



SUMMER 2026

AEARS NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the **Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service (AEARS)** Newsletter.

This newsletter is designed to keep parents and guardians informed about important updates, developments, and resources related to home education and alternative education settings in Ireland.

Our goal is to provide clear, timely, and helpful information to support families navigating the registration and assessment process under Section 14 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. Whether you're new to home education or have been on this journey for some time, we hope this newsletter will serve as a valuable resource to keep you connected with the AEARS team and the wider community.

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AEARS PERFORMANCE AND ACTIVITY

Quarter 2, 2026

Within Tusla, AEARS is part of the Quality and Regulation (QR) Directorate. QR produces a quarterly report on performance and activity across services that include AEARS. Key metrics of activity are part of this data. Some metrics from this report for Quarter 2, 2026 are listed below.

2,674 Children on the Section 14 Register	479 Registered with special educational needs	988 Applications for home education received	900 Assessments completed	345 On the waiting list for assessment
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This data shows an increasing trend within home education based on the number of registrations, the number of children with special educational needs and the number of applications received in 2025

This data can be reviewed using the below link, AEARS data is located on pages 44–46 of this report – [Q1 2026 Service Performance & Activity Report](#)

NCSE Assessment of Need – Referral Form

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) have devised a referral form specifically for AEARS to assist parent(s)/guardian(s) of a child who is home educating where an application for an Assessment of Need through the HSE has been made by parent(s)/guardian(s).

An AEARS assessor will consult and support the parent(s)/guardian(s) in the completion of the Assessment of Need referral form. An assessor in most cases will complete this form with the parent(s)/guardian(s) when they are undertaking an assessment of the education provision for a child whose name is on the Section 14 Register or applying to be registered.

The NCSE is the link between the HSE who manage the Assessment of Need process and AEARS who are provided with information from parent(s)/guardian(s) regarding their child's education provision and educational needs. NCSE send a form for the AEARS Assessor to complete with the parent(s)/guardian(s). All relevant sections on the form are completed and there is a specific section that provides an opportunity if applicable to outline any education services/resources recommended to meet the additional education needs of the child/young person to support their home education provision. This is done in consultation with the parent(s)/guardian(s).

AEARS are working through the referrals for completion from NCSE.



UNDERSTANDING A COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT

Parent(s)/guardian(s) are familiar with the Preliminary and Review assessment process. On some occasions, following a preliminary or a review assessment, AEARS is unable to determine if a certain minimum education is being met. In these circumstances, a Comprehensive Assessment will take place. Last year two comprehensive assessments were undertaken.

A Comprehensive Assessment is a more detailed assessment that involves entering the place where the child is being educated and observing the child receiving the education that is being provided. The assessor will observe the premises, equipment, and materials used in providing education for the child. The assessment will include assessment of the child with regards to his/her intellectual, emotional, and physical development, including an assessment of his/her knowledge and understanding of such subjects, and proficiency in such exercises and disciplines, as the assessor considers appropriate. It is to be noted that this type of assessment may take up a substantial part of the day or may take more than one day. It is preferable that the assessment be carried out during the time normally allocated to learning activities.

Further details are available below

[Guidelines on the Assessment of Education in Places Other Than Recognised Schools](#)

[Resources and Information – Tusla Child and Family Agency](#)



WHAT ARE CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS?

Following an assessment of the education provision, parent(s)/guardian(s) will receive a copy of the draft assessment report. The assessment report may include conditions attached to the registration and/or recommendations from the assessor.



Conditions

As part of the assessment process, conditions will be attached where issues have been identified through assessment relating to the intellectual, social, emotional, or physical development of the child in line with the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 Section 14 (12)(a)(ii).

Where conditions have been applied to a child's registration, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must sign and return a written agreement to the conditions outlined in the report, before the child's name can be added to the Section 14 Register or retained on the register.

A review assessment of the conditions will take place within 6 months or sooner if required. Conditions attached to a registration decision can be subject to appeal by parent(s)/guardian(s).



Recommendations

As part of the preliminary and ongoing review assessment process, advisory recommendations may be made by assessors to support the education provision being provided by the parent/guardian. The recommendations made are at the professional discretion of the individual assessors and it is not a requirement for recommendations to be implemented.

The recommendations offered by an assessor may include educational resources, experiences, and activities, which could be of benefit to the child in securing and developing skills to help them better reach their potential.



COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TESS AND AEARS

Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) works in partnership with AEARS supporting children regarding their education. There is a joint working agreement that assists AEARS and TESS with ensuring all children are in receipt of an education and that all children are either placed on the Department of Education and Youth School Register or on the Section 14 Register.

AEARS share information regarding applications and registrations, so TESS can support families where required. AEARS will make a referral to TESS where a child's registration has not been approved or where an application for section 14 registration has been deemed invalid.

It is important that any changes to your address/contact details or changes of circumstances are notified to AEARS, so we have up to date information and contact details for all parent(s)/guardian(s) on the register.

HSE's Public Health Screening Programmes



HSE Public Health Screening Programmes

As outlined in the previous AEARS newsletter the HSE provides information and services on childhood health screening – including hearing, vision and dental checks – to parents and guardians of children attending recognised schools. This screening plays a vital role in early detection and support for children's health and development.



Bridging the Gap for Home-Educated Children

At present, families whose children are registered for home education under Section 14 do not routinely receive this information. AEARS and the Public Health Department recognise the importance of ensuring equitable access to these services for all children, regardless of their educational setting.



Collaborative Efforts Underway

To address this gap, AEARS in collaboration with the Public Health Department are working through how best to communicate screening programme details to parents and guardians of home-educated children. The goal is to ensure that families are informed about available services and can access them in a timely and supportive manner.

Following recent consultation with the HSE we have included a link to the HSE webpage – [School Health Programme](#), with details of health screening available around the country for parent(s)/guardian(s) to access. AEARS will also incorporate this information on the AEARS website for all parents.

AEARS ongoing commitment to supporting the wellbeing of children in home education and ensuring that families have access to the same essential health resources as those in mainstream education.

If you wish to get further information about screening services available, you can contact your [local health office](#).



AEARS CONTACT INFORMATION

GET IN TOUCH

Our Home Education team is here to help with any questions about registration, assessment, or home education support.



Phone

Home Education Team

01 771 8635

or

01 771 8854



Email

Send us a message anytime

home.education@tusla.ie

Thank you for reading the Summer 2026 AEARS Newsletter. We hope you found it informative, and we look forward to keeping you updated in future editions.

