

Annual Report 2018 Department of Education and Skills









Contents

Forewo	ra by the Minister	
Forewo	rd by Minister of State Mitchell O'Connor	ii
Forewo	rd by Minister of State Halligan	iii
Stateme	ent from the Secretary General	iv
Overvie	w of key actions delivered during 2018	1
	s on the five key Strategic Goals in 2018	5
	- Improve the learning experience and success of learners	5
1.1	Curriculum at primary level	
1.2	Curriculum at post-primary level	
1.3	Gaeilge	
1.4	Foreign Languages	
1.5	National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development	
1.6	Literacy and Numeracy	
1.7	Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM)	
1.8	Leaving Certificate examination appeals	
1.9	Digital Strategy	
1.10	Digital Learning Framework	
1.11	ICT Infrastructure in Schools.	
1.12	Teacher Allocations	
1.13	New Allocation Model for SEN Teaching Resources	
1.14	Section 29 Appeals	
1.15	Gaeltacht Education Policy 2017-2022	
1.16	National Educational Psychological Service	
1.17	Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018-2023)	
1.18	Technology-Enhanced Learning in Further Education and Training	
1.19	Transitions from School to Higher Education	
	- Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or	
	s with special educational needs	13
2.1	Access and Inclusion in Early Years Settings	14
2.1.	1 Early Start	14
2.1.	2 Rutland Street Pre-school Project	14
2.1.	Supporting Inclusion and Diversity	14
2.2	Equity of Access to Higher Education	14
2.2.	Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH)	14
2.3	Student Grants	
2.3.	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	16
2.4	DEIS Plan 2017	
2.4.		16
2.5	Special Education Needs	
2.5.		16
2.5. 2.5.	3 1	17 17
2.5.	·	17
2.5.	·	17
2.5.	·	17
2.5.		18

	2.5.8	Special Education Home Tuition Scheme	18
	2.5.9	July Education Programme	18
	2.5.10	Middletown Centre for Autism	18
	2.5.11	In-School Speech and Language Therapy	19
	2.5.12	NCSE Support Services	19
	2.5.13	Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Scheme	19
	2.5.14	Development of NCSE Support Services	20
		ychological Supports	
	2.7 Tra	ansport Services for Students with SEN	. 21
	2.8 Sc	hool Excellence Fund	. 21
	2.9 Pa	thways to Participation in Apprenticeship	. 21
G	oal 3 – He	elp those delivering education services to continuously improve	23
	3.1 Qu	ality in Early Education	. 23
	3.1.1	Síolta/Aistear	24
	3.2 Ea	rly Years Education Inspections	. 25
		acher Supply	
		acher Education	
	3.4.1	Initial Teacher Education (ITE)	26
	3.4.2	Review of the curricular subject requirements for registration at post-primary level	26
	3.4.3	Reform of Initial Teacher Education (ITE)	26
	3.4.2	Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	27
	3.4.3	Continuing Professional Development – Junior Cycle Reform	27
	3.5 Sc	hool Leadership	. 27
		icide Prevention	
		sh-language curricula	
		ality Inspections	
	3.8.1	Standards of provision in schools	28
	3.8.2	New Models of Inspection	29
	3.8.3	Inspection of Irish-language courses in Coláistí Gaeilge	30
	3.8.4	School Self-Evaluation	30
		rther Education and Training Professional Development	
		aluation of the Youthreach programme	
		uild stronger bridges between education and the wider community	31
		hool Patronage	
		hool Admissions	
		rent and Student Charter	
		ills Development	
	4.4.1	National Skills Strategy	32
	4.4.2	National Skills Council	33
	4.4.3	Regional Skills Fora	33
	4.4.4	Skills to Advance	33
	4.4.5	Springboard+	33
	4.4.6	EXPLORE Programme	34
	4.4.7	Traineeships and apprenticeships	34
		eative Youth	
	4.5.1	Creative Schools	34
	4.5.2 4.5.3	Creative Youth Partnerships Creative Clusters	35 35
	4.6 Era	asmus+	. ა၁

4.7	International Education	35	
4.8	Education for Sustainable Development	36	
4.9	Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bi		
2018		,	
4.10	Further Education and Training National Learner Forum	37	
4.11	Complete review of higher education funding model to underpin delivery across	the	
secto	or	37	
4.12	Position Ireland as a desirable location for international students	37	
Goal 5	- Improve national planning and support services	38	
5.1	Action Plan for Education (2016-2019)	38	
5.2	Public Sector Reform Programme	39	
5.2	Shared Services Implementation	39	
5.2	.2 ETB/SOLAS Programme Board	40	
5.3	Data Protection	40	
5.4	Progress Review of Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2014-2019.	41	
5.5	Strategic Performance Agreements in Further Education and Training (FET)	41	
5.6	Reform of the National Training Fund	41	
5.7	Expert Group on Future Funding in Higher Education	41	
5.7	7.1 Economic examination of the three policy options proposed	41	
5.7	.2 Implementation of recommendations	42	
5.8	Publish the General Scheme of the Higher Education Reform Bill.		
5.9	Technological Universities Act, 2018	43	
5.10	Payroll and Pensions	43	
5.11	Building Programme 2018	43	
5.1	1.1 Summer Works and Emergency Works Schemes	44	
	1.2 Property Acquisitions	44	
	1.3 School projects compliance checks	44	
	1.4 Website Information	44	
	1.5 Higher Education Capital Projects	44	
	1.6 Energy Efficiency in Schools	45	
	ICT Developments		
	2.1 Patronage2.2 School Transport	45 45	
	2.3 eCorrespondence	45	
	2.4 eFOI	45	
5.13	School Transport		
5.14	BREXIT and the Education Sector		
5.15	European Social Fund (ESF) Operational Programme		
5.16			
5.17	Internal and EU Audit Unit		
5.18	Dealing with Past Abuse		
	dix A – Corporate Data	49	
	•		
	dix C – Bodies under the Aegis of the Department	54 55	
	Appendix D - Direct Links to our Website www.education.ie Appendix E – Acronyms		
Annen	OUX E = ACTOOVINS	57	

Foreword by the Minister



Education and training are critical to building a strong and successful country. They underpin our economy and how well we compete in the global market for jobs and innovation. They improve individuals' life choices, their health and wellbeing and employment outcomes.

I was appointed Minister for Education and Skills in October 2018 and I welcome the publication of the Department's Annual Report for 2018,

which outlines the work undertaken during that year.

We are also looking forward. As part of that a new Statement of Strategy and Action Plan (2019- 2021) was launched by An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar. We chose the title 'Cumasú' which I believe encapsulates the work of my Department and those working within the wider education sector: we want to empower people through learning and help them to achieve their full potential. Over the past few years, using the Action Plan framework, great progress has been made and I want to thank everyone who was involved. I see the education and training sector as a united one, where we engage in a common effort to nurture the next generation. I am committed to continuing with the reforms underway, in a carefully managed and paced way. I want to ensure that there is a logical sequence to what's being implemented on the ground.

2018 saw continued curricular reform, the launch of a three year STEM education awareness campaign and the publication of 'Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice". My Department progressed work in terms of admissions policy, assessment of the SNA scheme and the School Excellence Fund. While further improvements will continue to be made across many aspects of the system, this report recognises the good work that has been done.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Department's officials and my colleagues, Ministers of State, Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D. and John Halligan T.D. I would also like to acknowledge my predecessor in this role, Richard Bruton T.D., for his hard work and dedication.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all those working in the education and training sector for their work in 2018, which so greatly contributed to the Department's achievements. I look forward to working collaboratively with you all as we work to empower through education.

Joe McHugh T.D.

Minister for Education and Skills

Foreword by Minister of State Mitchell O'Connor



2018 marked a time of transformation for the higher education sector in Ireland. I welcome the publication of this Annual Report, which highlights the work carried out by the Department to ensure this transformation is facilitated, and progressed.

The Technological Universities Bill Legislation passed all stages, enabling institutes of technology to develop into a new model of

Technological Universities with TU Dublin, Ireland's first Technological University, being formally established in early 2019. The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill, advanced this year, will strengthen QQI in its regulatory role, and enable it to maintain and enhance the quality of educational provision across the further and higher education system.

Late last year a major Government initiative to address gender inequality in senior academic positions was announced. The aim of the initiative is to have women holding 40% of professorships by 2024, through the creation of women-only posts in universities and institutes of technology in Ireland - as recommended by the Gender Equality Taskforce report.

A National Workshop on Consent and ending Sexual Violence in Third Level Education brought together higher education representatives, students unions and other stakeholders to progress work on tackling the serious issue of sexual consent in higher education.

Access to higher education continues to improve, particularly for those in under-represented groups in society. The agreement for the €300m multiannual Human Capital Initiative for Higher Education will see an initiative that will fund programmes in HE meeting priority skill needs. During 2018, the publication of a mid-term review of PATH was published and new targets were set. The Higher Education Innovation and Transformation Fund was launched, awarding €23 million to 22 projects across a number of educational institutions. In addition, work commenced on new Higher Education legislation, which will provide the HEA with the necessary authority which is reflective of its central role in higher education system.

I look forward to building on the progress made to date in achieving positive change in 2019.

Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D.

Minister of State for Higher Education

Foreword by Minister of State Halligan

I welcome the publication of the Department of Education and Skills' Annual Report 2018. Last year was a productive year for the skills' area, as my colleagues and I continued to work towards making the education and training system one that is flexible, responsive and meets the needs of lifelong learners.

This report notes a number of important achievements made with this vision in mind. A new policy, 'Skills to Advance', was launched, providing guidance to ETBs in supporting the upskilling of those in employment, and enabling targeted support for vulnerable groups in our workforce.

Springboard+ extended, with a rollout of over 8,000 Springboard+ places, with 245 courses open to people irrespective of their employment status. Work continued on the apprenticeship expansion programme and a review of "Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship" was published.

2018 also saw the launch of the EXPLORE programme. This initiative will provide learning opportunities to those in employment, but not engaged with the education and training system, or existing upskilling programmes, and help address the low level of participation in lifelong learning amongst the Irish workforce. It is important that we recognise the need to future-proof, and to enable all workers to respond to new opportunities as they arise.

I would like to acknowledge the work of my colleagues in the wider education and training sector, for their continuous engagement and contribution. I look forward to building on the initiatives introduced above in 2019.

John Halligan T.D. Minister of State for Training, Skills, Innovation and Research and Development

Statement from the Secretary General

I am pleased to introduce the 2018 Annual Report of the Department of Education and

Skills, which details the progress made across all areas of the Department's responsibilities in the last year.

2018 was a productive year for the Department, as we continued to advance, renew and implement the Department's strategic approaches. We also welcomed a new Minister, Joe McHugh T.D., and we look forward to working collaboratively with him to advance

the work of the Department.

The Department saw two important Acts complete all stages in 2018. The Education (Admission to Schools) Act was signed into law in July, aiming to ensure that children are treated fairly while seeking a school place, with more structured and transparent application systems in place in schools. The Technological Universities Act was also signed into law, providing for the development of a new Technological University model, with TU Dublin formally coming into existence in early 2019.

Curricular reform continued, with the introduction of Physical Education and Computer Science as Leaving Certificate subjects, as well as increase specifications for a number of subjects at Junior Cycle. We made significant changes to the timeline in the issuing of Leaving Certificate results, as well as the release of CAO offers, and shortened the appeals process time. This will greatly benefit students who are preparing to enter higher education.

The Department published its Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, which places a much-needed emphasis on wellbeing for students in schools, as well as the wider school community. This policy statement and framework marks an important step towards the overall aim of all schools and centres for education having a School Self-Evaluation process focused on wellbeing promotion in place by 2023.

While we reached many milestones, as outlined in this report, and progressed important bodies of work, 2018 was not without its challenges. The emergence of potential structural concerns for a number of schools triggered the Department to act immediately, with consideration given to pupils, staff, patrons and parents. The Department now has a dedicated unit to progress the work necessary to carry out the complex work involved and the variety issues that need to be addressed.

I would like to express my gratitude to the staff in the Department for their work this year, as well as to all those working in the wider education and training sector.

Seán Ó Foghlú Secretary General

Overview of key actions delivered during 2018

At the core of the Department's Strategy Statement is the aim to improve the lives of every learner through the provision of a quality education and training experience. Education and training give learners the skills and knowledge to fulfil their personal goals and to be productive and valuable members of society. The Annual Report details the Department's activities during 2018 and reports on the progress made towards implementation of our Strategy Statement.



Improve the learning experience and the success of learners



In 2018, actions were taken to embed and support the new **Wellbeing initiatives** in schools; The Department published its Wellbeing Policy Statement for schools, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) was expanded and additional Education Psychologists were recruited. In addition a Wellbeing Practice Framework to inform Planning and Evaluation in schools was published.

Progress continued to be made on **curricular reform**. Significant changes to the process of Leaving Certificate examination appeals were announced, substantially cutting the time involved in the appeals process.

In the area of **Critical Skills Development**, further work was undertaken to build the evidence base to inform **STEM** policy and the supply of teachers of STEM subjects. Partnerships between schools and businesses were strengthened to encourage greater extracurricular activity in STEM and a three year STEM education awareness campaign was launched.

Work continues to **improve proficiency in, and increase the diversity of take-up of, languages**, in order to provide greater opportunities to learners and meet skills need. An Advisory Group was established to oversee the implementation of "Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017 – 2026", which in 2018 included an audit of foreign language provision in post-primary schools, drafting Leaving Certificate specifications in Mandarin, Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese, the introduction of a short course in Lithuanian and an increase in the number of schools providing Chinese as a short course, an increase of 25% in the number of Language Assistants in Spanish, German, French and Italian and an increase in the uptake of Erasmus.



Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs



In 2018, progress in providing **opportunities for learners at risk of disadvantage was accelerated.** The Department continued to support the new DEIS schools to optimise the use of available supports to improve student outcomes and work continued with HEIs, to deliver the targets for increased enrolment among disadvantaged learners and the Department enhanced NEPS support to schools participating in DEIS.

The Department continued to progress the steadily **increasing inclusion** of children in the education system. A comprehensive assessment of the SNA scheme was completed and work commenced on developing proposals to implement the recommendations. A new in-school

Speech and Language Therapy Service was piloted to develop greater linkages between educational and therapy support and assist schools to develop their capacity to support children with speech and language needs in schools.

Further measures were taken to improve **access to higher education** for under-represented groups. A mid-term review of the national Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education gathering baseline data and setting new targets to be achieved was carried out. Funding was allocated to regional clusters of higher education institutions under PATH to enable delivery of key elements of the national Access Plan and to support regional and community approaches to access; work was advanced on examining measures to increase participation by Lone Parents.



Help those delivering education services to continuously improve



Evaluation and review of programmes in FET continued with the completion of an evaluation of the Youthreach programme, commencement of the evaluation of the VTOS/SST programme and implementation of the recommendations from the PLC review. Compacts with Higher Education Institutions and Strategic Performance Agreements in FET between SOLAS and the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) continued to drive and set targets for quality delivery across the sectors.

Significant strides were made in building strong leadership and improving teacher education and addressing teacher supply issues during 2018. Investment in leadership across the system continued with the further rollout of coaching and mentoring for principals, supports for changes to the leadership and middle management structure of schools, the development of a management and leadership capability framework and upskilling programme for the Higher Education sector and implementation of the Professional Development Strategy for the Further Education and Training sector. The Department established the Teacher Supply Steering Group to oversee the development and implementation of an Action Plan for Teacher Supply. The Action Plan was published in 2018 with actions across a range of policy areas.

Arrangements for data systems to support the evaluation of outcomes from FET programmes were developed and a progress review of the Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 was completed



Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community



The Education (Admission to Schools) Act, 2018 enacted in July 2018 represents a major change to admissions policies particularly in Primary schools. The Act is aimed at achieving a more structured, fair and transparent decision making process by schools, regarding enrolment.

Progress towards increasing the diversity of school type, in order to **offer parents more choice** was also made with patronage surveys being rolled out to pre-school parents; a new Online Patronage process (OPPS) was launched, allowing parents to express preferences for the finalisation of protocols for the initial identification Phase of the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process, which lays the ground work for agreeing more detailed arrangements for the implementation phase and transfer of patronage of schools following consultation.

Traineeship in Ireland to promote and encourage work based learning and strengthen partnerships between employers, higher education and further education and training providers. During 2018, work continued on the revision of existing Craft Apprenticeship and the development of new national apprenticeships. 18 new apprenticeships have been developed (cumulatively), spanning a variety of sectors from financial services and ICT to hospitality. The Department completed a review of pathways to participation in apprenticeship to inform future policy. In addition, 24 new traineeships have been developed in areas such as hospitality, engineering, logistics and animation.

Following the publishing of the review of the funding allocation model for higher education, the new **Higher Education Innovation and Transformation Fund** was launched as part of this modernisation and reform of the funding model. 22 projects across 23 educational institutions were awarded a total of €23 million under the Fund.

During 2018, the Department commenced the process of putting in place new **Higher Education** legislation which will provide the HEA with the necessary authority in relation to revised functions, governance and other related matters, which more fully reflect its current central role and responsibilities in relation to higher education. A consultation process was undertaken to inform the development of the new legislation, following which, work commenced on drafting an outline of the new legislation.



Improve national planning and support services



A total of €547m was spent on schools' infrastructure. In addition, capital expenditure on higher education infrastructure was €33.85m.

In 2018, the relevant authorities for the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020 (PEIL) co-financed by the EU through the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) were designated. Over the course of the programme – the EU will contribute some €613m to ESF and YEI supported activities in Ireland. During 2018, payment applications submitted to the Commission resulted in receipts of €116m, of which €109m was paid into the Department's Vote.

Work advanced on **shared services and centralised procurement** to strengthen management systems across a range of services in the Department and the sector. The Department rolled out the Financial Services Support Unit (FSSU) to the Community and Comprehensive schools sector and progressed the development of Payroll Shared Services for the ETB sector for implementation in 2019. An evidence base for a business case to introduce HR/Payroll Shared Services in the higher education sector was developed and ICT systems were upgraded to support the shared service agenda for that sector. The Education Sector Procurement hub was developed to maximise the benefits of centralised procurement, and to facilitate progress towards a single procurement service.

Our Mission

To facilitate individuals, through learning, to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's social, economic and cultural development.

Goals 2016-2019



The Department's performance in 2018 is measured against the key outputs and performance indicators outlined in the Statement of Strategy 2016-2019.

General corporate data which outlines our extensive engagement with our customer base and the wider civil service can be found at Appendix A.

Progress on the five key Strategic Goals in 2018

During 2018, the Department made significant progress in achieving the goals detailed in the Strategy Statement and Action Plan for Education 2016-2019. The Annual Report 2018 acknowledges the significant and systematic progress that was made under each of our five goals:

Goal 1 – Improve the learning experience and success of learners

This Goal is about building learning environments for all learners that promote health, wellbeing and personal development. It is crucial that learners experience learning environments which support them to reach their full potential. This means addressing their wellbeing needs, providing curricula and learning outcomes appropriate for current and predicted future skills requirements and embracing the power of ICT to deliver learning in an innovative way, so that students are fully prepared for the challenges and opportunities they will face in the future.

Review of the year under this Goal

GOAL

- A Foreign Languages Advisory Group (FLAG) has been established to oversee implementation of Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education.
- The School Excellence Fund Digital was launched, with 32 clusters and involving 200 schools.
- The Department's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018–2023 was launched.
- A review of work experience at post-primary level has commenced, with a view to increasing access and quality of work experience for students.
- Action plans for improvements to 106 primary and 28 post-primary schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme have been reviewed and approved. A grant of €1,200 each and additional language support hours provided to 134 schools where action plans for improvement have been approved.
- Additional foreign language assistants to support the teaching of Spanish, German, French and Italian are being allocated to schools which is an increase of 25%.
- Roll out of Computer Science and Physical Education as Leaving Certificate subjects has begun, supported by funding of €450,000.
- All Continuing Professional Development (CPD) being developed for primary and postprimary teachers of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education will incorporate the key principles underpinning the STEM Education Policy.
- A framework for STEM professional development programmes and teaching and learning resources has been developed
- Additional NEPS psychologists have been recruited to enhance access to the NEPS service and increase the range of NEPS in-school supports
- New specifications for Mathematics, Home Economics, History, Music and Geography are being introduced under the new Junior Cycle for the first time this school year.
- Significant changes to process of Leaving Certificate examination appeals and entry to higher education.

Further details under this Goal are set out below.

1.1 Curriculum at primary level

The primary curriculum is undergoing a period of redevelopment and review. This work is being undertaken by the NCCA. As part of this work, the NCCA is engaging widely with stakeholders in education and other interested individuals and groups. This includes working directly with schools across the country on their priorities and needs for a redeveloped primary curriculum. Another strand of work involves drawing on an extensive body of research published in a series of short papers at https://www.ncca.ie/en/primary/primary-developments/curriculum-review-and-redevelopment. Building on this work and informed by the findings from a 2017 consultation on curriculum structure and time, the NCCA will publish a draft overview of a redeveloped primary curriculum in autumn 2019. This draft will be the basis for an extensive consultation, which will determine the overall shape and direction of a redeveloped curriculum.

The Primary Languages Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile (PLC/CTB), which sets out children's language learning for English and Gaeilge, was introduced to schools on a phased basis in 2016, from junior infants to second class. Work on PLC/CTB continued throughout 2018 in schools and by the NCCA. September 2019 will see this being built on, as the PLC/CTB is extended to a full eight-year primary curriculum (junior infants to sixth class). Hardcopies of the document will be delivered to all schools, with a re-developed online support space. The PLC/CTB will also be supported by a sustained model of professional development, delivered by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), over the course of three years.

In recognition of the need for time to embed the Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile, as well as being conscious of the extensive workload on teachers, it was announced in 2018 that the implementation of the new primary Maths Curriculum would be delayed until 2022.

1.2 Curriculum at post-primary level

Implementation of the new Framework for Junior Cycle is being progressed. This work commenced in September 2014, with the introduction of the new specification for English.

The final implementation phase will be in September 2019, when the Technology subjects, as well as Religious Education, Jewish Studies and Classics, will be rolled out. As subjects are being introduced, they are supported by a comprehensive CPD programme for teachers.

Of the 21 subjects available under the Framework for Junior cycle, only three – Mathematics, Gaeilge and English – are compulsory.

The direction of Junior Cycle reform is consistent with practice in other high-performing education systems where schools have been given greater autonomy and flexibility in developing the programmes they offer.

There are a number of developments taking place at Senior Cycle, including a broad review and implementation of new and revised specifications.

The NCCA has commenced an extensive review of Senior Cycle programmes and vocational pathways. From September 2018, the NCCA engaged with a representative sample of 41 schools in the initial consultation cycles of the review. Each cycle concluded with a national seminar involving representatives from the collaborating schools and the education partners. The first of two consultation cycles focused on the purpose of Senior Cycle and futures thinking, with the second consultation cycle focusing on pathways and flexibility. An overview report is expected to

be finalised in the spring, with a public consultation to commence in May 2019. The final advisory report is expected to be completed in autumn 2019.

Leaving Certificate Physical Education (LCPE) (examinable) and Senior Cycle Physical Education (non-examinable) were introduced on a phased basis to 80 schools from September 2018, with students to sit the first LCPE examinations in 64 schools in June 2020. A grant of €350 per digital device was paid to the 64 LCPE schools, with one device for every two students, commencing the subject in September 2018. A payment of €750 per school was also made towards the purchase of additional ICT equipment.

Phase 1 of Leaving Certificate Computer Science commenced in September 2018, with 40 schools offering the subject to fifth year students. The first examination will take place in June 2020. The 40 schools who are offering Computer Science for Leaving Certificate in Phase 1 each received €3,000 towards the purchase of connector devices, totalling €120,000 in grants for these schools.

The first Leaving Certificate Politics and Society examination took place in June 2018, with 867 candidates taking the examination in this new subject. Some 66 schools opted to offer the subject from September 2018, in addition to the 41 schools that participated in the Phase 1 rollout of the subject.

1.3 Gaeilge

The Department made a significant contribution to the whole of Government "20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language", by way of a 5 Year Action Plan for Irish 2018 – 2022 which was launched in summer 2018. The chapter entitled "Area for Action – Education" contains 48 of the 187 measures contained in this Plan and the Department is named as the lead organisation, with responsibility for 28 of these measures.

The Department's Early Years Education Policy Unit (EYEPU) has also had input in the Plan and, given the scale of these actions, an entire chapter of the Plan is devoted to this sector.

A number of other agencies have also provided *Education* actions, including; HEA, Foras na Gaeilge, Údarás na Gaeltachta, ETBs, COGG, the Teaching Council and others.

In November 2018, the Department published a "Review of policy and practice in relation to exemptions from the study of Irish". The report formed part of a public consultation on draft revised circulars governing the granting exemptions from the study of Irish.

Published in 2018:

 Review of policy and practice in relation to exemptions from the study of Irish https://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Irish-
 Exemption/Irish
 https://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Irish
 Exemption/Irish
 Exemption/Irish
 Exemption/Irish
 Exemption/Irish
 https://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Irish
 Exemption/Irish
 Exemption/Irish
 Exem

1.4 Foreign Languages

Following the launch of "Languages Connect", Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017 – 2026, a Foreign Languages Advisory Group (FLAG) was established to oversee implementation of the Strategy. Some of the achievements in 2018 include the launch of an awareness campaign (www.languagesconnect.ie) to improve awareness of the importance of learning a foreign language, the development of resources, support for innovation, facilitation of Communities of Practice, increasing numbers of students going on school language exchanges, an audit of foreign languages provision in our schools, language upskilling for teachers, the introduction of Polish and Lithuanian as short courses for Junior Cycle and Polish and Korean as

new Transition Year modules, and an increase in the number of foreign language assistants provided to schools.

1.5 National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development

A review of the "National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) 2014 – 2020" was conducted in 2018 and the resulting report was published in November 2018. The ESD Advisory Group developed a new Action Plan 2018 – 2020 setting out the measures required towards 2020. The Review was launched by the Minister at the annual ESD Forum in November 2018 which showcased best practice ESD activities in schools and heard from a range of speakers across the education sector at home and abroad on ESD and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The ESD Strategy also informed the contribution made to the first Irish Voluntary National Review provided to the United Nations High Level Political Forum in New York in July 2018.

Published in 2018:

 'Education for Sustainability' The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland Report of Interim Review and Action Plan for Q4 2018-Q4 2020 https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/esd-interim-review-action-plan-2018-2020.pdf

1.6 Literacy and Numeracy

The "Literacy and Numeracy Strategy" and the more challenging targets set out in the action plan 2017-2020 implementation continued, with a view to improving literacy and numeracy outcomes. The inaugural Literacy and Numeracy Forum was held in October 2018, which was designed to promote and encourage quality, excellence and innovation in literacy and numeracy, and which, inter alia, showcased exemplars in the Irish school system.

1.7 Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM)

The Department's STEM Education Policy Statement 2017–2026, published in November 2017, sets out the ambitious goals and actions required to achieve and improve the STEM education experience and outcomes for all learners. A STEM Implementation Advisory Group was established in order to progress the actions in the STEM Education Implementation Plan, building on a range of reforms and initiatives already underway in STEM, in areas such as curriculum and assessment reform, teacher professional development, embedding digital learning and advances in Initial Teacher Education. A number of sub-groups have also been set up under the Advisory Group to progress particular areas such as STEM and the Arts, Gender Balance in STEM and Business/Industry Engagement with Education. The advertising element of an awareness campaign took place in January 2019, in conjunction with Science Foundation Ireland, with the purpose of drawing attention to the different career types under the STEM heading (#IGetPaidToDoThis).

1.8 Leaving Certificate examination appeals

The issue to students of provisional results of the Leaving Certificate has traditionally been ten weeks from the first day of the examinations. The new proposed timeline moves the issuing of these results forward by one day (to Tuesday 13th August in 2019), and this will be followed by the release to students of CAO Round 1 offers by Friday 16th August.

The appeals process will now take approximately five weeks from the date of issuing provisional results to the issuing of appeals results.

1.9 Digital Strategy

The "Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020, Enhancing Teaching, Learning and Assessment" sets out a clear vision that is focussed on realising the potential of digital technologies to transform the learning experiences of students by helping them become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens who participate fully in society and the economy.

The Strategy is organised around four key themes:

- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Using ICT
- Teacher Professional Learning
- Leadership, Research and Policy
- ICT Infrastructure

Arising from the Strategy, the Department is currently implementing the "Digital Strategy Action Plan 2018". Progress of this Plan is being monitored by the Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) which includes representation from the Department, industry, academic experts, practitioners/teachers and the technology voluntary sector.

The Digital Strategy, in recognising that schools' ICT infrastructure required updating and investment, provides for a fund of €210m in the form of an ICT grant. To date, an investment of €60m has been distributed to schools to help them update their equipment and implement the Digital Strategy. The balance of the funds will be distributed over the remaining period of the Strategy.

1.10 Digital Learning Framework

A Digital Learning Framework for teachers and an eLearning planning resource for schools have been developed to assist and guide schools on the embedding of digital technologies in teaching and learning. The dissemination of the "Digital Learning Framework" to all schools is currently underway supported by a range of CPD, including national seminars and other resources. An external evaluation of the framework, which was trialed during 2017/2018 school year, showed very positive feedback. All schools are now required to implement the "Digital Learning Framework" and, as part of their planning process, prepare a digital learning plan. A three year longitudinal study of the Framework has been commissioned and will be conducted by the ERC.

1.11 ICT Infrastructure in Schools

Embedding of digital technologies is the focus of the School Excellence Fund (SEF) – Digital. A range of projects are underway in 32 clusters involving 190 schools and supported by €1m funding. The aim of this project is to support and facilitate schools to collaborate on innovative use of digital technologies. Learning outcomes from the clusters will be disseminated to the wider system to assist other schools.

Broadband connectivity remains varied across the school system. All post-primary schools are provided with minimum connectivity of 100Mbp/s. Significant barriers remain for some primary schools through poor broadband connectivity. The Department, under its Schools Broadband Access Scheme, continues to seek to improve broadband services to primary schools. At the end of 2018, some 1,400 primary schools were on speeds of 30Mbps or greater. To progress improved broadband services to primary schools, the Department has established an interdepartmental/interagency working group. The Department of Communications, Climate

Action and Environment is part of this group in the context of its remit for the National Broadband Plan and the State Intervention Programme.

The Action Plan for On-Line Safety was launched by the Government in July 2018 and sets out the actions across Government Departments and agencies that are being taken to protect children and adults in their online engagement in what is a particularly dynamic environment. The Department will chair the group for the duration of the Action Plan (2018-2019) however, overall responsibility for the implementation of the Action Plan, and to deliver within agreed timelines, rests with each lead Department and their agency/support service who will be accountable to the Oireachtas for implementation. Political oversight will be by way of a Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Taoiseach and with membership comprising relevant Ministers.

1.12 Teacher Allocations

In 2018, 69,817 teaching posts were allocated at primary and post-primary level. The redeployment process in 2018 involved the redeployment of 177 permanent teachers at primary level and 45 permanent teachers at post-primary level. On completion of the process to redeploy permanent surplus teachers at primary level, a supplementary redeployment panel is used for filling any remaining permanent posts. In 2018, there were over 1,300 teachers on the supplementary redeployment panel.

1.13 New Allocation Model for SEN Teaching Resources

At primary level, 9,280 special education teaching posts were allocated to primary schools. More than 1,365 of these posts are shared among schools, with over 2,700 schools involved in a sharing arrangement. 4,127 whole time equivalent posts were allocated under the SEN model to post-primary schools for the 2018/19 school year.

1.14 Section 29 Appeals

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, an appeal may be made to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills in respect of a decision by a school Board of Management or a person acting on behalf of a Board of Management to:

- permanently exclude a student from the school
- suspend a student from the school for a cumulative period of 20 school days in any one school year or
- refuse to enrol a student in the school.

In 2018, the Department received a total of 432 Section 29 appeal applications. A total of 256 of these appeals went to a full hearing. Of those appeals that went to a full hearing, 113 (44.1%) were upheld including 20 upheld in part and 143(55.9%) were not upheld.

1.15 Gaeltacht Education Policy 2017-2022

Implementation of the Department's Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 continued with the ongoing roll-out of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme which provides additional resources to 105 primary and 28 post-primary schools participating in the Gaeltacht Scheme. The additional resources include additional Irish-language support teaching hours, a grant for the purchase of Irish-medium teaching resources, additional Inspectorate advisory visits and additional CPD provided by COGG. Implementation of the e-hub pilot project, which is designed to use online delivery to extend the subject range available through the medium of Irish to students in post-primary Gaeltacht schools, commenced with the allocation of additional resources to participating post-primary schools. Implementation of the Forás language-development pilot project, which provides for the allocation of additional teaching resources to each of two selected post-primary schools to enable Junior Cycle students to better engage with

the school's curriculum through the medium of Irish through the development of their Irish-language skills, also commenced.

195 advisory visits to the primary and post-primary schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme were carried out in 2018. Advice, guidance and feedback were provided to the schools on their target-setting, school self-evaluation and whole-school action-planning for improvement processes. An analysis of the feedback provided by schools during the advisory visits to 105 primary school and 28 post-primary during the period September to December 2018 was carried out. This led to the publication of a report of the key messages from schools relating to the first phase of implementation of the Scheme. In addition, "Draft guide for Gaeltacht Post-primary Schools Immersion Education: Indicators of Good Practice" and "Draft Guide for Post-primary Schools (2018)" were published in collaboration with COGG to provide practical support for schools in implementing immersion education.

In September 2018, the delivery of a part-time blended-learning Masters programme on Irish-medium and Gaeltacht Education (M.Ed.) for primary and post-primary teachers in Mary Immaculate College commenced. Significant progress was also made in the planning for the delivery of a new full-time four-year Irish-medium Initial Teacher Education (ITE) B.Ed. Programme (primary teaching) in Marino Institute of Education from September 2019. Two additional teaching posts continued to be provided to the Máistir Gairmiúil san Oideachas (Professional Masters in Education) teacher education programme at the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) via secondment arrangements to work towards increasing the number of post-primary teachers who can deliver a range of subjects through the medium of Irish. A specific package of additional supports was put in place from September 2018 to support post-primary schools located on the islands. This package of supports includes increased teacher allocation for each of the island post-primary schools, an additional ring-fenced budget per annum for each post-primary island school to cover their additional operational costs and the establishment of Coláiste Naomh Eoin, previously designated as a Language Unit (Aonad), as an independent stand-alone post-primary school on Inis Meáin, Co Galway.

Published in 2018:

- Draft-guide for Gaeltacht primary schools Immersion Education: Indicators of Good Practice
 https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/indicators-of-good-practice-in-immersion-education-draft-guide-for-gaeltacht-primary-schools.pdf

1.16 National Educational Psychological Service

During 2018, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) sanctioned psychologist staffing numbers were increased from 184 whole time equivalents (wte) to 194, in order to enhance the level of access of all schools to the range of NEPS in-school supports, including casework, consultation, intervention, training and supporting communities of practice.

During 2018, NEPS psychologist staffing numbers fell to 172 wte by year's-end, due to depletion of recruitment panels and ongoing resignations/retirement of existing complement. Following the completion of a national recruitment competition by the Public Appointments Service in the autumn, these panels were refreshed and new staff came on stream in early 2019, both negating the 2018 losses and bringing current staffing numbers to 188 wte.

1.17 Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018-2023)

Wellbeing for students and the wider school community has been brought into focus with the development and publication of the Department's "Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework

for Practice (2018-2023)", and the commencement of its implementation, which aims to build learning environments that promote health, wellbeing and personal development.

The policy statement and framework for practice published in 2018 informs how schools can best promote wellbeing within the school community. It provides for the first time, an overarching structure encompassing existing, ongoing and developing work in the area of wellbeing promotion in schools. It is the Department's aim that by 2023 all schools and centres for education will have embedded a dynamic School Self-Evaluation process focusing on wellbeing promotion.

Published in 2018:

Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018–2023
 www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/wellbeing-policy-statement-and-framework-for-practice-2018–2023.pdf

1.18 Technology-Enhanced Learning in Further Education and Training

The Department continued to work with SOLAS in 2018 on the implementation of the first Technology "Enhanced Learning Strategy 2016-2019". The Strategy is expanding access to FET through blended and online learning, delivering appropriate infrastructure, equipping educators to adopt technology to a greater degree in their practice and developing high quality content.

1.19 Transitions from School to Higher Education

Results of a study on the "Early impact of the changes to the Leaving Certificate grading bands" carried out in 2018 show:

- Students found that the new grading system had no significant impact on them. While there was some confusion surrounding the H7 grade, students seem to find there is less risk involved in taking the higher paper.
- More students are taking higher level in the subjects selected for analysis (Gaeilge, English and Maths).
- Preliminary input from the State Examinations Commission (SEC) appears to suggest that
 there has been a decrease in propensity to drop from higher level to ordinary level. Public
 commentary will be available when full entry and sit data has been completed.
- There was more than a 50% decrease in instances of random selection in 2017 compared to 2016.

Goal 2 – Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs

Inclusive education is a fundamental principle of our education and training system. Education and training are key to breaking the cycle of disadvantage. While considerable progress in advancing equity and equality of opportunity has been made, significant challenges remain and will be addressed to ensure that children and young people from different backgrounds and needs are adequately supported so that they can experience success in the education system.

Review of the year under this Goal

- The School Excellence Fund DEIS continues to be rolled out, with applications received from the ten clusters of schools involved in the first phase considered by the Steering Group.
- Applications from 75 clusters of schools were received in Tranche 2 of the School Excellence Fund – DEIS and the Inspectorate undertook advisory/challenge visits to support schools participating in Tranche 1.
- Funding for third-level access measures, under PATH 2, was allocated to regional clusters of higher education institutions.
- Work began on implementing the recommendations in "An Independent Review to Identify the Supports and Barriers for Lone Parents in Accessing Higher Education".
- A comprehensive assessment of the SNA scheme was completed.
- €5.7 million in funding was allocated to clusters of higher education institutions under the PATH Strand 3 Higher Education Access Fund.
- The Three-year Review of SNA Allocations has been completed.
- The Progress Review of the National Plan for Equity of Access has been completed.
- Piloting of innovative practices to strengthen links between DEIS schools, local enterprise, ETBs and HEIs has been undertaken.
- An evaluation of the outcomes of the Comprehensive Assessment of the SNA scheme is underway.
- Development and consultation process on the SEN inspection model for post-primary schools is complete.

Further details under this Goal are set out below.

2.1 Access and Inclusion in Early Years Settings

2.1.1 Early Start

The Department funds and administers the Early Start pre-school classes established in 1994/95 in 40 primary schools and the Rutland Street pre-school, in designated areas of urban disadvantage throughout the country. The project involves an educational programme to enhance overall development, help prevent school failure and offset the effects of social disadvantage. The educational programme can cater for 1,650 children.

Each Early Start pre-school child attracts capitation funding of €95.23 per annum. In addition, each full and half unit receives non-pay funding in respect of start-up grants for materials or equipment, as well as an annual grant to foster parental involvement.

In 2018, non-pay funding amounting to €0.234 was paid out to Early Start Units from this subhead.

2.1.2 Rutland Street Pre-school Project

The Rutland Street Pre-school Project, established in 1969, is a two-year pre-school programme in a Dublin inner city community, catering for 3-5 year-olds. Although not part of Early Start, it was used to pilot many of the approaches later incorporated in the Early Start project. The Rutland Street Pre-school Project's budget for non-teaching pay and non-pay elements is administered by the Department from this subhead. The staffing for the school is an administrative principal, seven teachers and five childcare workers for 95 children.

2.1.3 Supporting Inclusion and Diversity

The Department plays a support role in the ongoing development of the Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) which was launched in June 2016 by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA). This is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. In 2018 DES/EYEPU, which sits on the cross-sectoral implementation group steering the initiative, continued to provide supports to the AIM model through participation in both the project team on developments such as AIM Inclusive Play (AIP) Resources (6,500 packs delivered to ECCE services nationally in 2018) and the Training working group which developed further training programmes in 2018.

A consortium led by Mary Immaculate College, in partnership with Early Childhood Ireland and Froebel, Maynooth University, is delivering the award winning "Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) programme" http://lincprogramme.ie/ nationwide to 900 students per annum over four years to train an Inclusion Coordinator – a key role that has been identified to help support children with a disability in pre-school – to work in every early years setting. An additional capitation is paid by DCYA to services which employ an Inclusion Coordinator. The third cohort of students graduated in October 2018.

2.2 Equity of Access to Higher Education

2.2.1 Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH)

The Department continued the roll-out of funding to support initiatives under the "Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Fund". The overall objective of the PATH Fund is to support the goals, objectives and actions in the National Access Plan. PATH funding is allocated on a competitive basis to higher education institutions to support particular priority areas within the National Access Plan. €16.2 million was secured through the budgetary process for the rollout of three strands of PATH.

PATH 1 supports the objective in the National Access Plan to increase access to Initial Teacher Education for students from the target groups identified in the National Access Plan such as Lone Parents and Travellers and students with a disability. Under PATH 1, the Department, through the HEA, invited the six centres of teaching excellence, in partnership with relevant local

stakeholders, to compete for PATH 1 funding by submitting proposals in accordance with a set of prescribed criteria. Funding was approved to the six centres of teaching excellence in 2017 to fund initiatives and these initiatives were underway in 2018.

PATH 2 provides €6m to be invested in "The 1916 Bursaries Fund" over three years for the most socio-economically disadvantaged students from under-represented target groups. Lone parents and ethnic minorities including Travellers will also be a target group for this fund. Under a three-year initial pilot, bursaries will be awarded to 600 students in the three academic years who have been identified by their HEI as being the most socio-economically disadvantaged students in the target groups. Funding has been provided to regional clusters of HEIs for the award of the first 1916 bursaries to 200 students in the academic year 2017/2018, and a further 200 bursaries were awarded to students from target groups in 2018/19.

The roll-out of funding continued under PATH 3 which will provide €7.5m over three years to a Higher Education Access Fund, which is intended to support regional clusters of HEIs to attract 2,000 additional students from groups currently under-represented in higher education. By the end of 2018, €6.7m has been allocated to five of the six regional clusters of HEIs, with the final allocation of funding at an advanced stage.

The Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) supports participation by students with a disability in full-time programmes of further and higher education. The aim is to ensure that these students can participate fully in education on an equal basis with their peers. The number of students supported by the fund has grown from 3,800 in 2008 to almost 15,545 in 2017. €9.6 million was allocated through the fund in 2018.

The 2017 FSD review recommended the extension of the FSD supports to learners on part-time courses. As part of the 2018 FSD allocation, institutions were invited to begin preparations for inclusion of learners on part-time courses under the fund and may use their allocations to assist students on part-time courses on a pilot phased approach.

The SAF provides financial assistance to students experiencing financial difficulties while attending third level. Students can be assisted towards the rent, childcare costs, transport costs and books/class materials.

In December 2018 a further €1 million was added to the SAF for students attending Professional Masters of Education courses, who are experiencing financial difficulty. €9.1m was allocated in 2017, which supported a total of 14,119 students. The allocation to the fund in 2018 was €10.1m.

The report on "An Independent Review to Identify the Supports and Barriers for Lone Parents in Accessing Higher Education and to Examine Measures to Increase Participation" was published in August 2017. In January 2018, a cross-departmental group was convened to respond to the recommendations of the Lone Parent Review.

A Data Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, commissioned by the HEA and developed by Trutz Haase Consultant, was published in 2018. An Implementation steering group chaired by Department has been set up to oversee this work. The HEA is responsible for the implementation of the plan and the Department will work with it on implementation. Agreement in principle has been reached among key stakeholders regarding procedures and purposes of data-sharing, with a view to developing formal agreements between these organisations, e.g. Central Statistics Office (CSO), HEA, institutions, and the Department. The HEA is progressing the geo-coding of the Student Records System.

Published in 2018:

Progress Review of the National Plan Access Plan and Priorities to 2021

(https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/progress-review-of-the-national-access-plan-and-priorities-to-2021.pdf)

2.3 Student Grants

Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) received 98,500 applications for the 2018/19 academic year, of which circa 79,600 qualified for grant support. Expenditure on student grant supports in 2018 amounted to approximately €363m.

Published in 2018:

- The Student Grant Scheme 2018 (S.I. No. 100 of 2018) (http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/si/100/made/en/print)
- The Student Support Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 101 of 2018) (http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/si/101/made/en/print)
- The Student Support (Amendment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 586 of 2018) (http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/si/586/made/en/print)

2.3.1 Student Grant Appeals Board

In 2018, the Student Grants Appeals Board sat on 24 occasions and heard circa 713 appeals from students aggrieved by determinations made by appeals officers.

2.4 DEIS Plan 2017

2.4.1 School Excellence Fund – DEIS

The School Excellence Fund (SEF) initiative, targeted primarily at DEIS schools, was introduced in 2017 to support and reward innovative practice in schools. The SEF aims to encourage schools to work in clusters to explore and apply new, innovative solutions to tackle educational disadvantage and to improve learning outcomes for students. In 2018, the School Excellence Fund-Step Up project was piloted in mainstream schools to advance collaborative working between post-primary schools, the Inspectorate and JCT support service that will encourage self-evaluation and improvement in teaching and learning in selected priority areas. A new Digital stream of the fund has recently been added. The SEF-Digital supports clusters of schools to collaborate and work together in exciting ways on projects related to teaching and learning using digital.

The Department is currently working with more than 50 schools to support, advise and challenge them in their adoption of innovative practices. These schools, arranged in clusters that must include at least one DEIS school, are involved in a range of projects for which additional funding is provided. The advisory and challenge visits are designed to assist schools with target setting, planning and identifying actions to be taken and monitoring progress.

2.5 Special Education Needs

2.5.1 Catering for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

The Department oversees the provision of a range of educational supports and services for children with special educational needs in mainstream and special schools including teachers, special needs assistants, assistive technology, specialist equipment, enhanced capitation and special transport arrangements.

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 inclusive mainstream school settings through the primary and post-primary school network. Where children with special educational needs cannot be provided for in mainstream settings, the Department provides for specialised special class and special school places.

NCSE is responsible, through its network of Special Educational Needs Organisers, for processing applications from schools for supports for children with special educational needs.

Targeted Supports provided for pupils with Special Educational Needs in mainstream and Special Schools

2.5.2 New model for allocating special education teachers to schools

A new model for allocating special education teachers to schools has been introduced for all mainstream primary and post primary schools.

The Special Education Teaching allocation provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on each school's educational profile.

Under the allocation model, schools have been provided with a total allocation for special education needs support based on their school profile.

An additional 1000 teaching posts have been provided since 2017 to support the introduction of this new allocation model, with over 13,300 posts allocated to schools for the 2018/19 school year. In total, the number of special education teachers provided for mainstream schools has increased by 37% since 2011, at which point there were 9970 teachers allocated to schools.

The very significant levels of additional provision the Department has made in recent years to provide additional special education teachers means that all schools are resourced to provide for the special educational needs of children in their schools to a higher extent than ever previously.

2.5.3 Special Schools

1,397 teachers providing education to 8,224 children attending special schools with reduced pupil teacher ratios ranging from 6:1 to 11:1 depending on disability categorisation.

2.5.4 Special Classes

There were 1,300 special classes in mainstream schools in 2017/18 school year, which represents an increase of over 137% in the number of special classes which were available in 2011, which was 548.

This included very significant additional provision for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) special classes. Since 2011, the NCSE increased the number of ASD special classes from 330 in 2011 to 1,042 across the country in 2017/18 school year. This included 130 ASD early intervention classes, 635 primary ASD classes and 277 post-primary ASD.

2.5.5 Special Needs Assistant Scheme

Children with special educational needs who have additional care needs are also supported by Special Needs Assistants. 14,973 whole time equivalent Special Needs Assistants posts were provided to schools, as at December 2018, to provide for the care needs of over 36,000 children with special educational needs attending primary, post-primary, and special schools.

Since 2011, the number of SNAs available for allocation to schools has increased from 10,575 to almost 15,000. This is an increase of 42% in the total allocation.

2.5.6 Assistive Technology Scheme

In 2018, 1,748 payments were made to primary schools, and 760 to post-primary schools, towards the cost of assistive technology, amounting to over €2.3m.

The type of equipment provided under the assistive technology scheme is varied, and includes audiology supports for children with hearing impairment, equipment to assist children with visual impairment and for children with physical or severe communication disabilities, where it has been outlined that the equipment is essential to access the curriculum.

2.5.7 Irish Sign Language Scheme

The Irish Sign Language Scheme assists deaf/hard of hearing children and their families to acquire competency in a language at the earliest possible opportunity.

In order to ensure that the child can both communicate with their family members and to assist them to acquire fluent language skills while engaged in meaningful activity with capable users of the language and significant others, the child's family members, parents and siblings may also be included in the Irish Sign Language (ISL) tuition, which is provided, in the main, at the child's home, under this scheme. A grant is paid to parents to employ an ISL tutor. In the majority of cases ISL tuition is for 1 hour per week up until the end of June, rising to 7.5 hours per week for July and August.

Approximately 205 children and their families were supported with ISL tuition during the 2017/18 school year, in the region of 66 tutors were employed to teach ISL amounting to expenditure in the region of €323,000 annually.

2.5.8 Special Education Home Tuition Scheme

The purpose of the Home Tuition Grant Scheme is to provide a compensatory educational service for students, enrolled in schools, with a significant medical condition, which has caused, and is likely to continue to cause, major disruption to their attendance at school. The scheme also provides a compensatory educational service for children with special educational needs seeking an educational placement. Provision is also made for early educational intervention for children with autism.

A total of 1,760 pupils availed of home tuition under the above Scheme during the 2017/18 school year, amounting to €16.6m.

2.5.9 July Education Programme

The July Education Programme provides for special classes to cater 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 or profound general learning disability. Where school based provision is not feasible, home-based provision may be grant-aided through the Home Tuition Scheme.

There has been a steady increase in the number of schools offering the July Programme since it was introduced in 2001. In total, 241 schools participated in the programme in 2018. 6594 pupils availed of the home-based July Programme provision in 2018, with an expenditure amounting to €15.1 m in 2018.

2.5.10 Middletown Centre for Autism

The Middletown Centre for Autism (www.middletownautism.com) project is a jointly funded initiative between the Department and the Department of Education in Northern Ireland aimed at supporting the promotion of excellence in the development and harmonisation of education and allied services to children and young people with ASD. Alongside increasing the number of users that have benefited from the Centre's services, an important aim of the expansion of services was to further embed the Centre as an essential delivery body of the range of services available to support children with autism on an all-island basis.

The expansion of the Centre's services in the South have enabled the Centre to pilot the provision of direct support to children, the completion of targeted research projects in order to inform future policy development and an increase in the number of training places offered to both parents and professionals, particularly highlighting key life stages for a child with autism.

2.5.11 In-School Speech and Language Therapy

Budget 2018 provided an additional €2m to introduce a demonstration project for in-school Therapy services in 2018. The project commenced in schools from September 2018 and proceeded over the course of the 2018/19 school year.

The demonstration project is designed to develop and test a model for the delivery of in-school speech and language and occupational therapy support, in a defined regional area, across a range of schools, in conjunction with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and supplementing existing HSE therapy services. The demonstration model will focus on developing greater linkages between educational and therapy supports.

It will provide for in-school therapy services and also professional support, training and guidance for school staff and parents. It will seek to assist schools to develop their capacity to support children with speech and language needs in schools, while also focusing on early identification and intervention.

An Interdepartmental Working Group, including representatives from this Department, the NCSE, the Department of Health, the Health Service Executive (HSE), and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, has been appointed to develop the pilot/demonstration model for In-school Therapy Services.

The project is taking place in Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) 7 Region of South West Dublin, Kildare, and West Wicklow.

This region has been selected to ensure that the pre-school and in-school therapy model can be tested in both urban and rural locations and with a suitable mix of various types of schools and pre-schools.

75 schools, including a representative sample of primary, post-primary, and special schools are taking part in the project.

75 pre-school settings associated with primary schools participating in the project are being included in order to provide for therapy interventions to be made at the earliest possible time and to create linkages between pre-school and primary school provision.

In total, 150 settings are participating in the demonstration project.

The model has been designed to provide for a clinical Speech and Language Therapy service delivery model of specialist, targeted and universal supports in line with best practice for pupils which will see those receiving supports along a continuum of provision depending on the extent or severity of needs of the child/pupil.

The model is being evaluated over the course of the 2018/19 school year.

2.5.12 NCSE Support Services

The NCSE Support Services provide advice and support to schools on the education and inclusion of students with special educational needs, providing in-school support, CPD for teachers and support to schools on the management of challenging behaviour. It enhances the multi-disciplinary capacity of the education system through providing access to expert knowledge in areas such as autism, speech and language and challenging behaviour.

2.5.13 Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Scheme

Following the interim report on the SNA comprehensive review, an NCSE led working group comprising relevant stakeholders was established to assist in developing a proposal for an

improved model for providing care supports to provide better outcomes for students with special educational needs who have additional care needs.

The NCSE published a Policy Advice Paper No. 6 – Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme: A New School Inclusion Model to Deliver the Right Supports at the Right Time to Students with Additional Care Needs in May 2018.

The NCSE review found that the SNA scheme, as currently configured, works well in meeting the needs of younger children and students for whom it was originally designed including those with care needs such as toileting, mobility and feeding.

The scheme is greatly valued by parents, students and schools and there is evidence of an enduring loyalty and a strong attachment between many schools, students, parents and the SNAs.

The NCSE found that that the scheme is less effective for older primary and post-primary students. An overreliance on SNA support can result in these students experiencing alienation and stigma.

They also found that that some SNAs are undertaking medically complex and invasive procedures and supporting students with extremely challenging behaviours without adequate training and supervision being provided.

The NCSE concluded that a better model of support was required. They consider that what is needed is the right support at the right time provided by a range of personnel with relevant qualifications and skill-sets.

The Department has agreed to develop proposals for the implementation of the NCSE's policy advice recommendations, in consultation with other relevant Departments and Agencies, and to plan for the development of a pilot of the proposed new School Inclusion Model.

2.5.14 Development of NCSE Support Services

The NCSE continued to develop Support Service to schools in 2018. The new Support Service has brought together the Special Education Support Service (SESS), the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) and the Visiting Teacher Service for children who are deaf/hard of hearing and for children who are blind/visually impaired (VTSVHI), into a single support service managed by the NCSE.

The development of this new Support Service within the NCSE means that schools will receive better and more integrated support in the future. It will build on the existing good work and supports which the National Behaviour Support Service, the Special Education Support Service and Visiting Teacher Service provide to children and their families as well as to teachers and schools.

The NCSE Support Service provides advice and support to schools on the education and inclusion of students with special educational needs, providing in-school support, CPD for teachers, and support to schools on the management of challenging behaviour. It will also enhance the multi-disciplinary capacity of the education system through providing access to expert knowledge in areas such as autism, speech and language and challenging behaviour.

Published in 2018:

A review of Nursing Provision for children with complex medical conditions, including those children
attending Special Schools was undertaken and completed in 2018. This review was completed by
a Cross Sectoral Team Working Group comprising members from the Departments of Education
and Skills, Health, Children and Youth Affairs, NCSE and HSE, as well as an expert clinician

 A Guide for Parents and Students in relation to how children can be provided with additional teaching support in mainstream schools was completed in 2018. https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/a-new-model-for-allocating-special-education-teachers-to-mainstream-schools.pdf

2.6 Psychological Supports

In the academic year 2017/18, the Department's psychologists were involved in casework, which includes assessment and consultation, in relation to 8,378 students. Additionally, under the "Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments" (SCPA) process, private psychologists provided assessment to schools for 1,464 pupils. Additionally, it is estimated that teacher support and development was provided to c. 21,600 teachers in processes to build their capacity in the areas of wellbeing promotion, literacy development, problem-solving and the provision of a continuum of support.

During this period, NEPS psychologists assisted in 328 Critical Incidents attending at 161.

2.7 Transport Services for Students with SEN

The Department aims to provide safe, efficient and cost-effective school transport services for eligible children with special educational needs. During the 2017/18 school year over 12,500 children with special educational needs were transported to schools on over 2,500 routes, at a cost of over €106 million in 2018.

2.8 School Excellence Fund

As part of the Excellence initiative, the Inspectorate is currently working with a number of schools in excellence and improvement visits, to challenge and support school leaders and teachers in their efforts to develop innovative approaches and to improve standards.

In total, 20 clusters comprising of approximately 60 schools are working collaboratively with inspectors to achieve better outcomes for children. These clusters comprise predominantly of schools at primary and post-primary levels that participate in the DEIS programme. In a small number of cases, early years' providers are included in clusters.

The Department prepared a report on education provision for children in Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs). The report was compiled and prepared for publication on foot of joint Inspectorate/NEPS visits to three such centres.

The Inspectorate, in conjunction with the Educational Welfare Service (TUSLA), presented on action planning for improvement in DEIS schools at a series of CPD events around the country.

Published in 2018:

 Findings of Joint Inspectorate and NEPS Visits to Education Settings in Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs)
 (https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/findings-of-joint-inspectorate-neps-visits-to-erocs.pdf)

2.9 Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship

As set out in the Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland, SOLAS published a review on pathways to participation in apprenticeship in 2018. The purpose of the review is to ensure that our national apprenticeship system is more reflective of the range and diversity of our population, more inclusive of diverse backgrounds and abilities and that apprenticeship opportunities are more readily accessible to all. Work on the implementation of

actions arising from the review commenced following its publication. A copy of the review is available at www.solas.ie.

Areas identified for action were to:

- Increase participation in apprenticeship by diverse groups
- Launch an online apprenticeship 'jobs market' to increase visibility of opportunities for all potential apprentices
- Create new pathways via pre-apprenticeship courses around the country
- Promote the bursary incentive with employers
- Promote diverse pathways to participation in apprenticeship in the 2018-2020 "Generation Apprenticeship campaign".

Goal 3 – Help those delivering education services to continuously improve

Quality of provision is the cornerstone of the success of the education and training system. The Department recognise the fundamental roles that leaders, teachers and support staff play and we seek to strengthen the system's capacity as a whole to continuously improve and to deliver the highest quality education and training services for learners. The quality of Ireland's education system is recognised internationally, but to be the best we need to continuously improve.

Review of the year under this Goal

GOAL

- "Insights and future developments: Review of the Early Years Education-focused Inspection April 2016 June 2017", a national report on the quality of early years provision, was published.
- Developments continued in the area of Initial Teacher Education reform, with progress made in relation to reviews being undertaken by the Teaching Council.
- A comprehensive programme of CPD to support the implementation of the revised "Children First Guidelines" has commenced.
- An evaluation of the pilot of the "Centre for School Leadership" has been published.
- A revised guide to "Early Years Education Focussed Inspections" was approved and trial inspections completed in 40 early years services.
- Mentoring programme for principals in year two of their appointment was established in conjunction with the "Centre for School Leadership".
- Mid-term Review of the "Further Education and Training Strategy" was completed.
- Review conducted of the current National Síolta Aistear initiative model of delivery. The review's findings are now being implemented.
- School Excellence Fund Step Up Project was launched, focusing on supporting schools to 'step up' in the delivery of the new Junior Cycle programme.

Further details under this Goal are set out below.

3.1 Quality in Early Education

The Department plays a key role in ensuring that early years education delivered in pre-schools funded through the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme, and in Early Start pre-schools, supports children in their learning through the implementation of the Aistear curriculum framework. In 2018, the Department continued to work with the Department of Children and Youth

Affairs (DCYA) and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in order to achieve this objective.

Inspection findings from the first full year of operation of the EYEI Model were reviewed and a comprehensive composite report "Insights and Future Developments – A Review of Early-Years Education-Focused Inspection: April 2016 – June 2017" was published in January 2018. The review showed that the introduction of Early Years Education Inspection by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills was widely welcomed. In particular, the inspections were endorsed as a mechanism for recognising and validating the work of early years settings and early years practitioners in their provision for the early education and care of young children. Evaluation findings highlighted that, whilst the majority of settings were staffed by highly committed staff and were providing welcoming and safe environments for young children, many were challenged in relation to the provision of early educational experiences. Challenges have been identified across all domains of education practice, including: the degree to which curricula and programmes of learning are informed by Aistear, the way assessment of learning strategies and processes are used, how "Assessment for Learning" is employed to inform the next steps in children's learning and the pedagogical strategies used by early years practitioners to support and extend children's learning.

3.1.1 Síolta/Aistear

The National Síolta/Aistear initiative (NSAI), which commenced in 2016, is supporting the wider implementation and rollout of both frameworks, including the development of material, resources and CPD for early years practitioners. The Department is working in partnership with DCYA and the NCCA on this initiative with two national Coordinators in post overseeing the work of Síolta Aistear mentors drawn from a range of organisations; 30 Early Years Specialists from Better Start National Quality Development were trained in 2018 to rollout the Aistear and Play CPD to early learning and care practitioners. The Coordinators additionally support mentors to provide training, mentoring and coaching supports to ELC settings to support the implementation of Síolta & Aistear. In 2018, a review of the model of delivery for the initiative was carried out and it was agreed by partners to centralise and manage the delivery of the initiative through a NSA implementation office to be established in January 2019.

In 2018, a new nationally approved CPD Programme, "Aistear and Play" was developed by an expert group led by the Department and the NCCA for rollout from the new implementation office in 2019. Two roll outs of this are scheduled for 2019, targeting approximately 50-60 ELC Settings and 600+ early years practitioners.

The Department carried out extensive work in 2018 to create new professional degree programme Criteria and Guidelines (C&G) for Early Childhood Education and Care degree programmes. Following a comprehensive consultation in the first half of 2018 on the draft, developed by an expert group in 2017, the Department commissioned an evaluation of the consultation responses. This was published in June 2018 and informed the process for finalisation of the C&G by DES and DCYA and the agreement of an implementation process and timeline for further consultation with the HEIs in January 2019. Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI) established a review group to carry out a similar exercise on the Further Education and Training (FET) awards in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for finalisation in 2019.

A skills forecast model for a "Workforce Plan for the Childcare Sector" was initiated by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs at the request of DES and DCYA. The skills forecast model development was completed in first quarter of 2018 and will be used for essential analysis for the workforce development planning process by DCYA in conjunction with DES, which will take place in 2019 and 2020.

In 2018, the "First 5 – A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028" was published. Some key areas of the Strategy fall within the remit of the Department of Education and Skills, or are a shared responsibility between DES and DCYA. These include collaborative governance arrangements between the two Departments, the extension of the remit of NEPS and the expansion of the Department's Inspectorate activity in the early years sector, quality initiatives, transition supports, special education policy, workforce planning and curriculum reform.

At end 2018, the Secretaries General of DES and DCYA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), setting out the roles and responsibilities of the two Departments in relation to early childhood education and care and critical areas of co-operation in key policy areas, including professionalisation of the sector and curriculum development and alignment. The MOU put in place agreed structures of high level engagement to underpin future strategic collaboration.

Published in 2018:

 Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Education (Level 7 and Level 8) Degree Programmes in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Ireland - An Evaluation of the Consultation Findings.

https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Early-Childhood/evaluation-report-consultation-on-draft-criteria-and-guidelines.pdf

3.2 Early Years Education Inspections

In 2018, the Department's Inspectorate continued with the programme of implementation of Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI). The inspections evaluate the quality of the learning and development experiences provided in early years settings, contracted to deliver the universal free pre-school programme (ECCE Programme). The inspections are funded mainly by DCYA, with some additional costs borne by DES.

Since the programme commenced in April 2016 to end 2018, a total of 1,889 inspections, including 70 Follow-Through Inspections were completed in a range of early years settings delivering the ECCE programme. This represents approximately 45% of all eligible early years settings. The Follow-Through Inspections completed in 2018 provided valuable further insight into the impact of EYEI on the quality of early education practice in early years settings and will contribute to the development of capacity for quality improvement into the future.

The completion of this programme of Early Years Education Inspection represents a strong contribution to the shared mission of the two Departments to provide all children with a high-quality early years education experience that will meet their needs and enable them to build the competencies and capacities needed for learning and for life.

3.3 Teacher Supply

In November 2018, the Teacher Supply Action Plan was published.

The development of the range of actions contained in the plan was led by the Teacher Supply Steering Group, chaired by the Department's Secretary General, in recognition of the significant challenges some schools experience in recruiting teachers.

Published in 2018:

• Teacher Supply Action Plan https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/teacher-supply-action-plan.pdf

3.4 Teacher Education

The Department promotes the quality of teaching and learning through the provision of quality teacher training programmes, CPD and supports for principals and teachers in their work. This is

provided through the Teacher Education Programmes, Education Centres and Support Services for teachers at primary and post-primary level.

The policy priority work in this area also supports implementation of the relevant actions in the areas of STEM, DEIS, Languages Connect, Literacy and Numeracy and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

3.4.1 Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

Under Section 38 of the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2012, the Council is responsible for review and accreditation of programmes of Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Guidelines for this are set out by the Council in its documents "Initial Teacher Education: Strategy for the Review and Professional Accreditation of Existing Programmes", "Guidelines on School Placement", and "Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers". These policy documents form the bridge between the Council's policy and the development and implementation of reconceptualised programmes of ITE in HEIs.

Beginning in 2015, the Council undertook to complete an "impact consultation exercise", in consultation with relevant stakeholders, ascertaining the impact of the reconceptualised programmes as experienced at an individual, school and system level. This large-scale consultation exercise was completed in 2018.

The findings from this exercise, as well as current national policies, will inform the drafting of an updated version of the "Strategy for the Review and Professional Accreditation of Existing Programmes and Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers", outlined above. The Council will then, using these refreshed guidelines, commence a second cycle of review and accreditation in 2020.

3.4.2 Review of the curricular subject requirements for registration at post-primary level

For registration as a post-primary teacher, a student has to fulfil the Curricular Subject Requirements for at least one subject.

The Teaching Council commenced a review in 2018 of the Curricular Subject Requirements for registration at post-primary level. The aim of the review is to:

- maintain and protect the standard
- protect the provision of subject choice at post-primary
- help to assure parity of esteem of subject discipline areas
- take account of changes in the system more broadly
- increasing flexibility and diversity
- streamline processes.

The consultation process gathered feedback, comments and observations from stakeholders such as teachers, teacher unions, the Inspectorate, subject associations and HEIs. Participants were invited to convey their feedback orally at consultation and also through written submission following the event.

This process is expected to conclude by the second quarter of 2019, resulting in a revised draft of the curricular subject criteria.

3.4.3 Reform of Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

In 2012, the HEA was asked to advise on the structure of ITE provision in the State and an International Review panel was established, chaired by Professor Pasi Sahlberg.

The report by the International Review Panel proposed a fundamental change to provision of ITE in Ireland. It recommended that ITE should be facilitated in a university setting with systematic links to clinical practice in field schools which provide, where possible, for the full range of sectoral teacher education, spanning from early childhood to adult education. This would facilitate greater synergies between the different levels of education. It would also provide a critical mass for improving capacity for high quality research, the integration of students and staff across a number of disciplines and the promotion of balanced international mobility of students and staff.

Very significant progress in ITE has taken place since 2012, in response to the recommendations in this report. In 2018, Professor Sahlberg was engaged by the HEA to carry out a follow up to the 2012 review. This work was supported by Professor Áine Hyland with the assistance of the HEA executive. The findings from the review will be published in 2019.

3.4.2 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

In 2018, the PDST provided a comprehensive professional development programme to support teachers and school leaders. A total of 153,874 CPD Units were provided by the PDST in 2018.

At primary level, CPD to support the implementation of the Primary Languages Curriculum (Infants to 2nd Class) continued as well as an increased emphasis on provision to support the STEM Policy Statement through a range of new workshops.

At Senior Cycle, support was provided to schools involved in the introduction of the new Leaving Certificate subject Computer Science, for Leaving Certificate Physical Education (PE) – both the examinable subject and the non-examinable framework – and for the national rollout of Politics and Society following on from the first cohort of students taking the examination in 2018.

The new "Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017" were published in December 2017. PDST made available a range of child protection eLearning resources for schools to access as well as delivering, over the course of 2018, face-to-face seminars for all Designated Liaison Persons (DLPs) and Deputy Designated Liaison Persons in schools.

PDST continued to provide leadership programmes for teachers and school leaders, both newly appointed and experienced, in 2018 adding programmes, webinars and on-line resources with a focus on Leading Learning, School Self-Evaluation and developing more critically reflective school leaders.

3.4.3 Continuing Professional Development – Junior Cycle Reform

A comprehensive professional development programme to support teachers of Junior Cycle continued during 2018. A total of 68,793 units of CPD were delivered by the JCT Support Service in 2018. This included seminars for school leaders, whole-staff workshops in schools, subject specific workshops via school clustering and education centre hosted events and school visits.

Some 100 school cluster days were arranged by JCT.

The increased use of interactive webinars by the support services as a mode of CPD delivery has had a positive impact on service delivery by making CPD more accessible. JCT broadcast webinars all year round, but have a concentrated event each March/April time which is called #JCTWOW – our Weeks of Webinars event. JCT webinars are interactive events which allow teachers to ask questions and have them answered live. All webinars are recorded and are subsequently uploaded to the website at www.ict.ie.

3.5 School Leadership

The Centre for School Leadership (CSL) is a partnership between the Department of Education and Skills, the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN), and the National Association of Principals

and Deputy Principals (NAPD). It was established in September 2015, with a role in leading, supporting, enhancing and advising on high-quality programmes (Mentoring, Coaching & Aspiring Leaders) to develop and support school leadership, particularly principals, across the primary and post-primary school network.

A new postgraduate diploma in School Leadership for Aspiring Leaders was established from September 2017. A total of 257 teachers enrolled in the Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership (PDSL) in 2017. There was an intake of a further 275 participants for the second cohort in September 2018. The course is provided by a University of Limerick (UL) led consortium in conjunction with University College Dublin (UCD) and the NUIG.

The CSL mentoring programme has recruited and trained 500 experienced school leaders to mentor newly appointed principals. All newly appointed principals in primary or post-primary schools have access to a CSL trained mentor since September 2017.

In 2018, the Department announced the introduction of team coaching for principals who have availed of four or more sessions of one-to-one coaching. Coaching is available to leadership teams in primary and post-primary schools and the focus of the coaching will be on developing the skillsets required to meet the standards stated in the "Looking at Our School" publication (primary and post-primary).

Fitzpatrick Associates Economics Consultants were engaged by the Department to undertake two elements of work relating to the CSL. The first element was an evaluation of the work undertaken to date and the second element was research into effective support for school leaders. The final report was published on the Department's website in February 2018.

Published in 2018:

 School Leadership in Ireland and the Centre for School Leadership: Research and Evaluation https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/school-leadership-in-ireland-and-the-centre-for-school-leadership-research-and-evaluation.pdf

3.6 Suicide Prevention

Following the development by the Department, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Children and the National Office for Suicide Prevention, of the SafeTALK suicide programme, it was announced during 2018 that over the next two years, teachers in every post-primary school in the country will receive training on how to respond when a critical incident occurs in their school community. In addition, there will be a significant expansion of the SafeTALK programme to a further six Education Centres around the country.

3.7 Irish-language curricula

The PDST continues to support teachers in the delivery of Irish-language curricula at both primary and post-primary levels. Particular emphasis is placed on in-school support and provision of support materials online. A range of relevant CPD events are provided, based on national education priorities.

3.8 Quality Inspections

In 2018, all models of inspection were aligned to the quality framework published in "Looking at Our School 2016". Report templates were revised to reflect the domains and standards outlined in the quality framework.

3.8.1 Standards of provision in schools

An extensive analysis of the findings from inspection programmes in the "Chief Inspector's Report 2013-2016" was published in early 2018. The report noted that the overall quality of teaching and learning in primary schools was generally of a high standard. Teaching was judged as good or

better in between 88% and 94% of schools and learning was considered to be good or better in between 89% and 96% of lessons, depending on the model of inspection used. These figures represent an improvement on the previous "Chief Inspector's Report 2010-2012" where, for example, during Incidental Inspections, the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in over 86% of all schools while the quality of learning was satisfactory or better in 87% of all schools.

At post-primary level, the overall quality of teaching was evaluated as good or better in between 88% and 94% of lessons, and the quality of learning was good or better in 85% to 91% of lessons visited, depending on the model of inspection used. This was better than in the 2010-2012 report in which the quality of learning was satisfactory or better in between 82% and 84% of lessons and the standard of teaching observed was satisfactory or better in over 85% of all inspections. However, at both primary and second level, inspectors noted that while overall the standards of teaching and learning were good or better, more lessons were "good" rather than "very good".

The "Chief Inspector's Report 2013-2016" contained detailed analysis of inspection findings about the teaching of English, Mathematics and Irish, and a range of other curricular areas. It also commented that the quality of school management was generally very good, but it noted the major challenges facing voluntary boards of management and the weaknesses in the current management structures for schools. The report stated that parent questionnaires administered by the Inspectorate had indicated that in the majority of schools, student behaviour was very good and that there were good student management systems in place. Schools were reported to be doing good work to tackle bullying and there was a marked improvement since the last report in the percentage of post-primary parents and students that are confident that schools would deal with bullying promptly and effectively.

3.8.2 New Models of Inspection

Work on the development of inspection models focussed on three areas in 2018. The Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection Model was developed in close collaboration with a range of stakeholders, including the education partners: the Ombudsman for Children, Tusla and schools. The model enables the Inspectorate to meet its obligation under the "Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017" to "conduct intensive, full-scale inspections focused on the implementation of the 2017 Procedures during a model of inspection designed specifically for this purpose."

The Inspectorate also developed another inspection model for the "Evaluation of Provision for Students with Additional and Special Educational Needs in Post-Primary Schools" in 2018. The development of this model was an action in the "Action Plan for Education 2018" and reflects a number of important developments in SEN, including the introduction of a similar evaluation model in primary schools in 2016 and the introduction, in 2017, of a new model for allocating resources for SEN in primary and post-primary schools.

During 2018, the EYEI model was subjected to consultation and revision. Opportunity was provided for commentary and feedback on the "Signposts for Practice" that form part of the EYEI Quality Framework and this resulted in the addition of some new signposts to promote clarity of understanding for practitioners in relation to the focus and aims of the outcome statements in the EYEI Quality Framework. The revised guide to EYEI was submitted for approval to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and Minister for Education and Skills in June 2018 and inspection against this revised guide commenced in September 2018.

Published in 2018:

- Insights and Future Developments: A Review of Early Years Education-focused Inspection: April 2016 June 2018 (January 2018)
- A Guide to Early Years Education Inspection (June 2018)
- Guide to Inspections of Courses in Irish-Language Colleges (Coláistí Gaeilge)

- Child Protection Monitoring by the Inspectorate
- Chief Inspector's Report January 2013 July 2016 (Executive Summary)
- Chief Inspector's Report January 2013 July 2016 https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/

3.8.3 Inspection of Irish-language courses in Coláistí Gaeilge

During 2018, the quality of provision in an agreed sample of Irish-language courses provided by various Coláistí Gaeilge was evaluated by the Department. There was ongoing communication and collaboration with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG) in giving recognition to these courses and in planning for the programme of evaluation and this included the delivery of CPD for all inspectors. Inspections of Irish-language courses assure the quality of the education provided for students and provide advice and support to the teachers, principals and the management committees of the colleges. Written reports in both languages were published on the Department's website following the inspection visits. In 2018, the overall quality of teaching and learning in the Coláistí Gaeilge was found to be good. Similarly, the overall quality of leadership and management of the courses was also good. In the very few instances where inspectors noted practices of significant concern, matters were promptly brought to the attention of DCHG.

3.8.4 School Self-Evaluation

During 2018, the Department continued to support schools to embed effective SSE practices. Following the lifting of an industrial relations directive in February in the primary sector, there was an intensification of support. Inspectors engaged in an extensive programme of advisory visits and regional seminars and schools were provided with a range of materials to support their reengagement. In post-primary schools, inspectors continued to engage in advisory visits and a number of seminars for schools leaders were facilitated. A range of additional SSE support materials were published across both sectors in 2018.

3.9 Further Education and Training Professional Development

Chaired by the Department, and including representation from ETBs, ETBI and SOLAS, a steering group was established to lead on implementation of the first "FET Professional Development Strategy (2017-2019)". The Strategy sets out how staff working in FET in the ETBs will be assisted to maintain and update their skills in a range of areas. Progress in 2018 included the development of accredited programmes in Management and Technology Enhanced Learning for FET staff and the inclusion of a budget for staff development as part of the service planning process.

The Inspectorate continued to provide input at conferences, seminars and workshops in 2018 to assist in embedding school self-evaluation based on the teaching and learning dimension of Looking at Our School 2016 – A Quality Framework for Primary and Post-primary Schools.

3.10 Evaluation of the Youthreach programme

To ensure relevance to the labour market and effective progression for learners, the "Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2014-2019" commits SOLAS to organise and conduct a schedule of evaluations of FET programmes. Work was completed on the second of these, the evaluation of the Youthreach programme, which is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the ESF as part of the ESF PEIL 2014-2020, by the ESRI. This evaluation is due for publication in 2019. Work had also been progressed on the combined evaluation of the Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme (VTOS) and Specific Skills Training (SST), which is due for completion in 2019.

Goal 4 – Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community

This Goal is about building strong linkages, creating clusters and sharing good practice to achieve better outcomes and benefits for the learner. Our education service aims to respond to the changing needs, choices and expectations of learners in a changing global context. Successful enterprise engagement is key to driving the growth of traineeships and apprenticeships, ensuring the relevance of work placements and work-based projects and increasing the diversity of opportunity in learning beyond school.

Research, development and innovation are critical to Ireland's economic and social development in the years ahead. We want to attract talent from around the world to our education institutions, engage in world-class research and collaborations and we want to ensure quality standards and best international practice for learners in Ireland.

Review of the Year under this Goal

GOAL

- Work is ongoing with the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs to finalise a skills forecast model for the early years workforce to 2030.
- Five new Skillnets Learning Networks were established, in areas that address national workforce and sectoral policy.
- Further Education and Training providers and Higher Education Institutions are providing employability statements for courses/disciplines to better inform students, parents and employers.
- The Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 was signed into law by the President on the 18th July 2018.
- New partners were identified for the Skills to Growth Initiative across the nine regions to enable skills audits.
- A comprehensive and independent review of the National Training Fund has been completed, in order to guide strategic decisions on its structure and future direction.
- Following a competitive call process, a rollout of over 8,000 Springboard+ places commenced across the country with all 245 courses open to people irrespective of their employment status.
- The Department participated in Ireland's first voluntary "National Review of Sustainable Development Goals" (SDG) implementation.
- 68 schools were selected to participate in a network of Creative Clusters as part of the School Excellence Fund and the Creative Ireland Programme.

Further details under this Goal are set out below.

4.1 School Patronage

In March 2018, the Minister announced the launch of surveys of parents of pre-school children in 16 areas across the country, marking the Identification Phase of the School Reconfiguration process.

In 2018, six new schools were established under the new schools process, comprising one primary school and five post-primary schools, all of which are multi-denominational in ethos. One new multi-denominational school was established in 2018 under the patronage divesting process. In addition, in the case of two schools, a transfer of patronage from denominational to multi-denominational took place, enabling these primary schools to continue to serve their local communities under new multi-denominational patronage from September 2018.

The Online Patronage Process System was launched in 2018, a system that has been developed to provide objective information to parents and guardians, allowing them to make an informed choice in expressing a preference for their preferred model of patronage for their child's education.

4.2 School Admissions

The Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 was signed into law by the President in July 2018. The overall objective of the Act is to provide a new framework for school enrolment that is designed to ensure that every child is treated fairly and that the way in which schools decide on applications for admission is structured, fair and transparent.

The first stage of commencement of the Act on 3rd October 2018 brought a number of sections into operation, including the banning of admission fees and the amendment of the Equal Status Act 2000 to remove, in the case of recognised denominational primary schools, the existing provision that permits such schools to use religion as a selection criterion in school admissions. Under this provision, there is a protection to ensure that a child of a minority faith can still access a school of their faith or a similar faith.

On 3rd December 2018, section 8 of the Act became operational. This section provides a power for the Minister to compel a school to open a special class or classes where the National Council for Special Education has identified a need for such provision within an area.

Published in 2018:

Education (Admission to Schools) Act, 2018
 http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/14/enacted/en/html

4.3 Parent and Student Charter

In January 2018, the Government approved the formal drafting of the Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill by the Department in conjunction with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel. During 2018, work on the Bill to provide for a Parent and Student Charter advanced substantively and it is envisaged that it will be published in 2019.

4.4 Skills Development

4.4.1 National Skills Strategy

The purpose of the "National Skills Strategy" is to provide a framework for skills development, that will help drive Ireland's growth both economically and societally over the next decade. Through the vision, objectives, actions and indicators outlined, the Strategy will support the development of a well-educated, well-skilled and adaptable labour force, creating and sustaining a strong pool of talented people of all ages throughout Ireland.

4.4.2 National Skills Council

The role of the National Skills Council is to oversee research, advise on prioritisation of identified skills needs and on how to secure delivery of identified needs. It has a key role in promoting and reporting on the delivery of responses by education and training providers to those priorities.

In 2018, the Council met four times. Discussion topics included: The Future of Work, The Impact of AI and Automation in Ireland, Lifelong Learning and Work Ready Graduates and Career Pathways.

4.4.3 Regional Skills Fora

Led by the Department and the Regional Skills Fora, the purpose of the "Skills for Growth" Initiative is to increase the quality and quantity of data available on skills needs in individual enterprises, to allow for enhanced engagement between enterprise, education and training providers and other relevant members of Regional Skills Fora nationally. In order to reach a larger number of Enterprises, the Department has signed MOUs with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and Údarás na Gaeltachta. The Department is currently in discussions with other relevant stakeholders in order to further enhance the reach of the Skills for Growth skills audit tool

4.4.4 Skills to Advance

A new employee development policy framework – "Skills to Advance" aimed at developing the skills of people in employment, was launched 2018. This new policy framework provides key guidance, direction and targets for Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in supporting the upskilling of those in employment, working both directly with learners and through their employers.

"Skills to Advance" will enable targeted support for vulnerable groups in the Irish workforce, with a particular focus on employees who have lower skills levels and who need more opportunities to advance in their working lives and careers, to sustain their employment and to avoid displacement or to avail of emerging job opportunities.

The policy sets a target of having over 40,000 workers, whose skills level is below level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), engaged in state supported skills development by 2021. A copy of the employee development policy framework is available at www.solas.ie.

4.4.5 Springboard+

Co-funded by the Government and the ESF as part of the ESF PEIL 2014-2020, Springboard+ is a specific initiative that strategically targets funding of free or heavily subsidised, flexible reskilling opportunities in areas of emerging skills needs. All courses approved for funding under Springboard+ are selected by an independent panel with industry and educational expertise following a competitive tendering process. In June 2018, 8,088 places on 245 courses were launched under Springboard+ 2018 to take place over the academic year 2018/19.

A key change in Springboard+ 2018 was the expansion of the eligibility for all courses regardless of employment status. This built on the expansion of eligibility in 2017 to people in employment for all advanced manufacturing courses and "returners" i.e. those seeking a return to work following child or family care responsibilities.

Courses remained free for the unemployed, returners and those in employment participating on courses at level 6 of the NFQ. Employed people participating on courses at levels 7 and above in the NFQ contributed just 10% of the course cost, with the remainder being funded by the Government.

There was a positive response to the expansion for Springboard+ 2018, with almost 66% of places filled by those who are in employment.

Under Springboard+ 2018, there was a particular focus on courses which offered flexible learning provision i.e. online, blended, distance learning. As a result, almost three-quarters of the courses were delivered in a more flexible format, which aligned with the opening up of courses to learners irrespective of their employment status.

Under Springboard+ 2018, over 8,700 participants were supported on Springboard+ courses.

4.4.6 **EXPLORE Programme**

In 2018, the EXPLORE Programme was rolled out across the country. The key objective of the initiative is to create a new solution to help address the issue of Ireland's low level of participation in lifelong learning amongst the Irish workforce.

256 people participated in EXPLORE during 2018. Plans are underway for further iterations of EXPLORE and it is expected that over 500 employees will participate in the initiative during 2019.

4.4.7 Traineeships and apprenticeships

Work continued on the apprenticeship expansion programme, with a further nine new apprenticeship offerings being rolled out during the year in areas such as hospitality, ICT and logistics. By year-end, 18 new apprenticeships were available to learners in addition to the 25 craft apprenticeships.

A review of "Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship" was published in 2018. Implementation of actions arising from the review commenced immediately to ensure that the apprenticeship system is more reflective of the range and diversity of our population, more inclusive of diverse backgrounds and abilities and that apprenticeship opportunities are more readily accessible to all.

In addition, a new Employer Portal Initiative was developed and is currently being piloted. It is anticipated that the portal will go live in early 2019 and will provide capability to approved employers to advertise apprenticeships, as well as other value-added services.

Registrations continued to rise across both existing craft and new apprenticeships with 5,648 new apprentices registered by the end of 2018, representing an increase of almost 17% on the 2017 figure of 4,843.

4.5 Creative Youth

In late 2017 "A Plan to Enable the Creative Potential of Every Child and Young Person" was launched. The aim is to deliver the Government's commitment to ensure that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, arts and coding by 2022. The Creative Youth plan sets out a range of initiatives which will be piloted and implemented in the coming years, including Local Creative Youth Partnerships. The Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Arts Council are key partners in delivering Creative Youth.

4.5.1 Creative Schools

The Creative Schools pilot project was launched in early 2018. Approximately 10% of all schools in the country applied for the pilot and 150 schools were chosen from 400 applications. Of the 150 schools participating, 110 are primary, 30 are post primary, 7 are special schools and 3 are Youthreach centres. 41 DEIS schools were chosen for inclusion in the pilot, across primary and post-primary levels.

Each participating school has access to a "Creative Associate", who is essential in embedding inspirational and sustainable creative practices in teaching and learning. Creative Associates are a mixture of practising artists and teachers, with an understanding of creativity and its potential to transform the lives of children and young people.

Participating schools, working with their Creative Associate, are completing the development of a school development plan for arts and creativity and implementing these plans. The Creative Associates will explore new links for schools with artists and with arts, cultural and creative organisations, both locally and nationally, to help develop their plan. To assist this, each participating school was awarded €2,000 for implementation of their plan.

4.5.2 Creative Youth Partnerships

A new initiative to promote creativity for young people as part of the Creative Ireland Programme will be piloted in three ETBs.

It is envisaged that these Partnerships will be networks which enable information sharing, collaboration between local Creative Youth service providers to bring about better use of existing resources, practices and initiatives in an ETB area.

€300,000 is being made available for this pilot. The pilot partnerships will engage with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to develop youth consultation processes for their area, which will allow for the voice of children and young people to play a central role in how these partnerships develop.

4.5.3 Creative Clusters

In September 2018, 68 schools were selected to participate in a network of Creative Clusters as part of the School Excellence Fund and the Creative Ireland Programme.

It sets out to encourage and recognise excellence and innovation in our schools. This initiative will help deliver on the Creative Youth Pillar of Creative Ireland, which sets out a commitment that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, arts and coding by 2022.

4.6 Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the EU Programme for Education, Training and Sport for 2014-2020. Under the Programme in 2018, the European Commission provided funding totalling €29,553,645 to Irish beneficiaries, project promoters and partners. This is an increase of approximately 19.3% on the 2017 figure. Funding is provided for mobility, organisational partnerships and policy work.

Funding from the European Commission for Erasmus+ (2014-2020)						
Category	2014 (€)	2015 (€)	2016 (€)	2017 (€)	2018 (€)	
Erasmus+ schools	1,307,671	2,863,261	2,600,299	3,496,583	3,573,704.40	
Erasmus+ VET	4,278,442	3,904,761	4,012,928	4,229,305	7,081,513.60	
Erasmus+ adult education	1,644,297	931,820	922,225	910,517	1,738,565	
Erasmus+ youth	2,898,321	3,036,979	3,117,912	4,949,204	3,982,183	
Erasmus+ HE	7,705,791	9,430,206	9,341,690	11,185,937	11,368,385	
Total	17,834,522	20,167,027	19,994,964	24,771,546	27,744,351	

4.7 International Education

In the third year of the "International Education Strategy 2016 – 2020", the Department is well positioned to achieve its vision, which is to support Ireland to become internationally recognised

for the development of global citizens through our international education system and a market leader in attracting international student talent.

The High-level Group on International Education, chaired by the Department, continued its work to oversee the implementation of the strategic actions in the "International Education Strategy". The group and its subgroups met on 9 occasions throughout 2018, to drive individual actions and to ensure comprehensive sector engagement.

In 2018, 27 high-level international visits were made from partner countries such as the USA, China, Mexico, Malaysia, Oman, the UAE, and Korea. These visits have allowed the Department to learn about the challenges that other education systems are encountering and the policies that these countries are currently developing to overcome these challenges. These visits have also allowed the Department to assist other countries in building their capacity across the entire education area. Some of the topics covered during these visits included: future skills needs, higher and further education policy, social inclusion, IT digital strategy and curriculum developments.

In 2018, under the Government of Ireland International Academic Mobility Programme, the Department awarded grants for 51 projects to the value of €500,000. This has allowed academics and staff from Irish HEIs to avail of mobility opportunities to deepen their collaborations with partner institutions in 21 partner countries.

In addition, during 2018, more resources were invested in the sector internationally with a concerted effort to deepen cooperation and partnership in traditionally strong markets such as North America, the Gulf, India and China alongside additional investment in the developing markets of ASEAN, Nigeria, Mexico, Colombia and Brazil.

Irish HEIs participated in coordinated education fairs and promotional activity in 16 different countries in 2018, with Ministers and senior officials from the Department leading delegations in ten locations, making the necessary high-level linkages at Government level to further develop our links in core and high potential markets.

4.8 Education for Sustainable Development

The fourth national forum on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) took place in November 2018, where a mid-term review of the ESD Strategy was launched.

The review outlines the significant amount of work that has been done since the launch of the Strategy in 2014 and sets out the Action Plan to 2020, arising from the review's recommendations. Under the Strategy, as new curricula are developed at all levels, key ESD principles are being integrated and embedded.

Published in 2018:

The Review of the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2014-2020
 (https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Education-for-Sustainable-Development.html)

4.9 Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill, 2018

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill, 2018 had advanced to Committee Stage in Seanad Éireann by end 2018. This Bill, on enactment, will amend the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012, which established Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the national agency with responsibility for external quality assurance and qualifications across the further and higher education sectors.

Published in 2018:

 Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill 2018 (https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/bill/2018/95/eng/initiated/b9518s.pdf)

4.10 Further Education and Training National Learner Forum

The FET Learner Forum took place in 2018 with learners participating from across the country and from a wide range of FET programmes, including traineeships, community education, Youthreach and the Back to Education Initiative.

The Forum provides an opportunity for learners to share their views at national level, as well as help influence policy. Their feedback, which is collated into a qualitative based policy report, helps to inform future decisions on the delivery of FET programmes.

4.11 Complete review of higher education funding model to underpin delivery across the sector.

An independent review of the current funding allocation model for funding higher education was completed in 2018. The Expert Panel report, which made 33 recommendations to reform the model by which funding is allocated to higher education institutions, was published in January 2018.

This review provides a roadmap for transitioning towards a reformed funding model that is more transparent, consistent across higher education institutions, incentivises actions in key strategic areas such as research and STEM provision, and supports improved accountability while also respecting institutional autonomy.

An Implementation Group was established to oversee the implementation of the RFAM recommendations. The group is chaired by the HEA and comprises representation from the DES, DPER, IUA & THEA.

4.12 Position Ireland as a desirable location for international students

The Interim List of Eligible Providers (ILEP) – a restricted list of education programmes considered to justify the granting of permission to students to live and work in Ireland - is a key reform to the student immigration system for international education announced by Government in May 2015. The first full iteration of the ILEP was published in 2016 and continues to be updated at regular intervals. As part of the ILEP process, providers are subject to unannounced inspections, spot checks and other monitoring of compliance. The ILEP is an interim measure pending the introduction of the International Education Mark (IEM) for the provision of education to international learners, which will provide a full quality framework in the future.

The legislative amendments necessary to facilitate the introduction of the IEM are contained in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill 2018. This Bill was published in August 2018 and is currently before Seanad Éireann (Bill No. 95 of 2018).

Published in 2018:

 Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill 2018 https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2018/95/?tab=bill-text.

Goal 5 – Improve national planning and support services

The Department and its agencies have an important role in providing strategic leadership, developing policy and delivering services. This involves co-ordination with sectoral stakeholders, the broader public sector, the political system and other Governmental bodies and cross-sectoral work programmes. The remit of the Department encompasses early years education, primary and second level education, further education and training and higher education, including supports for research and international education.

Review of the year under this Goal

- The Technological Universities Act, 2018 was signed into law by the President in March 2018.
- The Department is working to enhance corporate governance across the education sector.
- Implementation of a new HR Strategy for the Department in order to support the effective management of the Department's HR function through updated and modern HR practices.
- A new division to improve strategic policy capability established.
- A new online system to process payment of examination entry fees has been launched.
- A new online Schools Transport Appeals application has been launched.
- A Collaborative Working application for cross-departmental working groups has been launched.
- Applications were submitted by the DES to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for consideration by the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards Committee.
- Performance review of the Legal Shared Services Centre of Excellence to support the ETB sector has been finalised.
- The Department is working with other Departments and agencies on the wider Civil Service use of collaborative working guidelines and tools.

Further detail under this Goal are set out below.

5.1 Action Plan for Education (2016-2019)

In 2018, the Department continued to support the management and implementation of the reform agenda across the education and training sector. Under the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 framework an updated annual plan was produced. The Action Plan for Education 2018 set out the high-level priority actions for the sector for the year, with progress measured against targets through published quarterly progress reports and an end-of-year review – which was published in early February 2019, along with the quarter 4 progress report. This ensured that progress against stated goals and objectives was regularly monitored throughout the year. Since the launch of the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 and the Statement of Strategy, the Department has made significant progress towards achieving its goals and objectives. 85% of actions targeted for delivery by the end of 2018 have been achieved. Actions not achieved at the end of 2018 have been rescheduled and/or redefined and included in the Action Plan for Education for 2019 as appropriate.

Key indicators can be found in the Action Plan for Education 2018 – End of Year Review. https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/review-ap-ed-2018.pdf

Published in 2018:

- https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/action-plan-for-education-2018.pdf
- https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/action-plan-for-education-2018-quarter-1-progress-report.pdf
- https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/action-plan-for-education-2018-quarter-2-progress-report.pdf
- https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/action-plan-for-education-2018-quarter-3-progress-report.pdf
- https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/action-plan-for-education-2018-quarter-4-progress-report.pdf
- https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/review-ap-ed-2018.pdf

5.2 Public Sector Reform Programme

During 2018, the Department worked closely with the Reform Delivery Office and the Reform Evaluation Unit in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to support the implementation of "Our Public Service 2020", launched in December 2017. This framework supports continuous development and innovation across the public service.

Six priority areas were identified for 2018. The PSR Programme Office is leading on Action 14 "Continuous and responsive professional development". Meetings and events were organised to further refine and scope initiatives in 3 key areas, the process for the recognition of core skills, leadership and the Model of experiential learning opportunities.

In 2018, the Department continued to promote the use of appropriate structures and processes to ensure Management Board oversight and governance of the development and implementation of commitments under the Public Service Reform agenda, and to promote Project and Programme Management structures and methodologies throughout the organisation.

The Action Plan for Education framework 2016-2019 sets out a high-level view of the range of new and ongoing reform activity across the education and training sector.

5.2.1 Shared Services Implementation

In 2018, the Department continued to manage and implement the reform agenda across the education and training sector, through the development and implementation of the "Education & Training Sector Shared Services Plan 2017-2020". The Department continued to support the implementation of new ways of working, through driving the shared services projects under the plan. The shared services projects, ETB Payroll & Finance, Higher Education Payroll and Upgrading the School Employees Payroll, continued to be progressed in 2018.

The ETB Payroll project successfully secured a payroll software supplier. They commenced the configuration of that product in expectation that services to the first ETBs would commence in quarter 2 2019. The ETB Finance project published its RFT in December 2018. It is expected that this procurement will be completed in quarter 2 2019 also.

The second phase of the Higher Education Payroll Shared Service project, in the form of the EduCampus MIS Refresh project, has been completed. EduCampus are planning to roll out the next version of software to all its client HEIs in 2019.

The upgrade of the school employees payroll shared services continued with external stakeholder contributions to the business case and the development of detailed "as – is" and "to – be" processes, functional requirements and documentation regarding the special automations which this service needs to continue to deliver the efficient service it provides to over 120,000 employees in the education sector.

The Alternative Models of Service Delivery, Schools Payments pilot project was implemented in 2018. It is expected that the pilot will conclude successfully and then the framework will be available to all suppliers.

The Department also worked to further the funding, integration and governance of the Department's sectoral procurement supports as part of its Shared Services offering in 2018 and this work will continue in 2019. The development of governance structures between the Department and the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) was also progressed during 2018, with the development of a MOU. The education sector is working with OGP to develop service level agreements and schedules of services during 2019.

Finally, the Department contributed to elnvoicing Ireland's governance. This in turn has helped to quickly identify the possible entities which may need to receive elnvoicing services in order to meet their EU obligations for elnvoicing since April 2019.

Underpinning these initiatives and framing the strategic direction for the Department into the future, the Department continued to progress the Department's Shared Services Plan for 2017-2020 and the development of Shared Services governance in 2018.

5.2.2 ETB/SOLAS Programme Board

In 2018, the Department's ETB/SOLAS Programme Board continued to actively support and enable the implementation of the overall reform programme for the ETB/SOLAS sector. This Programme Board is chaired by the Department's Secretary General and its membership includes members of the Department's senior management team, along with the General Secretary of ETBI, the CEO of SOLAS and the chief executives of two ETBs. In November 2018, the work of the Project Management Office (PMO) which was tasked with supporting the Programme Board in the implementation of its objectives transferred to the Department's ETB Financial, Administrative and Personnel Unit and Major Projects Division.

During 2018, the Programme Board continued to oversee the two key shared service projects for the ETB sector. The ETB Payroll project successfully secured a payroll software supplier. They commenced the configuration of that product in expectation that services to the first ETBs would commence in quarter 2 2019. The ETB Finance project published its RFT in December 2018 and it is expected that this procurement will be completed in quarter 2 2019 also.

The PMO also provided support to other live projects such as Legal Services Centre of Excellence in ETBI and Phase II of the ETB organisation design.

5.3 Data Protection

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which introduced a new data protection regime across the EU, came into effect on the 25th May 2018. A significant readiness project was undertaken in the Department prior to its commencement in order to demonstrate compliance. Personal data processing activities across the Department were identified and Privacy Notices were generated and published.

The Department has a Data Protection Officer in place. along with a team providing support to all business units in understanding and complying with the requirements of GDPR. A series of supports/polices have been put in place and the data protection team continues to engage with

business units, as well acting as the first point of contact for individuals seeking information on their personal data rights.

5.4 Progress Review of Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2014-2019

A progress review of the FET Strategy was published in June 2018. The purpose of the review was to assess the appropriateness, priority and continued relevance of the strategic goals and actions set out in the Strategy Implementation Plan, having regard to the significant reform of the sector, Government policy in the area (including the National Skills Strategy (2025), the Action Plan for Education, the Action Plan for Jobs, Pathways to Work 2016-2020) and the wider economic and labour market developments since the strategy was first published in 2014.

The review produced a number of recommendations that will be taken forward in the development of the next FET Strategy, which will cover the five years from 2020, and is expected to be published in 2019. A copy of the progress review is available at www.solas.ie.

5.5 Strategic Performance Agreements in Further Education and Training (FET)

SOLAS and the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) significantly enhanced the planning of FET, through the implementation of a new strategic dialogue process between SOLAS and the 16 ETBs. The process aims to define how each ETB will contribute to the national targets set for the sector within the context of the "SOLAS Corporate Plan 2017-2019". This process resulted in a Strategic Performance Agreement between each of the 16 ETBs and SOLAS. These 16 agreements, as well as an overarching summary document, were finalised in 2018. Copies of the agreements, and the overarching summary document, are available at www.solas.ie.

5.6 Reform of the National Training Fund

The independent review of the National Training Fund (NTF), which was commissioned by the Department was published in August 2018. The report, which was undertaken by Indecon Consulting, made 14 specific recommendations regarding reform of its future direction, investment in higher education, enhancing enterprise engagement and improvements in monitoring and evaluation.

An implementation plan to deliver the recommendations contained in the Independent Review was published as part of Budget 2019, along with details of a new advisory group to the National Skills Council in order to optimise enterprise engagement on NTF priorities. This advisory group is being chaired by Liam Ryan, a member of the National Skills Council, and includes key stakeholders from the enterprise sector and bodies who have a strategic and oversight role in delivery of skills provision.

Published in 2018:

- Indecon Review of National Training Fund
 (https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2018-press-releases/indecon-review-of-national-training-fund.pdf)
- National Training Fund Expenditure Report 2018
 (https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/national-training-fund-expenditure-report-2018.pdf)

5.7 Expert Group on Future Funding in Higher Education

5.7.1 Economic examination of the three policy options proposed

The Report of the Expert Group on Future Funding (Cassells Report) was published in 2016. As committed to in the Programme for Government, the Cassells report was referred to the Oireachtas Joint Committee for Education and Skills for consideration. In January 2018 the

Committee requested the Department to undertake an economic examination of the three policy options proposed by the expert group to assist the Committee in forming its view of the most appropriate option.

Following the receipt of this request the Department engaged with the European Commission Structural Support Service throughout 2018 to seek to have the economic evaluation carried out with support from the European Commission Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP). A formal application for support under the SRSP was submitted in October 2018 and subsequently approved by the Commission. The review is expected to commence in Q2 2019.

Having this evaluation undertaken through the Commission's SRSP will provide access to the type of independent international expertise and analysis that will be very beneficial to a major evaluation of this nature.

5.7.2 Implementation of recommendations

Pending a decision on the Cassells Report from the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education further reform to higher education funding has been undertaken.

The report on the review of the funding model proposes greater connection between higher education and national skills needs. It is also proposed to increase the transparency around the level of investment in meeting skills needs. The report will also facilitate greater progress in terms of research, innovation and performance across the higher education sector.

In July 2018, the new Higher Education Innovation and Transformation Fund was launched as part of this modernisation and reform of the funding model. 22 projects across 23 educational institutions were awarded a total of €23 million under the Fund.

As part of that announcement, the Department also launched the process by which higher education institutions can apply for additional ring-fenced funding for operating on a multi-campus basis.

An increase in the National Training Fund (NTF) levy of 0.1% was implemented as part of Budget 2019 measures, with a further 0.1% proposed in 2020 subject to reforms of the NTF. The increase in funding from the NTF is a key strategic element of the overall funding increase for higher and further education and provision of skills gaps.

As part of the Budget 2019 measures, the establishment was announced of a new Human Capital Initiative within the NTF to allocate €300 million from the NTF surplus to meet the future skills needs of the economy and provide additional investment at levels 6-8 in higher education. This investment will be made over the 5 year period from 2020 to 2024, with €60m being made available in each of those years.

5.8 Publish the General Scheme of the Higher Education Reform Bill.

The Higher Education Authority Act, 1971 is being updated to provide the Higher Education Authority (HEA) with the legislative basis for revised functions including the regulation of the higher education sector. A consultation process on the updating of the legislation was undertaken in 2018. Written submissions were received on a number of key themes related to the update of the Act and a consultation forum was held with the relevant stakeholders to further discuss the relevant issues. This process included the publication of a consultation document, a request for written submissions and a consultation forum with key stakeholders. The views expressed and

issues raised during the consultation process are informing the development of the legislation. A consultation report will be published in 2019. Work commenced in 2018 on drafting an outline of the new legislation and further consultation will be undertaken with the relevant stakeholders in 2019. It is anticipated that the general scheme of the Higher Education Reform Bill will be published in 2019.

5.9 Technological Universities Act, 2018

The Technological Universities Act, 2018 provides for the development of a new Technological University model. The TU4Dublin consortium comprising, the Dublin Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown and Institute of Technology Tallaght merged to become the first Technological University to be established under the 2018 Act, with the new Technological University Dublin formally coming into existence on January 1st, 2019.

Three other consortia of Institutes of Technology are currently engaged with the assessment process seeking designation as technological universities, namely:

- Munster Technological University (MTU), consisting of Cork and Tralee Institutes of Technology
- Technological University of South-East Ireland (TUSEI), consisting of Waterford and Carlow Institutes of Technology and,
- Connacht Ulster Alliance (CUA), consisting of Galway-Mayo, Sligo and Letterkenny Institutes of Technology.

5.10 Payroll and Pensions

The Department provides payroll and pension services to teachers and school staff in all schools (excl. the ETB sector) by issuing payments to over 120,000 people on a fortnightly basis.

In 2018, the Department processed superannuation benefits for over 1,500 teachers and non-teaching staff. With the development of the pension modeller on the Department's website, pension scheme members are now in a position to access the modeller and obtain an estimate of pension benefits, while the Pension Unit continues to issue pension benefit statements to scheme members. As part of the superannuation process, the Department also provided for over 1,550 transfers of pensionable service to/from other public service bodies, provided for over 530 notional service quotes, processed over 1,020 family law queries and processed in the region of 115 applications for professional added years for employees in the education sector.

The Department is engaged in a Digitisation Project to scan online all payroll and pension files. Approximately 70,000 files were completed at the end of 2018. Scanning of all documentation being received in payroll is commencing.

5.11 Building Programme 2018

The Department aims to provide appropriate infrastructure for learning environments so that all learners have access to a modern learning environment. A primary focus of the Department is the provision of accommodation to meet demand for school places in areas where enrolments are rising.

Under Project Ireland 2040, the Department continues to make progress to increase the infrastructural capacity in the schools sector, in order to meet demographic and other demands. In 2018, capital expenditure for the school sector amounted to €547m.

It is anticipated that Construction activity in 2018 and 2019 will involve over 130 large-scale projects and circa. 280 smaller scale projects under the Additional Accommodation Scheme. These projects will deliver approx. 40,000 additional and replacement school places, the

replacement of over 600 prefabs which is a key element of our prefab replacement programme. In addition, enhanced sports facilities will be provided through the construction/modernisation of 48 PE Halls at post-primary level and 82 general purpose rooms at primary level. This will also support the provision of 200 modern science labs which will support the delivery of the reformed science curriculum and the roll-out of Computer Science as a Leaving Certificate subject.

A total of just under €29m was paid out from the Department under the Minor Works Grant in 2018 for the school year 2018/2019.

5.11.1 Summer Works and Emergency Works Schemes

There were 308 Summer Works Projects approved in December 2018 for delivery in 2019. 26 Summer Works Projects were approved in 2018 on appeal. These were additional to the 2017 approvals and are for delivery during 2018/2019.

During 2018, there were 525 projects approved under the Emergency Works Scheme. Total expenditure in 2018 under the Emergency Works Scheme came to just under €29m.

5.11.2 Property Acquisitions

During 2018, 16 property transactions were completed. These were to meet education accommodation requirements nationwide but particularly in areas experiencing significant demographic growth.

Three schools were delivered via Public Private Partnership (PPP) in 2018, bringing to 30 the total number of operational PPP schools. A further two PPP schools and one further education college are targeted for completion in 2019.

Agencies such as ETBs, National Development Finance Agency, a number of Local Authorities as well as the Grangegorman Development Agency and the Office of Public Works continue to assist in the delivery of approximately 70 major school projects.

A range of frameworks for consultancy appointments are in operation for larger, complex and urgent projects.

Work continued to progress the acquisition of sites in relevant areas during 2018. Engagement with officials across the Local Authority sector has been of significant benefit in supporting site acquisition processes and in providing greater certainty in relation to planning outcomes associated with sites. The Department also avails of professional expertise to assist in the identification and assessment of potential site options.

5.11.3 School projects compliance checks

During 2018, the Department commenced compliance checks of 120 projects in schools that had received devolved funding and completed their projects by the end of 2017 to ascertain if works were carried out in accordance with the Department's guidelines.

5.11.4 Website Information

Lists of projects approved for delivery are published on the Department's website on a monthly basis. In the case of major projects, updates are provided on the progress through the various stages of delivery. In the case of smaller devolved projects information is published on a weekly basis listing the name of the school, the type of project and dates of approval.

5.11.5 Higher Education Capital Projects

Capital expenditure on higher education infrastructure in 2018 was €33.85m. Funding was used to progress a number of key projects, including the Glucksman Library at UL, the Confucius Institute

at UCD and infrastructural improvements in a number of Institutes of Technology. Devolved Grant payments totalling €11.1m were paid to the 14 IOTs for minor works and equipment, including ICT upgrades.

Construction commenced on the Central and East Quads at Grangegorman. These are being delivered via Public Private Partnership (PPP) and will provide a significant part of the academic infrastructure for the new TU Dublin City Campus.

Project Ireland 2040 signalled a commitment to investment of €2.2 billion in higher education infrastructure over the decade 2018-2027, in addition to capital funding for PPPs and research.

5.11.6 Energy Efficiency in Schools

The Department continues to be at the forefront of design with respect to sustainable energy efficiency in school buildings. The Department's Technical Guidance Documents (TGDs) set the benchmark for sustainable design in school buildings with a clear focus on energy efficiency which is supported by a strong energy research programme with 49 research projects at various stages.

The Energy in Education programme, a partnership with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, offers energy management training workshops and an advice, mentoring and assessment service to schools. As part of this programme the on-line portal www.energyineducation.ie offers best practice advice and case studies.

The Department and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland are currently involved in an energy efficient retrofit pilot scheme for schools since 2017. Heading into its third year, the aim of the pilot is to create a scalable model for energy efficiency retrofitting of schools. The programme involved six schools being retrofitted in 2018. This is taking place in advance of the major programme of retrofits scheduled to commence in 2022, as outlined in Project Ireland 2040. Subject to resources, it is intended to expand the intake of schools in the pilot programme in the lead up to 2022.

5.12 ICT Developments

5.12.1 Patronage

A new Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) was developed to provide objective information to all parents and guardians which will allow them to make an informed choice in expressing a preference for their preferred model of patronage for their child's education. This first round of preferences was gathered in quarter 2 2018.

5.12.2 School Transport

An online School Transport Appeals application went live in quarter 2 2018. This application moved a paper based process online and streamlined the appeals process.

5.12.3 eCorrespondence

eCorrespondence, developed by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), under the Build-to-Share strand of the Public Service ICT Strategy was implemented by the Department in 2018.

5.12.4 eFOI

eFOI, developed by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), under the Build-to-Share strand of the Public Service ICT Strategy was implemented by the Department in 2018.

5.13 School Transport

During the school year 2017/18 over 117,000 children including over 12,500 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 4,500 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country, covering over 115 million kilometres annually at a total cost of over €200 million in 2018.

5.14 BREXIT and the Education Sector

The Department's response to Brexit has continued to develop, with an increased emphasis on contingency planning in the event of a No Deal exit. This included working towards agreement with the Department for Education in the UK on principles for the Education Sector under the Common Travel Area, which forms a key part of this Department's response to Brexit. In addition the Department fed into the "Government's Contingency Action Plan – Preparing for the withdrawal of the UK from the EU on 29 March 2019" – which was published in December 2018. This included a commitment to amend the Student Support Act 2011, which would facilitate the continued Payment of SUSI financial supports to Irish students studying in the UK and UK students studying in Irish HEIs.

The Department also coordinated actions of other Departments to maintain the recognition of UK professional qualifications in the event of a No Deal Brexit.

5.15 European Social Fund (ESF) Operational Programme

Some 90,000 people participated on ESF co-financed activities under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020 during 2018.

Two new activities commenced during the year, the Ability Programme, a pre-activation programme for young people with disabilities which is designed to assist in their transition from school to further education, training and employment was launched in June 2018. Over the next three years, the 27 approved projects will support over 2,600 young people aged between 15 and 29 years.

The Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS) commenced in October 2018. YESS is a work experience scheme targeted exclusively at young jobseekers, who are either long-term unemployed or face significant barriers to employment. YESS is co-funded by the Government of Ireland, the ESF and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).

The "eCohesion system", a database system for managing all the ESIF Funds, became fully operational in early 2018. Following the formal designation of the Irish ESF authorities in November 2018, the first payment applications under the PEIL were submitted to the European Commission. €109m of the receipts were lodged to the Education Vote in respect of Youthreach, Adult Literacy and the Back to Education Initiative activities during 2014-2016.

Published in 2018:

- A Citizen's Summary of the 2017 Annual Report on the PEIL was published on www.esf.ie in July 2018.
- The mid-term Evaluation of the PEIL Operational Programme incorporating an evaluation of the operation of the Youth Employment Initiative was also published on the ESF website (www.esf.ie) in December 2018.

5.16 Department Expenditure

The Department's expenditure outturn in 2018 amounted to €10.2 billion. This included €9 billion in gross voted current expenditure, €415 million in current expenditure on the National Training Fund and capital expenditure of €745 million.

The Department's 2018 budget allocation represented a nearly 6% increase on its 2017 level. This increase provided for, among other things, 2,300 additional posts in schools, including additional teachers and SNAs, implementation of a range of policy measures in the areas of disadvantage, creativity, STEM, foreign languages, Gaeltacht education and digital learning and increased investment in higher and further education and training.

5.17 Internal and EU Audit Unit

The Internal Audit Section at the Department is responsible for providing assurance to the Accounting Officer on the adequacy, efficiency and effectiveness of the Department's risk management, internal control systems and governance processes.

The ESF Audit Authority ensures that Ireland complies with the regulatory requirements of the European Union in relation to the audit of ESF, promotes best practice in the management, control and audit of ESF in Ireland and ensures that audits are performed in accordance with international auditing standards in order to provide high quality, fair and balanced reports.

Annual audit programmes are prepared under the auspices of the Audit Committee and both the Internal Audit Section and the ESF Audit Authority report to the Committee on the conduct of these programmes and the finalisation of audit reports. A total of four reports were finalised in 2018 and both areas track, on a quarterly basis, progress on the implementation of recommendations arising from audit reports.

The unit underwent an external quality assessment in 2018, in compliance with the International Internal Auditing Standards.

No internal Protected Disclosures were brought to the attention of the Head of Internal and EU Audit Unit or the Audit Committee in 2018.

5.18 Dealing with Past Abuse

During 2018, the Department continued to progress the completion of contributions from religious congregations towards the costs incurred by the State in responding to residential institutional child abuse.

Contributions are being made by the religious congregations under two rounds:

- the legally binding 2002 Indemnity Agreement and
- the 2009 voluntary offers.

In 2018, additional cash contributions amounting to €1.99m were received on a voluntary basis from congregations, while €0.65m was received under the 2002 Indemnity Agreement. Three further properties were fully transferred to the State under the 2009 voluntary offers. Considerable progress has been made in progressing all remaining transfers.

The total offers made by the congregations under the two rounds amount to €480.6m while to end December 2018, total contributions amounting to €228 million had been received, see Table below.

Summary of original offers made plus amounts realised							
Offered Realised To be Percentage of (€m) (€m) realised offer realised / yet (€m) (#) to be realised							
2002 Indemnity Agreement	128	123.79	4.21	97%/3%			
2009 Voluntary offers (*)	352.61 480.61	104.44 228.23	248.17 252.38	30%/70% 47%/53%			

* The values of a number of properties fully transferred to the State are not yet available.
It is unlikely that the full value of the amounts offered in 2009 will be achieved due to lower valuations on completed property transfers or disposals, offers not accepted, etc.

The Department continued to furnish the Council of Europe with bi-annual plans detailing the individual and general measures that are being taken to implement the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) Judgements in the Louise O'Keeffe case. The bi-annual plans show the progressive improvement in child protection measures undertaken by the State.

The drafting of the Retention of Records Bill was substantially completed at the end of 2018.

Appendix A - Corporate Data

Supporting the Parliamentary Process 2011-2018

Supporting the Parliamentary Process	2011	2015	2016	2017	2018
Parliamentary Questions responded to	3103	3657	3434	4209	4260
Memoranda for Government Received for Observations	147	160	108	144	167
Representations received by Minister and Minister of State Offices	13000	7330	6130	6557	7266
Responses to Topical Issues	60	36	18	38	41
Responses to Adjournment (Commencement) Debates	32	41	11	43	55

Information Services 2011-2018

Information Services	2011	2015	2016	2017	2018
Email enquiries received through info@education.gov.ie	7000+	6168	9733	10,733	6,901
Visitors to our website www.education.ie	1.6m	2.18m	2.25m	2.85m	3.11m
Freedom of Information Requests Received Decisions Made	1,170 1,000+	420 400+	496 450+	548 556	568 554
Subject Access Requests					
Received	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	45
Closed	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	44
Press Releases Issued	112	126	90	155	203
Twitter followers	n/a	20,000	24,469	30,546	38,067

Annual Programme of Inspection in Schools and Centres for Education 2018

The Inspectorate completed a total of **6,338** inspections/advisory visits to schools and settings in 2018 as outlined in Tables 1 to 6 below.

Table 1: Summary of Inspectorate activities, 2018

Summary of inspections	2018
Inspections of early years' settings participating in the ECCE Programme*	691
Inspections and evaluations in primary schools (including inspection of the work of	
teachers on probation)	ı
Inspections and evaluations in post-primary schools and centres for education	
Other inspections, advisory visits and evaluation activities	
School self-evaluation advisory visits	881
Total inspections/advisory visits to early years settings, schools, centres for education and other educational settings	6338

^{*}Early Childhood Care and Education Programme

Table 2: Inspections of Early years' settings participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme, 2018

Early years Education-focused Inspections	2018
Early years Education-focused Inspection	621
Early years Education-focused Inspection: Follow-through	70
Total Early years Education-focused Inspections	691

Table 3: Inspections and evaluations in primary schools, 2018

Primary Inspection/Evaluation Activity	2018
Whole-School Evaluation	6
Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning	104
Evaluation of Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS* Schools	10
Incidental Inspection	281
Follow-through Inspection	128
Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Education Needs	11
Curriculum Evaluation	218
Pilot Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections: Primary	18
Pilot Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections: Special Schools	2
Total of school inspections	778
School self-evaluation advisory visits to schools	591
Inspection visits to newly qualified primary teachers in the school year 2017/18	2788

^{*}DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools): An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion

Table 4: Inspections and evaluations in post-primary schools and centres for education, 2018

Post-primary Inspection/Evaluation Activity	2018
Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning	78
Subject Inspection	252
Programme Evaluation	23
Evaluation of Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS* Schools	10
Incidental Inspection	129
Follow-through Inspection	73
Evaluation of Centres for Education	21
Pilot Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections: Post Primary	14
Pilot Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections: Centres for Education	2
Pilot Evaluation of Provision for Students with Special Educational Needs	6
Total of school inspections	608
School self-evaluation advisory visits to schools	290

^{*}DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools): An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion

Table 5: Other inspection activities, 2018

Other inspections/evaluations of provision for students and young people	2018
Inspection of Coláistí Gaeilge (Irish Colleges)	28
Inspection of Special Care Units	5
Pilot Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections: Special Care Units	2
Inspection conducted for the purpose of school recognition	1
Inspection conducted under Section 24 of the Education Act 1998	1
Inspections in the European Schools	13
Inspection of summer literacy/numeracy camps for children	5
Inspection of campaí samhraidh for children (Irish-medium summer camps)	5
Evaluation of summer CPD courses for primary teachers	41

Other inspections/evaluations of provision for students and young people	2018
Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme: advisory visits to schools	195
School Excellence Fund DEIS: advisory visits to schools	130
School Excellence Fund Step-Up: advisory visits to schools	9
Administration of PISA 2018 in post-primary schools	157
Total other inspections/evaluations of provision for students and young people	592
2018	

Table 6: Publication of reports, 2018

Publication of inspection reports	2018
Curriculum Evaluation Model (primary)	235
DEIS (primary)	3
DEIS post-primary)	1
Programme Evaluation (post-primary)	28
Special Educational Needs (primary)	10
Subject Inspections (post-primary)	289
WSE-MLL (primary)	114
WSE-MLL (post-primary)	92
Follow-Through (primary)	138
Follow-Through (post-primary)	101
WSE modified (primary)	17
Centres for Education	2
Evaluation of Schools at Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres	9
Total number of reports published	1039
(Note: the number of reports published in 2018 differs from the number of inspections conducted in 2018 as not all reports are publishable and not all relate to inspections conducted in 2018)	

Table of Prompt Payments 2018

Year	2018		
Details	Number	Value (€)	
Payments made within 15 days	8,215	338,178,184	
Payments made between 16-30 days	2,548	37,845,243	
Payments made in excess of 30 days that were subject to	69	253,131	
LPI and compensation costs			
Payments made in excess of 30 days that were not subject	1,573	7,819,268	
to LPI and compensation costs			
Total Payments	12,405	384,095,826	
Amount of late payment interest (LPI) paid	-	1,056	
Amount of compensation costs paid	-	3,780	
Total Invoices with LPI & Compensation	69	4,836	

Energy Consumption & Expenditure in 2018

The Department has an energy management and reduction programme in place which commenced in 2009, to reduce energy consumption by 33% by 2020. With a reduction of 26.1% being achieved to date, the Department is exceeding the projected reductions required. A detailed energy audit was undertaken on our campuses in Dublin, Athlone and Tullamore, and recommended actions for improvement have been implemented. Significant investment proposed for 2019 at our Athlone campus will impact energy efficiency from 2020 onward.

Department Expenditure on Energy Costs (incl. VAT)								
Category	2009 (€)	2015 (€)	2016 (€)	2017 (€)	2018 (€)			
Electricity	586,569.83	425,039	385,304.46	335,011.72	332,389.83			
Gas	83,336.94	131,518	107,696.62	112,118.43	116,554.67			
LPG and Oil	43,114.87	21,936	12,716.52	16,391.72	24,686.49			
Total	713,021.64	578,493	505,717.60	463,521.87	473,630.99			

Public Sector Duty

Under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014, all public bodies are statutorily obliged to have regard to human rights and equality issues in the performance of their functions. In this regard, the following goals have been included in the Department of Education and Skills' Statement of Strategy Action Plan for Education 2016-2019:

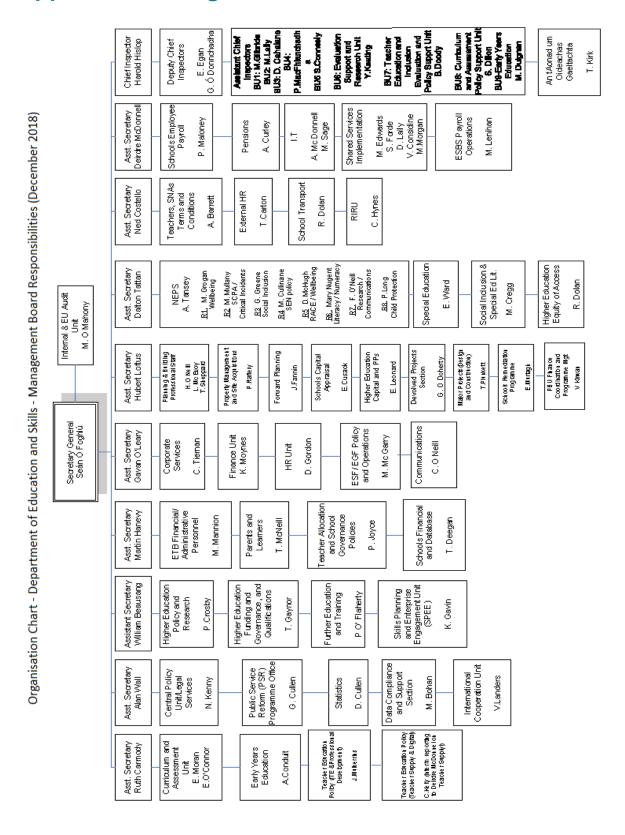
- Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs: this Goal is concerned with working to ensure that the profile of learners progressing through the education system becomes more representative of the population in general.
- Improve national planning and support services: this Goal is concerned with the Department and its agencies working in partnership and in consultation to create the right structures, gather the right evidence, develop the right policies, use the right funding instruments, provide the right service supports and deliver services effectively and efficiently.

Gender Balance on State Boards

Name of Board	Total Places on Board	Men	Women	Total	Women as % of Total	Single Gender Board?	Min. 40- 60% target achieved	High 45- 55% target achieved
An Comhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)	12	6	6	12	50.0%	No	Yes	Yes
Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board	9	5	4	9	44.4%	No	Yes	No
Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse	6	2	4	6	66.7%	No	No	No
Grangegorman Development Agency Board	15	7	7	14	50.0%	No	Yes	Yes
Higher Education Authority	15	7	8	15	53.3%	No	Yes	Yes
Irish Research Council	12	4	6	10	60.0%	No	Yes	No
Léargas	9	4	4	8	50.0%	No	Yes	Yes

Gender balanc								
Name of Board	Total Places on Board	Men	Women	Total	Women as % of Total	Single Gender Board?	Min. 40- 60% target achieved	High 45- 55% target achieved
National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)	13	6	7	13	53.8%	No	Yes	Yes
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	25	11	14	25	56.0%	No	Yes	No
National Council For Special Education (NCSE)	13	6	7	13	53.8%	No	Yes	Yes
Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	10	4	6	10	60.0%	No	Yes	No
Residential Institutions Redress Board	11	4	7	11	63.6%	No	No	No
Residential Institutions Review Committee	6	4	1	5	20.0%	No	No	No
Skillnet Ireland	13	8	5	13	38.5%	No	No	No
SOLAS (An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna)	13	4	4	8	50.0%	No	Yes	Yes
State Examinations Commission (SEC)	5	3	2	5	40.0%	No	Yes	No
The Teaching Council	37	21	15	36	41.7%	No	Yes	No
Educational Research Centre	5	3	1	4	25.0%	No	No	No

Appendix B – Organisation Chart end 2018



Appendix C - Bodies under the Aegis of the Department

Non-Commercial Bodies Under Aegis

- An Chomhairle um Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)
- → Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA)
- → Educational Research Centre (ERC)
- Grangegorman Development Agency (GGDA)
- → Higher Education Authority (HEA)
- > Irish Research Council
- → Léargas The Exchange Bureau
- → National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)
- → National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- → Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
- → Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB)
- → Residential Institutions Review Committee (RIRC)
- Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board
- > Skillnet Ireland
- > SOLAS An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
- → State Examinations Commission (SEC)
- > The Teaching Council

Further information on our agencies including contact details and board details can be found on our agencies webpage http://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Agencies/

Appendix D - Direct Links to our Website www.education.ie

Statistical Information	http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/
Inspectorate Reports	http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/
Education Legislation Legislation.html	http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Legislation/Education-
All Publications	http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/
Circulars and Forms	http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/
Special Education	http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/
School Design	http://www.education.ie/en/School-Design/
Press and Events	http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/
Services and Informat	ion for Parents http://www.education.ie/en/Parents/
	Psychological Service <a "="" education-staff="" en="" href="http://www.education.ie/en/Schools</th></tr><tr><th>Services and Informat</th><td>ion for Education Staff http://www.education.ie/en/Education-Staff/
Services and Informat	ion for Learners http://www.education.ie/en/Learners/

Appendix E – Acronyms

Acronym	
AIM	Access and Inclusion Model
CAO	Central Applications Office
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ELC	Early Learning and Care
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ESF	European Social Fund
EYEI	Early Years Education Inspection
EYEPU	Early Years Education Policy Unit
FET	Further Education and Training
FLAG	Foreign Languages Advisory Group
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institute
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
JCT	Junior Cycle for Teachers
NBSS	National Behaviour Support Service
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NSAI	National Síolta/Aistear initiative
NTF	National Training Fund
PATH	Pathways to Participation in Higher Education
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
PEIL	Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
SAF	Student Assistance Fund
SEF	School Excellence Fund
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SESS	Special Education Support Service
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
TU	Technological University
TUSLA	Child and Family Agency
UN	United Nations
VTOS/SST	Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme/Specific Skills Training
YEI	Youth Employment Initiative