

# Department of Education & Science Annual Report 2006



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## *Mission Statement*

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

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

## *High-Level Goals*

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

1. We will deliver an education that is relevant to individuals' personal, social, cultural and economic needs.
2. We will support, through education, a socially inclusive society with equal opportunity for all.
3. We will contribute to Ireland's economic prosperity, development and international competitiveness.
4. We will seek to improve the standard and quality of education and promote best practice in classrooms, schools, colleges and other centres for education.
5. We will support the delivery of education by quality planning, policy formulation and customer service.

## *Activities*

Our mandate: In support of these high-level goals, the Department is engaged in a wide range of activities including:

- Policy planning and review
- Quality assurance
- Human and financial resource allocation
- Planning and provision of education infrastructure
- Enhancing education through co-operation

*Foreword by  
the Minister*



*I am pleased to present my Department's Annual Report for 2006 which sets out progress made during the year towards meeting the high level goals and objectives set out in our Statement of Strategy 2005 – 2007 and also progress on other commitments and developments across the Department's areas of responsibility. Progress was made on a wide range of issues during 2006 involving all the partners in education.*

The school building programme continued apace with some 1,300 building and modernisation projects underway in our primary and post primary schools. An enormous amount of progress has been made on improving school accommodation in recent years. In 2006, my Department published a report giving details of how 6,500 projects, representing an investment of over €2 billion, were delivered during the period 2000 – 2005. I was also pleased to sign an agreement for a significant new initiative with Fingal County Council that will involve it acquiring sites for schools and also assisting in the provision of community facilities throughout Fingal. The provision of education facilities in rapidly developing areas is a challenging issue, which we will continue to work to address.

2006 saw school inspection reports published for the first time on my Department's website. Nearly 500 reports were published during the year, covering over 300 schools, Youthreach centres and Senior Traveller Training Centres. The publication of Whole School Evaluation reports provide parents and the wider community with access to balanced and fair information on the work going on in schools.

For the new academic year 2006/2007, I was delighted to be able to provide 500 additional teaching posts to further reduce class sizes in primary schools across the country. 4,000 extra primary teachers have been provided since 2002, the majority of these additional teachers have been targeted at providing extra support for children with special needs, those from disadvantaged areas and international pupils. 80 additional Home School Community Liaison teachers were also appointed in disadvantaged schools. This means there are now 450 staff working outside the classroom to help children who may not be able to participate fully in the education system or are at risk of dropping out of school.

The Employee Assistance Service now available to primary and post primary teachers throughout the country is the first stage of an overall Health and Well-being programme being developed for teachers.

Progress was also made on implementation of recommendations in the Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools. A new National Behaviour Support Service was established to provide targeted support to schools. The Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2006 was enacted to address issues in relation to the refusal to enrol, suspension or exclusion of a student and the related appeals process.

Work also commenced on the implementation of changes to the administration of third level student maintenance grants. The proposed changes will provide a user-friendly, coherent application and payment service for students across the country. Drafting of legislation to unify the various grant schemes and place on them on a statutory footing was progressed significantly.

On behalf of my Ministerial colleagues during 2006, Síle de Valera and Brian Lenihan, and myself, I would like to express my appreciation to all the staff in the Department for their continuing support and effort during the year.

I also wish to convey my heartfelt thanks to my colleague Síle de Valera, who departed from office as Minister of State in December 2006, for her commitment and contribution in the areas of Youth, School Transport and the Adult and Further Education sector. I wish her every success in her future endeavors. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Seán Haughey as Minister of State.

**Mary Hanafin, T.D.**

Minister for Education and Science



*Statement from the  
Secretary General*



*I am pleased to present this Annual Report on the Department's Statement of Strategy 2005 – 2007. This year's report outlines progress made on a wide range of issues across all levels of the Education system. The Department continued to progress key policy priorities and customer service improvements.*

During 2006 the first phase of the Department's e-Government project, the On-Line Claims System, was successfully rolled out to post primary schools. The system allows schools to input claims for the payment of casual and non casual teachers and to record teacher absences. Payments are generated directly to the employee from the Department's payroll service.

Policy templates and related information were made available on the Department's website – [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) to support post primary schools in preparing policies on Anti-Bullying, Child Protection, Guidance Plan, Internet Safety and Substance Use.

An Assessor of Youth Work was appointed in August 2006 and will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating youth work projects and programmes funded by the Department as well as assisting in the development of definitive criteria for the evaluation of youth work and a Quality Standards Framework for the sector.

Addressing educational disadvantage continued to be a priority for the Department with the continuing roll-out of the DEIS action plan. This involves the roll out of targeted resources to the most disadvantaged schools around the country. Over €650m was provided for educational inclusion programmes across all levels of education.

Important legislative frameworks were progressed including the enactment of the Institutes of Technology Act, 2006 and drafting of the Student Support Bill, 2006. The Department also contributed to the formulation of a number of national policy

documents, including the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation, Towards 2016, the new National Development Plan and the new NAP Inclusion, and was involved in a wide range of cross departmental work.

Garda vetting of new teachers, new appointees to non-teaching positions in schools, new youth work employees and volunteers and new school bus drivers began in 2006. These new vetting procedures, along with existing vetting of prospective employees of children detention schools, Special Needs Assistants and bus escorts to children with special needs, will help to ensure children and vulnerable adults are protected.

Implementation of the Governments Decentralisation Programme, involving the relocation of the Department's Dublin based staff to Athlone and Mullingar continued in 2006. In the Dublin headquarters there was an 11% turnover in staff due to decentralisation related moves. I would like to thank all the staff in the Department for their continued commitment and hard work in maintaining services during this period of significant change.

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

**Brigid Mc Manus**

Secretary General



# *Financial Statistics*



### Education and Related Expenditure<sup>1</sup>

Expenditure on the education sector amounted to €7.9bn in 2006. First level, Second Level and Higher Education including Capital Services took up 97% of the overall total. Youth and Other Key Services which include cultural activities, residential schools redress and a number of smaller programmes account for the remaining 3%. Expenditure on programmes is set out below:

First Level, Second Level and Further Education Grants & Services		
	€million	%
Department Pay & Other Overheads	55.0	1.0%
Salaries & Superannuation	4,446.1	83.7%
Grants and Services	653.8	12.3%
School Transport	159.7	3.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,314.6</b>	

Third Level and Research Grants & Services		
	€million	%
Department Pay & Other Overheads	4.0	0.2%
Salaries & Superannuation	991.7	59.3%
Grants and Services	445.1	26.6%
Student Support	232.6	13.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,673.4</b>	

<sup>1</sup> These figures are subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General

Capital Services		
	€million	%
Department Pay & Other Overheads	12.2	1.8%
First-Level	272.0	40.2%
Second-Level & Further Education	252.7	37.3%
Third-Level & Research	115.9	17.1%
Schools Information & Communication Technologies	4.1	0.6%
Public Private Partnership costs	20.3	3.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>677.2</b>	

Youth Activities		
	€million	%
Department Pay & Other Overheads	1.1	2.2%
Grants and Services	48.4	97.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>49.5</b>	

Other Key Services		
	€million	%
Department Pay & Other Overheads	5.4	2.5%
International Activities	7.4	3.5%
Redress	194.2	90.3%
Other	8.0	3.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>215.0</b>	

Expenditure per student over ten years at constant 2006 prices:		
Sector	1996	2006
First level	€2,608	€5,701
Second level	€4,005	€8,131
Third level	€7,816	€10,272

# *HIGH LEVEL GOAL 1*

## *Meeting the Needs of the Individual*

*We will deliver an education that is relevant to individuals' personal, social, cultural and economic needs.*

**Objective 1.1: We will support the development and provision of quality early childhood education in line with the strategy set out in the White Paper on Early Childhood Education Ready to Learn.**

## Early Years Education

In 2006, a new Early Years Education Policy Unit was established within the Department. The Unit will be co-located with the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC). Both the OMC and the Department will work towards integrated policy development and service delivery in the sector and respond directly to related recommendations in the White Paper on Early Childhood Education, 1999, the OECD Review of Early Childhood Education in Ireland, 2004, and the subsequent NESF Report, 2005.

## Provision Within the Primary School Sector

Although early years education covers children from 0-6, debate on early years provision in the Irish sector generally centers on the 3-6 years age group. This includes the primary school infant provision for 4-6 year olds in over 3,200 primary schools. Nearly half (49.2%) of four-year olds and virtually all (99.9%) of five-year olds are enrolled in infant classes in primary schools. Outside of this universal provision in the primary sector, pre-school initiatives have been targeted towards children who experience disadvantage or who have special needs.

## Social Inclusion Measures

The Early Start pre-school project was established in 1994/95 in 40 primary schools in designated areas of urban disadvantage in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Galway, Drogheda and Dundalk. There are 56 teachers and 56 childcare workers employed in 16 full Early Start units (serving 60 children each, 30 in the morning and 30 in the afternoon) and 24 half units (serving 30 children each, morning only). The total number of spaces provided by the existing 40 Early Start centres is 1,680.

The Rutland Street Project, established in 1969, is a pre-school attached to the Rutland Street primary school in Dublin. Although not part of Early Start, it was used to pilot many of the approaches later incorporated in the Early Start project.

The policy, as set out in the 2006 Traveller Education Strategy, is to move towards integrated provision for Traveller services including Traveller pre-schools. There are, however, currently 35 pre-schools for Traveller children.

## Special Needs

In 2006, there were 16 pre school classes for children with autism. Individual educational intervention was provided for 284 children from 2 ½ years to 5, through the Home Tuition programme.



**Objective 1.2: We will enable schools at primary and second level to deliver a high quality education by providing a comprehensive range of provision, including financial, staffing and curricular supports.**

## Staffing of Schools

### Supply of Primary Teachers

Extra primary teachers were provided in the 2006/07 school year, specifically to reduce class size. In 2006, there were 4,000 more teachers in primary schools than there were in 2002. Under the action plan for tackling educational disadvantage DEIS, more children in disadvantaged primary schools are in smaller classes.

Teaching posts in primary schools in December 2006	28,405
Pupil teacher ratio for the 2006/07 school year	16.4:1
Students in Colleges of Education (full time)	5,169
Students who completed the Graduate Diploma in Primary Education at Hibernian College (approx)	400

### Supply of Second Level Teachers

Staffing allocations to second level schools are approved by the Department on an annual basis in accordance with generally applied rules relating to recognised pupil enrolment. In the 2001/02 school year, there were approximately 24,477 whole time equivalent teaching posts allocated to second level schools. For 2006/07, the corresponding figure is 25,484 whole time equivalent posts.

Teaching Posts in Voluntary Secondary Schools	13,414
Teaching Posts in Community and Comprehensive Schools	4,178
Teaching Posts in Vocational Schools	7,892
Pupil teacher ratio for the 2005/06 school year	13.2:1

## Appeals

The Primary Staffing Appeals board heard 90 cases in 2006. Additional teaching resources were awarded in 15 cases. At second level, the Appeals Committee dealt with 217 appeals, of which 117 were successful.

## Child Protection /Vetting

From the start of the school year 2006/07, all new teachers appointed to schools had to be vetted. Vetting of new appointees to non-teaching positions in schools, new youth work employees and volunteers and new school bus drivers also began in 2006. Vetting was already in place in respect of prospective employees of children detention schools, as well as Special Needs Assistants and bus escorts to children with special needs.

## Teacher Education

### Initial Teacher Training

The Department is responsible for devising and implementing effective policies and measures to ensure the adequate supply of suitably qualified and trained primary school teachers in the short, medium and long terms. This involves a high level of co-operation between the Department and the management of the Colleges of Education. Funding is provided to the Colleges of Education by the Department and the Higher Education Authority.

The Department is also responsible for implementing policies in relation to the Postgraduate Diploma programme for post primary teachers, provided by the Education Departments of participating Universities. This involves regulating teacher supply through quotas, addressing shortages in particular areas through the use of Subject Specific Quotas and addressing the significant variations between the numbers pursuing the programme and the numbers continuing into the teaching profession.

In 2006, the Department began an overall review of initial teacher education provision, which takes into account the three stages of the teacher education continuum, national and international research, reports and ongoing developments.

## Induction

### National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction (NPPTI)

The NPPTI is a partnership initiative between the Department, Teacher Unions, St. Patrick's College (primary strand), UCD (post-primary strand) and the schools participating in the project. The NPPTI was established in 2002 and was in Phase V (2006 – 2007) in 2006.

The main objective of the Teacher Induction programme is to support the professional development of newly qualified teachers by way of systematic support in their first year of teaching, thus laying the foundations for subsequent professional growth and development.

## Inservice/Continuous Professional Development

### Education Centre Network

During 2006, the Department provided funding to a network of 21 full-time and 9 part-time centres. The Network provides teachers with continuous access to national programmes involving ongoing curriculum implementation and locally identified teacher professional development needs.

### Primary Curriculum Support Services

The implementation of the revised primary school curriculum is supported by a dedicated Primary Curriculum Support Programme team. As well as a comprehensive programme of in-career development, there is an ongoing support service, provided by Cuiditheoirí, who provide school based support on a regional basis. The principles underpinning the Primary Curriculum Support Programme aim to complement the principles of the Primary School Curriculum, through the:

- Promotion of ownership of the curriculum by schools so that each child's educational experience is enriching, meaningful and relevant to his or her life
- Adoption of a partnership approach to planning the support programme at national, regional and local levels
- Facilitation of quality in-career development events whereby teachers become familiar with the content, principles,

teaching methodologies and assessment approaches of the curriculum

- On-going evaluation of the support programme whereby future activities are informed and shaped accordingly
- Encouragement for the development of school clusters and networks towards sharing best practice and developing learning communities
- Accessibility of support and advice from the Primary Curriculum Support Programme personnel, personally and through ICT's.

### Second Level Support Services

At post primary level, a Second Level Support Service provides ongoing post-implementation support in a number of subject areas: Transition Year Programme, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied, Leaving Certificate English, Junior Certificate Physics and Chemistry, Junior Certificate School Programme and Civic Social and Political Education. The Mathematics, Biology and Home Economics support services moved under the auspices of the Second Level Support Service in September 2006. National programmes of in-service continued during 2006 in the revised post primary curricular areas of Leaving Certificate History and Geography, Junior Certificate Science, Physical Education and Religious Education.

### Leadership Development for Schools (LDS)

The LDS has expanded the range of supports and services that it offers to school leaders, from the original Misneach Programme launched in 2003 with 170, to a dynamic series of professional development programmes involving over 2,000 school leaders per annum. These leaders receive support in their roles as deputy principals, newly appointed principals and as established school leaders. LDS is currently writing a country background report for an OECD Activity "Improving School Leadership".

### School Development Planning Support Service (SDPS) (Primary)

The SDPS continues to have a significant impact on school communities in the development of the curricular and





organisational aspects of their school plans and in the responsiveness of these plans to the learning needs of their pupils.

In addition to assistance with school plans and in response to feedback, SDPS is providing specific guidance to schools in planning for improved learning outcomes for all their pupils. This guidance was provided during the school year 2006/07 in the following focus areas: (a) assessment; (b) literacy; (c) numeracy; (d) individual teacher preparation; (e) development planning.

SDPS continues to provide guidance to schools through School Development Planning Templates, which have been produced by the Support Service as clear and concise aids to schools and school leaders in their development planning activities. In addition to information and guidance, a wide range of supports, both curricular and organisational, have been made available for download by schools and individual teachers on the SDPS website [www.sdps.ie](http://www.sdps.ie).

### **Summer Course Programme**

The principal objective of the Summer Course Programme is the advancement of teachers pedagogic and management skills in the context of the work of the primary school. In 2006, 13,848 primary teachers participated in 650 summer courses.

### **School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI) (Post-Primary)**

School Development Planning is a process undertaken by the school community to stimulate and strengthen a culture of collaborative development planning in school communities, with a view to promoting school improvement and effectiveness.

During 2006, the work of SDPI focused on the areas of subject department planning, whole school guidance planning, in-school management review, planning the follow-through to Whole School Evaluation and subject inspection and the development of whole-school policies on a range of issues, including homework, pastoral care, learning support and the inclusion of students with special educational needs.

The SDPI Cluster Support programme, which supports and facilitates the sharing of good practice, expanded significantly in 2006. Progress was made with development work in relation to the DEIS School Support Programme. Collaboration with other agencies in the provision of training, the preparation of resource material and the realisation of projects relevant to school planning, remains a major element of the work of SDPI.

### **Technologies**

The T4 – Technology Subjects Service was established in 2006. T4 provides support to teachers and schools in implementing the new and revised post-primary technology subjects.



A full time support service is now in operation, including an overall National Co-ordinator and an Assistant National Co-ordinator for each subject, along with Regional Development Officers. The support service is hosted by Galway Education Centre.

### **Teacher Fee Refund Scheme**

The purpose of the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme is to provide funding towards the cost of course and examination fees incurred by teachers on successful completion of relevant in-career development courses approved by the Department and school authorities. €546,280 was provided for the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme in 2006.

### **Boards of Management**

In recognition of the responsibility which the Education Act has imposed on Boards of Management and the increasingly complex environment in which they must operate, the Department has developed a new scheme for the provision of support to school management bodies, for the purpose of training and development of boards of management in the discharge of their duties. This scheme is administered through Drumcondra Education Centre. In 2006, €320,000 was drawn down by representative bodies.

### **National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS)**

The NBSS was established in 2006 as a result of School Matters: The Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools. The work of the team has concentrated on team training, the establishment of a national intervention framework for dealing with inappropriate student behaviour, the identification of strategies and best practice to be used to deal with this behaviour and ongoing research into and communication with behaviour support systems in other countries.

### **Special Education Support Service (SESS)**

The SESS was established in September 2003, to deliver in-service training and support to schools on a nationwide basis. The service consolidates, co-ordinates, develops and delivers a range of professional development initiatives and support structures for school personnel working with students with special educational needs, in a variety of educational settings. These settings include mainstream primary and post-primary schools, special schools and special classes.

In 2006, there have been significant improvements to the level of resources available to the SESS: numbers of full-time staff on the SESS team has risen from 3 to 9 while the number of associates has grown from 21 to 25. Almost 15,000 teachers have availed of course places provided by SESS in 2006, including 4,000 availing of Autism Related Courses.

### **Special Educational Needs Courses**

The provision of Special Education Needs courses continues to develop, through the working relationship between the Department and the following institutions-

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

These institutions provide a combined Post-Graduate Diploma Programme of Continuous Development for Teachers involved in learning support and special education. This course was provided for the first time in 2006/07. In 2006/07, there were 276 participants (184 Primary & 92 Post-Primary) on the combined course in the seven institutions concerned.

### **Cross Border School and Community Partnership Programme**

The Cross Border School and Community Partnership Programme began in September 2006. The aim of this project is

to bring schools, parents and their communities into closer working harmony by establishing effective local networks, with schools at the heart of a structured home-to-school programme. The specific objective of the project is to improve the quality of educational provision for children designated as having special educational needs in the border areas of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. In total, 10 Northern Ireland schools and 9 Republic of Ireland schools will be involved. The programme will draw in 784 teachers and assistants, 7,490 parents and 63 health professionals.

## Payroll Service

The Department co-ordinates and administers a range of payroll services to primary, second level and retired teachers and school staff and issues a number of grant payments to schools.

In 2006, an integrated payroll for casual and non-casual teachers in Secondary and Community/Comprehensive schools was introduced. A payroll for the payment of substitute SNAs was also developed and a redundancy scheme for SNAs was introduced. The percentage of teachers being paid electronically increased to 98% in 2006.

In excess of two million payments were issued in 2006 to serving and retired teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs). Breakdown of payments issued is:

- 795,000 payments at a cost of €1.66bn were issued to primary teachers
- 550,000 payments at a cost of €1.12bn were issued to post primary teachers
- 235,000 payments at a cost of €232m were issued to non teaching staff
- 425,000 payments at a cost of €538m were issued to retired teachers.

## Support for Schools and School Staff

Schools' running costs are met by the Department's scheme of capitation grants. These grants are intended to contribute towards the general operating costs of schools which would

include heating, lighting, cleaning, insurance, painting, teaching aids and other miscellaneous charges.

The standard rate of capitation grant for primary schools in 2006 was €145.58 per pupil. The amount of grant paid to an individual school is determined by the enrolment in the school subject to a minimum grant of €8,734.80 in the case of a school with 60 pupils or less.

Enhanced rates of capitation funding are paid in respect of children with special educational needs who attend special schools or special classes attached to mainstream schools. In 2006 these rates ranged from €400.00 to €619.50 per pupil.

The standard rate of capitation grant is paid to all primary schools except Gaelscoileanna located outside of Gaeltacht areas which receive an additional €25.39 per pupil over and above the standard rate grant.

The standard per capita grant for voluntary secondary schools in 2006 was €298 per pupil. In addition to per capita funding up to €40,000, schools received €159 per pupil under the School Services Support fund, towards secretarial and caretaking services.

The capitation grant is in addition to the Ancillary Services grant which provides additional funding for primary schools towards the cost of secretarial and caretaking services. The standard rate of grant per pupil under the scheme in 2006 was €139 subject to a minimum grant of €8,340 in the case of a school with 60 pupils or less and a maximum grant of €69,500 in the case of a school with 500 or more pupils.

## Policy Templates Aimed at Reducing the Administrative Burden on Schools

Schools are required to prepare a number of policy documents to support their day-to-day management and operation. These policy documents form an important element of the overall school development plan. In August 2006, the Department published policy templates to assist post-primary schools in

preparing policies to meet a range of legislative and regulatory requirements. The initial focus of this was on five key areas:

- Anti-Bullying
- Child Protection
- Guidance Plan
- Internet Safety: Acceptable Use Policy
- Substance Use.

The templates include prompts to assist schools in developing policy content. In addition to the templates, the following support materials are provided for each policy area:

- A list of the steps to be undertaken in developing the policy
- The latest published guidelines, where applicable
- Relevant resources, including website links, which schools may find useful in developing and implementing the policy
- A sample of an existing policy, where available/applicable.

The five policy templates and accompanying support information are available on the Department's website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

### Language Support

Additional supports have been introduced in schools, to address the needs of recently arrived children with English language needs. In the school year 2006/07, 802 whole-time equivalent language support teachers were put in place at primary level and 346 whole-time equivalent teachers at second level, to support children whose first language is not English, representing an investment of €66.6m. This compares to 149 and 113 teachers respectively in the school year 2001/02.

In September 2006, a range of documents were made available on the Department's website in German, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Spanish and Russian.

New measures to support the teaching of Irish at primary level were launched in April 2006. These include a new team of Irish language experts to work with teachers, courses for teachers in the evenings and at weekends, summer camps for children through Irish and training of teachers in how to teach drama through Irish.

### Education Services Interactive Project

The purpose of the Education Services Interactive (ESI) project is to develop a web based portal and specific applications which will deliver on-line services to schools, replacing paper based systems. The first application, an On-Line Claims System (OLCS), enables schools to claim salary payments for their staff and allows them to record the absences of their teachers and Special Need Assistants. These claims will generate payments directly to the employee from the Department's payrolls.

The system was introduced on a pilot basis to 78 primary and post primary schools in May 2006. Training for staff in all relevant post primary schools took place in October 2006 and rollout of the system to the relevant schools in the post primary sector took place on 6th November 2006. Planning for the rollout to the primary sector took place in 2006.

### Employee Assistance Service for Teachers (EAS)

In 2006, the Employee Assistance Service (EAS) for teachers was launched. The service is available to teachers throughout the country and is the first stage of an overall Health and Well-being programme being developed for teachers, for which Exchequer funding of €2m is being provided. The Department sought proposals on the open market for the provision of the service, from suitable providers. Following a successful EU tendering process, Vhi Corporate Solutions were contracted to administer the service for an initial three year period.

The EAS provides a range of supportive psychological health services to teachers. Services include, single session or short term structured telephone counselling, face to face short term confidential counselling as well as critical incident debriefing. The scheme aims to provide assistance to teachers who may be experiencing difficulties, to provide support to them and to avoid, in so far as is possible, these issues impacting on their performance in the classroom.

### Primary Curriculum

A revised primary curriculum was launched in 1999 and is being implemented on a phased basis. In 2005/06, Physical Education and Music were implemented in all schools. In 2006/07, the final

phase of implementation was completed, with the introduction nationally of History and Geography and Drama, supported by national programmes of professional development for teachers. The second phase of a review of implementation of the curriculum has begun, focusing on Gaeilge, Science and Social Personal and Health Education.

## Literacy and Numeracy

In December 2006, the Department notified all primary schools of the requirement for children to sit standardised tests in English reading and Mathematics, either at the end of first class or beginning of second class and at the end of fourth class or beginning of fifth class. The arrangements come into effect from the calendar year 2007. Parents should be notified of their individual children's results with effect from the school year 2007/08.

A grant of almost €1.7m issued to schools for the cost of test materials, teachers' manuals, test scoring services or test-related software. A standard reporting template developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) was piloted in the school year 2006/07, preparatory to its national use in 2007/08. The purpose of the template is to enable schools to communicate results clearly to parents.

A national programme of teacher professional development in assessment for learning is also being put in place.

Two reports were published in 2006 presenting the results of national assessments undertaken in 2004 of English reading and Mathematics in primary schools. The 2004 National Assessment of English Reading, published by the Educational Research Centre, examined the achievement of some 4000 pupils in first and fifth classes. The results show little variation in achievement compared with the previous survey in 1998, or over the period since 1980. There was evidence of improvement in some aspects of fifth class children's reading skills, such as their ability to read and understand information presented in charts, maps, diagrams and lists of instructions. Lower pupil achievement was strongly associated with socio economic status, medical card coverage and low parental attainment. Other factors associated with poorer average scores include being a member of the Travelling community, speaking a first language other than

English or Irish, living in a lone parent household or being part of a large family. Factors associated with higher levels of achievement were parents reading to their child, parents reading for enjoyment, the availability of books and educational resources in the home and parental rules about watching TV and playing computer games.

Counting on Success, Mathematics Achievement in Irish Primary Schools was published in October 2006 and presents the findings of the achievements of a sample of 4,171 students in 4th class in primary schools undertaken in 2004. The results show no overall change in mathematics since the previous survey in 1999, but there was an increase of about 5% in performance in Algebra, Shape and Space and Data and Chance, an increase of about 4% in Reasoning, and a marginal disimprovement in Measures and Number. 12% of pupils achieved at an advanced level (Level 5) on the overall proficiency scale and 12% performed at the lowest proficiency level (Level 1). However, a further 2.6% of pupils were assessed as having mathematics ability below Level 1. 51% of pupils were in schools where learning support in mathematics was provided, compared with 44% in 1999 and 7% received learning support, compared with 8% in the 1999 survey. However, the percentage of pupils considered by teachers to be in need of learning support had dropped significantly, relative to the 1999 survey, from 21% to 14%. In addition, average class sizes were significantly lower in 2004 than in the previous study in single grade classes, but the numbers in multi grade classes did not change significantly.

## Post Primary Curriculum

At post primary level the process of curricular reform continued, with revised curricula in Junior Certificate Science and in Leaving Certificate History and Geography being examined for the first time in 2006. These subjects all provide for the assessment of practical coursework as well as a written terminal examination. Development work in relation to planned senior cycle reforms was undertaken by the NCCA.

A national programme of inservice training began in 2006 to support the implementation of a new Leaving Certificate Technology subject, together with a revised syllabus in Leaving Certificate Design and Communication Graphics, with effect from

September 2007. The development is being supported by an investment of some €40m in technology for schools to upgrade facilities and modernise existing equipment in metalwork and technology rooms and to facilitate the introduction of the revised/new syllabi.

## School Transport

In 2006, the school transport scheme carried about 140,000 pupils each school day, 55,000 post-primary pupils, 76,000 primary pupils and 9,000 pupils with special needs.

Approximately 5,000 bus routes were operated at a cost of €111m.

## Safety on Buses

In 2006, all of the Bus Éireann and private school transport bus fleets were retrofitted with safety belts and safety belts already fitted to 2,700 vehicles, owned by private contractors in the scheme, were checked. In addition, three-for-two seating on primary and post primary services was eliminated.

Also in 2006, a multi media information campaign, aimed at

informing pupils and parents of the requirement to use seat belts on a school bus, was undertaken. The campaign consisted of TV and cinema ads, a radio ad, a special DVD and posters.

## Appeals

The role of the School Transport Appeals Board is, to examine appeals against decisions made by, or on behalf of, the Department regarding the provision of school transport services and/or grant-aid under the terms of the School Transport Schemes.

In 2006, the Board heard 37 appeals of which 5 were allowed.

## Appeal System for Students/Parents

The appeals system provided for under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 has been in operation since September 2001. To date, over 1,000 appeals have been dealt with as shown in the table below:

Appeals in	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Post-Primary	28	59	115	170	216	181	769
Primary	1	15	49	83	84	85	317
Total	29	74	164	253	300	266	1086

The National Educational Welfare Board can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place and will prioritise cases where an appeal under Section 29 has been unsuccessful.

There were 266 appeals completed in 2006. Breakdown of appeals in 2006 is:

Primary Appeals	Withdrawn	Local Resolution	Facilitator Resolution	Upheld at Hearing	Not Upheld at Hearing	Totals
Refusal to enrol	27	5	9	20	13	74
Expulsion	2	0	0	2	3	7
Suspension	1	0	0	1	2	4

Post Primary Appeals	Withdrawn	Local Resolution	Facilitator Resolution	Upheld at Hearing	Not Upheld at Hearing	Totals
Refusal to enrol	25	8	3	30	27	93
Expulsion	9	2	9	21	43	84
Suspension	1	0	1	0	2	4

## Objective 1.3 We will provide for a range of supports and services for children with special educational needs to assist them fulfill their potential.

### Special Education Provision

The Department provides the policy framework for special educational support services necessary for children with special educational needs. The framework comprises a range of supports and services to schools to cater for a wide range of special educational needs including:

- Additional teaching hours through resource and learning support teachers for children with special educational needs, who are integrated into mainstream education
- Reduced pupil teacher ratios for special classes and special schools catering for children with specific needs
- Special Needs Assistants for schools with children enrolled who have care needs
- Enhanced capitation for special classes and special schools
- Assistive technology where this is recommended.

The specific level of educational intervention required at school level is determined, in line with Departmental policy, by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). Schools seeking additional teaching and/or care supports apply to special educational needs organisers, who sanction the appropriate level of intervention required.

A General Allocation system of allocating learning support/resource teachers to all primary schools was introduced in the 2005/06 school year. Schools now have access to learning support/resource teachers based on their pupil enrolment figures, which means early intervention is available from the time a child enrolls in the school.

In 2006, administrative principal posts and administrative deputy principal posts were provided to schools that satisfied the following criteria:

- mainstream schools that, in addition to their ordinary mainstream class teachers, also have five or more special classes for children with the more complex, low incidence, special needs (administrative deputy principals);
- administrative principal posts where a school has a principal and four or five mainstream class teachers and also has a specialist autism unit<sup>2</sup> established under the approval of the NCSE.

The 2006 provision to support children with special educational needs in schools included:

- 1,000 teachers in special schools
- 5,500 teachers at primary level dealing directly with children with special educational needs
- 2,300 whole time equivalent teachers at second level working with pupils with special educational needs
- 8,200 Special Needs Assistants supporting pupils in primary and post primary schools
- A grant of €501,075 was issued in respect of adaptive technology for 334 pupils in post primary schools
- Over €50m was spent on school transport for special needs pupils
- Capitation grants provided to special schools and schools with special classes was increased by 30%.

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

In October 2006, the NCSE submitted its Implementation Report to the Minister, which sets out its views and recommendations on a plan for the implementation of the EPSEN Act 2004.

While the report focuses on the implementation of the Act, it does have regard to the implementation of Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005 and the need for the health and education sectors to work in close co-operation, to ensure the proper implementation of both Acts. To this end, a cross sectoral team,

<sup>2</sup> An autism unit is defined as two differentiated autism classes and provision for younger children with autism i.e., a total capacity for 12-18 children with autism.



representative of senior officials of the Department, the Department of Health and Children, the Health Service Executive and the NCSE, has been established, to ensure the EPSEN Act 2004 and the Disability Act 2005 are progressed in tandem.

### **Individual Education Plan (IEP)**

An education plan for each individual pupil with special educational needs will become mandatory when the relevant sections of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 are commenced. In preparation for this, the NCSE published guidelines on the individual education plan process, copies of which were issued to all primary and post primary schools at the start of the 2006/07 school year. These guidelines provide advice and assistance to schools, teachers and parents on devising and implementing individual education plans. It is the NCSE's intention that these guidelines will provide a benchmark for best practice pending the implementation of the EPSEN Act 2004 and that schools will use these guidelines to draw up school policies and procedures in relation to individual education plans.

### **Home Tuition and July Education Programme**

The home tuition scheme provides funding to parents to provide education at home for children who, for a number of reasons

such as chronic illness, are unable to attend school. The scheme was extended in recent years to include funding of:

- Tuition for children awaiting a suitable educational placement
- Early educational intervention for pre-school children with autism
- July Education Programme.

As home tuition takes place outside of the normal school framework, there is a need to ensure that tutors are appropriately qualified. In 2006, the Department undertook a review of qualifications, which led to an extended list of qualifications acceptable under the scheme for eligible children with autism.

In 2006, in excess of €8m was spent on the home tuition scheme. In the region of 1,300 children availed of home tuition during the 2005/06 school year. Approximately 400 home tuition grants were awarded for children with autism.

The July Education Programme is available to all special schools and mainstream primary schools with special classes catering for children with autism and for children with a severe/profound





general learning disability, who choose to extend their education services through the month of July. The numbers availing of the July Education Programme continues to increase each year. In 2006, in the region of 1,100 children availed of a school based programme, while 1,442 children availed of the home based option. In excess of €4m was spent on this programme in 2006.

### **Review of Special Schools and Special Classes**

A review of the role of special schools and special classes commenced in 2006, in the context of the continuum of special needs education.

As a first phase of this examination, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra were asked to conduct a survey of special schools and classes. The second phase of the review will be managed by the NCSE and will involve wider consultation with the schools and other partners.

### **Additional Education Facilities**

In September 2006, a new school, the Children's Ark, was established in the Mid Western Hospital, Dooradoyle, Co. Limerick, to cater for children who are in the hospital.

Two new classes for pupils with emotional behaviour disorder

(EBD) and speech and language disorder (SLD) were set up in 2006. The establishment of the new hospital school and classes for EBD and SLD provides for a further 23 school places.

Twenty-one additional classes for children on the autistic spectrum were also set up in 2006, bringing the total number classes at the end of 2006 to 199.

### **Specialised Centre for Autism**

The establishment of a specialised centre for autism in Middletown, County Armagh, is a joint initiative between the Department and the Department of Education, Northern Ireland, for the purpose of supporting the promotion of excellence in the development and harmonisation of education and allied services to children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders.

A Development Manager was appointed during 2006 to progress the development of the centre and manage the development of corporate governance protocols.

A campus master plan for the Middletown property was completed in 2006 and this will guide the commissioning of any necessary infrastructure and refurbishment works.



## Psychological Services

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) supports the personal, social and educational development of all children in primary and post-primary schools through the application of psychological theory and practice in education, having particular regard for children with special educational needs.

The main focus of NEPS is on early intervention with pupils and staff in schools in order to maximise pupil potential, to combat school failure and to avoid acute crises for children and young people. The aim is to deliver, through a staged model of intervention, a balanced service using a consultative, problem-solving approach to both the difficulties of individual students and to the needs of schools. The use of the consultative model means that psychological advice and expertise can be made available to many more children than could be reached by engaging solely in individual casework.

All primary and post primary schools have access to psychological assessments either directly through the assigned NEPS psychologist or through the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA) that is administered by NEPS, which supports the cost of assessments provided by a panel of private practitioners. Four additional psychologists were appointed in 2006, bringing the number of psychologists employed to 123.

During 2006, NEPS psychologists were assigned to some 570 post primary schools and over 1,600 primary schools. This meant that 77% of post-primary (representing 75% of pupils) and 49% of primary schools (representing 60% of pupils) had access to the full psychological service provided by NEPS. NEPS psychologists engaged in casework with some 4,900 children and over 4,000 additional pupils were catered for under the SCPA scheme.

NEPS provides assistance to all schools and school communities that experience critical incidents, processes applications for Reasonable Accommodation in Certificate Examinations and provides a service to children with visual impairment,

irrespective of the school which they attend.

Some 3,600 applications were processed by NEPS psychologists under the Reasonable Accommodation in Certificate Examinations scheme (RACE) upon request from the State Examinations Commission.

During 2006, support was provided by NEPS psychologists to schools in some 92 critical incidents. This involved:

- Helping school management to mobilise the school and its resources and to access other support systems in the immediate aftermath of an incident
- Identifying students at risk who are in need of support
- Assisting staff to support students.

Also in 2006, work commenced on the updating of the Critical Incidence Advisory pack for schools, which was first issued in 2004/05.

### Objective 1.4: We will provide for the effective operation of the State Certificate Examinations.

The State Examination Commission was established by Government in March 2003 and has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations.

2006 was the State Examinations Commission's third full year in operation. The Commission publishes an annual report, which is available on their website [www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie). In 2006, over 54,000 candidates sat the Leaving Certificate and almost 58,000 students sat the Junior Certificate.

Revised curricula in Junior Certificate Science and in Leaving Certificate History and Geography were examined for the first time in 2006. These subjects all provide for the assessment of practical coursework as well as a written terminal examination. Development work in relation to planned senior cycle reforms was undertaken by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

## *FOCUS ARTICLE*

### *Men and Primary Teaching*

*In Ireland and in most other developed countries there are significantly more female than male teachers working in both first and second level schools. While this was not always the case, since the 1970s there has been a significant and continuous decline in the number of males entering the teaching profession, particularly at primary level.*

The general consensus among the partners in education is that the absence of male role models in primary education is a critical problem because children need to spend time with both men and women. Since half a child's day is spent in school, the school needs to reflect the social world in which both men and women play their parts. It is necessary therefore, in the context of providing a full and appropriate curriculum, to have male and female role models in primary schools.

In recognition of the feminisation of primary teaching, the Minister established the Primary Education Committee in 2003. The main task of the Committee was to make recommendations on strategies and initiatives to increase the number of males entering primary teaching.

The Committee was composed of representatives from the five Colleges of Education, the Mater Dei Institute of Education, the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) and the Department.

The Committee examined relevant research in this area including "Gender Difference in Patterns of Entry to the Colleges of Education" by Dr. Sheelagh Drudy et al (2002) and also commissioned research from Dr. Eileen Drew on male and female teachers' attitudes to primary teaching as a career ("Facing Extinction: Why Men are not Attracted to Primary Teaching" – November 2006). A National Conference with the partners in education was held in October 2004, to discuss the issues involved. The Committee examined a wide range of factors and research, including:

- Access to teacher education
- Exam performance and entry standards
- Image of teaching
- Work conditions in primary teaching.

In November 2005, the Committee published its report, *Males into Primary Teaching*. One of the key recommendations in this report was that a coordinated promotion campaign, which would encourage boys as well as girls to enter primary teaching,

should be undertaken. This report is available on the Department's website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

### **Men As Teachers and Educators (MATE) Promotion Campaign**

The promotion campaign started in January 2006. The focus of the campaign was agreed with the Presidents of the Colleges of Education and the Institute of Guidance Counsellors. The campaign focussed on a number of key target audiences, particularly students, parents of school going children, mature students, teachers and guidance counsellors. It highlighted the wide variety of skills that a primary teacher uses, such as strong interpersonal and communications skills, organisation, planning and assessment, the ability to analyse and reflect and team work. It promoted the rewards of being a teacher such as the value to society, work/life balance, career satisfaction, diversity of skills, professional development, conditions of employment and job security. The campaign included advertisements placed in the national newspapers, two phases of advertisements on national and local radio stations, a poster campaign in schools and the placement of banner advertisements on specifically identified websites.

Figures released by the Central Applications Office in March 2007 showed a 27% increase in the number of men putting primary school teaching as their first preference - up from 750 in 2006 to 951 in 2007. Overall first preference applications for primary school teaching was up 15% (from 3,977 in 2006 to 4,577 in 2007), which shows that this is a very attractive career option for all young people.

The Teaching Council was launched in February 2005 and established on a statutory basis in March 2006. One of the functions of the Teaching Council is to promote teaching as a profession. The Department will work with the Teaching Council and with the INTO, the Colleges of Education and the Institute of Guidance Counsellors to continue to highlight and promote the attractiveness of primary teaching as a career for males as well as females.

## *HIGH LEVEL GOAL 2*

### *Supporting an Inclusive Society*

*We will support, through education, a socially inclusive society with equal opportunity for all.*

**Objective 2.1: We will contribute, through education, to the implementation and development of the Government's Social Inclusion Policy and continue to provide and review targeted support programmes for children experiencing or at risk of educational disadvantage and early school leaving.**

In 2005, the Department launched Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools – DEIS, an action plan to address the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities. This action plan is being implemented on a phased basis over five years.

The action plan provides for a standardised system for identifying levels of disadvantage and a new School Support Programme (SSP). The SSP will bring together and build upon, existing interventions, including those in the primary sectors, in schools with a concentrated level of disadvantage. There are many different agencies involved in the DEIS initiative including SDPI (School Development Planning Initiative), SDPS (School Development Planning Support), LDS (Leadership Development for schools) and PCSP (Primary Curriculum Support Programme).

The total provision for educational inclusion programmes in 2006 was almost €650m across all levels of education.

### Developments in 2006

- Pupil teacher Ratios in 190 urban primary schools with the highest concentrations of disadvantage were reduced to 20:1 in junior classes and 24:1 in senior classes
- Administrative principals were allocated to all DEIS urban primary schools on lower enrolment and staffing figures than apply in primary schools generally
- The Reading Recovery Programme was been extended to DEIS schools in Cork, Limerick and Galway
- 80 new Home/School/Community Liaison Coordinators were sanctioned for DEIS schools

- The School Completion Programme was rolled out in all DEIS schools not already in the programme
- €500,000 in additional funding was provided under the School Books Grant Scheme to support DEIS schools
- €1m additional capitation was provided to 670 DEIS primary schools
- €1m additional capitation was provided to 203 DEIS post primary schools
- A report and recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy was launched and a coordinating committee was appointed.

### Support for Literacy and Numeracy in Primary Schools

The Primary Curriculum Support Programme, while responsible for providing assistance in the area of implementing curricular change, is also responsible for the implementation and co-ordination of literacy and numeracy strategies under DEIS. The following programmes have all been identified as areas for expansion under the DEIS action plan:

#### Reading Recovery Programme

This school based early intervention programme started in Monaghan in 2000 before being extended first to Dublin and then to disadvantaged schools in Galway, Cork and Limerick. The number of schools taking part in this programme in the 2005/06 school year was follows:

Location	No. of Schools
Monaghan	14
Dublin	12
Limerick	12
Galway	8
Cork	12

#### First Steps

First Steps is a research-based literacy resource, including professional development courses and support materials for primary teachers. It offers teachers an accurate means of assessing and monitoring children's competencies and progress



in reading, writing, spelling and oral language. Over 200 schools began implementation of the First Steps programme in 2006.

### **Maths Recovery**

Maths Recovery is an intervention programme which has been developed as a systematic response to the problem of chronic failure in school mathematics. It provides a programme of intensive, individualised teaching to students, in order to advance them to a level at which they are likely to learn successfully in a regular class. Rollout of the programme to DEIS Urban Band schools, began in the 2006/07 school year.

### **Ready Set Go Maths**

The Ready Set Go Maths is an intervention programme which contains a practical handbook of guidance for teachers in the use of a wide range of activities and materials, to enable them to improve the quality and effectiveness of early learning in numeracy for children. The programme was developed in 2006 and rollout will begin in 2007.

### **Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP)**

This programme was implemented nationally in August 1996. It is an intervention for second level students, who are potential early school leavers. In 2006, there were 175 schools participating in this programme, of which 118 are DEIS schools.

### **Demonstration Library Project**

The JCSP Literacy Strategy includes a National Demonstration Project for the Provision of Libraries for JCSP Schools. The project began in 2001, initially for three years and has now been extended. Libraries staffed by full-time qualified librarians have been set up in 11 participating JCSP schools and a further 10 schools were added in December 2006. In 2006 €1.7m was provided for funding of the existing libraries and expansion under the DEIS Action plan. The project will continue to expand under DEIS to a total of 50 libraries, (10 per year until 2010).

### **Book Grant Scheme**

In 2006, the main book grant scheme, issued to post primary schools, amounted to €6,691,163. A further €511,367 was

issued to DEIS schools for the development of existing loan/rental schemes, benefiting 16,515 pupils. In addition, existing and new seed capital to support loan/rental schemes totalled €306,613, benefiting 5,782 pupils. Overall, the total grant for this service amounted to €7.52m and catered for 131,975 pupils.

### **Children Detention Schools**

There are five Children Detention Schools providing residential and educational services for children up to age 16 years who have been convicted or placed on remand by a court.

Arising from a review of youth justice provisions, the Government approved a package of measures in 2005, designed to restructure and streamline the delivery of the State's services in this area. In 2006, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment began work on the development of a curriculum for children in detention and special care.

Care inspection reports for the following children detention schools were published in 2006:

- Trinity House School, Lusk, Co. Dublin (January 2006)
- Finglas Child and Adolescent Centre, Dublin 11 (February & October 2006)
- St. Joseph's Special School, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary (May 2006)
- Oberstown Girls School Oberstown, Lusk, Co. Dublin (November 2006)

Following amendments to the Children Act 2001 contained in the Criminal Justice Act 2006, the Department made enquiries with the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform (DJELR) and the Health Service Executive (HSE), regarding the transfer of responsibility for children detention schools. Responsibility for four schools transferred to the remit of the DJELR, while responsibility for the fifth school transferred to the HSE from January 2007.

### **Youth Encounter Projects**

There are five Youth Encounter Project schools providing



educational facilities for children who have either become involved in minor delinquency, or are at risk, and have become alienated from the mainstream school system. Each school caters for up to 25 pupils aged between 10 to 16 years. A pupil may be referred to one of these schools by a number of agencies or by the court system. The schools have additional resources to provide a comprehensive life-skills programme in addition to the normal curriculum. In 2006, a value for money review of Youth Encounter Project schools was progressed substantially.

### High Support/Special Care Units

High Support/Special Care Units, which come under the aegis of the HSE, provide residential care for children who are legally "out of control" and at risk, in need of care and protection and who require an education service in a secure and therapeutic environment. The Department has responsibility for enabling the provision of an education service in the units to meet the needs of the children resident there.

### Substance Misuse

Drug prevention education is implemented, as part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum, in primary and post-primary schools. The SPHE curriculum is mandatory in all primary and post-primary schools up to Junior Certificate level and substance use is one of 10 modules taught.

The Department is represented at senior level on the National Drugs Strategy Team and on the Interdepartmental Group which in turn reports to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion. In addition, the Department is represented on all Drugs Task Forces, both Local and Regional. In 2006, the Department funded 36 mainstreamed Local Drug Task Force projects at a cost of over €3m

**Objective 2.2: We will promote the development of a high quality inclusive further education and vocational training system for young people and adults, which is relevant to social and economic needs.**

## Programmes

### Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)

VTOS is a second-chance education and training programme for people aged 21 years or over. It enables those in receipt of certain social welfare payments, particularly people who are unemployed, to return to education and retain their social welfare payments. Courses can be up to 2 years in duration and cover a wide range of subjects and activities. Certification is available at a range of levels, including the Junior or Leaving Certificate, or modules leading to awards certified by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC).

VTOS is offered at 104 centres around the country. In 2006, 71.5% of students who completed the programme progressed to employment or further education or training.

<b>Participants in 2006</b>	<b>5,377</b>
<b>Expenditure in 2006</b>	<b>€61.2m</b>

### Adult Literacy / Community Education

Adult Literacy and Community Education programmes involve the provision of basic education, including reading, writing and numeracy skills, to adults whose skills are inadequate for functional participation in everyday life.

In 2006, the Department continued to provide funding to Vocational Education Committees (VECs), the main providers of literacy services, to support further development and expansion. Through funding to the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), the Department also supported the in-career development needs of teaching staff involved in the delivery of the VEC Adult Literacy Service.

The teaching of English to migrants is an element of the adult literacy service of the VECs. In 2006, 30% of all VEC literacy students were on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses.

In 2006, the Department initiated a pilot project on intensive tuition in adult basic education for people who wanted tuition at a more intensive rate than normal. This project enabled literacy and numeracy learners to participate in a programme of 6 hours per week for 14 weeks. This compares to the usual 2 hours per week provision.

In 2006, NALA devised a new two-year multi-media literacy project, entitled The Really Useful Guide to Words and Numbers. One element of this project is a TV series of that name. It was accompanied by a learner workbook, a free telephone helpline and a website. The website included printable sheets from the workbook, additional online activities and the entire video clip of each programme 24 hours after broadcast.

Specially targeted literacy programmes have been provided, such as literacy for deaf people, literacy for people with dyslexia and literacy for native Irish speakers in Gaeltacht areas.

<b>Participants in 2006</b>	<b>40,000</b>
<b>of which 12,133 were ESOL students</b>	
<b>Expenditure in 2006</b>	<b>€23m</b>

### Youthreach

Youthreach is an integrated programme of education, training and work experience, introduced jointly with FÁS in 1989, for young people in the 15-20 age group who have left school early without any qualifications or vocational training. The programme usually provides two years integrated education, training and work experience.

The programme provides a strong emphasis on personal development, on the core skills of literacy/numeracy,

communications and IT, along with a choice of vocational options such as catering, hairdressing, computers, woodwork, photography, video, sports, art and crafts and a work experience programme. Participants receive a weekly training allowance. They are also entitled to financial assistance with childcare.

Youthreach has expanded progressively since its introduction and is now offered at over 90 locations; in out-of-school centres provided by VECs.

<b>Participants in 2006</b>	<b>2,860</b>
<b>Expenditure pay and non-pay in 2006</b>	<b>€52.7m</b>

### Senior Traveller Training Centres (STCs)

STCs operate on the same basis as Youthreach, but there is no upper age limit. Particular efforts are made to encourage Traveller parents into the centres because of the impact this can have on their children's schooling. There are 33 centres providing an integrated education, training and work experience programme for Traveller early school leavers aged 15 upwards. Trainees are entitled to allowances and to assistance with childcare.

In 2006, the Department's Inspectorate began evaluating Youthreach and STCs for the first time. The Quality Framework Initiative, which is a quality assurance model that leads to continuous improvement in the service, was mainstreamed in all Youthreach and STCs in 2006. Also in 2006, a Value for Money Review of Youthreach and STC programmes began. It is envisaged that this review will be completed during 2007.

<b>Participants in 2006</b>	<b>1,054</b>
<b>Expenditure pay and non-pay in 2006</b>	<b>€25.1m</b>

### Post Leaving Certificate Programme (PLC)

The PLC programme is for those who have completed senior cycle or equivalent. It was introduced in 1985 with aid from the European Social Fund to provide integrated general education, vocational training and work experience for young people who had completed upper second level education or equivalent. Its

purpose was to enhance the prospects for these young people to gain employment. This remains the priority objective of PLC provision.

Since then, PLC courses have been developed in a wide range of disciplines supporting industry and community needs and have significantly widened the scope of educational provision.

Programmes have been developed and delivered in such areas as childcare, community care, e-commerce, equestrian studies, sport and leisure, tourism and multi-media, in addition to the more traditional areas such as business studies.

Through the Higher Education Links Scheme, PLC courses also provide an alternative route to higher education in the Institutes of Technology for those who have completed the Leaving Certificate Applied programme, or who were unable to enter third level education after leaving school.

PLC courses are delivered in 213 centres around the country in both second level schools and stand-alone colleges, mainly in the VEC sector. Over 30,000 PLC places have been approved in the 2006/07 academic year. In all, there are over 1,000 courses available in over 60 disciplines. Most PLC learners gain accreditation at FETAC level 5 with some at FETAC level 6.

Negotiations between the Department, management and union sides, commenced in December 2006 in regard to the development of the PLC Sector. These negotiations are being carried out in the context of priorities which are set out in the Social Partnership Agreement Towards 2016.

The ESRI Report *The Post – Leaving Certificate Sector in Ireland – ‘A multivariate Analysis of Educational and Employment Outcomes’* was published in August 2006. The report highlighted how the PLC sector has been growing in importance since its inception in 1985. Most participants have been female, outnumbering males by about two to one. The analysis has also pointed to the changing profile of PLC participants over time. While the gender breakdown has remained relatively stable, since the early 1990s, the bulk of the

growth in participation has been among those over age 21. This points to an emerging role of the PLC sector in providing a route to ‘second chance’ education and lifelong learning. The report also highlighted that approximately 90% of those students completing a PLC course, progress to further education and training or directly to employment.

<b>Participants in 2006</b>	<b>30,136</b>
<b>Expenditure on capitation only in 2006</b>	<b>€5.5m</b>

### **Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) (Part-time)**

The aim of the BTEI (Part-time) Programme is to increase the participation of young people and adults with less than upper second level education in a range of learning opportunities. Under this initiative, a programme may be offered for as little as one hour per week or as much as 17 hours per week, depending on the needs and demands of the prospective learners.

A discussion document summarising the main issues emerging from consultation meetings held with BTEI (Part-time) providers was circulated by the Department in October 2006. While identifying some challenges and system constraints, the report emphasised the positive achievements of the BTEI (Part Time), in particular the flexibility of the funding mechanism which has led to a significant expansion in the range of learning options available to adults.

<b>Participants in 2006</b>	<b>24,728</b>
<b>Expenditure in 2006</b>	<b>€14.6m</b>

### **Education Equality Initiative**

The Education Equality Initiative is one of a range of initiatives which seek to address educational disadvantage through the provision of short-term grants to organisations for specific purposes. Under the most recent phase of the Initiative, (running from 2004 to 2006), 10 projects were grant-aided.

## Support Services

### Guidance Services

The Adult Education Guidance Initiative (AEGI) started in 2000 with 10 pilot projects designed to support the objectives for lifelong learning set out in the White Paper on Adult Education: Learning for Life 2000. By 2006, there were 38 pilot projects with all but one managed by the local VEC. The measure is designed to support access to Adult Literacy, VTOS, BTEI and community education programmes. Survivors of residential abuse were recently included as another category.

Three new Adult Guidance projects opened in 2006, bringing the total number of projects to 38.

<b>Participants in 2006</b>	<b>24,796</b>
<b>Expenditure in 2006</b>	<b>€5.6m</b>

### Childcare

The Department provided funding of €5.7m to VECs in 2006 to assist with the childcare expenses of participants in VTOS, Youthreach and Senior Traveller Centre programmes. The aim is to attract people, whose attendance is currently prevented by childcare responsibilities, to enrol on these programmes.

<b>Childcare places in 2006</b>	<b>2,025</b>
<b>Expenditure in 2006</b>	<b>€5.7m</b>

**Objective 2.3 We will promote the personal and social development of young people through non-formal education, having particular regard to the youth work needs of young people aged 10-21 and those who experience social or economic disadvantage.**

The main aim of the youth work service in Ireland is to help all young people to realise their potential and to become active participants in a democratic society. Youth work projects and organisations present valuable opportunities for the social and personal development of young people. Youth work also provides another avenue to participation and inclusion to those young people who might traditionally have had fewer opportunities.

### Developments in 2006 included:

#### North/South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work

A North/South Committee for the professional endorsement of youth work training was officially launched in January 2006, to develop a comprehensive framework for accreditation and certification in youth work on an All Ireland basis.



**Assessor of Youth Work**

An Assessor of Youth Work was appointed in August 2006 and will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating youth work projects and programmes funded by the Department, as well as assisting in the development of definitive criteria for the evaluation of youth work and a Quality Standards Framework for the sector. The Assessor of Youth Work will also confirm, through evaluation, that public funds are being used efficiently and effectively.

**Resourcing of Vocational Education Committees (VECs) to carry out their functions under the Youth Work Act, 2001**

A structure agreed between the Department and the Irish Vocational Education Association in July 2006, provided for the appointment of new Youth Officer posts. This is an important step in the provision of supports to facilitate the further roll out of the Act at local level.

**Garda Vetting**

Garda Vetting of new youth work employees and volunteers was introduced from 1 September, 2006. This development is serving as an added precaution in ensuring the safety of young people involved in youth work activities.

**National Consultative Conference of Young People**

The theme of this one-day Conference, held in October 2006, was Active Citizenship and it complemented the work of the Task Force on Active Citizenship, established in April 2006. Two hundred young people were asked to produce concrete suggestions that would help encourage more people, especially young people, to get involved in active citizenship and volunteerism. Their recommendations fed directly into the work of the Task Force.

**Financial Support to the Youth Work Sector in 2006**

€47m was provided by the Department to youth work programmes and initiatives in 2006 including:

**Youth Service Grant Scheme (YSGS)**

Funding for the support of voluntary youth work is made available on an annual basis to 31 national and major regional voluntary youth work organisations.

**Special Projects to Assist Disadvantaged Youth (SPY)**

A scheme of grants is made available in respect of special out-of-school projects for disadvantaged young people. Priority is given to projects in the spheres of special youth work initiatives, young homeless people, young substance abusers and young Travellers. In 2006, 179 projects were supported with a further 24 receiving one-off grants.

**Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund (YPFSS)**

This Fund aims to divert 'at risk' young people in disadvantaged areas from the dangers of substance misuse through the provision of services and facilities. In 2006, 104 projects were supported.

**Youth Information Centres**

The Department supports a network of 32 Youth Information Centres. These Centres provide young people with easy access to information on rights, opportunities, benefits, health, welfare and other matters. This service also helps those looking for advice and help concerning emigration and mobility within Europe.

**Dormant Account Funding**

An amount of €2m was made available in 2006 from the Dormant Accounts Fund (Economic and Social Disadvantage Funding Measures) for small scale equipment grants for local youth groups/clubs. Grants were made available to youth groups and clubs through local Vocational Educational Committees (VECs). Disadvantaged and marginal groups were the priority targets for funding.

**Local Youth Club Grant Scheme (LYCGS)**

This Scheme provides support for youth clubs and groups at local level.

### **Development Fund**

A Development Fund to assist youth organisations in preparing themselves organisationally for implementation of the Youth Work Act, 2001 was put in place for 2006. Some 24 youth work organisations benefited from this fund in 2006.

### **Gaisce - The President's Award**

Gaisce - the President's Award is the National Challenge Award from the President of Ireland to the young people of Ireland aged between 15 and 25 years of age. The purpose of the Award is to encourage young people to set and achieve a demanding challenge for themselves in a non-competitive environment.

### **Youth Exchange/Trans-national Programmes**

The Department provides financial assistance to a number of youth exchange programmes.

- International exchange schemes are administered on the Department's behalf by Léargas - The Exchange Bureau. Funding from the Department is provided to Léargas towards its operating costs and the cost of administering its exchange programmes. Léargas is the Irish agent for the EU Youth Programme.
- Funding was also made available to Co-Operation Ireland, which administers exchange schemes with Northern Ireland.
- Causeway - the British-Irish Exchange Youth Programme is co-funded by both Governments and is administered in Ireland by Léargas.

## **Objective 2.4 We will manage the Department's response to initiatives for the redress of child abuse in residential institutions.**

During 2006, the Department assisted the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse by providing documentary records and other information. Hearings of the Commission's Investigation Committee continued and the Secretary General of the Department gave evidence at a public hearing in June 2006. Expenditure of some €8.5m was incurred by the Department in 2006. Total expenditure on the Commission to the end 2006 was €36.4m.

Further progress was made in the assessment and payment of awards under the redress scheme. The Redress Board processed 2,658 applications in 2006 bringing to 7,291 the total number of applications processed to end 2006. The Department paid approximately €188m in redress awards and related costs during 2006. Cumulative expenditure on redress to end 2006 amounted to some €565m.

The Education Finance Board was established as a statutory body in February 2006, to administer an education grants scheme for former residents of industrial schools, reformatory schools and certain other institutions and their families. In 2006, the Board received 1,354 applications for grant assistance from former residents and their families and approximately €1.3m was expended on education grants by the Board.

The Department provided funding of approximately €1.5m in 2006 for advice and support services for former residents of institutions.

During 2006, the Department processed some 1,341 Freedom of Information applications for records from former residents of industrial schools and other institutions. This brings the total number of such applications processed by the Department to 11,266 at end 2006.



**Objective 2.5: We will promote greater equity of access to third level education, particularly for disadvantaged and mature students and students with disabilities through improved targeting of student support/access initiatives.**

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

The principal support, in financial terms, is provided for under the student grant schemes, which make available means-tested financial assistance to students in further and higher education. The four maintenance grant schemes are administered by the local authorities and the VECs. In June 2006, the Minister

announced plans to transfer sole responsibility for the administration of the student maintenance grant schemes to the State's 33 VECs.

The Programme for Government committed to the development of a unified and flexible grant scheme for the payment of student maintenance grants. The Student Support Bill will provide a single statutory basis for the four existing student grant schemes and streamlined administrative procedures for the management of the student grant awarding process. The Government approved the drafting of the Student Support Bill in July 2006.

Expenditure in 2005/06 on student supports was as follows:

Schemes	No. of Grant holders	Expenditure in 2006
Student Grant Schemes	57,609	€233m
Third Level Access Schemes		€15m
Scholarships	240	€1.4m







In 2006, the ordinary maintenance grant rate increased by 3% giving a maximum grant of €3,110 in the 2006/07 academic year. There was a 22.5% increase in the 'top-up' maintenance grant paid to over 12,500 students. Students qualifying for the non-adjacent ordinary grant plus the top-up received €5,970 in assistance in the 2006/07 academic year. Expenditure on 'top-up' maintenance grant amounted to €31m in 2006 and is included in the figures in the table on page 35.

Other targeted supports include:

#### **Student Assistance Fund**

A gross allocation of €6.038m was approved for this fund in 2006/07. This compares to a gross allocation of €5.8m for 2005/06.

#### **Fund for Students with Disabilities**

A total allocation of €8.1m was approved for support for students under the Fund for Students with Disabilities in 2005/06. This compares to €6.3m in 2004/05. A total of 2,032 students, through both individual and group applications, benefited from the Fund in 2005/06, compared to 1,696 in 2004/05.

#### **Millennium Partnership Fund for Disadvantage**

An allocation of €2.1m was provided for the Millennium Partnership Fund for 2006/07. Fifty six community and area partnerships are expected to benefit from this allocation. Pobal has continued to administer the fund for the 2006/07 academic year.

The Department also provides for a number of third-level scholarship opportunities including, the Easter Week 1916 scholarships, for students who completed their second level education through the medium of Irish and scholarships to the European University Institute in Florence.

In December 2006, the Minister announced the establishment of a new Government-funded scholarship for the top-performing Leaving Certificate students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The scholarships were named in honour of the late Donagh O'Malley, who was responsible for revolutionising educational participation in Ireland through the introduction of free post-primary education.

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

The National Office for Equity of Access to Third Level Education (National Office), established within the Higher Education Authority, has been fully operational since February 2004. The National Office is currently implementing a three-year Action Plan for the period 2005-2007. One of the key outcomes of this plan has been the publication in 2006 of the first national evaluation of higher education access programmes, which provides a practical framework of policies and initiatives for a successful access programme.

**Objective 2.6: We will promote gender equality in services, actions, programmes and measures for children and adults at all levels of education.**

The Department continued to support gender mainstreaming across all areas of the education system in 2006. As part of this process, the Department supported research on gender issues in education at every level from pre-school to third level and further education. In addition, following on one of the main recommendations of the Report of the Primary Education Committee, Males into Primary Teaching, a coordinated promotion campaign aimed at encouraging boys as well as girls to enter primary teaching was launched. The campaign aimed to highlight the wide variety of skills that a primary teacher uses, and to promote the rewards of being a teacher such as the value to society, work/life balance, career satisfaction, diversity of skills, professional development, conditions of employment and job security.

In May 2006, the Department launched Equal Measures. This resource pack for primary schools is designed to assist boards of

management, teachers, parents, pupils and the school community to develop a gender equality policy and to promote gender equality in primary schools. This pack was distributed to all primary schools. Work on developing a resource pack for second level schools also began in 2006.

The Department also participated in a project co-ordinated by the Ministry for Equal Opportunities Luxembourg. As part of this project, Ireland hosted an international seminar on Men and Education in November 2006, which showcased Irish work on males and education, including research funded by the Department.

## *HIGH LEVEL GOAL 3*

### *Contributing to Economic Prosperity*

*We will contribute to Ireland's economic prosperity, development and international competitiveness.*

**Objective 3.1: We will promote the contribution of the third level sector to economic and social development in the context of changing needs and arrange a supply of qualified and skilled personnel to support Ireland's competitiveness and economic and social development.**

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is the statutory planning and development body for higher education and research in Ireland. The HEA has wide advisory powers throughout the whole of the third-level education sector. In addition, it is the funding authority for the universities and a number of designated higher education institutions.

**Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions**

The continued development of research and innovation in higher education institutions is supported by working with the HEA in creating research capacity by investing through the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTL). In 2006, funding in excess of €35m was invested through cycle 3 of the PRTL, which contains 29 projects.

In 2006, template documents for conducting various forms of appraisals were put in place, including a template and guidelines for managing cost benefit analyses. This will allow the Department plan for and manage changing needs and emerging demands in the higher education sector and allow institutions address a wide range of financial reporting requirements.

**Strategic Innovation Fund for Higher Education**

A €300m, 5 year Strategic Innovation Fund for Higher Education was established under Budget 2006, aimed at promoting collaboration, reform and quality improvement in the higher education sector. In 2006, funding for 14 major projects, worth over €42m, was awarded under the first cycle of the Fund. The projects approved are aimed at enhancing collaboration between higher education institutions, improving teaching and learning,

supporting institutional reform, promoting access and lifelong learning and supporting the development of fourth level education. Due to the collaborative nature of the projects approved, all seven universities, thirteen institutes of technology and the Dublin Institute of Technology will be involved in a number of projects.

**Institutes of Technology Act 2006**

The Institutes of Technology Act 2006, designates the Institutes of Technology as institutions of higher education within the remit of the HEA. This will provide for greater autonomy for the Institutes, improved governance and will facilitate the development of a strategic approach to higher education within a unified policy framework.

In the 2005/06 academic year, 53,161 students on full-time courses, 20,439 students on part-time courses and 12,158 apprentices attended the Institutes of Technology. In the academic year 2005/06, 4,750 academic and 2,756 non-academic staff were employed in the Institute of Technology sector.

Total recurrent expenditure for the Institutes of Technology sector in 2006 was €512.6m. Additional funding of €6.1m was provided for research projects under Technological Sector Research.

**Medical Education and Training**

The report of the Fottrell Working Group on Undergraduate Medical Education and Training and the Buttmer Report on Postgraduate Medical Education and Training, were published in 2006. These reports represent the most significant review of medical education and training ever undertaken in Ireland and are aimed at responding to the needs of a changing health system and ensuring that medical education in Ireland is sufficiently resourced and developed to maintain our reputation for producing quality doctors into the future.

As part of these reforms the annual number of undergraduate places for Irish and EU students will be increased from 305 to 485. An additional 70 places were provided in September 2006.

A further 40 places will be provided in 2007 with a further 35 each in 2008 and 2009. A separate graduate entry stream, which will provide 240 additional places per annum, will be introduced. These increases, which will be phased in over a five year period, will increase the annual number of medical places from 305 to 725.

### Grangegorman Development Agency

The Grangegorman Development Agency Act 2005 enabled the establishment of the Grangegorman Development Agency to proceed in 2006. The members of the Board, the Chairman and a temporary Chief Executive were appointed to the Agency.

**Objective 3.2: We will promote the use of ICT in schools and encourage pupils to achieve computer literacy and acquire the necessary skills for participation in the Information Society.**

The ICT in Schools Programme, which commenced in 1998, is designed to provide students with the opportunity to achieve computer literacy and to acquire the necessary skills for participation in the Information Society. The Department works in tandem with the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

### School Computer Network Development

During 2006, schools continued to be assisted with the development of their internal networking facilities. The existence of a school network enables multi-user access to the Internet and facilitates the sharing of software resources and the shared use of printers etc. Since 2004, some €23m has been provided to develop schools' networking capacity in order to facilitate their full exploitation of the potential offered by broadband connectivity and their efficient use of computer software.

### Schools Broadband Access Programme

The provision of broadband to schools is an essential building

block within the Department's strategy of integrating ICT into teaching and learning. The Schools Broadband Access Programme is being undertaken in partnership with industry. The Agreement with IBEC/TIF (Telecommunications and Internet Federation) provides for a three year €18m joint Fund, with industry contributing €5m per annum and the Government contributing €1m per annum, and meets the costs of schools local connectivity. Under the Programme, schools connectivity is being routed to the Internet through a National Broadband Network, which has been developed by HEAnet. Each school is connected to the network via a high-speed broadband router, provided to the school and housed in the school, and a broadband access link. The Network provides centrally managed services for schools such as security, anti-spam / anti-virus and content filtering. The overall costs of the Programme, over the three year period and including the initial set-up costs, are some €30m. Following the procurement process, the roll-out of broadband connectivity commenced in June 2005 and continued during 2006. The vast majority of schools have been connected to the Network using a mixture of DSL, wireless and satellite technologies and the Department is monitoring the position of the outstanding schools, where the installation is awaited due to building programmes or installation difficulties.

### Computer Infrastructure

There has been considerable progress on the integration of ICT into teaching and learning in schools since the introduction of the ICT in Schools Programme in 1998. The number of computers in schools continues to increase as is reflected in the Census of ICT infrastructure in schools, published in 2006 by the NCTE. The census was conducted during the first half of 2005 and is the fourth in a series that began in 1998. It shows improved pupil to computer ratios as follows:

#### Pupils per Computer in Irish Schools

Level	2000	2002	2005
Primary	16.3	11.3	9.1
Post Primary	10.9	7.4	7.0
Special School	5.7	3.8	3.1



### Teacher Professional Development

The role of the individual teacher, as a critical success factor in integrating ICT into teaching and learning, is well recognised. Therefore, the investment in infrastructure has been complemented by a focus on teacher training. The NCTE operates a Teaching Skills Initiative which provided 10,151 training places in 2006, to meet the specific needs of teachers in their use of ICT, including technical courses, subject specific courses and internet, web design and digital media courses. The NCTE also provides on-line teaching resources via the Scoilnet Portal and supports a number of innovative projects. Together with the regionally based ICT advisory service, it provides advice on the integration of ICT into teaching and learning.

### Curriculum Developments

During 2006, the NCCA continued its work on an ICT Framework, which is being developed as a practical tool to support teachers in planning and providing opportunities for students, to develop their ICT literacy across the curriculum.

**Objective 3.3: We will contribute to the development of education in Ireland through co-operation and decision making in the European Union, international organisations and bilaterally and through participation in programmes and initiatives in education, scientific and training areas assisted by the European Union and other international organisations.**

### International Delegations

There were a total of 33 foreign delegation visits to Ireland during 2006, from a wide variety of countries including Korea, Lesotho, Hong Kong, China, Bahrain, Iceland, Japan, South Africa, Denmark, Canada, USA, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Albania, Kosovo, Serbia and Slovenia. Education Ministers from Hungary, Estonia, Thailand and China also visited Ireland during the year. The Concluding Conference for the very successful



2005 European Year of Citizenship through Education, was held in September 2006.

### **Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)**

The PISA Governing Board (PGB) meets twice a year to oversee implementation of PISA and to advise the OECD on how the policy interests of member countries can be addressed in the context of PISA. Network A is a network of the OECD International Indicators in Education Systems (INES) project, and includes representatives of all 30 OECD member countries. Network A focuses its work on the outcomes of learning including the preparation of indicators of learning outcomes for the OECD publication, Education at a Glance. Ireland hosted the PGB and the Network A Group in October 2006.

### **EU Policy Developments in the areas of Education and Training**

The Lisbon Strategy seeks to make the EU the 'most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world by 2010'.

The work at EU level in progressing the education and training elements of the Lisbon Agenda is referred to as the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme. Ireland participates actively in EU Education and Training cluster groups and Peer Learning Activities (PLAs). Ireland hosted a PLA on Access and Social Inclusion in January 2006.

During 2006, EU Education Ministers agreed Council Conclusions on the future priorities for enhanced European cooperation on Vocational Education Training (VET), efficiency and equity in education and training and on the European Indicator of Language Competence. Ministers also adopted a recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning.

Preparations were ongoing during 2006, for the implementation of the new integrated Lifelong Learning Programme which is funded by the European Commission. This programme is the successor to the Socrates Education Programme and the Leonardo daVinci Vocational Education and Training Programme.





## **Objective 3.4: We will contribute to maintaining international competitiveness by developing Ireland as a leading knowledge-based economy.**

### **Support for Research Projects**

The Department works to address identified infrastructural deficits in the third level sector by administering a multi annual capital investment programme in the sector. During 2006, progress was made in advancing a total of 63 mainstream (non research) projects as follows:

- 25 in various stages of design
- 15 on site of which 2 were completed
- 6 pre design issues addressed or progressed
- 17 Public Private Partnership projects

### **Uptake of Physical Sciences and Related Subjects**

A revised syllabus in Junior Certificate science was examined for the first time in 2006. The syllabus represents a significant change in the way science is taught at Junior Cycle, including in the area of teaching methodology and assessment, reflecting international trends towards a more investigative approach to science education. This approach has been welcomed by a recent study by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). In particular, it provides for a move towards more practical and project work, with 30 practical experiments and investigations which can be carried out at different times over the period of the programme and presented for assessment as one of the components of the final examination. The increased focus on practical work is seen as important in encouraging more pupils to choose the physical sciences at senior cycle. In the 2006 Junior Certificate examination, 86.2% of students sat Science. In the 2006 Leaving Certificate examination, 14.4% of students sat Physics, 13.9% sat Chemistry and 48.8% sat Biology.

## *HIGH LEVEL GOAL 4*

### *Improving Standards and Quality*

*We will seek to improve the standard and quality of education and promote best practice in classrooms, schools, colleges and other centres for education.*

## Objective 4.1: We will work to improve the quality of education provision through regular inspection, evaluation and planning.

The Inspectorate undertakes external evaluation of the work of teachers and schools and promotes initiatives that support school self-review, curriculum implementation and teacher education. The Inspectorate advises and supports teachers and schools and contributes to policy development by the Department.

The annual programme of inspection of primary and post-primary schools and centres for education incorporates:

- whole-school evaluation (WSE)
- subject inspection in post-primary schools
- in-depth focused evaluation of selected educational programmes or services in schools, and
- inspection of the work of individual teachers.

These external evaluation processes make an important contribution to quality assurance of the education system and promote accountability in relation to quality and standards in schools.

### Quality Assurance of Schools and Centres for Education

In 2006, the Inspectorate conducted 285 WSEs, comprising 228 evaluations at primary level and 57 at post-primary level. These inspections involved reviewing the work of the schools in the areas of management, planning, curriculum provision, teaching and learning and support for students. The inspections also involved evaluation of school policies in areas such as enrolment and admission, countering bullying, health and safety and the adoption of child protection guidelines. In addition to discussions with staff members about the quality of services to students, the inspection process included consultation with the board of management and parents. Inspection teams also met with student representatives in some post-primary schools.

In each case a WSE report was prepared in which strengths were acknowledged and recommendations made in relation to the further development of educational provision in the school, as appropriate.

The Inspectorate conducted evaluations of 5 Youth Encounter Project Schools and 15 inspections of Youthreach / Senior Traveller Training Centres during 2006.

The number of subject inspections completed in post-primary schools increased from 676 in 2005 to 727 in 2006. Subjects across the curriculum were evaluated under the headings of whole-school provision and support, planning and preparation, teaching and learning and assessment.

The Inspectorate also monitored the effectiveness of 62 Irish language summer courses to ensure accountability and to contribute to improvement in the work of the Irish summer colleges.

### Newly Qualified Teachers

The number of probationary teachers at primary level has continued to grow substantially. During the school year 2005/06, a total of 1,957 newly qualified teachers were evaluated and reported on, as part of the probation process. The Inspectorate had a caseload of 2,368 probationary teachers on hand at the beginning of the 2006/07 school year.

### Publication of School Inspection Reports

Since 6 February 2006, all reports arising from WSE, subject inspection and focused evaluation have been subject to publication on the Department's website. The publication of reports ensures that schools, parents and the general public have access to meaningful information on quality and standards in the education system. The publication and dissemination of inspection findings also supports the provision of relevant policy advice for the education system.

The first inspection reports were published on the Department's

website in June 2006. A total of 154 reports on 134 schools were published at that time. By December 2006, a total of 455 reports were published, representative of 361 schools or centres for education and these are classified as follows:

#### Reports Published June to December 2006

Primary WSE	79
Post-primary WSE	20
Centres for Education	11
Subject Inspection within WSE	82
Stand-alone Subject Inspection	263
Total	455

100 Inspection reports (41 primary WSE, 9 post-primary WSE including 36 subject inspections and 14 stand-alone subject inspections), arising from evaluations commenced before 6 February 2006, were not eligible for publication but were issued to schools.

Reports are published in accordance with the procedures outlined in Publication of School Inspection Reports – Guidelines, published in 2006. Once the draft inspection report is factually verified, the school's board has an opportunity to respond formally to the report. In accordance with the guidelines, the response from the school is published along with the inspection report.

Since September 2006, WSE and subject inspection reports written in Irish on Gaelscoileanna or Gaeltacht schools have been translated into English and the Irish and English versions of the reports have been published contemporaneously.

#### Procedure for Review of Inspections on Schools and Teachers under Section 13(9) of the Education Act, 1998

The Procedure for Review of Inspections on Schools and Teachers under Section 13(9) of the Education Act 1998 was first published in September 2002 and has operated successfully since then, providing a mechanism for a school or a teacher

affected by an inspection, to request a review of that inspection. The procedure was reviewed in 2006, following a consultation process involving the education partners. An updated Procedure for Review of Inspections became operative for all reviews sought after 1 December 2006.

#### Linking Evaluation with School and System Development

The inspection reports on schools include key findings and recommendations for further development. The recommendations are intended to guide school management and staff in identifying priorities for school planning and development, that will improve the quality of education provided for students.

In 2006, the Inspectorate published composite or thematic reports on the quality of particular aspects of educational provision that have system-wide relevance. The reports provide information on quality and standards that are of interest to policy makers, school support services, boards of management, school staffs, other education professionals and parents.

Among the reports published in 2006 was An Evaluation of Planning in Thirty Primary Schools. The report provides insights into the progress made and the challenges associated with whole-school planning processes in primary schools. The study identified an enduring challenge for schools as they endeavour, through planning, to impact on classroom practice and to improve outcomes for students.

#### Inspectorate Publications

In 2006, the Inspectorate published Guidelines on Whole School Evaluation for both primary and post-primary schools. Two major reports evaluating special educational provision were also published entitled: An Evaluation of Special Classes for Pupils with Specific Speech and Language Disorder and An Evaluation of Educational Provision for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. The Inspectorate also published Olltuairisc ar na Coláistí Gaeilge 2005.

## Irish in Primary Schools

A report by Dr John Harris, Trinity College, Irish in Primary Schools – Long term Trends in Achievements, was published in June 2006. This report is based on a survey of spoken Irish carried out in 2002. It is a repeat survey, the first of which was carried out in 1985. The surveys focused on competence in listening, speaking and reading skills in Irish among sixth class pupils in ordinary, all-Irish and Gaeltacht primary schools, and involved pupil paper-based tests, oral tests and the completion of a teacher questionnaire.

In all-Irish schools, pupil performance has remained more or less constant from 1985 to 2002, with the percentage of pupils achieving mastery in excess of 90%. In Gaeltacht schools, pupil performance across all learning objectives is generally high, but the percentage of pupils attaining mastery of 'general comprehension of speech' is 73.3% compared to 96.3% in all-Irish schools. Gaelscoilleanna are continuing to have high achievement rates in language fluency. There is now at least one gaelscoil in each county and numbers attending gaelscoilleanna increased fivefold in the period between the two studies. In mainstream schools, pupil performance in Irish declined over the period since the last survey.

## The recommendations in the Report include

- The development of a national plan of action to support Irish
- Increasing the scale of Irish medium teaching in ordinary schools through the development of immersion models and increases in the number of subjects taught through Irish
- A strengthening of in-career opportunities for teachers, including provision for short periods in the Gaeltacht
- The development of new test instruments, including standardised tests, to monitor the learning of Irish at class and school levels.

The Department has put in place a range of measures to assist with the teaching and learning of Irish in primary schools, including 30 extra Cuiditheoirí or language experts to advise and direct teachers in schools on the practice of teaching Irish. Evening and weekend courses, as well as courses during holiday time, are provided for teachers to help them improve their Irish.

As part of the ongoing inservice training provided for teachers on the new primary curriculum, one of training days provided for drama will be used to focus on drama through Irish.

From 2007, summer camps will be conducted through Irish for senior primary pupils from disadvantaged areas during the summer holidays. In addition, scholarships for post primary pupils are being provided to enable children from disadvantaged areas to attend already established Irish summer colleges.

## English in Post Primary Schools

Looking at English - Teaching and Learning English in Post Primary Schools was published in 2006. This presents a synthesis of key findings from inspections undertaken in a representative range of 75 post primary schools on the teaching and learning of English across all levels and programmes. In each case the subject inspections provided for meetings with principals and staff, observation of teaching and learning, interaction with students, review of student work, review of documentation, review of relevant data from the State Examinations Commission, and feedback to individual teachers and the school. The report shows that teaching and learning of English is most effective where students are timetabled for an English lesson every day; teachers teach across a range of years, levels and programmes; class formation and student placement promote progression; the school library is well equipped and maintained; there is a strong English department with supportive collaborative planning; a range of methods are used to engage students; the development of skills of speaking listening and reading are prioritised; and assessment practices that assist students' progress are used.

## History in Post Primary Schools

Looking at History – Teaching and Learning History in Post Primary Schools was also published in 2006. This is a synthesis of the findings from inspections of History in a representative sample of 50 schools undertaken in the period from September 2004 to May 2006. Good practice identified included the provision of 3 periods per week for History in Junior cycle, 1 period in Transition Year and 5 periods in senior cycle; clear objective setting within individual lesson plans; the tailoring of band options annually in senior cycle to suit student

preferences; provision of ICT, access to school library facilities and contact with external agencies to support the research elements of the subject; a strong history department which engages in collaborative planning; participation by teachers in inservice training and membership of the History Teachers' Association; making historical material available relevant to students' local and contemporary experiences and pooling of these resources within the school history department, and use of varied teaching and assessment methods, including visual methods.

### Guidance in Second Level Schools

In September 2006, the first comprehensive review of guidance in second level schools, *Review of Guidance in Second Level Schools*, was published. This comprised four separate strands:

- An audit of the use of the guidance resources provided by the Department in all second level schools, carried out by the National Centre for Guidance in Education
- An in-depth survey carried out in 260 schools, undertaken by the ESRI

- Case studies conducted in 15 schools by the ESRI
- Focus group interviews involving parents, students and other stakeholders held in out-of-school settings undertaken by Dr Deirdre O Neill, Trinity College and co-ordinated by the National Centre for Guidance in Education

The report provides insights into how the resources provided to schools for guidance are actually being used and into the experiences and expectations of students and parents in relation to guidance.

A graduated model for allocation of guidance hours to schools came into effect from the 2005/06 school year, ranging from 8 hours per week for schools with less than 200 students, to 47 hours per week for schools with over 1,000 pupils. The additional hours are conditional on a guidance plan being developed in the school and reviewed annually, providing to the maximum extent possible for all students in the school and ensuring overall guidance provision is a whole school activity.





In the 2005/06 school year, an extra 100 guidance posts were provided. These additional allocations provided important new latitude to schools in meeting the guidance needs of their students. Schools were asked to focus these additional hours on junior cycle students. This is in order to support these students through the key transition into second level education as well as to support them in developing self management skills at an earlier stage.

**Objective 4.2: We will support the development and implementation of a national framework of qualifications as provided for under the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 and the co-ordination of the recognition of qualifications.**

The National Framework of Qualifications was announced in October 2003 providing for all awards in the State within a 10 level framework from literacy and basic education to post doctorate level, based on the achievement of learning outcomes. All awards issued by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) since 2005 are issued under the new framework and the new quality assurance and programme validation procedures. All awards at Bachelor degree, Master's degree and Doctorate level in the university sector are issued under the new framework since 2005, but work is ongoing regarding the inclusion of Certificate and Diploma programmes in the new system. A framework to progress this area was agreed in January 2006. The CAO handbook for 2006

admissions expressed awards in terms of their levels under the National Framework of Qualifications.

The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) began the process for approval of providers' quality assurance arrangements under the national framework on a phased basis from March 2005. All providers were required to seek to have their quality assurance agreed under the new system in the period to the end of 2006.

#### **Other key developments in 2006 were:**

In February 2006, the Minister and her Chinese counterpart formally signed an international agreement on the mutual recognition of qualifications from sub-degree to doctorate levels. China has similar agreements with the UK, France, New Zealand and Australia.

In July 2006, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) published policies and criteria on the inclusion in, or alignment with, the National Framework of Qualifications, of the awards (or the learning outcomes associated with them) of certain international and professional awarding bodies.

There was continued expansion of the scale of activity of Qualifications Recognition Ireland, the one stop shop established by the Authority to advise on the comparability of international awards. The service has played an important role in providing advice on the recognition of international qualifications for recent recruitment drives to the Gardai and the Defence Forces, as well as offering advice to migrants seeking access to further learning or employment.

A pilot project by FETAC to develop good practice guidelines on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) commenced in December 2005 and was completed in 2006. The participants include community, statutory and voluntary providers and the construction and security sectors. FETAC has published its Policy and Draft Guidelines on RPL on its website.

On 8 November 2006, Ireland became the first European country to verify the compatibility of its National Framework of Qualifications with the Bologna Framework (the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area). The alignment of the National Framework and anticipated future alignment to the European Qualifications Framework are crucial to and will greatly facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications between signatory countries.

In November 2006, the NQAI hosted a conference entitled "Towards the Lisbon Agenda 2010 and Beyond – Implementing Change in Education and Training in Ireland in a European Context", on behalf of the Department and the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment. The purpose of the conference was to inform a wide range of stakeholders, including policy and decision makers, practitioners and the social partners about the Education and Training 2010 programme and to stimulate a debate on Ireland's progress in implementing change in the context of the Lisbon Agenda. The conference also looked beyond 2010 towards new approaches in teaching and learning that will be required to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

In November 2006, the European Commission formally launched a consultation on the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training. The Department requested FETAC, as the single national awarding body for further education and training in Ireland, to carry out the consultation on its behalf.

In 2006 FETAC issued 110,296 awards and HETAC issued 23,842 awards.

### **Objective 4.3: We will work to support excellence in the quality of academic teaching and learning in higher education.**

HETAC and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the UK, signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 6 June 2006 to cooperate and collaborate on quality assurance matters in higher education. One of the areas of cooperation identified relates to the identification of fraudulent awards bodies, which have the potential to damage the reputation of both Irish and UK higher education institutions.

A review of the effectiveness of HETAC was completed in 2006 by an international review panel commissioned by the NQAI. HETAC was one of the first agencies in Europe to be reviewed in terms of compliance with the standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. The process concluded that HETAC has performed effectively its principal statutory functions and has developed policies and procedures for each function which are being implemented and are being operated as appropriate.

A review of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures in the Dublin Institute of Technology was undertaken, on behalf of the NQAI by the European University Association, in 2005. The subsequent report, published in 2006, made a range of recommendations in regard to ongoing enhancement and concluded that the college was "a dynamic institute with a bright future."

In March 2006, FETAC adopted and published its policies on Quality Assuring Assessment, Validation of Programmes and Monitoring. The validation process examines how a programme meets the specifications for an award.

**Objective 4.4: We will promote teaching as a profession and maintain and improve the quality of teaching by the establishment of a Teaching Council.**

The Teaching Council was established on a statutory basis on 28 March 2006. In performing its functions, the Council implements the Government's policies relating to teacher education and training, probation, qualification, professional conduct and standards of teaching.

Since its establishment, the Teaching Council has undertaken a great deal of work across a wide range of responsibilities as set out in the Teaching Council Acts. During 2006, significant progress was made in developing a national Register of Teachers and the Council began drafting Professional Codes of Conduct for Teachers.

**Objective 4.5: We will contribute, in the context of the Good Friday Agreement, to the development of North/South co-operation and common action in the field of education and to the development of co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales and the United States.**

**North-South Cooperation**

The Department and the Department of Education Northern Ireland continued to liaise on a range of initiatives during 2006, including the European Schools Programme, Civic Link, Dissolving Boundaries and Horizons.



## EU Peace II Programme

The EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland (PEACE II) is a unique EU funding Programme for all of Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland, (Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan, Sligo).

Under the Peace II (Extension) Programme, Measure 5.5 - education, cross-border school and youth co-operation, was subsumed into Measure 5.4 - promoting joint approaches to social education, training and human resource development. All 14 projects jointly implemented and funded by the Department and the Department of Education, Northern Ireland under Measure 5.5, ceased activities in mid to late 2006.

During 2006, the Department participated on a selection panel for applications for funding under Measures 5.3 and 5.4.

The two Departments also took part in consultation events, organised by the Special European Union Programmes Body, in relation to the development of operational programmes for the proposed Peace II and Interreg IIIA successor programmes.

The Department, together with the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland, hosted a North-West Education and Skills Development Seminar in Derry/Londonderry in June 2006. The seminar was attended by senior representatives from a wide range of government agencies, education and training providers, and businesses.

**Objective 4.6: We will plan for and provide suitable cost-effective accommodation to underpin the delivery of quality education.**

## School Building Programme

The Department funds suitable accommodation, furniture and equipment for the primary and post-primary education sectors. Accommodation is provided through the delivery of new schools and extensions and the refurbishment of existing accommodation. Primary capital expenditure in 2006 was €270.5m and Post Primary capital expenditure was €253m.



2006 Projects completed	
New schools completed	17
Large scale school extension/refurbishment projects completed	43
Purchase agreements in place for the acquisition of new school sites	20
Summer Works Scheme projects completed	778
Small Schools Scheme projects completed	58
Permanent Accommodation Scheme projects completed	51

### Streamlined Delivery Systems

The Department continued to make progress in 2006 on the streamlining of its delivery systems which include the roll-out, wherever possible, of generic designs for new schools, the use of design & build contracts and also the evaluation of initial designs for school projects at meetings with school authorities and their design teams rather than the traditional approach through correspondence. The meetings help to minimise the design phase for projects and facilitate the devolved delivery to construction within the earliest possible timeframes.

### Grant Payments in 2006

In 2006, all recognised primary schools received a basic grant of €5,500 plus €18.50 per mainstream pupil and €74 per special needs pupil, under the Grant Scheme for Minor Works and a once-off grant of €2,000 to meet PE equipment renewal requirements.

Grants issued to 517 post primary schools in respect of Health and Safety in woodwork rooms and to 456 post primary schools in respect of the new curriculum in Design Communication Graphics.

In excess of €665m capital was invested across primary and post primary schools and higher education institutions in 2006. This figure breaks down as follows:

• Primary	€270.50m
• Young Offenders Capital	€1.50m
• Post Primary Capital	€252.68m

• Institutes of Technology and Colleges Capital	€75.99m
• Higher Education Authority Capital	€39.99m
• ICT at Primary and Post Primary level Capital	€4.11m
• Public Private Partnership	€20.28m

A major expansion in Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects was announced in 2005, with more than €300m worth of schools PPPs projects to be delivered during the period 2006 to 2009.

### Energy Policies

The Department continues to improve energy conservation in educational buildings using its energy policy DART (Design, Awareness, Research & Technology). Primary schools designed and built in line with this policy, have been demonstrated to have an energy performance that is 2.3 times more efficient than international best practice.

The energy policy is supported by current energy research projects including:

- Gaelscoil an Eiscir Riada, Tullamore, County Offaly
- Interreg solar hot water heating projects
- Tory wind turbine project
- Dundalk energy zone project 2020
- Biomass wood pellet / wood chip boiler projects
- Web based schools energy league table
- Generic repeat design
- Rural schools low energy carbon neutral design projects
- Interactive operation and maintenance manuals and the touch screen generic environmental educational programme.

Work commenced in December 2006 on the schools self certification and energy benchmarking project as part of the Energy Performance Building Directive



## *HIGH LEVEL GOAL 5*

### *Developing our Capacity to Deliver*

*We will support the delivery of education by quality planning, policy formulation and customer service.*



**Objective 5.1: We will create a greater capacity within the Department to concentrate on our core functions, especially that of strategic planning.**

**Regional Office Service**

The Regional Offices of the Department support a socially inclusive society by representing the Department on appropriate regional and local bodies, communicating information on education issues and providing any other educational services that can best be undertaken regionally.

Staff from the Regional Offices represent the Department on 34 City and County Development Boards and related sub-groups, including those relating to social inclusion measures.

The Regional Offices are also responsible for the Department's role in relation to the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008.

Funding in excess of €3.3m was provided in 2006 to mainstreamed Local Drugs Task Force projects.

**Objective 5.2: We will recruit, deploy, develop and support staff to enable them to contribute to their fullest in a well-managed, performance-driven culture and in an open and positive working environment.**

**Staff training/development**

In excess of 3,500 training days were provided in 2006, in areas that included business process mapping, Irish language training, IT (End User) training and management development.

In 2006, €155,827 was refunded, under the Refund of Fees Scheme, to staff attending further education courses in their own time.

As a percentage of payroll costs, expenditure on staff training and development in 2006 was 3%.

**Objective 5.3: We will support managers and staff in effectively delivering high quality services within a strategic and value-for-money framework.**

**Quality Customer Service**

The Department's Customer Service Liaison Officers Network was established as a sub-committee of Partnership in 2002 and is responsible for driving the implementation of the Customer Action Plan and Charter 2004 – 2007.

In 2006, over 1.3m telephone calls were received from external customers, of which 83% were answered.

Work continued to improve access to services via the Department's website. Documents of interest to parents of school going children were published on the website in German, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian and Spanish, to assist parents who are newcomers to Ireland.

Customers who are not satisfied that the service delivered was in line with agreed quality service commitments set out by the Department or with generally accepted principles of equity and good administrative practices, may make a formal complaint to the Department's Customer Services Office. In 2006, seven such complaints were received and dealt with, using the Department's Formal Complaints procedures.

**Objective 5.4: We will provide IT services within our organisation, which support policy formulation, policy evaluation and modern, effective service delivery to our clients.**

Core IT systems (including the school employee payrolls, Post Primary Pupil Database and the Financial Management System) and services were maintained and enhanced throughout 2006. The On-Line Claims System (OLCS) was implemented for second

level schools. This system enables schools to complete claims online for days/hours worked by part-time or substitute school employees, which in turn will generate direct salary payments to the individuals from the school employee payrolls.

The Unified Data Model (UDM) project, which is designed to improve the efficiency and interoperability of the Department's main database systems, continued throughout the year, and substantial progress was made.

**Objective 5.5: We will provide a range of financial functions and supports to underpin improved financial management in the provision of education services, including monitoring and reporting on progress in relation to educational measures that are part-financed by the European Union, which are incorporated in the National Development Plan for 2000-2006.**

### Internal Audit

The Department's Internal Audit Unit is responsible for providing assurance to the Secretary General on the adequacy, efficiency and effectiveness of the Department's internal control systems. It undertakes its work in accordance with an annual work programme which is approved by the Secretary General and is overseen by the Department's Audit Committee. The Unit conducts audits of sections of the Department, Community and Comprehensive Schools, Education Centres, other bodies under the aegis of the Department, as well as completing audits of EU funded programmes as agreed with the European Commission. It also provides administrative support to the Audit Committee.

In 2006, the Internal Audit Unit issued a total of 9 final audit reports. It also completed compliance and follow-up work in relation to implementation of recommendations. The Unit introduced new work practices in 2006, including a revised format for its audit reports.

The Department's Audit Committee held 4 meetings during the year, including a meeting with officials from the Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General. The Committee was strengthened during the year with the appointment of an additional external member – it now has 5 members, 3 external and 2 internal members.

### Value for Money Reviews

The following two Value for Money Reviews were published in 2006:

- Review of the Small and Rural Schools Initiative and the Permanent Accommodation Initiative
- Review of the Supply Teacher Scheme for Primary Schools.

In addition, work was also underway in the Department on the following Value for Money Reviews in 2006:

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

**Objective 5.6: We will promote good industrial relations practice throughout the education sector and encourage and support the modernisation of the sector through a partnership process.**

The Education Sector Performance Verification Group completed assessments in advance of the 1 June 2006 pay increase, provided for in the national pay agreement Sustaining Progress. In general, institutions reported co-operation with flexibility and ongoing change, satisfactory implementation of an agenda for modernisation, maintenance of stable industrial relations and an absence of industrial action in areas covered by Sustaining Progress. Payment of the increase provided for under the terms of the Mid-Term Review of Part Two of Sustaining Progress

was made to all education grades during 2006, following the verification progress.

A new Partnership Agreement Towards 2016 was negotiated and agreed in 2006. The agreed modernisation agenda for the education sector includes the development and evaluation of performance management and development systems, revision of procedures for dealing with difficulties in relation to teacher performance, revision of promotion procedures in all schools, new arrangements for the redeployment of teachers, initiatives arising from the implementation of new teaching and learning strategies in Institutes of Technology and Quality Assurance initiatives in all higher education institutions and colleges.

Agreement on this agenda involved extensive discussions with the managerial interests of first and second level schools, vocational education committees and third level institutions and the unions representing the grades concerned.

Payment of the increase due on 1 December 2006, provided for under Towards 2016, was recommended for those education grades who complied with the provisions and terms of the agreement during 2006, following the verification progress.

**Objective 5.7: We will support improved administration and forward planning by developing policy and legislative proposals and by collecting and analysing relevant education statistics.**

## Primary Legislation

### Teaching Council (Amendment) Act

This Act corrects a legislative difficulty in relation to the Teaching Council. The issue relates to the Minister's power to make Regulations governing the first election of members to the Teaching Council in circumstances where the relevant applicable provisions of the Teaching Council Act 2001 had not been commenced. The Act will declare that the requirement in the 2001 Act to commence the relevant sections will not serve to

invalidate the Regulations made by the Minister on 10 September 2004 in respect of the first election of members to the Teaching Council or anything done under those Regulations. This was enacted in March 2006.

### University College Galway (Amendment) Act

The purpose of the Act is to amend section 3 of the University College Galway Act, 1929, which required candidates for appointment to offices or positions in the National University of Ireland Galway to be competent in the Irish language. The Act replaces this requirement with an obligation to ensure that one of the principal aims of each strategic development plan of the University provides for the delivery of education through the Irish language. It also obliges the President and Governing Authority of the University to ensure this aim is implemented. This was enacted in 23 February 2006.

### Institutes of Technology Act 2006

This Act will transfer responsibility for the funding and certain operational matters of Institutes of Technology from the Department to the Higher Education Authority. These proposals involve the amendment of the Higher Education Authority Act, the Regional Technical Colleges Acts and the Dublin Institute of Technology Acts. The legislation was enacted on 16 July 2006. It will come into force by way of commencement orders, but all sections must become law no later than a year after enactment.

### Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2006

The principal purpose of this Bill is to amend Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 following recommendations of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in second level schools. The Bill will provide for a range of factors which an appeals committee must consider in dealing with a refusal to enrol, suspension or exclusion of a student and makes a number of procedural changes to the Section 29 appeals process. The legislation was approved for drafting on 26 July 2006.

### Student Support Bill 2006

This Bill will place all student support schemes on a statutory

footing, including the designation of an appropriate awarding authority. The General Scheme of a Bill was approved by Government for drafting on 14 July 2006. The Bill is currently being drafted.

## Secondary Legislation

### **Grangegorman Development Agency (Establishment Day) Order 2006**

The purpose of this Order was to establish the Grangegorman Development Agency with effect from 10 May 2006. The Agency has responsibility to project manage the development of the Grangegorman site in Dublin in an integrated and sustainable manner and to determine the type of procurement to be employed in relation to it. The site will be transformed into a modern campus for the Dublin Institute of Technology and

provide the Eastern Regional Health Authority with upgraded facilities.

### **Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Regulations**

The purpose of these regulations is to transpose Directive 2005/36/EC on the mutual recognition of qualifications. The Directive consolidates and amends the previous law in this area. Preparatory work on the drafting of regulations began in 2006. The deadline for transposition of the regulation into Irish law is October 2007.

### **Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (Charter) Regulations**

These regulations will specify the matters which must be included by third level institutions in their charters. These can



include the institution's arrangements for consultation and co-operation with the community in the region served by it; the institution's criteria for determining the level of demand for particular programmes of education and training and the levels of such programmes; its policy in respect of adult and continuing education; and its arrangements for the implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression. The Office of the Parliamentary Counsel to the Government has prepared a draft of the regulations and the Department is now engaging in consultation on the regulations with the relevant stakeholders.

### **Education Act 1998 (Publication of Inspection Reports on Schools and Centres for Education) Regulations 2006. [Statutory Instrument 49 of 2006]**

These regulations require the Chief Inspector to publish a report on the inspection of a recognised school or centre for education made by an inspector in the performance of his or her functions under the Education Act 1998. The regulations apply to inspections commenced on or after 6 February 2006 and do not include any inspection that is carried out for the purpose of assessing the performance by a teacher of his or her duties, or as a result of a grievance.

**Objective 5.8: We will implement that part of the Governments decentralisation programme involving the relocation of the Department's Dublin offices to Mullingar and Athlone.**

As part of the Government Programme of Decentralisation, 400 Dublin based posts in the Department will decentralise to Mullingar and Athlone.

### **Accommodation**

Three hundred posts will decentralise to Mullingar. The Office of Public Works (OPW) has acquired a site for office accommodation. The OPW has indicated that the accommodation should be ready for occupation sometime in

2009, as long as no difficulties arise in the procurement and/or planning processes.

One hundred posts will decentralise to Athlone. A new building, to accommodate these 100 additional posts, will be built on the Department's existing Athlone campus. This should be ready for occupation early in 2008 and the 100 posts will relocate throughout 2008.

### **Personnel**

Progress is being measured from the date of the Department's 2nd implementation plan to the Decentralisation Implementation Group, i.e., April 2005 to date. The timeline to full decentralisation is now likely to be the end of 2009/early 2010, when the accommodation in Mullingar is ready for occupation.

Sixty one officers transferred into the Department during 2006 in order to decentralise. Reaching a full staffing complement in all locations is on the way to being achieved. The estimated shortfall of people available to be assigned to posts in the decentralised locations has reduced from 56% of the total number required to 5.27%. The prospect of making up the 5.27% shortfall through normal recruitment/interdepartmental promotion competition is good.

## *FOCUS ARTICLE*

### *Irish Services*

*The Department is responsible for policy development, planning, provision, quality assurance and evaluation at all levels of education. Irish is taught as an obligatory subject for all pupils in primary and second level schools, except where pupils have been given exemptions on the basis of a learning disability or having previously studied abroad. The study of Irish is promoted through a national curriculum and is supported by Teacher Guidelines and in-service training for teachers.*



Students in junior and senior cycle follow a programme at three levels – Foundation, Ordinary or Higher Level and students in the Leaving Certificate Applied programme follow a programme in Communicative Irish. There is also a network of Irish-medium primary and second level schools (Gaelscoileanna) as well as Irish-medium schools in Gaeltacht areas. A range of courses taught through Irish are provided at third level. The third-level sector also has a specific role in providing pre-service training of teachers.

Youth work activities provided through Irish are supported by an annual grant-in-aid to Irish language voluntary youth organisations such as Feachtas and Ógras.

### Customer Charter

The Department's Customer Charter 2004-2007 includes commitments for the delivery of services through Irish as follows:

- We will comply with the requirements of the Official Languages Act, 2003
- We will reply in Irish to correspondence received in Irish
- We will respond in Irish to callers who wish to speak in Irish where possible, or offer to have the call returned within 1 working day by a member of staff who can deal with queries in Irish
- We publish corporate publications in Irish and English.

### The Official Languages Act 2003

The Official Languages Act 2003 was signed into law on 14 July 2003, to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish. Section 11 of the Act requires public bodies to publish a three year Scheme, detailing the services they will provide:

- through the medium of Irish,
- through the medium of English, and
- through the medium of Irish and English

and the steps that will be taken to ensure that any services not available through the Irish language will be so provided and when.

Each Scheme will remain in force for a period of three years or until a new Scheme has been confirmed, whichever is the later.

### The Department's Scheme 2005-2008

2006 was the first full year of operation of the Department's Scheme, which came into effect in December 2005. Prior to publishing the Scheme, the Department undertook a comprehensive survey of both administrative and professional staff to assess the current services provided through Irish and to estimate the demand for services through Irish. The priority in this first Scheme is to improve the delivery of Irish language services to the primary sector.

The survey showed that only 3% of administrative staff were in a position to offer a service in Irish. However, there is widespread interest among staff in acquiring Irish language skills and staff indicated that they were willing to attend training courses, both within and outside of office hours. The Department therefore made training its focus for the first year of the Scheme. Irish language awareness is included as part of both Induction and Customer Service training courses for new staff.

In 2005, the Department engaged a company, Gaelchultúr Teoranta, to provide a specialised Irish language training programme for front line staff to allow them to deliver quality customer service through Irish. Trainees were grouped according to their level of competency. Most participants had a similar level of competency in Irish (Leaving Certificate), although the majority had not used Irish since leaving school. Participants showed a high level of commitment in class and worked hard between the sessions. Following the courses, participants were more confident about speaking the language and had mastered the specific vocabulary relating to their work.

Gaelchultúr Teoranta provided further training to the 15 participants who had made best progress in the first programme. Although the course looked at work-related language, the focus was on general comprehension skills and fluency.

In addition to these formal training courses, the Department made copies of the workbook and CD resource, *Tuaras Teanga* available to staff. These have proved popular with staff, 36 members of staff used them in 2006. Staff also attended *Scoláireachtaí Gaeltachta*, Irish Proficiency Testing and other day courses organised by *Gaeleagras* and the Department approved refund of fees to staff for the *Dioplóma as Gaeilge*.

In March 2006, during *Seachtaine na Gaeilge*, cultural events as *Gaeilge* were organised at each of the staff canteens in the Department's offices in Dublin, Athlone and Tullamore.

### **Telephone Service**

With 3% of the administrative staff in the Department able to communicate in Irish, it is only possible to respond immediately to callers in Irish where staff have the language capacity to do so. For Irish calls that cannot be responded to immediately in Irish, staff offer to have the call returned within 1 working day. During the period of the current Scheme the Department will support this service by providing a dedicated telephone number for queries in Irish.

### **Information Leaflets, Application Forms and Circulars**

Information leaflets, for various customer groups, are generally available in English. All information leaflets issued by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) are issued in Irish and English.

During the current Scheme, Irish versions of application forms will be provided for the payroll service, for primary administration services and for personnel services for staff in primary schools.

The Department communicates with schools by means of circulars. In 2006, 89% of circulars to Primary schools were available in Irish. This compares with 68% in 2005.

### **Corporate Publications**

The Department publishes a number of corporate publications on an annual basis. In accordance with the Official Languages

Act 2003, an Irish version of all corporate publications is provided. These publications are sent to the education partners with over 4,000 schools receiving copies. Irish versions are sent, as a matter of course, to the all-Irish schools or schools in the Gaeltacht areas and are available to others on request.

### **Web Based Services**

The Department has committed to ensuring that at least 30% of material on its website, will be available in Irish by the end of the current Scheme. At the end of 2006, 19% of the material on the website was available in Irish. The availability of Irish information on the website is monitored continually and staff are made aware of the importance of providing information through Irish.

In 2006, the Department launched its web-based On Line Claims System (OLCS). This allows schools to claim salary payments and record absences on-line for teachers and Special Needs Assistants. The pilot, carried out in May 2006, involved 78 schools, including 5 Gaelscoileanna. The system went live in November 2006 for voluntary secondary schools and for community and comprehensive schools. Users can choose to complete claims through Irish or English. A telephone helpdesk was set up and staff are available for customers who wish to conduct their business through Irish. The system will continue to roll-out to other schools in 2007.

### **Inspection**

The Inspectorate provides a bilingual inspection service to all recognised schools at primary level, including schools in the Gaeltacht and all-Irish schools. In 2006, a multidisciplinary team of post-primary inspectors was trained in providing inspection and evaluation services in Irish to all-Irish and Gaeltacht schools.

As part of the annual continuing professional development programme of the Inspectorate, Irish language training (written and oral) is provided for primary and post-primary inspectors. Irish language training is also provided as part of the induction programme for all newly appointed primary and post-primary inspectors.

## **Psychological Services**

The particular requirements of Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools are considered, when assigning NEPS Psychologists to schools. NEPS identified a group of both administrative staff and psychologists who can provide advice or deliver services through Irish. As part of a strategy to ensure that NEPS continues to provide a satisfactory service to Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools, the recruitment process allows for an optional Irish examination, attracting additional marks for proficiency in Irish.

## **Progress Report**

In December 2006, the Department presented a progress report to the Office of the Coimisinéir Teanga, detailing progress made during the first year of the Scheme. The Coimisinéir Teanga accepted that progress was made and that the Department was on target to meet the commitments set out in the Scheme.