



Department of Education and Science
An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta



AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS
AGUS EOLAÍOCHTA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
AND SCIENCE

Annual Report

2008

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Our Mission and Goals

The mission of the Department of Education and Science is to provide for high quality education, which will:

- Enable individuals to achieve their full potential and to participate fully as members of society, and
- Contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development.

In pursuit of our mission, the Department has the following high-level goals:

- 1 Support and improve the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of education for every learner in our schools
- 2 Enhance opportunities in further education and youth services
- 3 Sustain and strengthen higher education and research
- 4 Support the delivery and development of education through policy formulation, high-quality planning and a strong customer focus.

In support of these high-level goals, the Department is engaged in a wide range of activities at all levels of the education system, including:

- The provision of high-quality policy advice to the Minister and Government and as an aid to decision making and accountability to the Oireachtas;
- Conducting research, review, evaluation and development of policy relating to all areas of education;
- Ensuring high-quality education through the role of the Inspectorate at first and second level and through partnership with responsible authorities in higher and further education and the Youth sector;
- Discharging a wide range of operational, resourcing and support functions relating to the funding of the sector, the payment of teaching and non-teaching staff and grants to schools and other education bodies, the allocation of teaching resources and other supports, the provision of psychological and school transport services and performing a range of personnel and staff relations functions;
- Planning and provision of education infrastructure to support the delivery of high-quality education at all levels;
- Enhancing education through co-operation on a North-South basis and through active involvement in a variety of EU activities and with a number of other international agencies.



Foreword by the Minister

I welcome this Annual Report which sets out the progress made in 2008 in implementing the Department's Statement of Strategy 2008-2010.

Since my appointment as Minister for Education and Science in 2008 the economic downturn has put significant pressure on the delivery of the Department's schemes and services. The education system itself is adapting and responding to the wider needs of society and the economy. This can be seen in the very substantial programme of curriculum change across both primary and post-primary levels, the development of new learning opportunities outside the traditional post-primary system, the expansion of third level, the growth of a new fourth level and new opportunities for adult and further education.

Within a relatively short period of time, educational opportunities have been significantly transformed for the better. Fifty five per cent of all 17-19 year olds, or 70% of those who sit the Leaving Cert, will go on to third level colleges. With the increased availability of second chance education and the wide range of courses on offer in the PLC sector and through other providers, the choice on offer has never been greater. Opportunities for adults have also been improved, with enhanced access to a wide range of courses from basic literacy right up to third level.

Enrolment at all levels of education is projected to rise over the next decade in line with population growth and demand. The projected growth in numbers at all levels will have a range of implications across the sector over the coming years, including increased pressures on school accommodation. In 2008, investment of €644m in school infrastructure resulted in the completion of large scale primary and post primary school projects and provided a total of 11,803 additional permanent school places in new schools and additional permanent school places and enhanced facilities in existing schools for a further 11,100 pupils.

In addition to increasing numbers of learners, wider changes in the landscape of Irish society provide a backdrop for the challenges facing our education system. Ireland has become a richly diverse society, with a new mix of languages, cultures and expectations. There are increasing demands on the education system in responding to the needs of emerging communities. At primary level, a new model of Community National School is being developed to meet the need for a new form of plurality of provision within the framework of a single school setting. The new schools will operate under VEC patronage following the passage of the relevant legislation and will provide a distinctive new choice alongside the existing patron body schools.

The pilot phase of the new Community National School model, which began in September 2008, incorporates arrangements to capture feedback and information, to evaluate progress and to make recommendations for the future development of the model.

I hope that you will find the information in this report useful. On my own behalf, and on behalf of my colleagues, Ministers of State Seán Haughey T.D., Barry Andrews T.D., John Curran T.D., Conor Lenihan T.D. and John Moloney T.D., I want to take this opportunity to express our thanks to all who work in the Department and in the wider education sector for their ongoing commitment to improving education at all levels.

Batt O'Keeffe T.D.

Minister for Education and Science

Statement from the Secretary General

I am pleased to present this Annual Report which details the progress made in 2008 towards the achievement of the high-level goals in the Department's Statement of Strategy 2008 – 2010.

Set against a backdrop of significant growth in demand for services and a deteriorating economic outlook, our challenge is to deliver optimum outcomes for learners within the resources available. Through its impact on the lives of individuals, education helps to shape our values as a society, promote good citizenship and enrich our culture. Future jobs, investment and the return to economic growth now depend greatly on the quality of our educated workforce and on our capacity for research and innovation.



Ensuring effective participation for all continued to be a priority in 2008 with programmes addressing educational disadvantage, supporting students with special needs and measures to assist students needing English language assistance.

Measures to support and enhance quality education outcomes included individual school and thematic evaluations, a new school leadership programme, the commencement of Project Maths, agreement on procedures in relation to teacher performance and promotion to posts of responsibility in schools. A pilot of a new model of primary school commenced from September 2008.

Developments to support schools and school staff in 2008 included the roll out of the On Line Claims System (OLCS) to primary schools. All schools are now using the system to input claims for the payment of casual and non casual teachers and special need assistants. In 2008, the second stage of the Occupational Health Strategy was introduced. The service encompasses pre-employment health assessments, sickness absence management, medical assessments of fitness for work and ill health retirement.

As part of the Government programme of decentralisation, 88 Dublin based administrative posts decentralised to Athlone in 2008.

In 2008, a government decision was taken to integrate the Youth Affairs Section of the Department into the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. This structural change, effective from 1st January 2009, will provide opportunities to ensure a cohesive and comprehensive response to the needs of young people.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff who moved from this Department with the Youth Affairs Section for their dedication to their duties and to wish them every success in the future.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of the staff in the Department and to thank them for their contribution towards achieving our objectives in 2008.

I look forward to continuing to work with all those involved in the education sector in delivering and developing high quality education services.

Brigid McManus
Secretary General



High Level Goal 1:

“Support and improve the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of education for every learner in our schools”

Section 01

Supporting School Communities

Section One

Supporting School Communities

HIGH LEVEL GOAL ONE:

Support and improve the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of education for every learner in our schools

Context

Attendance at full-time education is compulsory for all children between six and sixteen years of age. Although children in Ireland are not obliged to attend school until the age of six, almost all children begin school in the September following their fourth birthday. Thus, a great percentage of four-year-olds and almost all five-year-olds are enrolled in the infant classes in primary schools.

FIRST LEVEL ENROLMENT STATISTICS FOR 2008/2009 ACADEMIC YEAR		
<i>School Type</i>	<i>Number Schools</i>	<i>Total Enrolment</i>
Primary Schools	3,175	498,914
Special Schools	128	

Children from about 12 to 18 years attend a second-level school. Second-level schools include secondary schools, vocational schools and community and comprehensive schools.

SECOND LEVEL ENROLMENT STATISTICS FOR 2008/2009 ACADEMIC YEAR		
<i>School Type</i>	<i>Number Schools</i>	<i>Enrolment</i>
Secondary	388	184,329
Vocational	253	103,732
Community & Comprehensive	91	53,251

In its Strategy Statement 2008-2010 this Department identified the following priorities for primary and post-primary education:

- Promoting quality, relevance and inclusiveness by supporting schools in developing an inclusive environment for all learners
- Targeting interventions to address educational disadvantage
- Raising educational attainment
- Meeting the needs of learners with special educational needs
- Providing supports for newcomer children

- Progressing the modernisation agenda
- Enhancing teacher education and professional development
- Promoting ongoing curriculum development, school evaluation and quality improvement
- Providing high-quality school accommodation, administrative and financial supports

OBJECTIVE 1.1:

Develop appropriate policy initiatives and responses to underpin the effective day to day management and operation of schools including the provision of a range of financial, staffing and administrative supports.

Financial Supports

At primary level the two main sources of funding provided by the Department to schools are the Capitation and Ancillary Services grants.

Capitation funding is intended to contribute towards the cost of such items as heating, lighting, cleaning, insurance, general up-keep and general teaching aids required in the schools. Capitation grants are paid on a per capita basis. In addition, special enhanced capitation rates are paid in respect of children with special needs who attend special schools or special classes dedicated to children with particular special needs. The standard rate of capitation grant in 2008 was €178.58 per pupil, an increase of €15 on the 2007 rate. In 2008, the total capitation grant expenditure exceeded €95m.

Ancillary Services funding is provided to primary schools to provide for secretarial and caretaking services. The grant is intended to assist those schools that have not been provided with secretarial or caretaking assistance under the 1978/1979 schemes, under which certain schools receive the benefit of a full-time secretary or caretaker whose salary is fully funded by the Department. The amount of the grant paid to an individual school is determined by the enrolment figures. Schools with an enrolment of up to 60 pupils receive a minimum grant while schools with an enrolment of 500 pupils or more receive the maximum grant. The standard rate of grant with effect from 1st January 2008 was €151.50 per pupil, an increase of €6 on the 2007 rate. The effect of this is that the minimum grant that applied in 2008 was increased from €8,730 to €9,090 while the maximum grant increased from €72,750 to €75,750. In 2008, Ancillary Services Grant expenditure exceeded €70m.

At Second level over €147m expenditure was incurred by the Department in 2008 in relation to:

- Grants paid to secondary schools in relation to current expenses and
- Provision of running costs of community and comprehensive schools together with non-teaching costs.

The per capita grant for recognised pupils in secondary schools in 2008 was €331 which was an increase of €15 on the 2007 rate.

Community and comprehensive schools, unlike voluntary secondary schools, do not receive capitation grants. Instead each school is given a budget, following a negotiation process on the basis of estimates received from the schools. The budget is based mainly on pupil numbers, but also takes into account factors which vary from school to school.

Teachers

Through the provision of over 58,000 teacher posts the Department catered for a combined enrolment of approximately 840,000 students at first and second level for the academic year which started in September 2008.

At first level there were 31,349 teaching posts as of year end 2008/2009. This translated to a Pupil Teacher Ratio of 16.0:1.

At second level there were 27,236 teaching posts for the 2007/2008 academic year.

Payroll and Pension Services

The Department coordinates and administers a range of payroll services to:

- Teachers, special needs assistants and certain categories of clerical and caretaking staff employed in primary, secondary, community and comprehensive schools
- Retired teaching and non teaching staff formerly employed in primary, secondary, community and comprehensive schools.

The Pension Section of the Department has both an administration and regulatory role. Administrative services are provided to teachers, Special Needs Assistants and certain non teaching staff in Primary, Secondary and Comprehensive schools. The services cover a range of pension matters and include:

- Processing pension benefits on retirement or death of scheme members
- Issuing quotations for the purchase of notional service for pension purposes
- Arranging transfer of service to and from other pension schemes
- Providing information for scheme members on their entitlements.

The regulatory role includes:

- Amending relevant superannuation schemes
- Contributing to the development of pensions policy initiatives
- Providing pension related guidance and information to education sector bodies.

In 2008, 1,314 teachers retired, a very slight decrease from the previous year.

By end March 2008, the On Line Claims System had been rolled out to all primary schools. All schools are now using the system to input claims for the payment of casual and non casual teachers and special needs assistants. Absences of teachers and special needs assistants are also recorded on the system. The introduction of this system has created administrative efficiencies in schools and the Department. It also enables the casual and non casual teachers to receive payment in a shorter timeframe.

In 2008, new arrangements for the payment of gratuities to retirees, by electronic funds transfer through the payrolls, were introduced. This initiative has led to reduced processing times and provides for a more secure form of payment to retirees compared to payable orders.

In 2008 expenditure on the payrolls operated by the Payroll Division of the Department amounted to €4.25bn with 84,000 payments issuing each fortnight.

School Transport

In 2008, the School Transport Service carried in the region of 135,000 pupils each day of the school year, (75,000 post-primary pupils and 60,000 primary pupils, including almost 8,000 pupils with special needs) at a cost of €185.7m. School Transport is a very significant operation covering over 82 million kilometres on approximately 6,000 routes.

Revised Terms of Reference, guidelines, operating procedures and a new application form for the Independent School Transport Appeals Process were finalised in 2008. The Appeals Board was formally re-appointed by Minister of State Haughey for a three year term beginning 1 December 2008. The representation on the Board was expanded to include service user representation.

OBJECTIVE 1.2:

Promote the quality of teaching and learning

Evaluations in schools

The Inspectorate has statutory responsibility for evaluating the quality of educational provision in schools and centres for education. The table below provides an overview of inspection activity conducted in 2008.

AN OVERVIEW OF INSPECTION ACTIVITY CONDUCTED IN 2008	
<i>Type of inspection</i>	<i>2008</i>
Whole-school evaluation (WSE) Primary	245
Whole-school evaluation (WSE) Post-primary	60
Subject inspections—stand-alone	443
Subject inspections—within WSE	225
Programme evaluations	42
Probation of teachers (primary)	2,639
Evaluation reports on Irish colleges (<i>Coláistí Gaeilge</i>)	72
Centres for education (Youth Encounter, Youth Reach, Senior Traveller Training Centre, Centre for European Schooling)	17
Thematic evaluations	41 ¹
Assessments of education in places other than recognised schools (conducted at the request of the National Educational Welfare Board)	3
Total inspections	3,787

¹ A total of 135 schools were inspected as part of thematic evaluation work in 2008. However, of these 49 evaluations of leadership in primary and post-primary schools and 45 evaluations of English as an Additional Language (EAL) provision were conducted in the context of whole-school evaluations or subject inspections and are included in the totals for those evaluations rather than under thematic evaluations. The breakdown of the evaluations was: 49 evaluations of leadership in primary and post-primary schools; 45 evaluations of EAL in primary and post-primary schools; 25 Special Needs Assistant reviews in primary and post-primary schools; 6 DEIS good practice studies in primary schools; and 10 schools inspected as part of a thematic study of education of the hearing impaired.

During 2008 a total of 1,099 school inspection reports, including some conducted prior to 2008, was published on the Department's website (www.education.ie). The publication of reports ensures that schools, parents and the general public have access to meaningful information on quality and standards in the education system. The publication and dissemination of inspection findings also supports the provision of relevant policy advice for the education system.

REPORTS PUBLISHED IN 2008	
WSE Primary	257
WSE Post-primary	63
Centres for Education	23
Subject/Programme inspection within WSE	233
Stand-alone Subject/Programme inspections	523
Total	1,099

In addition to the publication of school inspection reports, the Inspectorate also published a number of composite and thematic reports in 2008. Composite reports are based on an analysis of subject inspection or other inspection data. During 2008, the following post-primary composite reports were published; *Looking at Home Economics*, *Looking at Irish at Junior Cycle*, *Looking at Geography*, *Looking at Materials Technology (Wood) and Construction Studies*, *Looking at Music* and *Looking at Junior Cycle Science*. The key findings and recommendations in these reports reflect the quality of current practice in the teaching of each of these subjects.

In 2008 the Inspectorate published *ICT in Schools*. This report presents the findings of a major evaluation which set out to establish the extent to which ICT was used in schools and to assess the impact of ICT on teaching and learning in both primary and post-primary schools in Ireland. The evaluation shows that while much progress has been achieved in the roll-out of ICT in schools, considerable challenges remain.

The Inspectorate also published *An Ghaeilge sa Bhunscoil* in 2008. This report sets out the main outcomes of an evaluation of the teaching of Irish in primary schools that was conducted by the Inspectorate in 2005. The report provides an account of the extent to which the curriculum is being implemented in ordinary schools (schools where education is provided through the medium of English). The inspectors' findings in relation to the standards of teaching and learning in Irish are also reported.

Initial Teacher Training

The Department is responsible for devising and implementing effective policies and measures to ensure the adequate supply of suitably qualified and trained primary school teachers in the short, medium and long term. This involves a high-level of communication and interaction with, inter alia, the Colleges of Education and the Teaching Council.

In response to the increased demand for teachers at primary level the number of places available on the post graduate course in primary teaching for 2008/2009 academic year was increased from 280 to 490.

Total funding for the non Higher Education Authority (HEA) Colleges of Education for 2008 was €12.26 million.

The Department is also responsible for implementing policies in relation to the post graduate diploma programme for post primary teachers, provided by the education departments of participating Universities.

Teacher Induction Training

The main objective of the Teacher Induction programme is to support the professional development of newly qualified teachers by way of systemic support in their first year of teaching, thus laying the foundations for subsequent professional growth and development. Phase VI of the National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction (NPPTI) was successfully completed in 2008.

Over €680,000 was spent on the NPPTI in 2008 with a total of 644 schools and 678 teachers participating.

In-Service Teacher Training

The Education Centre network operates under the aegis of the Teacher Education Section in the Department and serves as a regional infrastructure for the provision of teacher professional development services and other support services for teachers at both primary and second level.

There are 21 full time education centres and 9 part time centres nationally, organised in six regions. These centres host national programmes of curriculum reform and offer support services and courses covering a large range of subjects relating to teaching and learning.

Funding of over €4m was provided to the centres in 2008 which enabled them to run a total of 1,753 courses during the year, with over 35,000 teachers participating.

The Summer Course Programme continued in 2008. The principal objective of this programme is the advancement of teachers pedagogic (strategies of instruction, or a style of instruction) and management skills in the context of the work of the primary school.

548 summer courses were held in 2008 with a total of over 21,000 teachers participating (over 9,000 attended a regular course and almost 12,000 availing of an on-line course). Funding provided for 2008 was just under €60,000.

Funding of €1.65 million was provided to the Technology Subjects Support Service (T4), which is hosted by the Galway Education Centre, in 2008. T4 provides support to teachers and schools in implementing the four new and revised post-primary technology subjects. To date 2,000 teachers have attended in-service training.

In 2008, over €540,000 in funding was provided by the Department to a total of 496 successful applicants under the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme. The purpose of this scheme is to provide funds towards the cost of course and examination fees on successful completion of in-career development courses approved by the Department and school authorities.

School Leadership Training

Since 2003 the Leadership Development in Schools (LDS) programme has expanded the range and supports that it offers to school leaders. Over 10,000 teachers from principals to middle managers have successfully completed LDS module programmes such as Misneach, Spreagagh, Forbairt, Tánáiste, Cumasú and Cothú to date. This investment has led to a point where there are structured professional development opportunities for all school leaders in our education system from their point of appointment to day of retirement.

Tóraíocht, which is a post graduate Diploma in Educational Leadership offered in partnership with NUI Maynooth, was launched in 2008. It is intended for teachers with a minimum of four years teaching experience who may be interested in applying for senior leadership positions in primary and post primary schools. The course which is conducted through evening sessions in a number of education centres combines lectures, workshops, tutorials and on-line sessions. A total of 320 teachers applied for 160 places.

Almost €2.3 m was spend on the LDS programme in 2008 which facilitated 77 two-day residential programmes and 19 one day seminars which combined catered for a total 2,845 participants.

The National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS)

The NBSS was established in 2006 as part of the Department's response to the publication of the *Report of the Task Force on Student Behavior in Second Level Schools: School Matters*. The service forms part of an overall coherent national framework of support for schools experiencing difficulty coping with persistent and serious student disruption. The service is staffed by experienced practitioners from across the education sector. Approximately €680,000 was provided by the Department in 2008 to fund this service.

Introduction of Project Maths to Pilot Schools

Project Maths is a new ground-breaking curriculum development initiative in post-primary Mathematics. The project, which is scheduled to run from 2008 to at least 2013, will see the incremental development of revised syllabi in Junior and Leaving Certificate Mathematics alongside a significant programme of teacher professional development. The project will implement syllabus change in post-primary mathematics on a phased basis. The project has commenced in September 2008 in a group of 24 pilot schools. Syllabus revision will be informed by classroom experience and changes in assessment will be aligned with and underpin changes in syllabuses.

The project has been established by the Department in collaboration with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) who are leading the implementation of the project.

Creation of the Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS)

In 2008 the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) joined with the School Development Planning Service (SDPS). As a result, from September 2008 the first steps have been taken towards the creation of a cohesive single professional development support service

for the primary sector. The PPDS, while continuing to provide professional development programmes in response to system priorities, will be primarily concerned with the provision of customised support to schools and teachers.

Stay Safe programme

As a result of the continued targeting of support to the almost 1,000 schools who indicated in 2006 that they were not implementing this programme in full there remains only 266 schools which have yet to take up training. The Child Abuse Prevention Programme Support service provided training to over 1,250 teachers in 2008.

Child Protection Guidelines training

In 2008 training for Designated and Deputy Designated Liaison Persons was offered by the Primary Professional Development Service and Social Personal and Health Education support service at primary and post-primary level respectively to all schools.

Additional Second Level Supports

Completion of the intensive phase of support to teachers in History, Geography, Junior Science and Religious Education in 2008 has seen further consolidation of service at post primary level through the integration of History, Geography, Junior Science and Religious Education support services to the Second Level Support Service.

Irish/Gaeilge Support

Expansion of the Campai Samhraidh initiative run through Dublin West Education Centre to twenty primary DEIS band 1 schools in 2008, an increase from ten schools in previous years.

Continuation and expansion of the dedicated support in Gaeilge for primary and post primary teachers through the Primary Professional Development Service and the Second Level Support Service.

Integrating ICT into teaching and learning

The **ICT in Schools Programme**, which commenced in 1998, is designed to provide students with the opportunity to achieve computer literacy and to acquire the necessary skills for participation in the Information Society. Strategies are pursued through the work of the Department's ICT Policy Section and the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE), in collaboration with other agencies, support services and representative bodies as appropriate.

The provision of broadband to schools is an essential building block within the Department's strategy of integrating ICT into teaching and learning. The **Schools Broadband Access Programme** was undertaken in partnership with industry. The Agreement with IBEC/TIF (Telecommunications and Internet Federation) provided for a three year €18m joint Fund to meet the costs of schools local connectivity, with industry contributing €5 million per annum and the Government contributing €1 million per annum. Following the procurement process,

the roll-out of broadband connectivity commenced in June 2005. Over 99% of schools have been connected to the Network using a mixture of DSL, wireless, and satellite technologies. Under the Programme, schools connectivity is being routed to the Internet through a National Broadband Network, which has been developed by HEAnet. Each school is connected to the network via a high-speed broadband router, provided to the school and housed in the school, and a broadband access link. The Network provides centrally managed services for schools such as security, anti-spam/anti-virus and content filtering. The overall costs of the Programme to the end of 2008 were €34.4m.

Through its **Teaching Skills Initiative**, the NCTE provided over 11,000 teacher training places in 2008, with almost 156,000 places having been occupied since 1998. This training, which includes technical courses, subject specific courses, and internet, web design and digital media courses, addresses the specific needs of teachers in their use of ICT.

Additionally, the role of the school's ICT coordinating teacher, with the support of the school principal, is being prioritised as central in the provision of ongoing ICT support and advice to teachers. In this context, a first round of nationwide seminars, targeting ICT coordinating teachers in post-primary schools, was organised in 2008, and a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has been set up for all ICT coordinating teachers who attended.

In 2008 the Department published the report of the Minister's ICT Strategy Group – ***“Investing Effectively in Information and Communications Technology in Schools, 2008-2013”***.

The Scoilnet portal - a key access point in Irish education for those seeking curriculum-relevant learning resources – which is managed by the NCTE continues to grow, with traffic rising from circa 1 million visits in 2006 to 1.75 million visits in 2008. The amount of resources available has increased from approximately 7,600 physical files in 2006 to a current repository of over 11,000 reviewed teaching resources. In 2008 Scoilnet Search connected to the **European Learning Resource Exchange (LRE)** and provides access to over 100,000 resources from educational databases across Europe.

Scoilnet Maps an interactive mapping application featuring the complete suite of Ordnance Survey Ireland maps and ortho-photos online was rolled out to post-primary schools in February 2008 and had received more than 31,000 visits by year end. Supporting the Geography curricula at second-level, this initiative encourages teachers and students not only to view and print maps, but also to upload and share curriculum-relevant resources of their own. Scoilnet Maps is accessible through the Scoilnet portal to all students and teachers via the Schools Broadband Network, with teachers also being able to access the website from home.

Additionally, a *Framework Agreement* for procurement of Digital Reference Content was concluded in 2008, with a view to the provision of further content resources for use in teaching and learning in schools, in 2009 and beyond.

The **Digital Schools Award**, which was launched by the Minister for Education and Science in 2006, recognises excellence in schools approach to the integration of ICT in learning and teaching. This Award became available to all schools in January 2008 - during the course of the year 79 schools registered to become involved in the Award and 13 schools received it, bringing the total number of Digital Schools to 48 in 2008. In tandem with the national expansion of this

initiative, the Department also launched a targeted grant scheme under Dormant Accounts funding, in which 100 schools serving the most disadvantaged communities were invited to apply for funding to assist them in progressing towards Digital Schools status.

In addition the NCTE continued to support **Webwise** (www.webwise.ie), the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Node of Insafe (the European network of internet safety awareness nodes) and a range of other innovative projects throughout 2008.

On Safer Internet Day 2008, the Minister launched a fully integrated education programme that includes: classroom resources for use in teaching the SPHE curriculum to first, second, and third years in post-primary schools, nationwide in-service training for SPHE teachers, nationwide Internet Safety seminars for parents, nationwide Social Networking workshops for primary and post-primary teachers.

OBJECTIVE 1.3:

Provide targeted resources to promote social inclusion in our schools

Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools – DEIS

In 2005, the Department launched DEIS, an action plan to address the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities. This action plan is being implemented on a phased basis over five years. Under this specific initiative, the Department provided financial assistance to schools amounting to over €18m in the 2008/09 school year.

As part of the DEIS action plan, the measures outlined below have been implemented:

- ❑ Reduced pupil teacher ratio in primary schools in urban areas with most disadvantage
- ❑ Allocation of administrative principal on lower figures than generally apply in primary schools in urban areas
- ❑ Additional capitation funding based on level of disadvantage
- ❑ Additional funding for schools books
- ❑ Access to School Meals Programme
- ❑ Access to numeracy/literacy supports and measures at primary level
- ❑ Access to Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) services
- ❑ Access to School Completion Programme (SCP)
- ❑ Enhanced guidance counselling provision at post primary level
- ❑ Access to planning supports
- ❑ Provision for school library and librarian support at second level
- ❑ Access to Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) and Leaving Certificate Applied
- ❑ Access to range of professional development supports

In addition to the Department there are a number of other agencies involved in DEIS initiatives including the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI), the Second Level Support Service (SLSS) and the Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS).

The PPDS, while responsible for providing assistance in the area of implementing curriculum change, is also responsible for the implementation and co-ordination of literacy and numeracy strategies. These include:

- **The Reading Recovery** programme which is a school-based intervention designed to reduce literacy problems within the education system. It is an early intervention, giving children who have particular difficulties in reading and writing after one year in primary school, a period of intensive, individual teaching.
- **The First Steps** programme which addresses literacy needs in primary schools. It includes professional development courses and support materials for primary teachers. It offers teachers an accurate means of assessing and monitoring children's competencies and progress in reading, writing, spelling and oral language.
- **The Maths Recovery** programme which has been developed as a systematic response to the problem of chronic failure in school mathematics. It provides a programme of intensive, individualised teaching to students, in order to advance them to a level at which they are likely to learn successfully in a regular class.
- **The Ready Set Go Maths** programme is an intervention programme which contains a practical handbook of guidance for teachers in the use of a wide range of activities and materials to enable them to improve the quality and effectiveness of early learning in numeracy for children.

The following statistics highlight the impact of DEIS nationwide:

- 385,200 children at primary level attend schools that benefit from additional measures to combat educational disadvantage
- 97,400 students at post-primary level attend schools that benefit from additional measures to combat educational disadvantage
- 648 extra classroom teachers have been appointed at primary level
- 237 extra classroom teachers have been appointed at post-primary level
- 33 additional Administrative Principals have been appointed, on lower enrolment and staffing figures than apply in primary schools generally, to DEIS urban primary schools
- 151,000 children in 876 DEIS schools have the services of 450 Home School Community Liaison/Rural Coordinators
- 180,000 children and young people attending 691 schools (224 post-primary and 468 primary) have access to the SCP
- Under the SCP approximately 35,000 children and young people at risk of early school leaving were specifically targeted for intensive interventions, with other interventions targeted on a whole school basis
- Under the SCP approximately 800 young people who have opted out of school were targeted for interventions with a view to re-engaging them with the education system
- 2,565 primary schools shared payments in the order of almost €14 million in additional grant assistance to address educational disadvantage. The number of eligible pupils in these schools was 69,500 which equated to 18.3% of total enrolment for these schools
- 277 post-primary schools shared payments in the order of over €4 million in additional grant assistance to address educational disadvantage. The number of eligible pupils in these schools was 31,000 which equated to 31.8% of total enrolment for these schools
- The number of DEIS primary schools in the Reading Recovery programme increased by 45 to 212 in 2008
- 32 DEIS primary schools implemented First Steps Reading bringing the total number of DEIS schools implementing this aspect of First Steps to 281 in 2008
- 42 DEIS primary schools implemented First Steps Writing in 2008 bringing the total number of DEIS schools implementing this element of First Steps to 57
- A total of 283 DEIS primary schools are now included in the First Steps programme

- ❑ 164 DEIS primary schools joined the Maths Recovery programme in 2008 bringing the total number of DEIS schools in this programme to 247
- ❑ Training on the use of the Ready Set Go Maths programme was provided to all Urban Band 1 and 2 DEIS primary schools and this programme is now being implemented by these schools
- ❑ 23 additional post-primary DEIS schools joined the JCSP in 2008 bringing the total number of DEIS schools in the JCSP to 163
- ❑ A further 10 post-primary DEIS schools in the JCSP joined the Demonstration Library project in 2008 bringing the total number of DEIS schools in this project to 20.

A full review of the allocation of HSCL/rural coordinator posts and clustering arrangements was completed in 2008. As a result, posts are now allocated to schools on the basis of their levels of disadvantage and enrolment, having regard to geographic proximity or 'association' (where children from the same family attend different schools, i.e. boys and girls or primary and post primary aged siblings) and to facilitate local HSCL coordinators working with families of disadvantaged children across both primary and second level.

Further withdrawal of additional capitation retained by a number of schools from previous schemes which have now been subsumed into DEIS took place in line with agreed arrangements.

New and newly amalgamated primary schools established since 2007 were surveyed in May 2008. Following an analysis of the data by the Educational Research Centre (ERC), four of these schools were included in the Band 1 urban strand of DEIS, three in Band 2 and two in the Rural strand.

The Department has commissioned the ERC to conduct an independent evaluation of DEIS measures over the period of the DEIS action plan to 2010. In 2008, data which was collected in 2007 from students in second, third and sixth class in urban primary schools and also from students in third and sixth class in rural primary schools was analysed. This research exercise establishes the baseline data. The ERC will collect follow-up data in 2010 (and possibly on further occasions) with a view to assessing the impact of DEIS on pupil achievement.

OBJECTIVE 1.4:

Provide appropriate accommodation and facilities for the delivery of quality education

A record investment of €644m in school infrastructure in 2008 produced a record output of completed large scale projects.

Primary School Building Projects

In 2008, construction work was completed on 77 large scale primary school projects, which provided a total of 9,875 additional permanent school places in new schools and additional permanent school places and enhanced facilities in existing schools for a further 2,600 pupils.

This includes 27 projects constructed for opening in 2008 under the "rapid delivery" programme.

In addition, smaller scale projects, which were, in the main, devolved to school authorities, saw the completion of 406 projects, which included the provision of 4,125 additional primary school places under the Permanent Accommodation Scheme.

Post-Primary

In 2008, construction work was completed on 18 large scale post primary school projects which provided 1,925 permanent school places in new schools and permanent school places and enhanced facilities in existing schools for 8,500 pupils.

In addition, smaller scale projects, which were, in the main, devolved to school authorities, saw the completion of 128 projects in post-primary schools.

The DART (Design, Awareness, Research & Technology) Programme

Through this programme the Department continues to improve energy conservation in Educational buildings. This policy is driven by the Department's technical guidance documents, informed by the Building Unit's professional & technical staff & external partnerships, updated by continued energy research & development, disseminated by internal/external publications, conferences & annual report aided by cross border co operation projects and acknowledged by national & international energy awards.

Primary School's designed and built in line with the above policy and the technical guidance documents have been demonstrated to have an energy performance that is 2.3 times more efficient than international best practice, while post primary schools have been demonstrated to have an energy performance that is twice as efficient as international best practice.

The energy policy is supported by over twenty five different research projects. The current energy research projects include, Colaiste Choilm Tullamore, Dundalk energy zone project 2020, Biomass wood pellet/wood chip research and demonstration programme, interactive operation and maintenance manuals, interactive touch screen environmental educational programme, special schools energy audit, Generic Repeat Design, Rural schools Repeat project and the Energy Performance Building Directive web project.

The overall DART Programme won a Taoiseach Public Service Excellence Award in 2008.

The Biomass Research and Demonstration Project was a finalist in the Sustainable Energy Ireland Awards 2008 Renewable Energy Project Category.

ICT Equipment

In 2008, the Building Unit provided equipment grants of some €2.3m to new post-primary school building projects while €2.2m was provided to 72 primary schools where a newly constructed school or large scale extension reached practical completion in 2008. These grants are designed to enable schools equip their new classrooms with appropriate technology to integrate ICT into their teaching and learning. The Minor Works Grant for National School Properties was also available for expenditure on ICT equipment.

OBJECTIVE 1.5:***Provide a range of resources and supports for learners with special needs*****The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)**

The NEPS was established in 1999 to support the personal, social and educational development of all children in Primary and Post-Primary schools through the application of psychological theory and practice in education, having particular regard for children with special educational needs.

All primary and post primary schools have access to psychological assessments either directly through the assigned NEPS psychologist or through the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA). Schools that do not currently have NEPS psychologists assigned to them may avail of the SCPA, whereby the school can have an assessment carried out by a member of the panel of private psychologists approved and paid for by NEPS. NEPS also provides, upon request, assistance to all schools and school communities that experience critical incidents.

The main focus of NEPS is on early intervention with pupils and staff in schools in order to maximise pupil potential, to combat school failure and to avoid acute crises for children and young people. In this context the Department has published and distributed a framework document entitled *Special Educational Needs – A Continuum of Support*. These guidelines present a continuum of assessment and intervention processes that acknowledge the central role of the class teacher, supported as appropriate, by the school's own special education needs personnel and by agencies external to the school. This approach derives from the three stage approach to assessment and intervention described in the NEPS Model of Service. Psychologists offer support to schools at each stage of this process through consultation with teachers and parents. Psychologists also work with schools and teachers in developing this approach. The use of the consultative model means that psychological advice and expertise can be made available to many more children than could be reached by engaging solely in individual casework.

NEPS processes applications for Reasonable Accommodation in Certificate Examinations (RACE) and responds to queries in relation to individual children from other sections of the Department and from specialist agencies. In addition, NEPS contributes to policy development and provides a wide range of advisory and consultative functions with other divisions within the Department and with its agencies, especially in the area of special needs provision.

During 2008 the number of psychologists employed by NEPS increased from 135 to 153. This resulted in:

- The number of NEPS psychologists assigned to primary schools increasing from 54% of schools for 2007/2008 academic year to 70% of primary schools for 2008/2009 academic year - in terms of primary pupil numbers the increase was from 63% to 81%.
- The number of NEPS psychologists assigned to post-primary schools increasing from 84% of schools for 2007/2008 academic year to 90% of primary schools for 2008/2009 academic year - in terms of post-primary pupil numbers the increase was from 83% to 91%.

During the 2007/08 academic year NEPS psychologists were involved with referrals (casework) in relation to some 6,200 named students, it is also estimated that they made interventions and

provided advice on a further 7,000 un-named students. Some 4,600 assessments were funded under the SCPA at a cost of approx €1.5m.

In addition they made recommendations on some 3,100 additional pupils under the Reasonable Accommodation in Certificate Examinations scheme (RACE) on behalf of the State Examinations Commission.

Educational Supports

The Department is committed to ensuring that all children with special educational needs can have access to an education appropriate to their needs preferably in school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

The Department provides for a range of educational supports and services for children with special educational needs, including teachers, special needs assistants, assistive technology, specialist equipment, enhanced equipment and special transport arrangements.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for processing applications from primary and post primary schools for special educational needs supports. The cost to the Department of funding the NCSE in 2008 was €8.35m.

As of 31/12/08, there were 8,241 whole time equivalent learning support/resource teachers in mainstream primary and post-primary schools. In addition, a further 1,155 teachers provide education to children attending special schools.

Children with special care needs are also supported by special needs assistants. At the end of 2008, there were in excess of 10,200 special needs assistants in primary, post-primary and special schools.

The **Home Tuition Scheme** provides funding to parents to provide education at home for children who, for a number of reasons such as chronic illness, are unable to attend school. The scheme was extended in recent years to facilitate tuition for children awaiting a suitable educational placement and to provide early intervention for pre-school children with autism. Approximately 900 pupils availed of this scheme during the school year ending June 2008. The cost of running this programme in 2008 was approximately €8m.

The **July Education Programme** is available to all special schools and mainstream primary schools with special classes catering for children with autism who choose to extend their education services through the month of July. The Department also provides for a July Programme for pupils with a severe/profound general learning disability. Where school based provision is not feasible, home based provision may be grant aided through the home tuition scheme. 26 additional schools participated in this programme in 2008, bringing the overall figure to 104 schools, at a total cost of €5.1m. The Department is carrying out a review of the July Provision Scheme which is expected to be finalised in 2009.

Special Education Support Service (SESS)

The SESS was established in September 2003, to deliver in-service training and support to schools on a nationwide basis. The service consolidates, co-ordinates, develops and delivers a range of

professional development initiatives and support structures for school personnel working with students with special educational needs, in a variety of educational settings. These settings include mainstream primary and post-primary schools, special schools and special classes.

Teachers in a total of 111 Autism units received intensive training with regard to Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) in 2007 and 2008. The training is being rolled out on a phased basis over three academic years and the second part of phase 1 and the first part of phase 2 took place in 2008. This training is necessary to meet the ever expanding requirement for continuing professional development for educators in the ASD context. The teachers in the units trained in 2007 and 2008 will continue their training in 2009.

In 2007/08, the numbers of full-time staff on the SESS team rose from 15 to 20 while the number of associates is 9. The SESS provided over 20,000 training places in 2008, which represents an increase of approx. 4,000 places over 2007.

In 2008, the SESS continued the process of forming a team of seven behavioural specialists to:

- provide continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers, and
- draw up and supervise the behavioural programmes required by pupils with ASDs attending special schools/classes for children with ASDs.

This team constitutes people who have highly specialised training particularly in the area of applied behaviour analysis (ABA).

Special Education Needs Post-Graduate Programmes

The provision of these programmes continues to develop, through the working relationship between the Department and the following institutions:

- St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra
- St Angela's College, Sligo
- Church of Ireland College of Education, Rathmines
- Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
- University College Dublin
- University College Cork
- National University of Ireland, Galway

These institutions provide a Combined Post-Graduate Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Teachers involved in Learning Support and Special Education. For 2008/2009 academic year there were 294 (203 primary and 91 post-primary) participants on this programme.

St. Angela's College, Sligo, in collaboration with the SESS offered a post-graduate certificate/diploma programme of CPD in SEN (ASD) for teachers for the first time in the 2008/09 academic year. The aim of this programme is to develop teachers' knowledge, understanding and skills in working with students with autistic spectrum disorders. Up to 25 places were available on the programme for the year 2008/2009.

In addition for the 2008/2009 academic year there were:

- 18 participants on the post-graduate certificate in the education of pupils with ASD which has been run by St Patrick's College, Drumcondra since 2001

- 6 students participating in the Masters in Special Educational Needs also run by St Patrick's, Drumcondra
- A total of 150 places available on the on-line Certificate/Diploma in Education (Special/ Inclusive Education) course for primary and post-primary teachers.

Tender for the delivery of on-line programmes of continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers of students with special educational needs

In 2008, the Department invited tenders to assemble an inventory of on-line programmes to be utilised by the SESS in the delivery of CPD for teachers of students with special educational needs. This tender was awarded to the Institute of Child Education and Psychology.

Autism Provision

An additional 35 classes for children with autism attached to mainstream and special schools were approved, bringing the total number of special classes at the end of 2008 to 310.

In 2008, 12 additional early intervention classes for children on the autistic spectrum were also approved, bringing the total number of early intervention classes at the end of 2008 to 35.

The Department funds an ABA pilot scheme which was established in the absence of the network of special classes which is now available in schools. There is a commitment in the current programme for Government to long-term funding for the centres that are in the ABA pilot scheme subject to agreement with the Department on standards that will enable them to be supported as primary schools for children with autism. In 2008, agreement was reached on the core conditions to enable the centres participating in the scheme to be recognised as special schools for children with autism and discussions are ongoing in relation to existing contractual arrangements.

Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN) 2004

While it was announced in the 2008 budget that it would not be possible to proceed with full implementation of the EPSEN Act in 2010 as originally envisaged, the Government committed to keeping the matter under review and to fully implementing EPSEN at the earliest possible date.

OBJECTIVE 1.6:

Provide targeted resources and supports for newcomer children

Allocation of Additional Teacher Supports

The level of teacher support allocated to primary and post-primary schools is determined by the number of enrolled pupils for whom English is a second language and the associated assessment levels of pupils' language proficiency.

In 2008 a total of 2,000 full-time language support posts were provided to schools with 14 or more qualifying pupils at a total cost of €124m. In collaboration with parents and class teachers,

these Language Support Teachers identify pupils requiring additional support, devise appropriate language programmes, deliver the programmes and record and monitor pupils' progress.

In addition supports are provided to primary schools who do not meet the qualifying criteria for the appointment of full-time teachers in the form of grant aids for the employment of part-time language support teachers. In 2008, schools with between three and eight qualifying pupils received grant assistance exceeding €6,300 to allow the school to employ a qualified teacher for 4 hours per week. Schools with between nine and 13 qualifying pupils received grant assistance of over €9,500 to employ a qualified teacher for 6 hours per week. 469 schools benefited from this type of financial support in the 07/08 at a total cost of additional teaching over €3.7m.

Provision of support for teachers of English as an additional language

A team of Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS) trainers delivered seminars in English as an Additional Language (EAL) to teachers employed as language support teachers. For the 2008/2009 academic year the PPDS offered two days of in-service training.

OBJECTIVE 1.7:

Support the development and provision of high-quality early childhood education

The Department's role as set out in the 1999 White Paper on Early Education, *Ready to Learn*, is to improve the quality of educational provision in childcare settings.

While early years education policy falls under the remit of the Department of Education and Science, the Department's Early Years Education Policy Unit is co-located with the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) to ensure that policy developments in the early childhood sector are developed within an overall strategic policy framework for children.

Since 2000, Government investment in early years education has primarily been channelled through first, the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000-2006 and then the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010. These are administered by the OMCYA.

While the compulsory school age in Ireland is 6, children from the age of 4 can be enrolled in junior infant class in primary schools. Statistics show that nearly half of 4 year olds and virtually all 5 year olds are enrolled in infant classes in primary schools.

The Department's main interventions in early years which have been targeted towards children who experience disadvantage or who have special needs are:

- The **Early Start** pre-school project, which was established in 1994/95 in 40 primary schools in designated areas of urban disadvantage. The project involves an educational programme to enhance overall development, help prevent school failure and offset the effects of social disadvantage. The total number of spaces provided by the existing 40 Early Start centres is 1,680.

- The **Rutland Street Project**, established in 1969, is a pre-school attached to the Rutland Street primary school in Dublin. Although not part of Early Start, it was used to pilot many of the approaches later incorporated in the Early Start project.
- **Traveller pre-schools:** The policy, as set out in the 2006 Traveller Education Strategy, is to phase out segregated Traveller pre-schools. The number of segregated Traveller pre-schools continues to fall with 29 segregated services still remaining.
- **Special Education needs:** The Department funds a number of interventions, including 35 pre-school classes, to facilitate the demand for early intervention provision for children on the autistic spectrum. The Department also operates a home tuition scheme, providing funding for early educational intervention for pre-school children with autism.

Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE)

The CECDE was established for a fixed period in 2002 as part of the implementation of *Ready to Learn*. The original remit of the Centre included the development of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education which was successfully delivered in 2006 with the publication of *Síolta: the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education*. The CECDE ceased operation at the end of November 2008. The implementation of *Síolta* is now managed by the Early Years Education Policy Unit of the Department.

Dormant Account Funding of Pre-School initiatives

Dormant Accounts Funding was sought and approved for 2 pre-school initiatives in 2008. Under a Quality Improvement Measure that was linked to *Síolta* standards, pre-school services that operated in DEIS Urban band 1 areas were invited to apply for funding of up to €10,000. Under a separate integration measure, pre-schools were invited to apply for funding to encourage the enrolment and retention of Traveller children in pre-school services.



High Level Goal 2:

*“Enhance opportunities in further education
and youth services”*

Section 02

Further Education and Youth Services

Section Two

Further Education and Youth Services

HIGH LEVEL GOAL TWO:

Enhance opportunities in further education and youth services

Context

Further and adult education provision offers access, transfer and progression opportunities to learners. Course, both full-time and part-time are open to all but the main purpose is to provide a range of supports which will:

- meet the needs of young early school-leavers
- provide second-chance education to enable learners to progress their education up to a standard equivalent to upper secondary level
- provide vocational preparation and training for labour market entrants and re-entrants.

In its Strategy Statement 2008-2010 this Department identified the following priorities for further education:

- To increase and widen participation
- To promote the quality of educational provision
- To develop the sector in areas such as quality assurance.

The purpose of the Department's Youth Affairs provision was to support the personal and social development of young people under the age of 25 with a particular emphasis on those aged between 10 and 21, by developing policies and programmes which aim to provide a high-quality youth work service for all young people and by providing financial support to the youth work sector.

The Department's Strategy Statement 2008-2010 identified the following priorities for the youth work sector:

- The continued roll-out of the Youth Work Act, 2001, and the National Youth Work Development Plan as appropriate, on a phased and prioritised basis within the resources available
- The development and implementation of a Quality Standards framework for and with the Youth Work Sector.

On foot of a government decision in 2008 responsibility for Youth Affairs was transferred to the Office of the Minister for Children in the Department of Health and Children with effect from 1

January 2009. Preparations to effect this transfer were made during the course of 2008. The budget and staffing of Youth Affairs in the Department was transferred to the Office of the Minister for Children, in order to provide continuity of service and operational experience, as well as opening up greater opportunities for a more integrated, cohesive and effective approach to addressing the needs of children and young people.

OBJECTIVE 2.1:

Promote the quality of education provision

Adult Literacy

Adult Literacy and Community Education programmes involve the provision of basic education, including reading, writing, spelling and numeracy skills, to adults whose skills are inadequate for functional participation in everyday life. It also includes personal development, learning to learn and IT skills.

Funding for adult literacy (including funding for English for Speakers of Other Languages - ESOL) and community education is provided through annual grants to VECs. Funding has also been provided for specially targeted literacy programmes, such as literacy for deaf people, family literacy, literacy for people with dyslexia, and workplace literacy.

In August 2008, *Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT)*, ceased providing direct tuition to refugees. The Department decided that this provision should be mainstreamed and provided by VECs. Between August and December 2008, the Department provided funding to VECs to provide an English language and socialisation programme to 9 groups of refugees.

In 2008 the Department and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment jointly participated in the initial phase of the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC).

National Skills Strategy

In 2008, Minister of State Haughey established an inter-Departmental Committee tasked with drawing up an implementation plan for the National Skill Strategy. The Committee met on a number of occasions and progressed work on the Plan.

Value for Money Review of Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres

A Value for Money (VFM) review of the Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs) programmes was published in 2008. Overall, the review provides a basis for supporting the continued allocation of public funding to Youthreach. The review recommended that in the longer term the STTCs should be phased out as a segregated provision and adult Travellers should participate in mainstream further education.

On foot of the VFM recommendations, the Department informed VECs in August 2008 that from 1st January 2009:

- STTCs could no longer enrol learners under 18 years of age, and;
- Learners under 16 years of age enrolling in Youthreach would not be paid a training allowance.

Evaluations of Centres of Education

Inspectors assigned to the Department's Regional Office Service conducted seventeen evaluations on Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres in 2008.

Negotiations on the Development of the Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) Sector

In December 2006, the Department began negotiations with management and unions in relation to Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) provision in the further education sector, as envisaged under the Social Partnership Agreement Towards 2016. Towards 2016 acknowledged that the level of resources for the PLC sector would be determined in the light of resources generally and the implications for other areas of education.

A draft agreement, concluded with management and the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI) in July 2008, provides a basis for the future development of the PLC sector. Implementation will be considered in the context of current and future budgetary provisions for the Department and will take account of the present and prospective economic and budgetary context and related financial constraints.

OBJECTIVE 2.2:

Promote access and participation in further education

Further Education courses are provided at Levels 1 - 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Full-Time Programmes available

- **Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)** is targeted at unemployed persons over 21 years of age. Its primary target groups are the longer-term unemployed, the low-skilled and disadvantaged. VTOS participants are paid a training allowance and can avail of guidance and childcare supports.
- **Youthreach** is targeted at young people aged between 15-20 who have left school early without any qualifications or vocational training. It provides an integrated programme of education, training and work experience. It was introduced jointly with FÁS in 1989. The Department of Education and Science Youthreach programme is operated by VECs. Participants are paid a training allowance and are also entitled to childcare support.
- **Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs)** for Travellers over 18 years of age. STTCs provide an integrated education, training and work experience programme with a specific emphasis on catering for the cultural needs of the travelling community. Participants are paid a training allowance and are also entitled to childcare support.
- **Post Leaving Certificate programmes (PLC)** are in place for students who have completed their Leaving Certificate and for adults returning to education. PLC Courses are provided predominantly in the VEC sector, but some Community and Comprehensive schools and Secondary schools also offer courses.

Part-Time Programmes available

Adult Literacy and Community Education programmes

These involve the provision of basic education, including reading, writing, spelling and numeracy skills, to adults whose skills are inadequate for functional participation in everyday life. It also includes personal development, learning to learn and IT skills.

Funding for adult literacy and community education services is provided through the provision of annual grants to the VEC sector. Funding for **English for speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)** tuition is provided through the adult literacy budget. Funding has been provided for specially targeted literacy programmes, such as literacy for deaf people, family literacy, literacy for people with dyslexia, and workplace literacy.

Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)

The BTEI aims to increase the participation of young people and adults with less than upper second level education in a range of learning opportunities. With effect from 1 September 2007, BTEI eligibility criteria were amended to allow free tuition to any adult with less than upper second level education. Originally only people with a social welfare entitlement or medical card were entitled to free fees. BTEI participants can also avail of guidance and childcare supports. In 2008, there were 9,500 places available.

<i>Programme</i>	<i>2008 Expenditure €m Full-time</i>	<i>Places</i>
VTOS	71.2	5,000
Youthreach	65.3	3,692
STTCs	26.3	1,084
PLC	7.5*	30,188
<i>Programme</i>	<i>2008 Expenditure €m Part-time</i>	<i>Participants</i>
BTEI	18.5	27,104
Literacy	30.0	49,000
Community Education	11.0	56,500

* Expenditure on enhanced capitation and LDA payments only. Overall expenditure on PLC in 2008 was €168m, including pay, student support and capitation.

Programme Supports

- The Adult Education Guidance Initiative (AEGI) commenced in 2000 with 10 pilot projects designed to support the objectives for lifelong learning set out in the White Paper on Adult Education: Learning for Life 2000. There are currently 40 projects nationwide, with all but one managed by the local VEC. The measure is designed to support access to Adult Literacy, VTOS, BTEI and other adult and community education programmes in the Further Education Sector. The service is also available to survivors of residential abuse and their families.
- An annual childcare grant is provided to VECs to help learners with young children to return to the education system. Participants in the VTOS, Youthreach, STTCs and BTEI programmes are eligible. The aim is to attract people whose attendance is currently prevented by childcare responsibilities to enrol on these programmes.

SUPPORTS	2008 EXPENDITURE €M	BENEFICIARIES
AEGI	6.8	35,000
Childcare	4.36	2,273 children
		1,700 parents

OBJECTIVE 2.3:

Support the development of youth work services

Youth work, which is a non-formal learning process, complements the formal education process and is distinctive in that young people participate in the youth work programmes and activities on a voluntary basis.

In 2008, some €52m was made available to the youth work sector via a number of schemes and initiatives, namely:

SCHEME	PARTICIPANTS
Youth Service Grant Scheme	190,000
Special Projects for Youth	105,000
Young Persons' Facilities and Services Fund	39,530

In addition, funding of over €950,000 was provided to Gaisce – the President's Award and nearly €640,000 to Léargas – the Exchange Bureau for the European Youth in Action Programme.

Quality Standards Framework (QCS)

The development of a QSF for the youth work sector is being led by the Assessor of Youth Work in consultation with youth work interests. It is anticipated that the QSF will provide an opportunity to further define the youth work process and indicate its effectiveness as a non-formal educational process.

Building on progress made in 2007, the Framework was successfully piloted during March to November 2008 in 18 youth work projects, two youth information centres and three national youth work organisations. An independent evaluation carried out throughout the pilot, together with the views of various youth work interests, will inform the final shape of the framework, which will be rolled out nationally on a phased basis.

Local Youth Club Grants Scheme

Recognising the need for consistency of operation and administration across all the VECs operating this Scheme, a review of the existing scheme was conducted in 2008. A revised scheme was developed that took account of the many and varied activities being provided by youth groups throughout the country and aimed to respond to the realities and practicalities experienced by local voluntary youth groups in the provision of activities for young people. A pilot of the revised Scheme commenced in 30 VECs areas at the end of 2008.

Funding for the scheme was increased to €1.8 million in 2008 with over 1,500 local clubs receiving funding.

National Youth Work Advisory Council (NYWAC)

The work of the NYWAC, which is representative of both the voluntary and statutory sectors with an interest in youth work programmes and services, continued during 2008.

A number of sub-committees/working groups worked on a range of issues including:

- Further roll-out of the Youth Work Act, 2001
- Review of the National Youth Work Development Plan, 2003-2007
- Review of the Code of Good Practice – Child Protection Guidelines for the youth work sector (last published in 2003)
- Embedding Equality and Interculturalism into every day youth work practice.



High Level Goal 3:

*“Sustain and strengthen higher education
and research”*

Section 03

Higher Education and Research

Section Three

Higher Education and Research

HIGH LEVEL GOAL THREE:

Sustain and strengthen higher education and research

Context

The Department is responsible for general policy, including research, funding and oversight responsibilities for the Higher Education sector. The policy approach has regard to the overall aim of the higher education system enabling people to reach their full potential as individuals and active citizens, and the desire to maximize the contribution of the sector to social and economic development.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is the statutory planning and development body for higher education and research in Ireland. Recurrent funding is allocated by the Department to the HEA, which in turn deals with the individual budgets of the Universities, Institutes of Technology and a number of designated higher education institutions. In addition, the Department also has a direct responsibility for the resourcing of a small number of higher education institutions. The Department also funds the provision of infrastructure required for the delivery of higher education including research infrastructure.

In its Strategy Statement 2008-2010 this Department identified the following priorities for higher education and research:

- To widen and increase participation
- To modernise programme delivery
- To achieve world-class quality at all levels from undergraduate education to advanced fourth level research.

OBJECTIVE 3.1:

Enhance the quality of higher education and its capacity to respond to changing needs

In 2008, €1.39bn was provided to the University and Institute of Technology sectors. This included expenditure of €357m on free fees in the third level sector.

Revised recurrent funding mechanism in the university sector

In 2008, the HEA completed the phasing in of a revised mechanism for funding in the university sector. This contains provision for a greater proportion of funding to be allocated to institutions on the basis of performance and the achievement of national outcomes.

Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF)

This is a multi-annual fund, amounting to €510 million over the course of the National Development Plan 2007 – 2013, which is directed towards support for innovation in higher education institutions. It supports new approaches to enhancing quality and effectiveness within higher education and research, incorporating the use of existing resources (including capital resources) more effectively, as well as new funding.

Under the second cycle of the SIF awards amounting to some €101 million were announced in February 2008.

In 2008 recurrent expenditure under this fund amounted to €16 million.

Further details with regard to this fund are available from the HEA website (www.heai.ie).

Investment in mainstream higher education infrastructure

The Department continued a programme of investment in mainstream higher education infrastructure, through the delivery of a range of projects that provide modern, fit for purpose facilities. Total spending in 2008 in mainstream infrastructure was €60.7m.

Five major projects were fully completed in 2008 which delivered 17,052m² of new and improved facilities for 2,075 students. Also during 2008, eight major projects with the capacity to deliver 44,820m² of new and improved accommodation, were in design and a further 10 projects, targeted to deliver 56,016m², were on site.

The Devolved Grant Scheme was implemented in 2008, providing €15m for minor works projects i.e. projects under €3m, relating to the upkeep of facilities at all Institutes of Technology. Fifteen minor works projects were funded in 2008.

Under the Government's Public Private Partnership Programme (PPP) €270m was allocated for the provision of 17 new third level projects in 9 locations.

In 2008, the pre-procurement process for the 1st and 2nd bundles of third level PPP projects commenced. The 1st bundle consists of library facilities in Cork Institute of Technology, University of Limerick and Limerick Institute of Technology, together with three new facilities at Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology. The 2nd bundle consists of a number of new buildings in Waterford and Tallaght Institutes of Technology.

Grangegorman Development Agency

The Grangegorman Development Agency was established in May 2006. In 2008, the Agency completed the drafting of a Strategic Plan and Budget for the proposed development of the Grangegorman site. The Strategic Plan includes the options and the associated costs of moving

the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) campus to the Grangegorman site as well as making recommendations on site provision for the relevant health facilities.

Reform and expansion of Medical Education training

A programme of reform and expansion of undergraduate medical education and training commenced in 2006, following the acceptance by the Government of the report entitled *Medical Education in Ireland a new Direction (the Fottrell Report)*. The measures being implemented under the programme include an increase in the intake of Irish/EU medical students; changes to the entry criteria for medical courses and the introduction of a graduate entry programme and curriculum reform.

The *Fottrell Report* recommended an increase in Irish/EU places in medicine from 305 to 725 over a four year period. The increased intake is being achieved through the provision of an additional 180 undergraduate places and the introduction of a new programme of graduate entry to medicine which will provide 240 places.

Additional undergraduate places were provided amongst the existing five medical schools as follows:

- 2006/07 academic year 70 additional places
- 2007/08 academic year 40 additional places
- 2008/09 academic year 35 additional places

The programme of graduate entry to medicine commenced in the 2007/08 academic year with 60 new places created. A further 60 graduate places were provided in the 2008/09 academic year and the graduate stream will grow to 240 places by 2010/11. This includes 95 places in a new medical school which has been established at the University of Limerick, bringing the total number of medical schools to six.

The *Fottrell Report* highlighted the need to enhance investment in Medical Education and Training to meet the standards of training expected internationally and in response significant investment has been committed under the National Development Plan. Some €32m of extra dedicated funding has been provided since 2006 for medical education, through the Higher Education Authority, to support the expansion programme and to provide for the employment of academic clinicians and curriculum reform.

OBJECTIVE 3.2:

Significantly increase PhD numbers and research activity

Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (SSTI)

This strategy constitutes one of the principal pillars of the National Development Plan 2007-2013, and is the Government's blueprint for developing Ireland's research and innovation capacity. The SSTI provides for a range of programmes of support across a number of Government Departments and aims to improve the scale and quality of research carried out in Ireland in the higher education, public and enterprise sectors.

The Department supports a number of programmes under the SSTI, including the Programme

for Research in Third-Level Institutions and the award schemes of both the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology and the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

The SSTI target to double the output of PhDs by 2013 is advancing significantly. PhD graduate output for 2008 is estimated at 1,100, an increase of approximately 300 (or 37.5%) since 2005.

Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTLII)

The Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLII) is the most significant research programme supported by the Department. It supports the building of strategic institutional research capacity, enabling the establishment of research centres and facilities; and joint research programmes and national initiatives. The PRTLII was introduced in 1998 and projects with a total value of €865m have been approved under the four cycles of the programme.

The PRTLII received capital funding of €40m during the course of 2008. The bulk of which was expended on Cycle 4 of the programme, comprising 43 individual projects delivering 18,342m² of new research space as well as research equipment.

Research Facilities Enhancement Scheme

This Scheme was launched in 2008 to improve and refurbish existing research provision within higher education institutions. Funding of €54.3m was provided in 2008 to 20 higher education institutions, to enable them to purchase new and upgraded equipment.

Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET)

The IRCSET is an independent and autonomous research funding and monitoring body which promotes science and engineering research in Ireland. It operates research funding initiatives, which support talented researchers in their early stage career formation across Masters, Doctoral and Postdoctoral levels, in the sciences, engineering and technology. These initiatives are designed to ensure that Ireland will become an internationally attractive location for high-level research. The emphasis of its funding programmes is on exploratory research aimed at yielding new concepts, findings and innovations within Ireland.

Funding is made available through a series of competitive calls for applicants. Selection for funding is based on merit and the decision process is overseen by independent assessment panels.

Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS)

The IRCHSS, which was established in 2000, provides funding for cutting-edge research in the humanities and social sciences, including business and law. The IRCHSS operates a suite of interlinked research schemes, including the Government of Ireland Post-Graduate Scholarship Scheme.

Technological Sector Research

Funding is available only for the Institutes of Technology and the Dublin Institute of Technology.

There are three strands:

- Post-graduate Research & Development Skills: training in R&D skills for graduates leading to a Masters degree. This aims to increase the supply of highly skilled graduates to enable industry to become and remain competitive
- Enterprise Platform Programme: training programmes for graduate entrepreneurs involving education/enterprise training and advice/mentoring from business and industry
- Core Research Strengths Enhancement: support to develop research capacity in Institutes of Technology.

HEAnet

HEAnet provides high quality Internet Services to Irish Universities, Institutes of Technology and the wider research and educational community. It provides direct connectivity for its community to other networks in Ireland, Europe, the USA and the rest of the world. The services provided by HEAnet are vital for underpinning research activity in Ireland - high speed access is essential if Ireland is to remain at the international forefront of developments in research and technology.

In addition to the third level institutions, HEAnet also provides internet services to a number of other bodies such as Schools, Central Applications Office (CAO), Health Research Board, Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and the ESRI. In addition to core funding from this Department, all clients are subject to a subscription fee.

Irish Research eLibrary (IReL)

IReL is a nationally-funded, electronic research library, providing online access to full-text articles from thousands of international quality, peer-reviewed research publications across a range of disciplines. Science Foundation Ireland funded science and technology journals from 2007 to 2009, with the Department funding the humanities and social sciences journals.

International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD)

The ICLR is a North-South-US partnership that brings together leading experts in spatial planning, housing and local and regional development from Universities and research centres. The Centre's goals are to promote research into best practices in spatial planning and economic development and to develop capacity building programmes for public officials, civic leaders, non-governmental organisations and other practitioners.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE IN 2008	
<i>College</i>	<i>Expenditure in 2008 €m</i>
PRTL	14.22
IRCSET	25.56
IRCHSS	12.69
Tech Sector Research	8.15
HEAnet	10.24
E-journals (IReL)	4.28
ICLRD	0.40

OBJECTIVE 3.3:

Promote access to higher education particularly for under represented groups and provide flexible learning opportunities

The Department is responsible for leading the development of national policy on equity of access to higher education for all students particularly among those groups which are currently underrepresented in the sector. To that end, it supports a range of dedicated measures, which facilitate greater levels of participation by disadvantaged students, mature students and students with disabilities.

Financial Supports

The principal support, in financial terms, is provided under four student grant schemes, which make available means-tested financial assistance to students in further and higher education. These schemes are the Higher Education Grants Scheme, the Vocational Education Committees' Scholarship Scheme, the Third Level Maintenance Grants Scheme for Trainees and the Maintenance Grant Scheme for Students Attending Post Leaving Certificate Courses. The schemes are administered by the local authorities and the VECs. For the 2008/09 academic year, the maximum ordinary maintenance grant was €3,420. Students qualifying for the non-adjacent ordinary grant, plus the special rate of maintenance grant, received €6,690. In 2008, 54,666 students received grants under the ***Student Grant Schemes*** at a combined cost of €264m.

The special rate of maintenance grant is a specific grant payable to qualifying students on top of the highest level of the regular grant. The additional amount is paid to eligible students from particularly low-income backgrounds. The special rate applies to all the maintenance grant schemes. Expenditure on special rate of maintenance grant amounted to €44m in 2008 and is included in the €264m above.

In the 2008/09 academic year, €5m was approved for the ***Student Assistance Fund***, which provides financial assistance for full-time higher education students who are experiencing financial difficulties whilst attending college. Students can apply for assistance to help them with either temporary or ongoing financial difficulties.

The ***Fund for Students with Disabilities*** provides for funding to further and higher education colleges for the provision of services and supports to full-time students with disabilities. The Fund aims to ensure that students can participate fully in their academic programmes and are not disadvantaged by reason of a disability. A total allocation of €10m was approved for support for students under this fund. In the 2007/08 academic year, over 3,000 students, through both individual and group applications, benefited from the Fund for Students with Disabilities.

The ***Millennium Partnership Fund*** provides a further source of funding in addition to schemes such as the Maintenance Grant or the Student Assistance Fund. In the 2008/09 academic year, over €2.18m was provided for this fund. The fund is administered by POBAL and 56 community and area partnerships are expected to benefit from this allocation. In the 2007/08 academic year, 3,645 individuals benefited from the fund.

The website on financial supports for students www.studentfinance.ie was launched in January 2008. This website provides comprehensive information on a range of financial support

schemes including the Maintenance Grant, the Student Assistance Fund and the Fund for Students with Disabilities.

The Department also provides for a number of third-level scholarship opportunities, including scholarships targeting disadvantaged areas. In the academic year 2008/09, there were 250 scholarship holders. Total expenditure in 2008 was €1.25m.

In the academic year 2007/08, 18 students benefited from the **European University Scholarship**. Total expenditure on the European University Scholarship in 2008 was €512,000.

The Student Support Bill

This Bill, which underpins and supports Government policy to improve equity of access to further and higher education, was published on 5th February 2008. It concluded Second Stage in the Dáil on 30th April 2008. This Bill provides for a single statutory basis for all student grants, consolidating the existing four schemes for students attending higher education and post leaving certificate courses into one single scheme.

The Bill provides for the VECs to be given sole responsibility for the administration of the single unified scheme.

The Department is engaged with the VEC sector to develop the necessary infrastructure to implement a fully integrated scheme and provide for a more coherent administration system which will facilitate consistency of application, improved client accessibility and ensure the timely delivery of grant to those who need them most.

National Office for Equity of Access to Third Level Education (National Office)

In 2008, the Department continued to provide funding to this office which administers a number of access measures on behalf of the Department.

In July 2008, the office published a *National Plan 2008-2013 for Achieving Equity of Access to Higher Education*. This plan was drawn up in partnership with the Department and in close consultation with the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and access practitioners in higher education institutions. The plan provides an evaluation of progress, identifies challenges, outlines policy objectives and sets challenging, but realistic targets, which are consistent with the timeframe and objectives of the current National Development Plan.



High Level Goal 4:

“Support the delivery and development of education through policy formulation, high-quality planning and a strong customer focus”

Section 04

Improving and Developing Services

4

Section Four

Supporting School Communities

HIGH LEVEL GOAL FOUR:

Support the delivery and development of education through policy formulation, high-quality planning and a strong customer focus.

Context

The priorities of the Department over the period of the 2008-2010 Statement of Strategy are:

- To improve and develop the service we deliver
- To develop and review policies for the education system
- To continue implementation of the modernisation agenda
- To implement the Government's decentralisation programme

OBJECTIVE 4.1:

Deliver effective policies to address existing needs and emerging challenges in the education sector

Policy planning and review

Policy development is an integral part of the Department's services. The Department supports research, evaluation and planning to ensure an effective policy framework.

Research and sharing of best practice are particularly important in the policy development process. Twenty research projects were ongoing. A digest of research conducted or commissioned by the Department and other national bodies since 2000, was published on the Department's website in 2008.

Data Strategy

Making better use of existing data, as well as introducing new and essential sources of information, is a key goal for the Department, as it seeks to provide services in an increasingly diverse and challenging environment. The Department's Data Strategy provides an important contribution to the ongoing development of the evidence-base for education policy over the coming years. In 2008, significant work was carried out in relation to the establishment of an interactive, online Education Statistics Database. This database, which will be launched in early

2009, will be available on the websites of both the Department and the Central Statistics Office (CSO).

Value for Money and Policy Review

The Government's Value for Money and Policy Review Initiative is part of a framework introduced to secure improved value for money from public expenditure. The objectives of the Value for Money and Policy Review Initiative are to analyse Exchequer spending in a systematic manner and to provide a basis on which more informed decisions can be made on priorities within and between programmes. It is one of a range of modernisation initiatives aimed at moving public sector management away from the traditional focus on inputs to concentrate on the achievement of results.

Five Value for Money Reviews were completed and published by the Department in 2008:

- Review of the ICT Undergraduate Skills Programme
- Review of Youth Encounter Projects
- Review of ICT Support Services for Schools
- Review of Programmes managed by the Teacher Education Section
- Review of Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres.

Development of a new model primary school patronage

In June 2008, the Minister for Education and Science hosted a conference on the *Governance Challenge for Future Primary School Needs*. The conference was an opportunity for the main patron bodies to outline their vision of how the system needs to collectively evolve, in order to respond to changing societal circumstances.

A piloting phase of the new model of Community National School began in September 2008 in two schools in Dublin 15. The new Community National Schools, Scoil Ghráinne in Phibblestown and Scoil Choilm in Porterstown, will be characterised by an ethos of inclusion, equality and harmony, where each child and member of the school community is valued and treated with respect. The schools will be multi-faith, welcoming and respecting children of all faiths and none. They will recognise and aim to accommodate the wishes of parents to have their children receive religious and morality based education, or faith formation, within the school day. This commitment, within a multi-faith environment, is an important distinguishing feature of the model.

Qualifications

The Department supports the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and the Further and Higher Education and Training Awards Councils (FETAC and HETAC) in promoting the development and implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications, quality assuring a wide range of further and higher education and training provision and making awards to learners.

In 2008, the NQAI began a major review of the Implementation and Impact of the National Framework of Qualifications. A major public consultation process was completed in November. The findings of the review will be published in 2009.

FETAC introduced a new set of procedures for quality assuring assessments leading to their awards in 2008. These are being rolled out across FETAC providers.

HETAC began a new cycle of institutional level review of Institutes of Technology and other HETAC accredited providers in 2008.

The amalgamation of the NQAI, the HETAC and the FETAC was announced in the October 2008 Budget, as part of the Government's programme for the rationalisation of agencies. The new organisation will also take responsibility for the external quality assurance review of the universities, a function which is currently performed by the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA). The budget announcement also refers to the possibility of including some of the related functions of the National University of Ireland (NUI) in the new organisation. In 2008, the Department established an Implementation Advisory Group to advise on the implementation of the decision and discussions were opened with the NUI. The amalgamation is expected to be complete in 2010.

In 2008, FETAC made awards to over 130,000 people, 22,100 HETAC awards were issued and the NQAI processed over 2,000 applications for the recognition of foreign qualifications.

In addition, the transposition of the European Directive on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications was substantially completed with the making of regulations by the Minister in July 2008.

Integration

The Integration Unit of the Department is responsible for contributing to the development of education policy in the integration area and co-ordinating, as appropriate, the Department's responses to the education needs of newcomers so as to promote quality, relevance and inclusiveness for newcomer learners.

Arising from the Actions for Education identified in the National Action Plan against Racism, 2005-2008, the Department is currently developing an intercultural education strategy (IES). In October 2008, the Department hosted a conference, in conjunction with the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism, to commence the consultation process for the IES. In November and December 2008, seven focussed consultations were held with key education partners, over 200 delegates attended these meetings and over 50 written submissions were received. Work is continuing on drafting the strategy which is expected to be complete by early 2010.

In 2008, the Department completed the background report and organised a country visit for a team from the OECD Thematic Review of Migrant Education, during which the team met with key education stakeholders. The country report on Ireland is due to be published by the end of 2009. The composite report covering all the countries involved, Ireland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Austria and Sweden, is due to be published in the spring of 2010.

The Department submitted an official response to the European Commission in December 2008, regarding the ***“EU Green Paper - Migration and Mobility: Challenges and Opportunities for EU Education Systems”***. This will frame the discussion on and policy formation regarding newcomer students being integrated into European education systems.

Also in 2008, the Department held a briefing session for embassy staff on the Irish primary and post-primary education system and qualifications recognition in Ireland.

OBJECTIVE 4.2:

Support the modernisation of the education sector through a partnership process that promotes good industrial relations practice

The Department promotes good industrial relations practice throughout the education sector and encourages and supports the modernisation of the sector through a partnership process. This is done by:

- Advising institutions on the implementation and verification requirements of the modernisation agenda for the education sector, as set out in social partnership agreements
- Advising client groups on industrial relations and employment legislation issues
- Operating a pay and allowances sanctioning system for all grades
- Co-ordinating and organising the performance verification process through the Education Sector Performance Verification Group.

In line with the terms of the *Towards 2016* Agreement, revised arrangements for promotion to posts of responsibility in first and second-level schools and revised procedures for the suspension and dismissal of teachers were agreed in 2008 at the Teachers' Conciliation Council.

Standard employment contracts for fixed-term teachers were agreed and issued during the year.

The Education Sector Performance Verification Group (ESPVG) completed assessments in advance of the March and September 2008 pay increases provided for in the *Towards 2016* national pay agreement. In general, institutions reported continued co-operation with flexibility and ongoing change, satisfactory implementation of an agenda for modernisation, maintenance of stable industrial relations and an absence of industrial action in areas covered by *Towards 2016*.

Payment of general round increases in March and September 2008, provided for under *Towards 2016*, were implemented for those education grades who complied with the provisions and terms of the Agreement.

OBJECTIVE 4.3:

Support and develop staff and seek continuous improvement in the effectiveness, value and quality of our services

ICT Supports

The Department relies on a number of ICT systems to support key business functions and in 2008 the software underpinning all of the major systems (including the Teacher Payrolls/HR systems and the Post Primary Pupil Database) were upgraded as was the hardware for the Financial Management System.

A number of enhancements to the On-Line Claims System and Teacher Payroll/HR systems were completed and an online service to enable post primary schools upload data securely was

implemented. The infrastructure supporting online services for schools was strengthened and security measures were enhanced.

An Enterprise Architecture Section was established within the IT Unit to develop a new technical strategy and to ensure that ICT developments are designed from a corporate perspective and support the achievement of the business objectives of the Department.

Staff Training and Development

The Department engages with staff and management in identifying training needs and organises and supports a wide range of training and development programmes for staff. Support is available for the Inspectorate, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the Planning and Building Unit (PBU) and the IT Unit with regard to their specific professional and technical training needs.

In excess of 3,300 training days were provided in 2008, in areas that included, induction training for new staff, employment law, senior management development, IT (end-user) training, records management and financial management. The Department continued to prioritise management training to enhance its capacity to adequately meet new and evolving challenges. One hundred and sixty staff at management level attended two day grade networks for middle and senior managers in 2008.

Over 200 staff attended financial management training including public financial management, auditing, VAT, Withholding tax and Assets training. In addition to organised training and development, the Department continued to foster a learning culture by providing support for staff attending further education courses in their own time.

As a percentage of payroll costs, expenditure on staff training and development in 2008 was 2.88%.

OBJECTIVE 4.4:

Manage the Department's response to the initiatives for the redress of child abuse in residential institutions

The Commission to Inquire Into Child Abuse

The Department fulfils a dual role as sponsor of and respondent to the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, which was established in May 2000 to inquire into the causes, nature, circumstances and extent of child abuse in industrial and reformatory schools and other institutions.

During 2008, the Department provided the Commission with further information and clarification on a number of issues relevant to the Commission's inquiry. Expenditure of €15.69m was incurred by the Department in respect of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse in 2008. Total expenditure on the Commission to the end of 2008 was €59.36m.

Residential Institutions Redress Board

The Department provides funding and support to the Residential Institutions Redress Board,

which was established in December 2002, to provide financial awards to victims of child abuse in residential institutions.

In 2008, further progress was made in the assessment and payment of awards under the redress scheme. The Redress Board processed 2,382 applications bringing to 12,304 the total number of applications processed to end 2008. The Department paid €159.1m in redress awards and related costs during 2008. Cumulative expenditure to the end of 2008 was €904.7m.

Education Finance Board

The Department supports the role of the Education Finance Board which was established in February 2006 to provide education grants to former residents of institutions and their families.

In 2008, the Education Finance Board approved grants in respect of 1,526 former residents and their families and approximately €1.637m was expended on education grants by the Board. The Board had an available balance of €7.35m at the end of 2008 to provide education grants to former residents and their families into the future.

FOI requests relating to former residents

During 2008, the Department processed 227 FOI applications for records from former residents of industrial schools and other institutions. This brings the total number of such applications processed by the Department to 11,793 at the end of 2008. Further enquiries arose in over 140 cases that had previously been dealt with under the Act.

Advice and support

The Department continued to provide funding of approximately €1.25 million in 2008 for advice and support services for former residents of institutions.

OBJECTIVE 4.5:

Contributing to the development of:

- ***North/South cooperation through the exchange of information and learning and joint action in agreed areas of common interest***
- ***education through cooperation and decision making at EU and international level***

North South Cooperation

The Department liaises with the North/South Ministerial Council Secretariat and with the Department of Education, Northern Ireland, in relation to meetings of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in Education Sectoral format and it co-ordinates developments in bi-lateral contacts with officials in the Department of Employment and Learning and Department of Education, in Northern Ireland. The Department also develops and administers (including funding support) co-operation initiatives between the UK, the USA and Ireland, North and South, including the George Mitchell Scholarship Programme.

The sixth and seventh meetings of the NSMC in Education Sectoral format were held respectively

in Downpatrick, Co Down (May 2008) and in Dublin (December 2008). At both meetings, Ministers reviewed and discussed North South cooperation in the areas of Educational Underachievement, Teacher Qualifications and Teachers' Superannuation, Special Education Needs and School, Youth and Teacher Exchanges.

In 2008, both Departments of Education began the implementation of the report of the joint North/South *Review of Educational Exchanges and Supporting Mechanisms*. Implementation of this report will bring major developments and improvements to North/South exchange and co-operative work in both jurisdictions.

Also in 2008, the Department continued to co-fund, with the Northern Ireland Department of Education, a range of North/South cooperation initiatives including the European Schools, *Dissolving Boundaries and Civic Link* programmes. In addition, Department funding support of the *Cinemagic Film Festival* programme in 2008 has led to a significant increase in the overall numbers of young people reported as participating in the funded cooperation programmes.

The table below sets out the number of schools, youth groups, students, teachers/trainers and young people who participated in North South projects and programmes that received funding support from the Department in 2008.

Total Number Schools	784
Total Number of Youth Groups	20
Total Number of Teachers/Trainers	1,845
Total Number of Students	20,104
Total Number of Young People	3,049

The Cross Border Professional Exchange Programme came to a conclusion in 2008. The aim of this programme was to build on teachers' existing skills through sharing the expertise and experience of teachers in both the North and South. Materials created as part of the project were distributed to teachers in selected schools in border counties (North and South). The packs support teachers and inform parents on matters relating to Autism, Speech and Language difficulties and students who require additional support in order for them to engage with education.

The Department in conjunction with the Department of Education, Northern Ireland hosted and/or participated in a number of conferences in 2008, as follows:

- In April 2008, a conference on *Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs)* was held in Dublin. Parents and professionals had an opportunity to hear internationally acclaimed speakers address aspects of autism education, to gain knowledge about relevant issues and consider how best to provide for the special education needs of children with autism.
- Both Departments of Education participated in a joint *All-Island Skills Conference* in Derry and Letterkenny in October 2008. The conference included presentations from leading national and international topic leaders and was attended by senior business people, policy influencers and decision makers. An All-Island Skills Study was launched at the conference, providing a comprehensive analysis of the skills demand across the island.
- In November 2008, both Departments jointly organised a North/South conference on *"Promoting Attainment in Numeracy in Primary Schools"* in Cavan. A number of key areas for potential collaboration between both Departments were proposed, including the organisation

of a follow-up conference focusing on attainment in mathematics in post-primary schools. Those proposals are being considered by the Departments at present.

- The Department and the Department of Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland co-hosted a conference in Malahide in November 2008, aimed at sharing the Irish and UK experience and raising awareness on the importance of student and staff mobility under the *Bologna Process*.

International Education Policy

The Department contributes to the promotion of Ireland as a centre for international education through policy development and coordination, by supporting Departmental agencies which regulate and support international education in Ireland, by awarding scholarships to international graduate students who wish to undertake research in Ireland and by facilitating inward and outward visits by educational leaders and decision-makers.

EU Education Policy

At EU level, the Department is represented on the Education Committee (the working group of the European Council of Education Ministers) that contributes to the development of European policy on Education & Training. European Ministers usually meet three or four times a year at Education Council.

In February 2008, Education Ministers adopted '*Key messages on education and training*'. Education Ministers also adopted a European Parliament and Council recommendation on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which will act as a translation grid for qualifications around Europe. This was formally adopted by the European Parliament and Council on 23 April 2008.

At the Education Council in May, Education Ministers, adopted a general approach on a draft decision of the Council and European Parliament, which declared 2009 to be the Year of Creativity and Innovation. In addition, Education Ministers at the May Council adopted Conclusions encouraging Member States to continue to develop and implement national strategies in the adult learning area.

The promotion of multilingualism was a feature of EU education and training policy throughout 2008. Education Ministers adopted Conclusions on multilingualism at Council in May and, following on from these, a *Resolution on a European strategy for multilingualism* at the November Council.

At the November Council, Education Ministers, adopted a Resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance in lifelong learning policies; Conclusions inviting Member States to remove barriers to youth mobility; and Conclusions on European cooperation on schools.

Education Ministers, including Minister of State Lenihan, met informally in Bordeaux on 26 November 2008 and adopted the Bordeaux Communiqué on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training. The Communiqué is part of the Copenhagen Process, which was initiated in 2002, on improving the performance, quality and attractiveness of vocational education

and training. It built on Conclusions adopted by Education Ministers at Council on 21 November 2008.

EU Funded Education and Training Programmes

The integrated Lifelong Learning Programme 2007 to 2013 replacing the Socrates school education and Leonardo daVinci vocational education and training programme continued to be administered in Ireland and supported by the Department of Education and Science.

Under the Programme, the European Commission provides funding to beneficiaries and project promoters and partners and this funding is administered by the national agencies in the member states in the case of decentralised actions and by the Commission in the case of centralised actions.

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Number of Participants</i>
Erasmus Higher Education	2000 students and teachers
Leonardo DaVinci Vocational Education and Training	13 projects - 516 mobility participants
Comenius	62 projects – 137 mobility participants
Grundtvig	13 projects – 40 mobility projects
Study Visits	35 Educational and training professionals

Wider International

In 2008, the Department initiated negotiations with a number of partners in South America, Asia and the Gulf, on new educational agreements to provide a framework for development of international educational ties with those countries. It also facilitated a number of inward and outward visits with key education partners in the Asia-Pacific and Gulf regions.

The Minister participated in a major trade mission to China which significantly contributed to the further development of bilateral education relations. In addition to launching a number of institutional-level partnerships, the two Governments announced the creation of a Joint Working Group to provide a framework for enhancement of Ireland-China educational ties.



Section 05

Supporting Delivery & Focusing on the Needs of our Customers

5

Section Five

Supporting Delivery & Focusing on the Needs of our Customers

Organisation Capacity

In 2008 work commenced on the development and planning for the re-organisation of work within the Department's School's Division, from a sectoral approach to a thematic approach. This was to ensure it adopted a more co-ordinated approach to many of the common themes across primary and post primary schools. The aim was to develop a more efficient means of organising the work which would make it easier for schools and pupils to navigate and communicate with the Department. Internally it focussed the expertise on an area, common to all schools, to one team rather than across teams. In addition it will allow for the development of a specific unit which is primarily concerned with parents and pupil needs in and contribution to the school sector. The project received the backing and full co-operation of all staff and it is hoped that the agreed plans can be implemented during the early part of 2009.

During 2008 work continued with regard to the restructuring of the Department's Planning and Building Unit in order to improve the Department's planning and delivery of school accommodation to meet future needs, particularly in light of rapid demographic growth in certain areas of the country in recent years. The new structures will be kept under review to ensure that they meet the ongoing requirements of the Department and its stakeholders.

Customer Services

The Department's customer base encompasses all walks of Irish life. Everyone has a direct contact with education at some point of their lives, whether as a student, parent, teacher, employer, employee, as a member of the community or as a participant on parents associations, school boards of management or other governing boards. Each of these has a direct interest in the development and delivery of high-quality education services. The Government, members of the Oireachtas, the social partners and the Department's own staff, as internal customers, are all important client groups.

The Department is committed to delivering quality services that meet the needs of our customers, particularly learners. This commitment is reflected in the Department's Strategy Statement 2008-2010 and is underpinned in the performance management processes in the Department, where customer service is identified as a core competency for our staff. This commitment is reinforced in our Customer Charter. We are also committed to communicating with and delivering services to customers through the medium of Irish, where that is their preference.

The Department has procedures in place for handling comments and complaints from customers who are not satisfied that the service that they received was in line with our quality service commitments or generally accepted principles of equity and good administrative practice. An information leaflet for customers on our standards and procedures, entitled *Information for Customers Comments and Complaints* can be downloaded from the Customer Services section of the Department's website. Customers who are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint or the way in which it was handled by the Department are advised that they may pursue the matter further with outside agencies such as the Office of the Ombudsman or the Ombudsman for Children's Office.

In order to enhance the performance of the Department's website, www.education.ie, significant remedial work relating to the upgrading of servers was carried out in 2008.

Decentralisation

The Department completed the decentralisation of 88 administrative posts to Athlone in the summer of 2008. The priority now is to complete the decentralisation of approximately 296 posts to Mullingar as soon as accommodation becomes available. Full planning permission for this development was received in July 2008. In June 2008, the Department utilised existing available accommodation in its Regional Office in Mullingar to decentralise a section comprising seven posts from Dublin to that location. At the end of 2008, approximately 45% of Mullingar bound posts were held by officers who have opted to decentralise with the Department.

Supporting the Parliamentary process

In 2008 the Minister responded to 4,422 Parliamentary Questions asked by Deputies in Dáil Éireann, 4,141 of these were written replies and 281 were responded to orally by the Minister during Question Time. The questions and answers are published and are available on the Oireachtas website. 153 requests for observations in relation to Draft Memoranda for the Government were also received. In addition the Minister and Ministers of State received in excess of 11,500 representations during 2008.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

The Department received 502 new requests during 2008. Of these 457 were appropriate to the Department while 45 were proper to other education related bodies. Of the 457 requests proper to the Department 280 were Personal, 171 Non-Personal and 6 mixed. These figures include requests from former residents of the residential institutions mentioned elsewhere in the report.

The Department granted 75 FOI requests in full, part-granted 194 requests and refused 189 requests during 2008. In addition 35 requests were withdrawn and 23 requests were dealt with outside of FOI.

Financial Management

In line with the provisions of the Prompt Payments of Accounts Act the Department discharged its statutory responsibility in relation to the payment and recording of prompt payment interest paid. Interest penalties in accordance with section 4 of the Act were paid in a very small number of cases in 2008 as illustrated below:

Gross Voted out-turn	€9.295 billion
Total number of late payments on which Prompt Payment Interest (PPI) penalties charged	90
Net Prompt Payment Interest (PPI) penalties incurred	€3,005.07

Appropriate internal audit and risk management procedures are in place to ensure compliance with public financial procedure guidelines, prompt payment legislation and to meet statutory requirements. During the year the Department's Internal Audit Unit issued eight final audit reports. It also completed compliance and follow-up work in relation to implementation of recommendations. The Department's Audit Committee, which has a membership of five (including three external members, one of whom is the Chairperson), held four meetings during 2008.

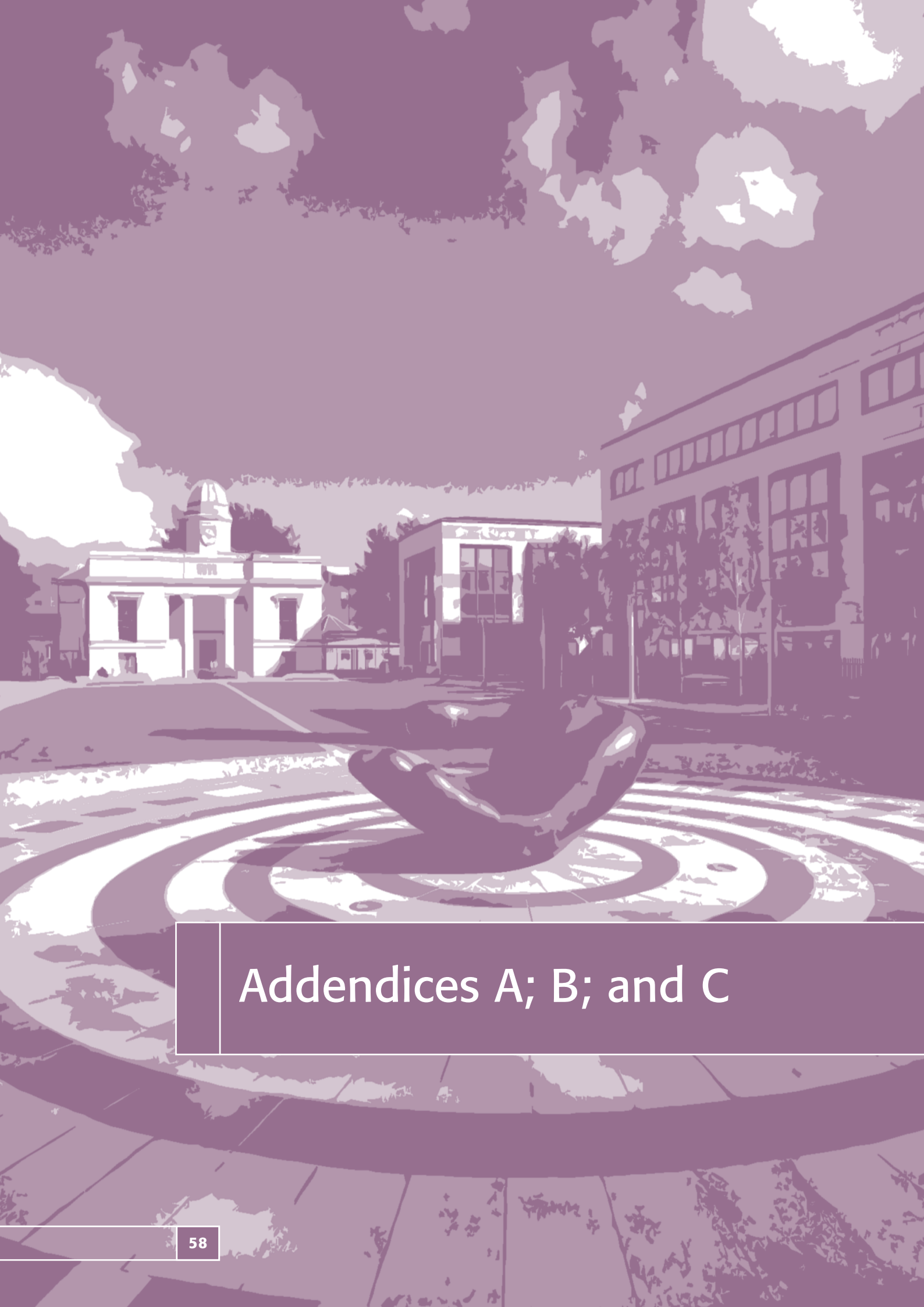
Contributing to cross-departmental cooperation

The Department's Strategy Statement for 2008-2010 notes the role of education in supporting wider Government policy objectives is very significant and spans the full range of the agenda for economic development, social inclusion, quality of life and active citizenship. This is reflected in the key cross-cutting responsibilities of each of the Ministers of State assigned to this Department. Each of their roles involves oversight and leadership of arrangements for co-ordinating with other Departments to achieve major Government policy objectives for:

- lifelong learning;
- the integration of newcomers in Irish;
- developing Early Childhood Education;
- promoting innovation in the economy; and
- interfacing effectively with the health sector in implementing the EPSEN and Disability Acts and strategies.

Other notable cross-cutting issues include interaction with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and local authorities in planning for the provision of new schools to meet the needs of emerging communities, implementing Government strategy for future skills supply and developing our research and development capacity (with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and others), advancing the broad social inclusion agenda, including the implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, (with Department of the Taoiseach and others), the development of policies to promote the Irish language, the implementation of the National Drugs Strategy, the RAPID programme (with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs), the promotion of equality measures across the education system (in liaison with the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform and the Equality Authority) and the implementation of Reach Out: The National Strategy for Suicide Prevention (in collaboration with the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive).

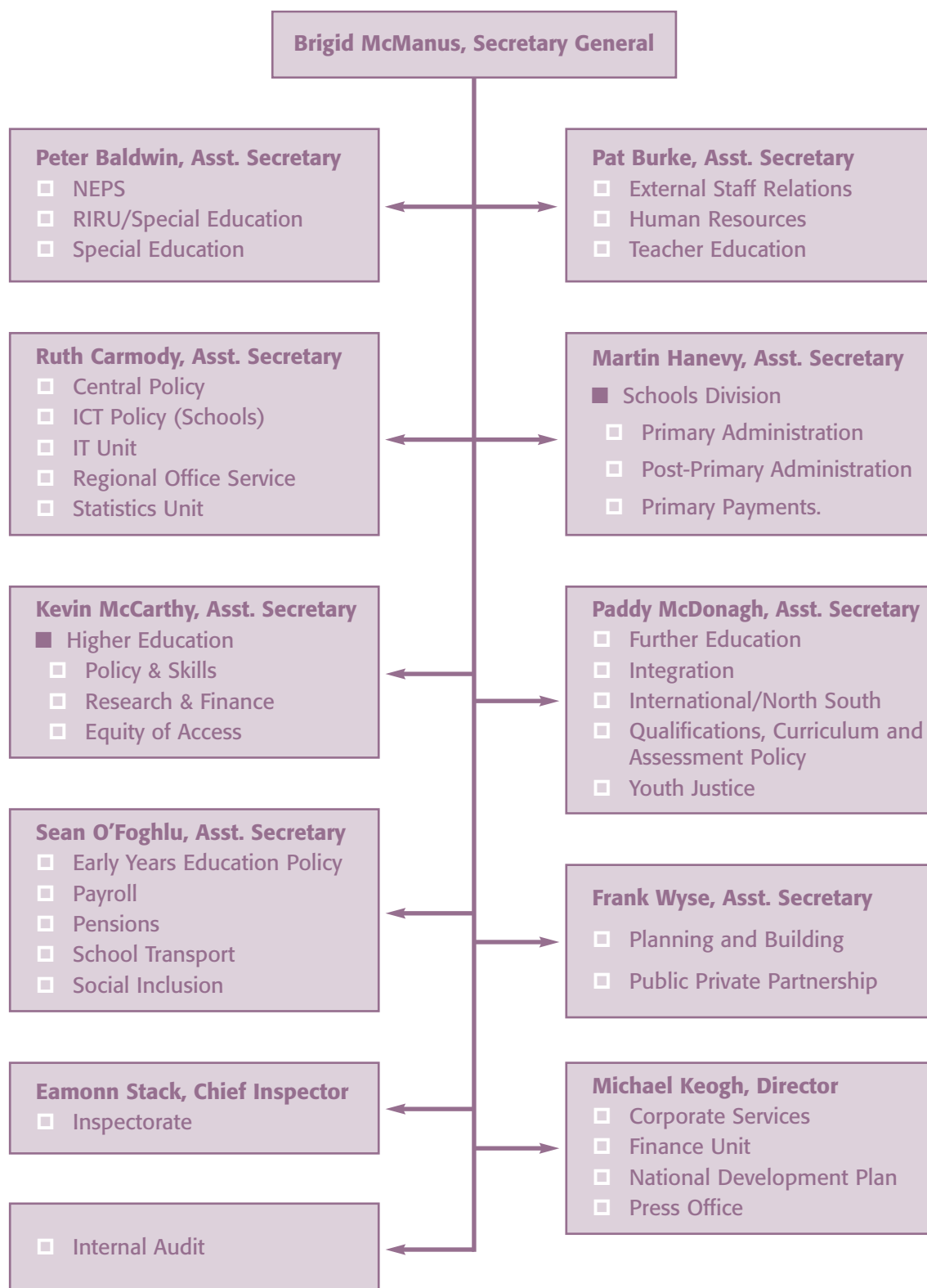
On these and on a range of other policy issues, Department officials continued to be involved in regular contacts with other Departments and agencies on both a bilateral basis and through formal co-ordinating structures such as inter departmental committees, senior officials groups and cabinet subcommittees during 2008. The Department also provided representation to a wide range of entities, such as City/County Development Boards, Drug Task Forces, and Childcare Committees at local and regional level during the year.



Addendices A; B; and C

Appendix A

Organisation Chart



Appendix B

Non-commercial bodies under the Aegis of the Department in 2008

Advisory Council for English Language Schools	(ACELS)
An Chomhairle um Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta	(COGG)
Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education	(CECDE)
Commission into Child Abuse	(CICA)
Education Finance Board	(EFB)
Further Education & Training Awards Council	(FETAC)
Gaisce – The President’s Award	
Grangegorman Development Agency	(GGDA)
Higher Education and Training Awards Council	(HETAC)
Higher Education Authority	(HEA)
International Education Board – Ireland	(IEBI)
Léargas - The Exchange Bureau	
National Centre for Technology in Ireland	(NCTE)
National Centre for Guidance in Education	(NCGE)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment	(NCCA)
National Council for Special Education	(NCSE)
National Education Welfare Board	(NEWB)
National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	(NQAI)
Residential Institutions Redress Board	(RIRB)
Residential Institutions Review Committee	(RIRC)
State Examinations Commission	(SEC)
The Teaching Council	

Appendix C

Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA)

Student Support Bill 2008

In the context of promoting greater equity of access to third level education, particularly for disadvantaged and mature students, through improved targeting of student support/access initiatives and with the objective of creating a better regulated and more streamlined student support system, there are no viable regulatory alternatives to legislation. Consultation took place with stakeholders who are supportive of the need to streamline the administration of the student support schemes and their administration. As no significant additional costs or impacts arise, it was not proposed to carry out a full RIA. A screening RIA was conducted prior to consideration of the Heads of the Bill by Government in July 2006 and was attached to the Memorandum for Government.

Statutory Instrument 139/08 – Recognition of Professional Qualifications (Directive 2005/36/Ec) Regulations, 2008

This Statutory Instrument was introduced to transpose EU Directive 2005/36 on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications. The RIA screening document was published in 2008.



Department of Education and Science, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1

Tel: 01 889 6400 Web: www.education.ie

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