2021), and the ongoing expansion of special class provision, we once again face a watershed moment in inclusive education in Ireland. It is imperative that in this context policy makers invest in supporting professional learning for all involved in inclusive education. As articulated by Páid McGee almost 20 years ago

*Through bad times and good, whether the system moves at a headlong pace, progresses sedately or stalls, the quality of teaching remains, for the child with special educational needs more than for any other child, the pre-eminent influence on the educational outcome (2004, p. 69).*

*Reach Journal* aims to act as a resource for teachers and other professionals working with learners with a diverse range of abilities along a continuum of need and to provide an opportunity for those involved and interested in inclusive and special education to publish articles based on their research, practice and experience. The Editorial Board of REACH particularly welcomes submissions from education practitioners and contributions reflecting the views and experiences of learners with a diverse range of abilities along a continuum of need. See <https://reachjournal.ie> for submission guidelines and template, contact the editor [reach\\_editor.iatse@gmail.com](mailto:reach_editor.iatse@gmail.com)) to discuss possible submissions and follow the Journal on Twitter @ReachJournal

**ANNA LOGAN**

Editor

## REFERENCES

- AsIAM ( 2022) *Reforming the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 - A Green Paper from AsIAM* <https://asiam.ie/wp-content/plugins/pdf-viewer-for-elementor/assets/pdfjs/web/viewer.html?file=https://asiam.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/EPSEN-Reform-AsIAM-Ireland.pdf&embedded=true22>) ( accessed 8th December, 2022)
- Children’s Rights Alliance (2022) *Children’s Rights Alliance welcomes Review of Out of School Education Provision and urges Department to act on recommendations without delay.* <https://www.childrensrights.ie/resources/press-release-children%E2%80%99s-rights-10> ( accessed 8th December, 2021)
- Department of Education and Science (1993) *Report of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC)*. Dublin: Author
- Department of Education and Skills (2017) Circular 0013/2017. *Special Education Teaching Allocation*, Dublin: DES.
- Department of Education (2021) *Minister Josepha Madigan launches review of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004* <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/69020-minister-josepha-madigan-launches-review-of-the-education-for-persons-with-special-educational-needs-epsen-act-2004/> ( accessed 8th December, 2022)
- Department of Education (2022a) *Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools*, Dublin: Author <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/8d539-autism-good-prac->

- [tice-guidance-for-schools-supporting-children-and-young-people/](#) (accessed 8th December, 2022)
- Department of Education (2022b) *Looking at our School: Quality Frameworks for Primary and Special Schools/ Post Primary Schools*, Dublin: Author <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b1bb3-looking-at-our-school-2022/> ( accessed 8th December, 2022)
- Inclusion Ireland (2022) A Statement on Inclusive Education 19th May 2022 <https://inclusionireland.ie/news-events/inclusive-ed-may2022/> ( Accessed 8th December, 2022)
- Ireland (1998) *Education Act*, Dublin: Houses of the Oireachtas
- Ireland (2004) *Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act*, Dublin: Houses of the Oireachtas
- Ireland (2005) *Disability Act*, Dublin: Houses of the Oireachtas.
- McGee, P. (2004). Reflections on Irish Special Education over Four Decades. *REACH: Journal of Special Needs Education in Ireland*, 17(2), 67–69. Retrieved from <https://reachjournal.ie/index.php/reach/article/view/164>
- National Council for Special Education (2011) *Inclusive Education Framework*: Trim: Author
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (2009) *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, Dublin: Author.
- O'Malley, D. ( 1996) *Speech delivered at the dinner of the National Union of Journalists, 10th September*, <https://www.fiannafail.ie/news/speech-by-donogh-omalley-td-announcing-free-universal-secondary-education-10th-sept-1966> ( accessed 8th December, 2022)
- Saorstát Eireann (1922) *The Constitution of the Irish Free State* <https://www.irish-statutebook.ie/eli/1922/act/1/enacted/en/print> ( accessed 8th December, 2022)
- Travers, J. ( 2017) Does the New Model for Special Education Teacher Allocation in Ireland Reach the Equity Bar?. *REACH: Journal of Special Needs Education in Ireland*, 30(2), 101–105. Retrieved from <https://reachjournal.ie/index.php/reach/article/view/36>