



Department of Education and Science Annual Report 2007

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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 individual's 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

Financial statistics

Education and Related Expenditure ¹

Expenditure on the education sector amounted to €8.7bn in 2007. First level, second level, higher education and research took up 94% of the overall total. Further education, youth and other key services account for the remaining 6%. Other key services include cultural activities, residential schools redress and a number of smaller programmes. Expenditure on these programmes is set out below:

Supporting School Communities (First & Second Level Education)	€million	%
Department Administration Costs	64.9	1.0%
Salaries & Superannuation	4,799.0	76.7%
Grants and Services	741.7	11.9%
Capital (<i>Excluding Dept Admin costs</i>)	647.8	10.4%
Total	6,253.4	

Further Education & Youth Services

Department Administration Costs	2.8	0.9%
Salaries and Superannuation	82.3	25.6%
Grants and Services	231.8	72.3%
Capital (<i>Excluding Dept Admin costs</i>)	3.9	1.2%
Total	320.8	

Higher Education and Research Grants & Services

Department Administration Costs	5.8	0.3%
Salaries and Superannuation	1,040.2	54.3%
Grants and Services	709.9	37.1%
Capital	158.9	8.3%
Total	1,914.9	

Improving and Developing Services

Department Administration Costs	7.2	3.3%
Grants and Services	15.9	7.4%
Redress Costs	185.0	85.9%
Child Abuse Commission costs	7.4	3.4%
Total	215.5	

¹ These figures are subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General

Expenditure per student over ten years at constant 2007 prices:

<i>Sector</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>2007</i>
First level	2,984	6,163
Second level	4,611	8,842
Third level	9,610	10,880

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

While early years education policy falls under the remit of the Department of Education and Science, the unit is co-located with the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The rationale for co-location is to ensure that policy developments in the early childhood sector are developed in conjunction with the other government departments which share responsibility for children. The three departments which have a joint responsibility for children are the Department of Education & Science, the Department of Health and Children and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

The Department of Education and Science's main interventions in early years have been targeted towards children who experience disadvantage or who have special needs.

Within the Department's action plan for educational inclusion, "*Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools*" (DEIS), the following commitment is given to early years education:

The Department will work in partnership with other departments and agencies to complement and add value to existing childcare programmes in disadvantaged communities, with a view to ensuring that the overall care and education needs of the children concerned are met in an integrated manner.

The CECDE conducted an analysis of Band 1 Urban DEIS schools with an intake of junior infants. The purpose of this analysis was to identify feeder preschools and the number of children in junior infants who would have accessed preschool services. The report showed that in over 90% of the schools that responded, children in junior infants had attended some form of preschool provision. A further needs analysis asked the childcare services to identify the factors that would improve the quality of the service they provide to children and their families. The factors identified included expert advice and support by an early education advisor, and development and training of the providers. An intervention model is being developed based on the outcome of these studies.

Current provision - within the primary school sector

While the compulsory school age in Ireland is 6, children from the age of 4 upwards can enrol in junior infant classes in primary schools. The most recent statistics² show that nearly half (44.4%) of 4-year-olds and virtually all (99.2%) of 5-year-olds are enrolled in infant classes in primary schools. For pre-school children, interventions in early years have been targeted towards children who experience disadvantage or who have special needs. These social inclusion measures include:

- The “*Early Start Preschool Project*” was established in 1994/95 in 40 primary schools in designated areas of urban disadvantage. The project employs 56 teachers and 56 childcare workers 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 preschool attached to the Rutland Street primary school in Dublin. Although not part of *Early Start*, it was used to pilot many of the approaches later incorporated in the *Early Start Project*.
- *Traveller preschools*: There are some 40 preschools catering for approximately 500 Traveller children. The policy set out in the 2006 “*Traveller Education Strategy*” is to move towards integrated provision for Traveller services, including Traveller preschools.
- *Special Education needs*: The Department funds a number of interventions, including 23 preschool classes to facilitate the demand for early intervention provision for children on the autistic spectrum. The Department also operates a home tuition scheme, providing funding for early educational intervention for preschool children with autism.

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

<i>Teaching posts in primary schools in December 2007</i>	30,393
<i>Pupil teacher ratio for the 2007/08 school year</i>	16.0:1
<i>Students in Colleges of Education (full time)</i>	4,892
<i>Students who completed the Graduate Diploma in Primary Education at Hibernian College</i>	472

² 2005/2006 data from the Department of Education and Science

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 2007/08, the corresponding figure is 25,911 whole time equivalent posts.

<i>Teaching Posts in Voluntary Secondary Schools</i>	13,502
<i>Teaching Posts in Community and Comprehensive Schools</i>	4,248
<i>Teaching Posts in Vocational Schools</i>	8,161
Pupil teacher ratio for the 2006/07 school year	13.07:1

Appeals against staffing allocations

The Primary Staffing Appeals Board heard 91 cases in 2007. Additional teaching resources were awarded in 21 cases. At second level, the Board dealt with 193 appeals, of which 107 were successful.

Teachers' pensions

A record number of 1,331 teachers retired in 2007. The number of retirements in 2007 represented a 56.59% increase on the average annual number of retirements in the four year period 2000-2003.

In 2007 significant progress was made on the provision of pension scheme information for beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries.

Payroll service

The Department coordinates and administers a range of payroll services to serving and retired teachers, and special needs assistants in primary, second-level, community and comprehensive schools. It monitors payroll expenditure on an ongoing basis and prepares estimates accurately for all payrolls.

The Department has paid salary to 77,000 serving and retired teaching and non-teaching staff in primary and second-level schools with 2 million salary payments issuing per year.

Developments in 2007

An on-line claim system (OLCS) was introduced for primary schools on a phased basis during 2007. By December 2007, 2,600 schools were using the system. OLCS is a web based system which enables schools to input claims for the payment of casual and non-casual teachers and special needs assistants to a database using a computer in the school. The data is transferred to the Department payroll systems, thus eliminating the inputting of manual claims and reducing payment delays. It also enables schools to record absences of teachers and special needs assistants.

The rollout of OLCS during 2007 was a major development involving the training of personnel from 2,600 schools, preparation of user documentation and the operation of a helpdesk to assist schools in adapting to the system.

Arrears of pay arising from the application of the terms of the Part-Time Act to casual and non-casual teachers in second level schools were calculated and paid during the year.

The percentage of serving teachers being paid electronically increased to 99.8% and retired teachers to 95% in 2007.

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 communication and interaction with; inter alia, the colleges of education and the Teaching Council.

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.

National pilot project on teacher induction (NPPTI)

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. The pilot programme has two strands, one at primary and one at post primary level. Phase V of the project, at both primary and post primary level was successfully completed in June 2007 with Phase VI commenced in September 2007.

In-service/continuous professional development (CPD) – support services

Primary curriculum support services

The implementation of the revised primary school curriculum is supported by a dedicated Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) team. The comprehensive programme of in-career training on the implementation of the revised school curriculum, introduced in 1999, was completed in June 2007. As well as the recently completed comprehensive programme of in-career development, there is an ongoing support service, provided by *Cuiditheoirí*, who provide school-based support on a regional basis. During 2007 PCSP trainers delivered seventy-four seminars on standardised testing along with eighty-six seminars on the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures.

Introduction of student council coordinator within the SLSS

In 2007 the student council coordinator within the SLSS was appointed. The newly appointed student council coordinator works under SLSS and in collaboration with the Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE) Support Service. The coordinator will design and make arrangements for the delivery of a programme of professional development to respond to the identified needs of teachers and schools in relation to the establishment and development of student councils at second-level.

The National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS)

The Minister established the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) in the autumn of 2006. The work of the NBSS is being carried out by a multi-disciplinary professional team headed up by a national coordinator supported by four assistant national coordinators. In addition, 10 regional development officers, and 14 part-time associate development officers were recruited to ensure the success of this initiative.

The NBSS has engaged intensively with a small number of schools most in need of this intervention, following consideration by the NBSS of applications from schools for this service.

In 2007 the NBSS teams began working intensively with 50 schools initially selected for inclusion in this development. In addition, the initial 30 behaviour support classrooms announced by the Minister have been sanctioned. These classrooms provide an individualised intensive intervention programme with the underlying premise that each student will continue with their ongoing curricular work.

While the service has only been in operation for over a year, the early indications are that the NBSS is being received very positively by schools and the NBSS teams have experienced a great degree of co-operation and goodwill from all involved. Eight million euro has been provided in 2007 to support the work of the NBSS, in helping schools promote positive student behaviour at second level.

Technology Subjects Support Service

T4 – The Technology Subjects Support Service was launched in December 2006. The four technology subjects, hence T4, announced for phased implementation are: Technology; Design & Communication Graphics (DCG); Architectural Technology and Engineering Technology. The first two subjects, Technology and DCG are now in the intensive phase with approximately 1,500 teachers attending in service. T4 provides support to teachers and schools in implementing the new and revised post-primary technology subjects. Four rounds of professional development have been completed. Teachers of each subject were invited to three days professional development during the year. T4 is hosted by Galway Education Centre.

School Development Planning Support Service (SDPS) - Primary

SDPS continued 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 provided specific guidance to schools in planning for improved learning outcomes for all their pupils. This guidance was provided during the school year 2007 in the

following focus areas: (a) assessment; (b) literacy; (c) numeracy; (d) individual teacher preparation; (e) development planning.

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 2007, the work of SDPI focused on the following areas: developmental aspects of subject department planning, such as assessment for learning, differentiated learning and tracking of students' progress; whole school guidance planning; in-school management review and development; school self-evaluation; planning the follow-through to whole school evaluation and subject inspection; CPD planning; planning in the context of DEIS; and the development of whole-school policies on a range of issues, including homework, pastoral care, attendance and participation, anti-bullying, behaviour, learning support, and the inclusion of students with special educational needs.

The SDPI Cluster Support Programme continued to provide skills training and to promote the development and sharing of good practice, as did the two summer schools and the diploma programme offered by SDPI. Collaboration with other agencies in the provision of training, the preparation of resource material and the realisation of projects relevant to school planning remained a major element of the work of SDPI.

In-service/Continuous Professional Development (CPD) – Other professional supports

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. €548,700.00 was provided for the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme in 2007.

Development and expansion of the Teacher Professional Networks Supplementary Funding Scheme

A supplementary funding scheme to support the work of teacher professional networks (TPNs) generally, including those focusing on subjects and specific programmes, expanded in 2007. This funding supports current and planned activities. There are over 35 TPNs availing of funding under the scheme.

Leadership Development for Schools (LDS)

Leadership Development for Schools (LDS) is a National Programme established by the Department of Education and Science (DES) in 2002 to promote professional development for principals, deputy principals and others involved in school management and educational leadership in first and second level schools.

DES hosted an OECD conference in Dublin in November 2007 to discuss the country background reports on "Improving School Leadership", following which the full

OECD comparative report will be published in mid 2008. Both the DES and LDS have coordinated the Republic of Ireland involvement on the OECD activity.

€1.9 million was allocated to LDS for 2007.

Other education supports

Interdepartmental Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Group

In 2007 an interdepartmental group involving representatives from the Department of Education & Science and the Department of Health and Children was reconvened. The group is in the process of completing a memorandum of understanding which looks at all health promotion issues in the context of teacher education. It has been agreed to establish a memo of understanding for the Inter Departmental Group and terms of reference for SPHE and the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (SPHE element) following the Talbot Report, which examined the management structures of the SPHE (post primary).

Introduction of summer camps for disadvantaged primary school students.

A pilot programme for summer camps in Irish for disadvantaged primary school students was introduced during the first two weeks of July 2007. The objective of the camp was to promote the learning of Irish in a fun way through organised activities, such as Art, Sport, Drama and Music.

Each camp ran for a week and there were 20 camps throughout the country. There was capacity for up to 600 students in 4th, 5th and 6th classes.

Boards of Management

In 2007 the Department 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 and consistent with national and Department priorities.

Junior Cycle Physical Education (JCPE)

The JCPE developed, piloted and disseminated in 2007, an “Action For Life” programme in conjunction with the Irish Heart Foundation. It provides a valuable, practical and easy to use educational resource package to assist teachers in planning and teaching part of the JCPE curriculum in primary schools.

In conjunction with Kerry Education Service (KES) a project has commenced in 2007 which focuses on a community of practice for all Continuous Professional Development in JCPE.

The JCPE has worked on and developed adventure activities including orienteering and is focussed on liaising with local organisations to create a more cohesive approach in delivering these activities.

Support for schools and school staff

Curriculum development

The Department provides, in conjunction with the National Council on Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), curricula and syllabi and guidance on their implementation, for primary and second-level schools.

Circular 044/2007 issued to primary schools in July 2007 requiring them to ensure that a minimum of 2.5 hours per week for English as Language 2, as set out in the Primary School Curriculum, is not delayed beyond the start of the second term in Junior Infants, and to implement this with effect from 2007/8.

In May 2007, a circular issued to post-primary schools notifying them of the decision to increase the marks for Oral Irish to 40% in the examinations for all new entrants to post primary school in September 2007.

In August 2007, the Minister announced that the Department was proceeding with reforms in Mathematics at Junior and Senior Cycle in post-primary schools. The purpose of the planned reforms is to make mathematics more relevant to the lives and experiences of students, contribute to the development of higher order skills and encourage more students to study higher level mathematics.

A new Leaving Certificate subject in Technology, together with a revised syllabus in Design & Communication Graphics, commenced in September 2007. Technology and the revised syllabus in Design & Communication Graphics will be examined for the first time in June 2009 and will bring to 34 the number of examination subjects available overall for students at senior cycle. €15.5 million in funding has been provided to approximately 500 schools introducing these two subjects at Leaving Certificate level for equipment upgrading. A Technology Subjects Support Service (T4) is in place to support schools in the implementation of the revised/new syllabuses.

In March 2007, the Minister launched an evaluation of the implementation of Relationships and Sexuality Education undertaken jointly by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency and the Department. An RSE policy template was developed and posted on the Department's website.

A Road Safety Authority Transition Year Programme (RSA TYP) was in 51 schools in the 2007/08 school year.

Support for schools and school staff

Policy templates aimed at reducing administrative burdens 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 November 2007 the Department published three additional policy templates covering: Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE); Data Protection and Student Councils.

Language support

In 2007 the Department reissued the circular on *Meeting the needs of pupils for whom English is a second language (circular 0053/2007)*. The revised circular outlines the role of the language support teacher, assessment of pupils thought to be in need of language support and the criteria governing the allocation of language support teachers. The upper limit of 2 language support teachers was replaced by an upper limit of 6 language support teachers per school. The level of teacher support allocated to primary and post-primary schools will be determined by the number of enrolled pupils for whom English is a second language and the associated assessment levels of pupils' language proficiency.

As a consequence, there was a considerable increase in the number of language support teachers in schools.

<i>Language support teachers (whole-time-equivalent)</i>		
Level	<i>Beginning of school year 2006 - 2007</i>	<i>Beginning of school year 2007 - 2008</i>
<i>Primary</i>	802	1,500 approx
<i>Post primary</i>	346	500 approx

Literacy and numeracy

In December 2006, the Department advised 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 came into effect from the calendar year 2007.

The results of testing will be reported to parents in respect of their own children in accordance with a broader reporting template, designed to report progress on children's learning to parents. This template was piloted in a number of selected schools by the NCCA in the 2007/08 school year.

€3m was provided in 2007 to fund the implementation costs. The main expenses related to:

- the cost of test instruments for schools;
- the development of a national monitoring programme;
- in-service training for teachers.

A grant of €3.60 per pupil was issued to all schools in December 2007, to cover the cost of the test materials, teachers' manuals, test scoring services or test-related

software in English reading and Mathematics, based on the overall enrolment in the school for the previous year. The total grant paid to schools in 2007 was €1.7m.

School transport

In 2007, the school transport scheme carried in the region of 136,000 pupils each day of the school year, 76,000 post-primary pupils and 60,000 primary pupils including almost 9,000 children with special needs, on approximately 6,000 bus routes. The school transport scheme operated at a cost, to the Department, of €172m in 2007.

Bus Éireann operates the scheme on behalf of the Department. At second level, Chief Executive Officers of VECs assist by acting as transport liaison officers.

A school transport helpline operates (1890 200 974) Monday to Friday.

In 2007, as a follow-up to the safety information campaign which was launched in 2006, the multimedia information campaign, aimed at informing pupils and parents of the requirement to use seat belts on the school bus, continued. The campaign consisted of TV, cinema advertisements and a radio advertisement which reinforced the special DVD and posters distributed in 2006. The campaigns also encouraged children to behave in a safety-conscious manner on, and in the vicinity of, school buses.

An independent school transport appeals board was set up in 2003. The appeals board which examines appeals against decisions made by or on behalf of the Department regarding the provision of transport services and/or grant assistance under the terms of the school transport schemes dealt with twenty-four appeals in 2007.

Appeal system for students and parents

Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 gives parents, and students who have reached the age of 18, the right to appeal certain decisions made by a school's board of management. The appeals system provided for under the Act, has been in operation since September 2001.

<i>Appeals in:</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Post-Primary</i>	28	59	115	170	216	181	188	957
<i>Primary</i>	1	15	49	83	84	85	195	512
Totals	29	74	164	253	300	266	383	1,469

Appeals may be made in respect of a decision to: permanently exclude a student; suspend a student from the school for a period which would bring the cumulative period of suspension to 20 school days in any one school year; refuse to enrol a student.

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

Special education needs provision

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

In 2007, there were 7,673 whole time equivalent learning support/resource teachers in mainstream primary and post-primary schools. In addition, a further 1,155 teachers provided education to children attending special schools.

Children with special care needs are also supported by special needs assistants. In 2007, there were in excess of 9,800 special needs assistants in primary, post-primary and special schools.

Significant investment has taken place in the provision of transport, specialist school accommodation, home tuition, assistive technology and equipment. For example, more than €3million was provided in 2007 on specialised equipment and materials and nearly €50million on school transport for special needs pupils.

Special educational needs courses for teachers

The provision of special education needs courses continues to develop, through the working relationship between the Department and third-level institutions.

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 2007/2008, there were 271 participants (173 primary & 98 post-primary) on the combined post-graduate course for special educational needs and learning support. There were 13 students on the Masters in Special Educational Needs course and 17 in Certificate in Autistic Spectrum Disorder course. Both these courses are run by St Patrick's College Drumcondra.

Seventy-five teachers registered in 2007 for a new on-line CPD programme for mainstream primary and post-primary teachers in the area of special education. This programme has been jointly developed by St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra and the Institute of Child Education and Psychology Europe (ICEPE). This course provides the option for teachers to acquire a qualification through on-line and face-to-face instruction.

The Department has developed a strategy designed to meet the continuing professional development needs of personnel working with children with special educational needs. This involves a major expansion of the range of post-graduate professional training programmes available to teachers in the special needs area and the ongoing development of the Special Education Support Service (SESS) to support

schools staff locally. The SESS now has 13 full-time seconded teachers and 16 part-time associates and had contact with some 15,000 teachers in 2007.

The SESS also formed a team of behavioural specialists, in 2007. This team is responsible for providing and facilitating professional development courses enabling teachers to apply behavioural principles in the implementation of the curriculum for students with special educational needs.

Autism

As part of the Department's ongoing commitment to ensuring that all children, including those with autistic spectrum disorders, receive an education appropriate to their needs, the following provision was by the end of 2007:

- over 275 special classes for children with autism, attached to special and mainstream schools;
- 23 early intervention classes for children on the autistic spectrum;
- teachers in 70 schools received intensive training with regard to autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) in 2007.
- 13 stand-alone facilities providing an applied behavioural analysis specific methodology on a pilot basis.

A thirty-hour course on contemporary applied behaviour analysis was provided by the Department in 2007. Thirty teachers working with students with ASD attended this course.

In 2007, schools were allowed to recruit teachers to new autism classes in advance of the new school year to accommodate training in autism-specific educational interventions for the teachers through the Special Education Support Service. Training was also provided to the special needs assistants attached to these classes.

Centre of excellence for children with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD)

The Department of Education and Science and the Department for Education in Northern Ireland are jointly engaged in the development of the Middletown Centre for Autism in County Armagh. The centre will be dedicated to improving and enriching the educational opportunities of children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders.

Significant progress was made during 2007 including the appointment of the board of directors and the inaugural board meeting was held in March. The chief executive took up appointment in April, with the head of research and development division and the head of learning support and assessment taking up their posts in September and October. The head of corporate services was appointed in December and will take up his post on the 1st January 2008.

The centre commenced work on the provision and phasing of services, beginning with the training/advisory and information/research services. The educational assessment and learning support services will come on stream when building works are completed.

The centre undertook a consultation exercise in late 2007 with all relevant stakeholders involved with children and young people with autism. The purpose of this consultation was to inform and invite comments regarding the delivery of proposed services which will be delivered by the centre.

Home Tuition Scheme

The Home Tuition Scheme provides funding to parents to provide education at home for children who, for a number of reasons such as chronic illness, are unable to attend school. The scheme was extended in recent years to facilitate tuition for children awaiting a suitable educational placement. Approximately 950 pupils availed of home tuition during the school year ending June 2007. The annual cost of the Home Tuition Scheme is currently in the region of €6 million.

July Education Programme

The July Education Programme is available to all special schools and mainstream primary schools with special classes catering for children with autism who choose to extend their education services through the month of July. The Department also provides for a July Programme for pupils with a severe/profound general learning disability. Where school based provision is not feasible, home based provision may be grant aided through the Home Tuition Scheme. The Department encourages all eligible schools to participate in this initiative in the interest of the children in question. There has been a steady increase in the number of schools offering the programme since it was introduced in 2001 when relevant schools were circulated with details. A total of 78 schools participated in the Programme in 2007.

Appointments to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

In January 2007, the Department announced appointments to the board of the NCSE for a new three year term of office ending on 31 December 2009.

The functions of the Council include:

- carrying out research and providing expert advice to the Minister for Education and Science on the educational needs of children with disabilities and the provision of related services;
- providing for a range of services at local and national level in order that the educational needs of children with disabilities are identified and provided for, and;
- coordinating, with health boards, schools and other relevant bodies, the provision of education and related support services to children with disabilities.

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

The Department of Education and Science is committed to full implementation of the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004. Work is ongoing to address policy issues and establish the foundation for the phased roll-out of the Act. The preparatory work required before EPSEN can be fully commenced is well underway. In this context, the Department:

- met with the education partners during 2007 to obtain their views on the implementation of EPSEN;
- participated in a Health/Education cross-sectoral team to ensure cross-cutting issues associated with the implementation of the EPSEN Act and Disability Act 2004 are progressed in tandem;
- appointed members to the inaugural board of the Special Education Appeals Board to ensure that procedures and processes are in place to allow for appeals under the EPSEN Act when the relevant sections of the Act have been commenced;
- contributed to the standards on assessment of needs which were published in 2007;
- considered the NCSE's implementation report, and feedback from the education partners, the Department of Health and Children and the HSE, with a view to developing proposals for the full implementation of the EPSEN Act;
- issued Circular 0051/2007 in June 2007 which provided the management authorities in primary schools with an update on the status of EPSEN Act 2004 and Disability Act 2005.

Coordination between the education and health services in supporting children with special educational needs

A cross-sectoral team, consisting of senior officials from the Departments of Health and Education, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was established in October 2006. This team has worked to ensure that arrangements for the implementation of Part 2 of the Disability Act and the EPSEN Act are progressed in tandem, having due regard to the resources and capacity of both sectors concerned. The cross-sectoral team met on a regular basis to identify and co-operatively resolve cross-cutting issues.

Review of special schools and special classes in mainstream schools

A review of the special schools and classes commenced in 2006, in the context of the continuum of special needs. The review is a two-phased process. Phase 1 was completed in 2007. The second phase of the review will be managed by the National Council for Special Education and will involve wider consultation with schools and other partners.

Capitation grants

The decision taken in 2006 to increase, by more than 30% the level of capitation for special schools and special classes was implemented in 2007.

Administrative support

A range of new measures to improve the capacity of schools to cater for the educational needs of all their pupils were introduced in 2007. These measures were intended to ease the burden of administrative work on principals.

The new measures include:

- The allocation of additional teachers to allow all deputy principals in schools with 24 or more mainstream class teachers operate as administrative deputy principals;
- The allocation of additional teachers to allow deputy principals in 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, to operate as administrative deputy principals;
- Where a school has a principal and four or five mainstream class teachers also has a specialist autism unit established under approval of the National Council for Special Education, the principal will be appointed on an administrative basis. 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.

SEN Cross Border Parent, Community and School Partnership Programme

The SEN Cross Border Parent, Community and School Partnership Programme has been running since 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 2007, 10 schools in Northern Ireland and 11 in the Republic of Ireland as well as 2 advisors for autism and 2 speech and language therapists were involved. The programme drew in 784 teachers and assistants, 7,490 parents and 63 health professionals.

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

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

During the course of 2007 13 additional psychologists were appointed to the service. Consequently the number of psychologists employed by service increased in 2007 from 128 to 138 including three psychologists assigned to the National Behavioural Support Service (NBSS).

During the 2006/07 academic year NEPS psychologists were assigned to some 48% of primary schools representing 59% of primary pupils and 77% of post-primary schools and pupils. With the above mentioned growth in staffing numbers, by December 2007, the level of coverage had grown to 52% of primary schools (63% of pupils) and 84% of post-primary schools (83% of pupils). Across all schools this represents an increase in pupil coverage from 67% to 74% in the period.

NEPS psychologists engaged in casework with over 5,700 named pupils and some 4,260 individual pupils were catered for in this regard under the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA). In addition, it is estimated that NEPS psychologists gave consultations, advice and assistance to teachers and school authorities in respect of an additional 5,000 un-named pupils.

In addition almost 2,800 applications were processed by NEPS psychologists under the Reasonable Accommodation in Certificate Examinations scheme (RACE) upon request from the State Examinations Commission.

During 2006/07 support was provided by NEPS psychologists to schools in some 118 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.

An update of the *Critical Incidence Advisory Pack for Schools* (first issued in 2004/05) was completed in 2007.

Publication

NEPS developed and published the *Special Needs Education – A Continuum of Support* document. These guidelines describe a graduated problem solving model of pupil assessment and intervention in schools and moves from simple classroom based interventions to more specialised and individual interventions. A copy of the guidelines and a companion resource pack was circulated to every primary teacher in late 2007.

Provision of assistive technology

In 2007, a grant of over €40,000 was issued in respect of assistive technology for 373 pupils with special needs attending post-primary schools

Objective 1.4: We will provide for the effective operation of the state certificate examinations.

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

2007 was the State Examinations Commission's fourth full year in operation. The Commission publishes an annual report, which is available on its website www.examinations.ie. In 2007, almost 54,000 candidates sat the Leaving Certificate and over 57,000 candidates sat the Junior Certificate.

In May 2007, a circular issued to post-primary schools notifying them of the decision to increase the marks for oral Irish to 40% in the examinations for all new entrants to post primary school in September 2007. The changes will come into effect in the Junior Certificate examination in 2010 and in the Leaving Certificate in 2012. For Leaving Certificate Applied candidates there is provision which enables students to complete their oral examination in the first year of the Leaving Certificate programme. For students who opt for this, the change will happen in the 2011 examination.

Two new non-curricular languages were offered for examination in 2007 – Bulgarian and Romanian – bringing to 15 the total number of non-curricular languages now offered for examination.

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.

The Department manages, monitors and resources the range of educational disadvantage and early school leaving initiatives within agreed policy objectives and targets.

DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools)

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. Under the DEIS initiative, the Department provided financial assistance to schools amounting to almost €19m in the 2007/08 school year. As part of the DEIS action plan, the measures outlined below have been implemented.

Organisational changes in the DEIS programme

- The Educational Research Centre (ERC) have been commissioned to conduct an independent evaluation of DEIS measures over the period of the DEIS action plan to 2010.
- Schools that did not qualify for DEIS and were receiving additional resources, were allowed retain these supports for the duration of DEIS.
- Some 1900 primary schools were supported in their efforts to deal with more dispersed educational disadvantage in schools.

Administrative changes in schools

- Reduced class size of 20:1 in junior classes and 24:1 in senior classes in urban primary schools serving the most disadvantaged communities.
- Administrative principals appointed, on lower enrolment and staffing figures than apply in primary schools generally, to all urban primary schools.
- Templates for the three-year school action plans have been introduced in primary strand of DEIS schools and are being developed for second-level schools in the DEIS programme.

Measures to develop literacy and numeracy

- The appointment of a new deputy national co-ordinator of the Primary Curriculum Support Programme as well as additional *cuiditheoirí* (literacy tutors);
- The Reading Recovery Programme has been newly extended to schools in Kilkenny and a second training centre has been created in Dublin. Some 190 DEIS primary schools now avail of the Programme;
- The Maths Recovery Programme has commenced for 102 DEIS schools;
- The Demonstration Library Project has been extended to 10 additional second-level schools in 2006/07;
- A new Family Literacy Project was initiated. In the initial phase of the project, it was piloted in seven areas;
- Within the School Books Grant Scheme, additional funding of €1.7m was provided for DEIS schools in 2007.

Other supports for DEIS schools

- Home/School/Community Liaison and Completion Programme services have been extended to any DEIS schools not already benefiting from them.
- Access to the School Meals Programme, which is operated by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, has been extended to all DEIS schools. All 873 DEIS schools can now apply for inclusion in the School Meals Programme.
- The Junior Certificate School Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme was extended to a further 30 schools.

Traveller education

- The policy, as set out in “*The Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy*” launched in 2006, is to move towards integrated provision for Traveller services from pre-school right through to further and higher education within a lifelong learning context.
- In keeping with the recommendations of the report the principle of “individual educational need” rather than “Traveller identity” will be used as the criterion to provide additional resources to all children, including Traveller children.
- An Implementation Group continues to work on the implementation of the recommendations in the report. The aim of the Department for Traveller education is to enable Travellers to participate in an equal manner with other service users through integrated educational mainstream provision.

Integration of International Newcomers

An Integration Unit was established in the Department in October 2007. The initial work of this Unit included engagement with the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and meeting with representatives of the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM). The Department, along with the Office of the Minister for Integration, has been involved with consultants in preparing a report

with recommendations for a national English language policy and framework for legally resident adult immigrants.

In 2007 the Economic and Social Research Institute was commissioned to carry out a study of how an increasing diversity of students impacts upon resource requirements and day-to-day teaching and learning. This research commenced in 2007 and a report on the work is expected in autumn 2008.

Publications

The Toolkit for Diversity in the Primary School – Together towards Inclusion – a North /South project was published in 2007. A hard copy version of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA's) *Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School* was also published in 2007.

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 unemployed people, over 21 years of age and aimed particularly at the long-term unemployed who are in receipt of certain social welfare payments. Courses are up to two years in duration and certification is available at a range of levels, including Junior and Leaving Certificate programmes or modules leading to awards certified by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC).

Almost seventy-two per cent of students who completed the VTOS programme in 2007 progressed to employment or to further education and training programmes. VTOS has 5,000 places annually which are allocated to the Vocational Education Committees and courses are offered at 104 centres throughout the country. The total pay and non pay expenditure in 2007 was €68.3m.

Adult Literacy / Community Education

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

Funding for adult literacy and community education services is provided through the provision of annual grants to the Vocational Education Committee (V.E.C.) sector. 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. Funding for English for speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) tuition is provided through the adult literacy budget.

Funding has been provided for specially targeted literacy programmes, such as Literacy for Deaf People, Family Literacy, Literacy for People with Dyslexia, and Workplace Literacy.

In 2007, additional funding of €7.4 million was provided for adult literacy and community education activities bringing the total funding provision for the adult literacy to almost €30 million and the Community Education Programme to over €10 million. This enabled funding for 3,000 additional adult literacy places, as committed under “Towards 2016”- Social Partnership Agreement, to be provided to the VEC sector. It also allowed a doubling of funding to €2 million for the Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education Scheme. The number of learners who availed of the adult literacy service provided by the VEC sector reached almost 44,000 in 2007. The figure in 1997 was 5,000.

In 2007, the Department provided funding for seven family literacy projects under the DEIS – Family Literacy Scheme. Each project received funding of €20,000.

The Department also provided funding for multimedia projects, devised by NALA, in 2007. The TV Series *The Really Useful Guide to Words and Numbers*, ran for 24 programmes, on RTE, until April 2007. A new TV series was filmed in late 2007. The new series aims to document the lives of 11 adult learners as they progress through an intensive 8-week specially designed intensive learning course. This course is validated by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC).

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 Department of Education and Science Youthreach Programme is operated by VECs.

The Programme usually provides two years integrated education, training and work experience. Basic skills training, practical work training and general education are features of the programme, and the application of new technology is integrated into all aspects of programme content. 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 and a work experience programme.

Four hundred additional places were allocated in 2007, bringing the total allocation to 3,692. Participants in Youthreach receive a weekly training allowance. They are also entitled to childcare support.

A Special Educational Needs Initiative was piloted in twenty Youthreach centres in 2007. Most of the practical supports for young disadvantaged people or those with special educational needs available in mainstream post primary schools are not available, nor are they transferred with the learner, to Youthreach centres. This anomaly is being addressed by introducing an initiative to 25 Youthreach groups initially, with a view to extending it to all Youthreach centres following an evaluation and subject to resources being available.

The cost of funding the pilot initiative is €2m for 2007. Twenty Youthreach centres were chosen to undertake the pilot initiative. Some centres had groups of 25 students while others had larger groups.

Senior Traveller Training Centres

Senior Traveller Training Centres 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 Senior Traveller Training Centres providing an out-of-school programme for Travellers with a specific emphasis on catering for the cultural needs of the travelling community. The Centres provide an integrated education, training and work experience programme for Traveller early school leavers aged 15 upwards. In 2007 there were 1,084 trainees in the STTC programme.

The Post Leaving Certificate programme (PLC)

The Post Leaving Certificate Programme provides integrated general education, vocational training and work experience for young people who had completed upper second level education or equivalent. Its primary objective is to enhance the prospects for these young people to gain employment. The Post Leaving Certificate programme (PLC) is for those who have completed senior cycle or equivalent. Some 30,188 PLC places were approved in the 2007/2008 academic year.

Back to Education Initiative (Part-time)

Commenced in October 2002, the BTEI provides for an expansion of flexible part time options across Further Education. Its priority is those adults with less than upper second level education. The programme's aim is to give adults who wish to return to education an opportunity to combine their return to learning with family, work and other responsibilities. Programmes are offered on a part-time basis, in the mornings, afternoons, evenings or at weekends. Participation rates have increased from 11,243 in 2003 to 25,860 in 2007.

1,000 additional places were provided on the BTEI programme in 2007.

BTEI eligibility criteria were amended to allow free tuition to any adult with less than upper second level education with effect from 1st September 2007

Support Services

Guidance services

Approval was given for two new Adult Guidance Projects in 2007 bringing the total number of projects to 40. The measure is designed to support access to Adult Literacy, VTOS, BTEI and Community Education programmes in the further education sector. Survivors of residential abuse were recently included as another category.

Childcare

The Department provided funding of €6.35m to Vocational Education Committees (VECs) in 2007 to assist with the childcare expenses of participants in Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), Youthreach and Senior Traveller Centre programmes. The aim was to attract people who were unable to enrol in these programmes because of childcare responsibilities.

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.

Appointment of National Youth Work Advisory Committee (NYWAC)

A National Youth Work Advisory Committee was appointed in April 2007 by the Minister under Sections 17 and 18 of the Youth Work Act, 2001 for a five year period. Its main role is to advise the Minister in matters relating to youth work.

Quality Standards Framework Initiative

The assessor of youth work, in consultation with the National Youth Work Advisory Committee (NYWAC) and other experts completed work on the development phase of a quality standards framework for the youth work sector (QSF) in November 2007. The fundamental aim of this QSF is to provide a support and development tool to youth work organisations and projects to help establish standards in the practice and provision of youth work.

Child protection awareness training programme for the youth work sector

This *Awareness Training Programme*, developed by the Child Protection Unit of the National Youth Council was launched in September 2007. It reflects good youth work practice and is set to become an integral part of youth work training for both paid and non paid personnel working in the sector. A number of other EU member states are now availing of this resource.

Increase in funding for schemes

An increase of 7.5% in general baseline funding was sanctioned for the three main funding schemes i.e. Youth Service Grant Scheme, Special Projects for Youth (SPY) and Youth Information Centres. The additional cost of these increases in 2007 was €2.47m

Special Projects for Youth Scheme

This Scheme was further developed with 14 single worker Special Projects for Youth expanded to two worker status. In addition, three new projects were sanctioned.

Local Youth Club Grants Scheme

Funding for this scheme was increased by 23% in 2007, bringing the overall budget for this scheme to €1.6m in 2007.

North/South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work (NSETS)

The primary function of the NSETS Committee, which was launched in 2006, is the professional endorsement of youth work education and training, initially within the higher education sector. Two institutions had programmes endorsed in 2007. These were the University of Ulster at Jordanstown (BSc Honours and Postgraduate Diploma/MSc in Community Youth Work) and NUI Maynooth (Diploma in Community & Youth Work and Higher Diploma in Community & Youth Work, both with full-time and part-time options).

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

Redress of child abuse in residential institutions

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

The Department:

- Provides funding and support to the Residential Institutions Redress Board which was established in December 2002 to provide financial awards to victims of child abuse in residential institutions.

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

- Provides funding for advice and support services for and by former residents of institutions.

Developments in 2007

During 2007, the Department provided the Commission with further information and clarification on a number of issues relevant to the Commission's inquiry. Expenditure of some €7.4 million was incurred by the Department in respect of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse in 2007. Total expenditure on the Commission to the end of 2007 was €43.667 million.

Further progress was made in the assessment and payment of awards under the redress scheme. The Redress Board processed 2,631 applications in 2007 bringing to 9,922 the total number of applications processed to end 2007. The Department paid approximately €185 million in redress awards and related costs during 2007. Cumulative expenditure to the end of 2007 was €745.6 million.

In 2007, the Education Finance Board approved grants in respect of 1,200 former residents and their families and approximately €1.37 million was expended on education grants by the Board. The Board has an available balance of €8.89 million to provide education grants to former residents and their families into the future.

During 2007, the Department processed 290 FOI applications for records from former residents of industrial schools and other institutions. This brings the total number of such applications processed by the Department to 11,566 at the end of 2007.

The Department continued to provide funding of approximately €1.5 million in 2007 for advice and support services for former residents of institutions.

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.

Other targeted supports include the Student Assistance Fund, the Fund for Students with Disabilities, the Millennium Partnership Fund for Disadvantage and for a number of third-level scholarship opportunities. Such scholarships include scholarships for students who completed their second-level education through the medium of Irish, the Easter Week 1916 and Donagh O'Malley commemoration scholarships and scholarships to the European University Institute in Florence.

Developments in 2007

Donagh O'Malley Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students

In December 2006, the Minister for Education and Science announced the establishment of a new Government-funded scholarship for the top-performing

Leaving Certificate students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The scholarship scheme was inaugurated in 2007. Approximately 16 scholarships are to be awarded each year.

Expenditure, grants, funds and scholarships

Expenditure

Expenditure in 2006/07 on student supports is as follows:

Schemes	No. of Grantholders *	Expenditure in 2007
Student Grant Schemes	56,341	€243m
Third Level Access Schemes		€17m
Scholarships	244	€1.7m

*provisional figures for 2006/2007 academic year

Student Maintenance Grants

In 2007, the ordinary maintenance grant rate increased by 10% giving a maximum grant of €3,420 in the 2007/08 academic year. There was a 14% increase in the 'top-up' maintenance grant paid to over 12,500 students. Students qualifying for the non-adjacent ordinary grant plus the special rate of maintenance grant, received €6,690 in assistance in the 2007/08 academic year. Expenditure on special rate of maintenance grant amounted to €38m in 2007 and is included in the €243m above.

The Fund for Students with Disabilities

A total allocation of 9.986m was approved for support for students under the Fund for Students with Disabilities in 2006/2007. This compares to €8,121,744 in the academic year 2005/2006. A total of over 2,400 students, through both individual and group applications, benefited from the Fund in 2006/07, compared to 2,032 in 2005/06.

The Student Assistance Fund

A gross allocation of €6.219m was approved for the fund in 2007/2008. This compares to a gross allocation of €6.038m for 2006/2007. The total number of students who benefited from the fund in 2005/2006 was 9,895. The total number of students who benefited in the fund in 2006/2007 was 9,226 (provisional)

Millennium Partnership Fund for Disadvantage

An allocation of €2.175m was provided for the Millennium Partnership Fund for 2007/08. Fifty-six community and area partnerships were expected to benefit from this allocation. *Pobal* has continued to administer the fund for the 2007/2008 academic year. The allocation for 2006/2007 was €2,111,500. A total of 3,957 individuals benefited from the fund in 2005/2006.

Scholarships

In the academic year 2007/08 15 students benefited from European University Scholarship and a total of €13,000 was expended in 2007. In the academic year 2007/08 there were 259 scholarship holders and a total of €1.162m was expended in 2007.

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

The functions of the Department include coordinating and monitoring the process of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all areas of the educational system.

Developments in 2007

During 2007 further progress was made on a number of key projects in the area of gender equality, including the Department's contribution to the implementation of the National Women's Strategy and the funding of research exploring how sexual orientation issues are addressed in post-primary schools.

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 Department has responsibility for analysis, development, review and implementation of higher education policy. The policy approach has regard to the overall aim of the higher education system enabling people to reach their full potential as individuals and active citizens, and the desire to maximize the contribution of the sector to social and economic development.

It is also charged with developing policy responses to existing skills needs in the economy and participating in various groups planning for future skills needs.

The Department also funds the provision of infrastructure required for the delivery of higher education including research infrastructure.

Developments in 2007

Commencement of institute of technology legislation

The Institute of Technology legislation was enacted in July 2006 with the commencement order being signed on 1st February 2007 on which date the Institutes of Technology (IOTs) and the Dublin Institute of Technology became designated institutions under the Higher Education Authority. From that date responsibility for allocating funding to the IOTs/DIT transferred from the Department to the HEA.

Medical education and training

Significant development work continued in relation to the reform of undergraduate and graduate Medicine. In line with the broad recommendations of the Fottrell and Buttimer Reports further additional undergraduate places were provided in 2007 and the first intake of graduate entrants to Medicine commenced. In addition, plans were announced to introduce a new entry mechanism for undergraduate medical education in 2009 that will involve an admission test that complements the Leaving Certificate.

Infrastructural developments

- Cycle 4 of programme for research in third level institutions was launched to a capital value of €108m and progress towards completion of outstanding projects awarded funding under cycle 3.
- Research equipment renewal grant to a capital value of €28m was provided under the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation.
- Funds were provided for equipment renewal consequent to the implementation of revised curriculum for apprentices to a value of capital value of €8m and

delivery of new and upgraded facilities for apprentices in individual institutes of technology.

- All necessary preparatory work required in respect of higher education projects nominated for delivery through the public private partnership process was completed culminating in the transfer of the projects for onward progression and delivery to the Public Private Partnership (PPP) Unit/National Development Finance Agency (NDFA).
- Funding of €15m was disbursed for the carrying out of minor works programmes in the institute of technology sector.
- Progress continues with the design and / or implementation to construction of a range of large scale capital projects within the higher education sector that deliver new and improved under graduate facilities. Examples of such projects include the following:
 - *Limerick Institute of Technology*: refurbishment of the Clare Street campus.
 - *Tralee IOT*: provision of new Learning and Resource Centre.
 - *Waterford IOT*: delivery of new Cert Tourism and Leisure Building.
 - *Dundalk IOT*: refurbishment and adaptation of former manufacturing plant for use by the Institute.
 - *Athlone IOT*: design of new Engineering School.
 - *NUI Cork*: construction of new Information Technology School.
 - *Mary Immaculate College of Education*: design of Phase 2 of campus redevelopment.
 - *St. Patrick's College of Education in Drumcondra*: design of new facilities.
 - *University of Limerick*: major infrastructure works.
 - *Dublin Institute of Technology*: ongoing funding of necessary remedial works

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 & Assessment (NCCA).

School computer network development

During 2007, 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 peripherals. Since 2004, some €23.5m has issued to 3,859 schools to develop their 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 Irish Business and Employers Confederation IBEC/TIF (Telecommunications and Internet Federation) provides for a three year €18m joint fund. Industry contributes €5 million and the Government contributes €1 million per annum to the fund. The fund 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. As of the end of 2007 the vast majority of schools had been connected to the network using a mixture of Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), wireless, and satellite technologies. The Department is monitoring the position of the outstanding schools, where the installation is awaited due to building programmes or installation difficulties.

Teacher professional development

The role of the individual teacher as a critical success factor in integrating ICT into teaching and learning is well recognised. The NCTE operates a Teaching Skills Initiative to meet the specific needs of teachers in their use of ICT. This course includes technical courses, subject specific courses, internet, web design and digital media courses. During 2007, teachers availed of 11,531 training places under the Initiative. The NCTE also provides on-line teaching resources via the Scoilnet portal and supports a number of innovative projects. During 2007, the number of reviewed teaching resources on Scoilnet increased to 10,000.

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.

EU Policy Developments in the areas of Education and Training

The Department continued to work with our European partners to develop and implement EU policies which have real and positive impacts on the development of education in Ireland. Key areas in which there was significant progress in 2007 include qualification recognition and education and training mobility.

Qualification recognition

EU Education Ministers reached political agreement on a draft recommendation which will establish a European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.

Education and training mobility

The new integrated Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013), funded by the European Commission, and designed to facilitate educational and training mobility, was implemented in Ireland in 2007. The Programme will enable third-level students and lecturing staff to participate in Erasmus educational exchanges, Irish trainees to benefit from European work placements, and schools and adult education organisations to participate in European partnerships.

The Department also continued to contribute to the implementation of the education and training components of the Lisbon Strategy, which aims to make the EU the “most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world by 2010”. In particular, the Department continued to implement the relevant aspects of the ‘Education and Training 2010’ work programme and continued its participation in a number of cluster groups, which foster peer-learning between member states on key education and training issues.

International Co-operation

The Department continued to promote the development of mutually beneficial links with education systems and education ministries overseas. The Department facilitated over 30 inward delegation visits to Ireland during 2007. Delegations came from a wide variety of countries including Saudi Arabia, Korea, Malaysia, Australia, Sweden, Norway, Hungary and Oman. Inward ministerial-level visits were also organised for Education Ministers/Vice Ministers from Lithuania, the Slovak Republic and China.

The Department continued to operate multilateral and bilateral programmes with over 25 countries which facilitate mobility of students, teachers and researchers, including third-level scholarships, summer school placements, professor/education expert exchanges and language assistant programmes

The Department also continued to act as Ireland’s national co-ordinating body for UNESCO, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Conferences/Meetings

In 2007 the Department was involved in the organising and funding of two major conferences/meetings: OECD International Comparisons in Education Network Conference and Council of Europe National Co-ordinator’s for Democratic Citizenship Meeting

OECD International Comparisons in Education Network Conference

This conference, which was held in Dublin in March 2007, focused on development work and on data collection for OECD’s *Education At a Glance*, concerning the social and economic outcomes of education. The Conference was attended by more than fifty delegates representing twenty-eight countries and international organisations.

Council of Europe National Co-ordinator’s for Democratic Citizenship Meeting

The 12th Council of Europe Education for Democratic Citizenship/Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) National Co-ordinators Meeting was organised in conjunction

with the Curriculum Development Unit of City of Dublin VEC and was held in Dublin Castle in December, 2007.

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

Uptake of the physical sciences and related subjects at second level

In August 2007, the Minister announced that the Department was proceeding with reforms in Mathematics at junior and senior cycle in post-primary schools. The planned reforms should make Mathematics more relevant to the lives and experiences of students, contribute to the development of higher order skills and encourage more students to study higher level Mathematics.

The Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2006-2013 sets out a range of measures to further strengthen science teaching and learning. The Strategy sets a target to increase the uptake of Physics and Chemistry in senior cycle to 20% of the overall cohort by 2113. Ensuring a continuum from junior cycle with the emphasis on project based hands-on investigative approaches and assessment of these as part of the overall examinations, allied with the embedding of key skills, a more applied focus and an emphasis on the inter-disciplinary nature of science in society forms part of the approach.

In the 2007 Junior Certificate examination, 87.3% of students sat Science. In the 2007 Leaving Certificate examination, 14.3% of students sat Physics, 13.6% sat Chemistry and 50.7% 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 Department is responsible for the evaluation of primary and post-primary schools and centres for education in accordance with Section 13 of the Education Act 1998. Its activities can be categorised broadly under four strands: (1) operating an inspection and evaluation programme; (2) assessing and advising on the implementation of legislation and Department regulations; (3) advising schools, teachers and parents on educational provision; (4) contributing to and supporting policy development.

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

- whole-school evaluation (WSE) at primary and post-primary level;
- subject and programme inspection in post-primary schools;
- evaluation of centres for education;
- in-depth focused evaluation of selected educational programmes or services in schools;
- 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 and centres of learning.

Quality assurance of schools and centres for education

Whole-school evaluation programme

In 2007 the Department conducted 300 whole-school evaluations (WSE) comprising 241 evaluations at primary level and 59 at post-primary level. WSE involved evaluation of primary and post-primary schools under the areas of management, planning, curriculum provision, teaching and learning and student support. During the process, information was gathered from a range of sources within a school in order to ensure that the judgements made by inspectors were valid, reliable and consistent. Boards of management, officers of the parents' association, and the student council in post-primary schools, were consulted by inspectors during a WSE. Following the evaluation a report was prepared in which the strengths of the school were acknowledged and clear recommendations made in relation to the further development of educational provision in the school.

The Inspectorate also monitored the effectiveness of 45 Irish language summer courses to ensure accountability and to contribute to improvement in the work of the Irish summer colleges.

Subject inspection programme at Post-Primary Level

The number of subject inspections completed in post-primary schools increased from 727 in 2006 to 757 in 2007. Subject inspections evaluated the provision for individual subject areas under the headings of whole-school provision and support; planning and preparation; teaching and learning; and assessment and achievement. A range of schools and a number of subject areas are selected each year. In 2007, the range of subject inspections was extended to include Social, Personal and Health Education and Civic, Social and Political Education.

Programme evaluations

Programme evaluations are designed to evaluate the effectiveness of programmes such as the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Transition Year programme (TYP), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The 20 programme evaluations completed in 2007 examined the quality of programme organisation and coordination in the school, the quality of programme planning, the quality of teaching and learning, and the quality of the school's evaluation and assessment. Like subject inspections, programme evaluations may take place either as "stand-alone" inspections or as part of a whole-school evaluation.

Evaluation of centres for education

Inspectors based in the Department's Regional Offices conducted 27 evaluations of Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres, Travellers Pre-schools and other centres for education in 2007.

Thematic evaluation projects

In addition to its mainstream evaluation activity the Department undertakes a number of in-depth thematic evaluation projects each year. These examine the quality of selected educational programmes or services across a sample of schools. An overall report is prepared that sets out main trends and recommendations for service improvement and policy development. The report is then disseminated to key personnel throughout the system. During 2007, field work was completed in schools on the implementation of Science and Social, Personal and Health Education in primary schools, and inspections of Geography and Materials Technology (Wood) and Construction Studies were completed in post-primary schools. Composite reports on these subjects will be published in 2008.

Probation of newly qualified teachers

During 2007 the Department processed inspection reports in respect of 2,362 primary teachers on probation. This represented a very significant increase over recent years. Inspection of newly qualified teachers therefore represented an important element of the overall work programme.

Inspection Activity 2007		Number of inspections
Primary Schools		
Whole-School Evaluation		241
Probationary Teachers (Primary)		2,362
Post-primary Schools		
Whole-School Evaluation		59
Subject Inspection		757*
Programme Inspection		20*
Other Inspections		
Centres for Education – Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training Centres and other centres for education		27
Coláistí Gaeilge		45
Others		49
Total		3,560

*These figures include both stand-alone subject inspections and those subject inspections that take place as part of a whole-school evaluation.

Publication of school and centre inspection reports

All reports arising from WSE, subject/programme inspections, or evaluations of centres for education commenced on or after 6 February 2006 have been subject to publication on the Department's website under regulations introduced by the Minister in early 2006. 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.

During 2007 a total of 946 reports were published representative of 501 schools or centres for education and these were classified as follows.

Reports Published January to December 2007	Primary WSE	Post-primary WSE	Centres for Education	Subject Inspection within WSE	Stand-alone Subject Inspection	Total
	200	51	7	195	493	946

Reports are published in accordance with the procedures outlined in *Publication of School Inspection Reports – Guidelines*, published in 2006. Schools are provided with an opportunity to verify the factual content of an inspection report and to submit a school response setting out the school's plans to address the report's

recommendations. This response is published along with the inspection report on the internet website of the Department of Education and Science at www.education.ie.

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 together. Subject inspections of Irish are also translated into English for English-medium second-level schools.

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 Department promotes the development and implementation of the national framework of qualifications, and enhance mutual recognition of qualifications, improving mobility for learners and employees.

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 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.

Key developments in 2007

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) agreed the draft report on the NQAI Quality Review which provided a full and open account of the internal and external feedback gathered during the self-evaluation process. The report reflected the strong commitment to quality improvement and organisation development within the NQAI. As part of the self-evaluation process, the executive of the NQAI identified the need for the formal development of policies by the Authority in relation to its internal and external quality assurance processes. Two documents - *Internal Quality Assurance and Accountability Policy* and *External Quality Assurance Procedures* were adopted in response to this need and published on the Authority's website.

In March 2007, NQAI commissioned a quality review of FETAC, under the terms of the Qualifications (Education and Training Act) 1999. The agreed approach to the review centred on self-evaluation by the Council and external evaluation by an external panel. In July 2007, following extensive internal and external consultation, FETAC published its *Self Evaluation Report*.

In August 2007, the country background report on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Ireland was published as part of an OECD activity on the

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning (2006 – 2008) in which Ireland participates.

As part of ongoing initiatives to promote Europass in Ireland, the National Europass Centre, located within NQAI, exhibited at Opportunities 2007 – Europe’s largest education, careers and skills showcase. Opportunities 2007 took place in Croke Park, Dublin over the weekend of 3/4 March 2007..

Qualifications Recognition Ireland, the one stop shop established by the Authority to advise on the comparability of international awards continued to expand the scale of its activities in 2007. 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.

HETAC adopted a new policy on institutional review of providers of higher education and training in December 2007.

FETAC is implementing a new Common Awards System for the development of awards. All existing systems for developing awards (FÁS, Fáilte Ireland, Teagasc, and NCVA) ceased operation in December 2007. The new Common Award System will ensure awards are relevant to both employers and learners needs, coherent with the national framework of qualifications, responsive to demand and nationally available to registered providers.

Since its inception almost a decade ago, the Higher Education Links Scheme continues to expand and broaden its progression routes for FETAC award holders to third level education courses at a range of higher education institutions. In 2007, 6,999 FETAC applicants applied through the Central Applications Office (CAO) for a variety of third level courses. This number represents an increase of 1,420 on the number of applicants in 2006.

FETAC issued 142,648 awards in 2007.

HETAC issued 22,404 awards in 2007.

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

The Department has responsibility for analysis, development, review and implementation of higher education policy. The policy approach has regard to the overall aim of the higher education system enabling people to reach their full potential as individuals and active citizens, and the desire to maximize the contribution of the sector to social and economic development.

The Department is also charged with developing policy responses to existing skills needs in the economy and representing the Department on various groups planning for future skills needs.

Developments in 2007

The HEA, HETAC and the NQAI have incorporated the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* in their policies and criteria. These policies and criteria are used for setting the standards of awards, for making awards, for delegating authority to make awards and for quality assurance in the higher education sector.

The Department is represented on the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN). The overall role of the IHEQN is to:

- provide a forum for discussion of quality assurance issues amongst the principal national stakeholders involved in the quality assurance of higher education and training in Ireland;
- provide a forum for the dissemination of best practice in quality assurance amongst practitioners and policy makers involved in the Irish higher education and training sector;
- endeavour, where appropriate, to develop common national principles and approaches to quality assurance in Irish higher education and training.

The principles are agreed by the Network as consonant with the legislative arrangements that govern quality assurance in the Irish Higher Education sector, and as conforming to the principles outlined in the *European Standards and Guidelines*.

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.

The Department has corporate governance responsibilities in relation to the Council and, in addition, liaises as appropriate on policy and other matters of interest to the Council. Since its establishment, the Teaching Council has undertaken work across a wide range of responsibilities as set out in the *Teaching Council Acts*.

During 2007, a value for money assessment of programmes managed by Teacher Education Section took place. The report is expected to be published in early 2008.

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.

The Department is responsible for the development of cooperation in the area of education between both parts of the island of Ireland, in the context of the Good Friday Agreement. The principal function of the Department, in this respect, is to take forward this cooperation through the North/South Ministerial Council and to develop common policies in the designated areas of special education needs, educational underachievement, teacher mobility and school, youth and teacher exchanges.

Developments in 2007

The first meeting of the North South Ministerial Council in Education Sector format since the re-establishment of the Northern Ireland (NI) Assembly structures was held in Dublin in May 2007. Ministers noted joint progress in four agreed areas of cooperation since 2002 – Special Educational Needs, Teacher Qualifications, Educational Underachievement and School, Youth and Teacher Exchanges – and requested officials to continue with the development of these areas of cooperation.

The North South Unit co-funded with the Department of Education in Northern Ireland a range of North South initiatives including the European Schools, Dissolving Boundaries and Civic Link programmes.

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 plans for and funds suitable cost effective solutions to accommodate, furnish and equip both the primary and post-primary education sectors, through the delivery of new schools and the refurbishment and extension of existing accommodation.

Developments in 2007

- 12 new schools and 25 large scale extension/refurbishment projects were completed in the primary sector
- 4 new schools and 19 large scale extension/refurbishment projects were completed in the post-primary sector
- 77 projects were completed under the Small Schools Scheme
- 53 projects were completed under the Permanent Accommodation Scheme.
- 797 primary projects were approved under the 2007 Summer Works Scheme
- 340 post-primary projects were approved under the 2007 Summer Works Scheme

- 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
- 24 sites were acquired to meet the demand for new schools
- Contingency, remediation and furniture and equipment applications continue to be processed
- Grant schemes in relation to health and safety in woodwork rooms in post-primary schools and the new curriculum in Design Communication Graphics, continue to operate

Financing building projects

The Department supports the delivery of the capital programmes by:

- ensuring that all capital payments are paid to relevant stakeholders promptly, efficiently and in compliance with the requirements of the appropriate regulatory authorities;
- collating relevant data relating to the operation of the capital programmes;
- reporting to Structural Funds Unit on ERDF aided measures;
- reporting progress on NDP measures;
- submitting annual report, including a spot checks report on Building Unit activity, to the Department of Finance.

Developments in 2007

- Payments amounting to close to €800m were processed by the Department in the course of 2007 on foot of over 8,800 requests.
- Monthly reports of capital expenditure performance were provided to relevant stakeholders.
- Annual report to the Department of Finance detailing capital activities in the course of 2006 was lodged together with a spot-check's report.
- Requisite returns to enable the drawdown of ERDF aid under the EU Operational Programme 2000 - 2006 were collated and submitted. Supporting audit functions and reports associated with the drawdown were conducted and lodged as necessary.
- Preparatory work to enable the drawdown of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) aid under the Operational Programme 2007 – 2013 was discharged efficiently and effectively.

Private Public Partnership (PPP) Programme

A major expansion of the Government's Public Private Partnership Programme from 2006 to 2009 was announced in 2005. Under this expansion, a total of €300m was provided for the provision of 23 new post-primary schools and 4 new primary schools in 22 locations around the country. Furthermore, €70m was allocated for the provision of 17 new third level projects in 9 locations. Additional National Development Plan (NDP) funding of €65 million was provided in January 2007 for 1st/ 2nd and 3rd Level PPP Projects.

Developments in 2007

- Completion of the Cork School of Music: the new €60m project was completed on budget and ahead of schedule. The school will accommodate 400 full-time third-level students and around 2,000 part-time students.

- Appointment of preferred tender for the 1st bundle of PPP schools consisting of 4 post primary schools which will provide 2,700 school places when completed.
- Progressing the pre-procurement process for the 2nd bundle of PPP schools consisting of 1 primary and 5 post-primary schools which will provide in excess of 4,700 school places when delivered.
- Appointment of technical advisors to assist in the progression of the 17 projects in 9 third level institutions.

Energy saving

The Department continued to improve energy conservation in educational buildings using its energy policy DART (Design, Awareness, Research & Technology). This policy is acknowledged by national and international energy awards.

Primary schools designed and built in line with the above policy have been demonstrated to have an energy performance that is 2.3 times more efficient than international best practice. Post-primary schools have been demonstrated to have an energy performance that is twice as efficient as international best practice.

The energy policy is supported by over twenty different research projects. The 1st of the generic repeat design schools won a highly commended energy award at the Sustainable Energy Awards Competition 2007 for excellence in building design or specification.

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 represent 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.

The Regional Office Service provided educational information through the following channels:

- Responding to e-mail queries received through the department's INFO@Education.gov.ie mailbox.
- Responding to telephone and personal educational queries received through the regional office network
- Drafting of speeches, notes and other briefing material for ministerial and other official engagements with a local or regional context.
- Providing appropriate departmental representation on all 34 City & County Development Boards and related sub-groups including those relating to Social Inclusion Measures and Education.
- Providing departmental representation on a range of other local & regional bodies, such as childcare committees and local and regional drugs task forces.

New patronage model for primary schools

In 2007 the Department launched a new model of patronage for primary schools. Initially, within this new model, the County Dublin Vocational Education Committee will act as patron in two pilot schools. These Community National Schools will be open to children of all religions and none. They will be inter-denominational in character, aiming to provide a religious education/faith formation programme and general ethics programme during the school day.

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 and development

The Department engages with staff and management in identifying training needs and organises and supports a wide range of programmes for staff.

Support is also available for the Inspectorate, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the Planning and Building Unit (PBU) and the IT Unit with regard to their specific professional and technical training needs.

In excess of 3,800 training days were provided in 2007, in areas that included induction training for new staff, senior management development, IT (end-user) training, records management and financial management. One hundred and fifty staff at management level attended 2 day grade networks for middle and senior managers.

As a percentage of payroll costs, expenditure on staff training and development in 2007 was 2.6%.

Financial Management Training

Over 100 staff attended briefing sessions and training courses covering the areas of financial awareness, management and governance and the estimates process. Over half of the participants were middle and senior managers.

Refund of fees

The Department continued to provide support for staff attending further education courses in their own time. In 2007, €179,836 was refunded under this scheme.

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

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

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 2007 three 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.

Developments in 2007

The On-Line Claims System (OLCS) was implemented in 2,400 primary schools. This system enables schools to complete claims online for days/hours worked by part-time or substitute teachers which in turn will generate direct salary payments to the individuals from the teacher payrolls. Significant enhancements to the OLCS were implemented in 2007 including further integration with the teacher human resources and payroll systems.

Complex calculations to generate arrears of salary accumulated over a number of years and due to over 5,000 post-primary teachers were completed and the arrears were paid.

A project to upgrade all of the Oracle software underlying the Department's major databases and applications commenced and progressed throughout the year.

A new database infrastructure was procured and security strengthened.

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 2006-2010.

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 2007, the Internal Audit Unit issued a total of ten final audit reports. It also completed compliance and follow-up work in relation to implementation of recommendations.

The Department's audit committee held four meetings during the year. The committee has a membership of five (including three external members, one of whom is

chairperson) and provided advice in relation to internal control, the risk management environment and audit matters.

Finance Unit

The Finance Unit arranged for a range of training to be provided to staff in the Department in both financial matters as well as in the operation of the Department's Financial Management System (FMS).

The Finance Unit produced its first Annual Output Statement (AOS) as part of the revised uniform budgetary process initiated by the Tánaiste and Minister for Finance. The AOS illustrates the outputs achieved from the financial resources allocated to the Department as well as setting targets for the following year. It is an excellent example of an ongoing change agenda aimed at public awareness of budgetary options and ultimately outcomes for actual expenditure.

Value For Money reviews (VFMR)

Further progress was made during 2007 on the Department's programme of Value For Money Reviews (VFMR's). Reviews completed during 2007 included:

- *Review of the ICT Undergraduate Skills*
- *Review of Programmes Managed by the Teacher Education Section*
- *Review of the Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres*

Two further reviews, of *School Insurance Arrangements* and of the *Summer Works Scheme*, commenced during 2007 and are scheduled for completion in 2008.

Other policy reviews undertaken under the auspices of the Inspectorate's Evaluation Support and Research Unit (ESRU) finalised in 2007 included:

- *Irish in the Primary Schools/An Ghaeilge sa Bhunscoil*
- *Looking at Irish in Junior Cycle/Ag Breathnú ar an nGaeilge*
- *ICT in Schools*

Progress was also made on the implementation of recommendations from previously published reviews. The majority of the recommendations contained in the *Review of the Small Schools and Permanent Accommodation Schemes* have now been implemented.

Prompt Payment of Accounts

In line with the provisions of the Prompt Payment of Accounts Act and Statutory Instrument Number 388, the Department has discharged its statutory responsibility in relation to the payment and recording of prompt payment interest paid.

Interest penalties in accordance with Section 4 of the Act were paid in a very small number of cases as follows:

Description	Amount
2007 Gross Voted Outturn	€8.705 Billion
Total number of valid PPI payments	75
Amount of PPI interest paid	€5,537.97

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.

Arrangements for the re-deployment of surplus second level teachers in the case of school closures were agreed at the Teachers' Conciliation Council in May 2007.

Agreement was also reached on issues arising from the implementation of the Protection of Employees (Fixed Term Work) Act 2003 in relation to primary schools and institutes of technology.

The Education Sector Performance Verification Group completed assessments in advance of the 1st June 2007 pay increase provided for in the *Towards 2016* national pay agreement. In general, institutions reported cooperation with flexibility and ongoing change, satisfactory implementation of an agenda for modernisation, maintenance of stable industrial relations and an absence of industrial action in areas covered by *Towards 2016*.

Payment of the increases due on 1st June 2007 provided for under *Towards 2016* was recommended for those education grades who complied with the provisions and terms of the agreement during 2007 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

Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007 (No. 9 of 2007)

Enacted in March 2007, the principal purpose of this Act was to amend *Section 29 of the Education Act 1998* following recommendations of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in second level schools. It provides 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.

Student Support Bill 2008

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 and was at an advanced stage of drafting in late 2007.

Secondary Legislation promulgated in 2007

Institutes of Technology Act 2006 (Commencement) Order 2007 (S.I. No. 36/2007)

The purpose of this Order was to appoint the 1st February 2007 as the date upon which the Institutes of Technology Act 2006 (No. 25 of 2006) came into operation.

Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 (Section 31) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 571/2007)

Signed by the Minister in July 2007, these regulations specify the matters which must be included by third level institutions in their charters: arrangements for consultation and co-operation with the community in the region; criteria for determining the level of demand for particular programmes of education and training and the levels of such programmes; policy in respect of adult and continuing education; and arrangements for the implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression.

Secondary Legislation in 2007

Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive Regulations

These regulations will transpose into Irish law Directive 2005/36/EC on the mutual recognition of qualifications which consolidates and amends the previous law in this area. Preparatory work on the drafting of regulations continued through 2007.

Education Act 1998 (Section 24(3) staff) Regulations

These regulations on which drafting continued in 2007 will give effect to the commitment in Towards 2016 to introduce revised procedures to address teacher performance.

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

Decentralisation

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

Accommodation

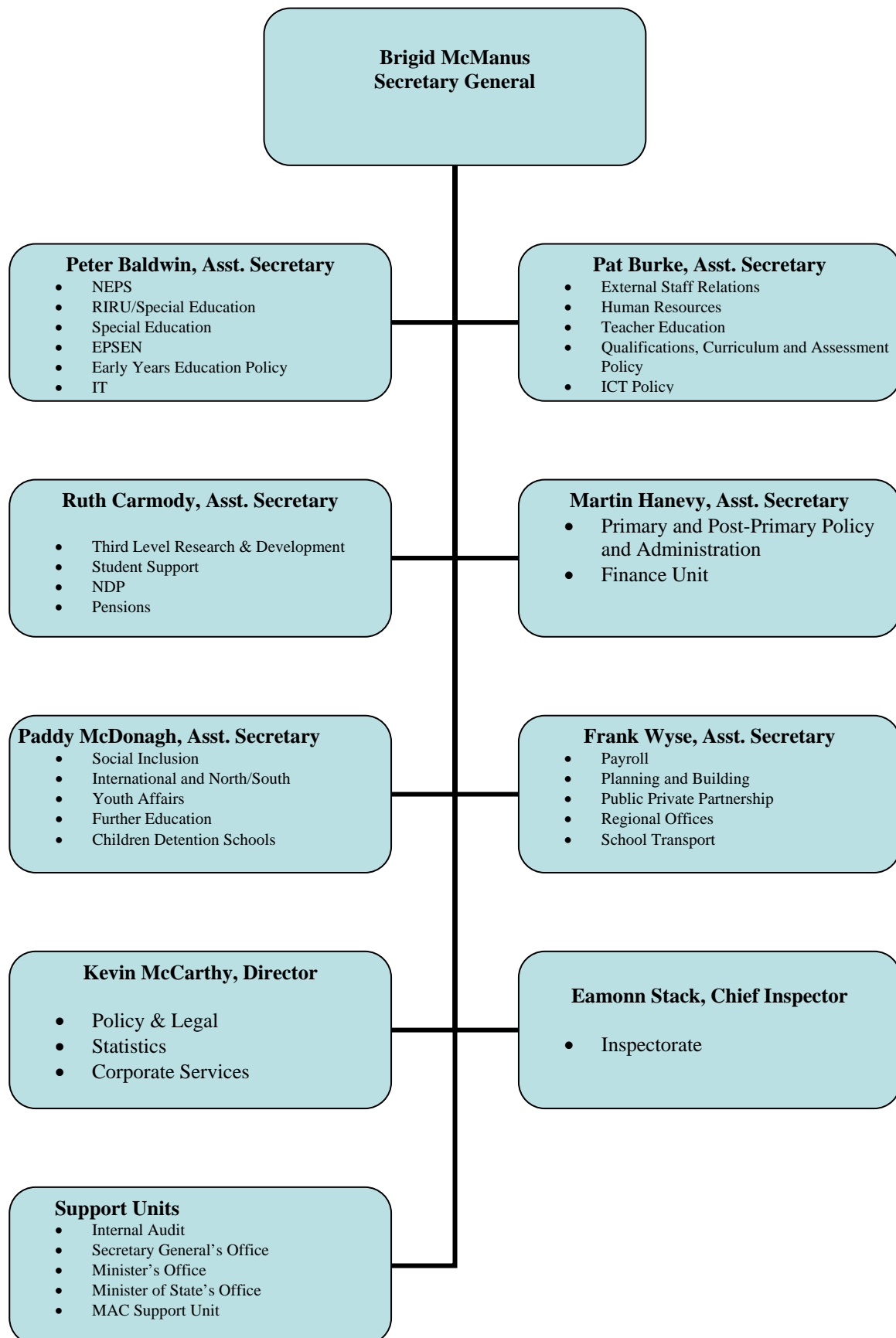
Three hundred posts (300) are scheduled to decentralise to Mullingar. The Office of Public Works (OPW) has acquired a site for office accommodation in Mullingar.

The evaluation of tenders for a private public partnership (PPP) project to include the provision of accommodation in Athlone was completed by the OPW in December 2007 and a successful tenderer was appointed to undertake the project. In the region of 100 posts will decentralise to Athlone. A new building which will accommodate these 100 posts along with a similar number of posts already located in temporary accommodation in Athlone, has been built on the Department's existing Athlone

campus. This building will be ready for occupation during the first half of 2008 and the Athlone element of the decentralisation of the Department will be completed in the summer of 2008.

Progress is being measured from the date of the Department's 2nd implementation plan, 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 will be ready for occupation.

Appendix A: Organisation Chart - December 2007



Appendix B: Non-commercial bodies under the Aegis of the Department in 2007

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