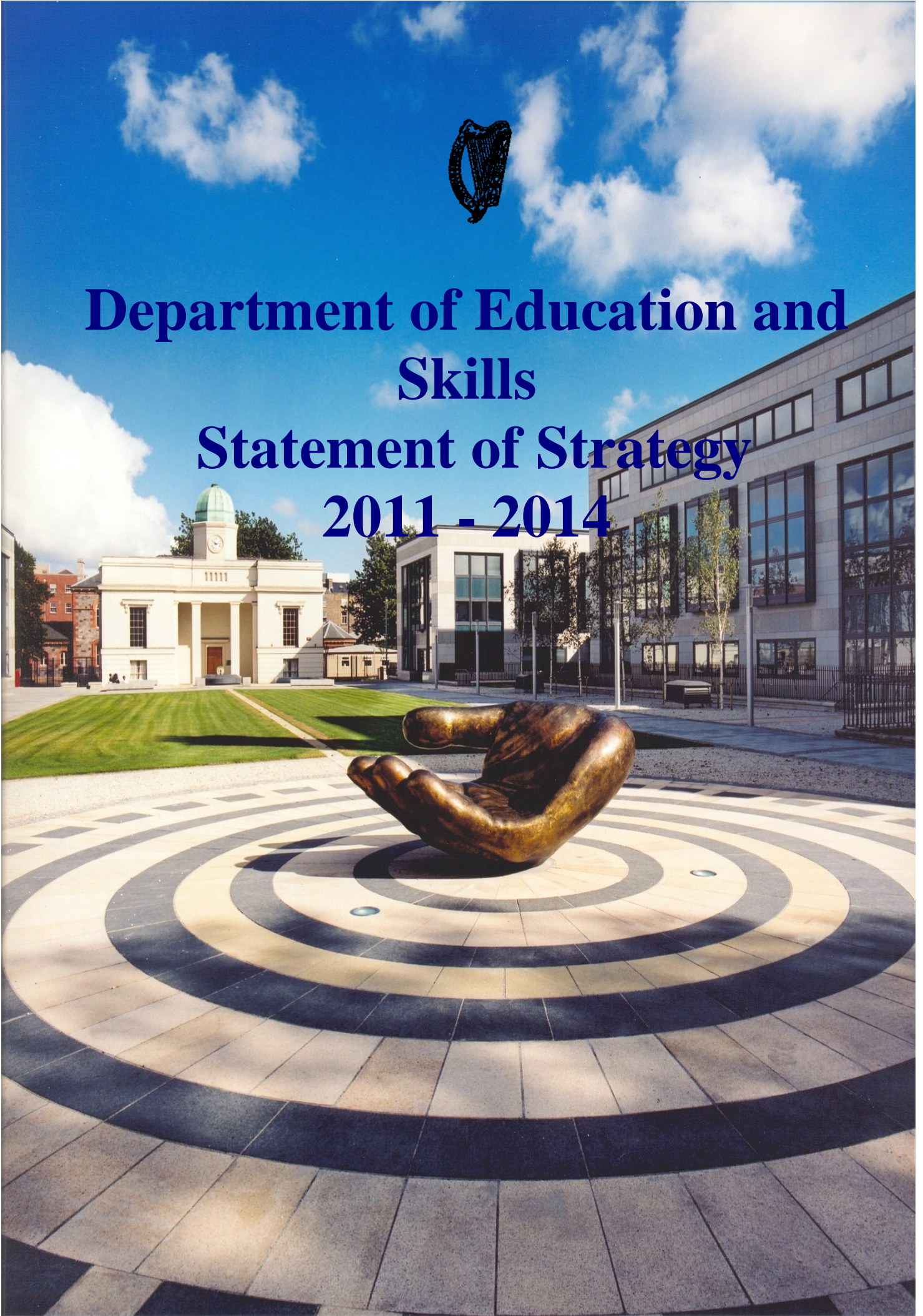




**Department of Education and
Skills
Statement of Strategy
2011 - 2014**



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

STATEMENT OF STRATEGY

2011 – 2014

1. Role of the Department

Our Mission

To enable learners to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's economic, social and cultural development.

Our Values

Department staff are guided by the following values:

- Behaving ethically, fairly, and impartially and respecting social justice, equality and inclusion.
- Operating to the highest standards of efficiency, diligence and courtesy.
- Being open, accountable, avoiding conflicts of interest and recognising that we serve the people of this country.
- Promoting partnership through consultation with, and respect for all our customers.
- Applying best practice standards on recruitment, staff training and development.

Our Mandate

The Department's role is to support the educational success of each learner and to drive improvements in the overall performance of the education and training system. We must also ensure that we deliver our day-to-day services efficiently and effectively.

The Department carries out a wide range of activities at all levels of the education and training system. This includes policy development; providing funding, services and support for education providers; planning and providing education and training infrastructure and enhancing education and training through co-operation on a North-South basis and through involvement in the activities of the European Union (EU) and other international agencies.

The Department has also been mandated with a specific role in relation to the Residential Institutions Redress and a number of related bodies operate under the aegis of the Department including the Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRU).

Given the importance of education and training to social and economic development the Department's mandate requires its involvement in a significant amount of cross departmental and cross sectoral work delivering on a range of policies led by other Departments. Our current economic difficulties have brought into sharp focus the direct impact that education and training can have on individual opportunity and also in helping to secure jobs and investment and drive economic growth. In this context, the education and training sectors have a particularly important role to play in ensuring that our education and training system at all levels is ensuring our students are equipped with the necessary skills and has an important role in tackling unemployment by providing reskilling and upskilling opportunities for jobseekers.

2. Environmental Analysis

The contribution education and training makes in advancing personal development, supporting economic, civic and community development, promoting culture and heritage, and tackling a wide range of social issues is widely recognised in Ireland. The wide ranging nature of our mandate means that the Department operates in a complex economic and social environment and engages with a wide range of stakeholders with competing and diverse priorities and beliefs.

Each citizen has contact with education and training at some point of their lives, whether as a student, parent, teacher, employer, employee, as a member of the community or as a participant on parents associations, school boards of management or other governing board. The Government, Oireachtas members, the various education partner organisations representing those involved in the education sector, national social partner organisations more generally and Education Sector employees and the Department's own staff, as internal customers, are all important stakeholder groups.

Key environmental issues to be taken account of in developing the strategy included addressing concerns for improved educational outcomes, contributing to the Government's growth and employment agenda and addressing the skill needs of the unemployed, the demographic pressures on the system, the need for structural change in the system, the wider economic and fiscal constraints and the need for the education sector to play its part in delivering on the Government's fiscal objectives and ensuring a robust child protection framework in the education sector.

2.1. Quality Outcomes

A key part of our mission over the period of the strategy will be to improve standards in literacy and numeracy and ensure that the education system is achieving quality learning outcomes to support life chances of all our learners in a fast changing society and workplace.

We need to ensure that children and young people learn to be effective lifelong learners and develop the capacity to problem solve, and to apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts. If we can achieve this it will be of long term benefit to each young person and their families and to society and the economy in general. We need to address concerns about ensuring a greater emphasis on critical thinking and a move away from the trend of rote learning.

2.2. Growth and Employment

A key element of the Government's growth and employment strategy is ensuring that we have the right skills to attract, retain and grow job opportunities, investment and growth. In addition to improving education outcomes generally we need to ensure our learners and graduates have the right skills for employment and provide reskilling and upskilling opportunities for the unemployed - particularly those at risk of long-term unemployment.

Higher education institutions responded to the changing needs of learners by providing a wide range of flexible learning opportunities, including more part-time courses. Implementation of the Strategy for Higher Education over the period of 2011-2014 will further enhance the responsiveness and quality of our system of higher education in meeting the needs of students and their parents, business and wider society.

The mandate for the new further education and training authority - SOLAS - is to ensure the provision of 21st century high-quality further education and training programmes to jobseekers and other learners. These programmes will be integrated, flexible, value-for-money and responsive to the needs of learners and the requirements of a changed and changing economy. Together with the proposed National Employment and Entitlements Service (NEES), SOLAS and the VECs which will ultimately be responsible for the delivery of all further education and training, will ensure that the unemployed, in particular the long-term unemployed, can access the upskilling and re-skilling opportunities they need. A governance structure across the Department of Social Protection and this Department will be responsible for delivery of an integrated referral and training service for the unemployed.

2.3. Child Protection

Over the past number of years there has been a significant refocus in the delivery of Child Welfare and Protection Services in Ireland. Since 1999, *Children First* provides robust national guidance that promotes the protection of children from abuse and neglect.

The Children First Guidance launched on the 15th July, 2011 states what organisations need to do to keep children safe, and what different bodies, and the general public should do if they are concerned about a child's safety and welfare.

The role of this Department is to provide guidance to schools and other education organisations in implementing national child protection and welfare policy, to refer any allegations received to the school/organisation for attention, to share information received with the Health Service Executive and to ensure that proper procedures, in accordance with the *Children First*, are followed in all cases.

The Government has recently approved bringing forward a range of legislation to better protect children from abuse, including, for the first time, statutory compliance with *Children First*.

While the role of the education sector in relation to child protection and welfare is clearly defined, the guidance and procedures adopted by the Department, as heretofore, will need to be continuously reviewed to ensure they are in line with the national guidance and legislative framework for child protection and welfare services. These reviews will involve, as appropriate, consultation with the education partners.

2.4. Demographics and Population Composition

There are challenges in meeting growing education and training demand associated with the changing demographics in Ireland. Enrolment at all levels will continue to increase over the next few years and will increase the demand for school accommodation, higher education provision, special educational needs supports and teacher supply and will be particularly challenging given the fiscal position. In addition, the composition of our student population has changed significantly in recent years with students now coming from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Parental Preferences for type of education

are now more diverse. Work patterns are changing with part-time employment now accounting for more than 20% of all employment. People increasingly need access to flexible education and training programmes that they can combine with work and family commitments. Catering for diversity is a core objective in the development of policies for all sectors and levels of the education and training system.

2.5. Technology in Education

ICT is having an impact on every aspect of everyday life and it has fundamentally changed the way we communicate with each other. There are opportunities to use ICT to provide greater access to education and training and to enhance teaching and learning in schools, further and higher education and training. This will require sustained investment in ICT and continued integration of ICT into all aspects of the curriculum. Enhanced broadband connectivity for homes, schools and other education providers across the country will also be required to take full advantage of online education services and digital content.

2.6. Education Structures

There is a need for modernisation and reform of the structures within which education is delivered. Over the period of this strategy significant change is planned with the rationalisation and restructuring of the VEC system, an integrated and modernised further education and training system through SOLAS, together with the roll-out of the NEES model, rationalisation of higher education provision and the development of a diversity of patronage types in school provision.

2.7. Wider economic context

The recession and banking crisis has had a severe impact on the public finances. As a result, the public finances have deteriorated rapidly since 2008 with a substantial gap between our national income and spending. This is not sustainable and further adjustments will be required to close the gap and return public spending to a sustainable level. While significant expenditure savings measures have already been secured or are being implemented, further savings will also be required over the period covered by this Strategy Statement.

In recent years, the Education sector has been given more favourable treatment than other areas of the public sector in terms of being able to fill teacher and special needs assistant (SNA) posts under public sector numbers policy and the moratorium on filling vacancies. There are specific EU/IMF commitments and targets in relation to a reduction in the overall number of public servants. Approximately one third of public servants work in the education sector and the sector will be impacted by these requirements.

All public sector organisations are required to work within a framework of reducing public sector numbers which will require a re-prioritisation of work over the period of this strategy.

In this context it will be essential to maximise the potential of the Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (Croke Park Agreement) and exploit opportunities for efficiencies such as through shared services, collaborative procurement arrangements and flexible redeployment arrangements across the education sector.

3. Our High Level Goals

Our overarching goal is to ensure that the Department and the wider education and training sector provides a good quality service to the public that also delivers value for the taxpayer. We want to support people employed in the sector to work to the best of their ability in delivering the service they provide. Our focus over the next three years will be in areas where the Department and the wider education and training system can improve performance.

1. Provide a quality inclusive school and early years education system, with improved learning outcomes.
2. Provide opportunities for upskilling and reskilling that meet the needs of individuals and the labour market.
3. Provide high quality learning, research and innovation opportunities in the higher education sector.
4. Plan and provide appropriate infrastructure for learning environments.

Goal 1

Provide a quality inclusive school and early years education system with improved learning outcomes

The Department's priority in providing supports to the school system, and for early education, is to enable schools and other providers to deliver quality outcomes for all learners. The Department's core functions support how our children and young people access education services and how the education system runs.

The Department seeks to promote quality, relevance and inclusiveness through various actions. These include providing teaching, financial and curricular supports, addressing educational disadvantage through targeted interventions, addressing the needs of learners with special educational needs, providing policy, legislative and regulatory support, and promoting ongoing curriculum, teaching and learning improvements through evaluation, accountability and leadership developments.

The Programme for Government commits us to developing and implementing a National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy which will provide a comprehensive set of measures to improve learning outcomes for children and young people. We will work to introduce measures to improve curriculum, teaching and learning, teacher quality, quality of school leadership and improved accountability.

Supporting the school system through direct support and advice to schools and VECs, payment of salaries to teachers and other school staff, providing special education supports, providing targeted resources to tackle educational disadvantage and providing school transport are the most resource and funding intensive functions carried out by the Department.

Long term objectives

- Improve the oral-language competence of young children in early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings and their readiness to develop early mathematical language and ideas.
- Increase the percentages of primary children performing at Level 3 or higher (i.e. at the highest levels) in the National Assessment of Mathematics and English Reading by at least 5 percentage points at both second class and sixth class by 2020.
- Reduce the percentage of children performing at or below Level 1 (i.e. minimum level) in the National Assessment of Mathematics and English Reading by at least 5 percentage points at both second class and sixth class by 2020.
- Improve the retention rates for students in second level schools.
- Increase the percentage of students taking the higher level mathematics examination at the end of junior cycle to 60 percent by 2020.
- Increase the percentage of students taking the higher level mathematics examination in Leaving Certificate to 30 percent by 2020.
- Increase the percentage of 15-year old students performing at or above Level 4 (i.e. at the highest levels) in PISA reading literacy and numeracy tests by at least 5 percentage points by 2020.
- Halve the percentage of 15-year old students performing at or below Level 1 (the lowest level) in PISA reading literacy and numeracy tests by 2020.
- Enhance the educational provision for children with special educational needs.

What we will do		Performance Indicators
1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support a high quality early years education system, for children aged 0-6 years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the Workforce Development Plan for the ECCE sector. Implementation of Síolta and Aistear, the National Quality Frameworks, in ECCE settings.
1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the operation of a high quality school system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching and financial supports provided to schools annually based on agreed criteria and enrolment data. Policy and legislative development to support the effective governance, management and operation of schools, including the involvement of parents and learners. Targeted interventions to assist schools in addressing serious weaknesses in teaching and learning. Effective operation of procedures to deal with serious underperformance by teachers. Feedback from students, parents and education providers.
1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide targeted supports to schools included in the DEIS programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports provided to schools included in the DEIS programme.
1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide targeted supports for children with special educational needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports provided for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream and special schools.
1.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the external evaluation of schools and centres for education by expanding and improving the range of inspection models used and by including better opportunities for follow-up and advisory work in schools within the inspection programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased inspection coverage of schools and centres for education and improved reporting to school communities, the Oireachtas and the public. New and enhanced inspection models are implemented. Improved follow-up procedures for poorly performing schools. Better tracking and reporting of the impact of inspection and evaluation on schools and centres for education.
1.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage boards of management and school communities to engage in robust self-review and ongoing improvement of teaching and learning in their schools and centres for education by providing relevant support materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials to support school evaluation are developed. All schools are required to have school improvement plans. Adjust external inspection models to encourage and complement robust school self-evaluation.
1.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a quality educational psychology service to schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students have access to quality psychological support from NEPS.
1.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a safe, efficient and cost effective transport service for eligible children to and from school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eligible children are safely transported to and from school. Implement approved recommendations in the Value for Money Review of the School Transport Scheme.
1.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and provide, in conjunction with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment ("NCCA"), curricula and syllabi that enable children and young people to develop skills for life, learning and work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued rollout of Project Maths. Progress on implementing change to the junior cycle curriculum and assessment arrangements at second level. Revision of the English curriculum for primary and post-primary schools to clarify the learning outcomes to be expected of learners. Revision of the Irish curriculum L1 and L2 at primary and post-primary levels to clarify the learning outcomes to be expected of learners. Revision of elements of the Primary Curriculum that apply to infant classes.

What we will do		Performance Indicators
1.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop, promote and implement a National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy to improve learning outcomes for children and young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the actions in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.
1.11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the use of ICT in teaching and learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily average of aggregate schools broadband network traffic to increase 25% year on year.
1.12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve assessment and evaluation to support better learning, especially in literacy and numeracy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide focussed CPD on better use of assessment techniques to support teaching and learning. Implementation of standardised tests in literacy and numeracy at primary level. Better reporting of assessment data to parents and school boards of management. Development of tests for literacy and numeracy for use at post-primary level. National collection of assessment data on literacy and numeracy at primary level. Preparations for national collection of assessment data on literacy and numeracy at post-primary level.
1.13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and operate, in conjunction with the State Examinations Commission, appropriate programmes for assessment, accreditation and certification of second-level examinations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective and efficient operation of the State Examinations at second level. Reform of the examinations system in line with curriculum changes.
1.14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Teaching Council and teacher educators to provide high quality initial teacher education programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher education places provided. Extend the three-year concurrent model for initial teacher education for primary teachers. Increase the duration of the Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) programme (for the consecutive model of teacher education) to a minimum of two years. Progress in re-configuring the content and duration of initial teacher education (ITE) courses for teachers to ensure the development of teachers' skills in literacy and numeracy teaching.
1.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide high quality, relevant continuing professional development programmes for teachers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-service programmes and summer courses provided through the Education Centre Network. Continuing professional development courses for teachers are accredited and adequately assessed and evaluated. Provision of detailed guidance and resources to teachers and ECCE practitioners on best practice in the teaching and assessment of literacy and numeracy through handbooks, online courses, digital and other resources.
1.16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the Teaching Council's role in regulating the teaching profession. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full enactment of the Teaching Council Act, 2001. Effective frameworks in place for the regulation of the teaching profession.
1.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support improvements in the teaching of Irish at primary and post-primary levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the curricular changes for Irish as L1 and L2 at primary and post-primary level as planned in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. Raise the minimum entry requirements in Irish for entry to initial teacher education programmes for primary teaching. Implement improvements to assessment of literacy in Irish as L1 in Irish-medium schools as outlined in National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. Implement relevant goals in the 20-year Strategy for the Irish Language which are deliverable in the short term.

What we will do		Performance Indicators
1.18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put in place patronage arrangements for newly established schools and support the work of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the new Government policy on school patronage and of the recommendations of the Forum.
1.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in co-operation with the Irish Youth Justice Service to develop strategies and policies to meet the educational needs of young people placed in detention schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of education and training programmes for young people placed in detention schools.

Goal 2

Provide opportunities for upskilling and reskilling that meet the needs of individuals and the labour market.

The National Skills Strategy highlights the fact that virtually all occupations in the future will require up-skilling and/or re-skilling and continual learning. The Strategy sets an ambitious target that 330,000 people who do not have a leaving certificate or equivalent qualification move up one level on the National Framework of Qualifications in the period to 2020. The Government has also made literacy and basic workplace skills a priority in the Programme for Government.

Results from the Quarterly Household Survey Q3 2011 show the long-term unemployment rate increased from 6.5% to 8.4% over the year to Q3 2011. Long-term unemployment accounted for 56.3% of total unemployment in Q3 2011. The Government's Labour Market Activation policy statement *Pathways to Work* commits to further education and training places for the unemployed and closer working relationships between the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Education and Skills in meeting their needs. Through the establishment of SOLAS and the reform of the further education and training sector, the Department will work to improve the quality and relevance of further education and training provision. Enhanced cross-departmental governance arrangements are now in place to oversee the establishment of NEES and SOLAS in a coordinated manner.

Long term objectives

- Progress in achieving the targets set out in the National Skills Strategy.
- Provision of focused further education and training programmes to enhance the employability of learners, including jobseekers.
- Progress in implementing *Pathways to Work* including provision of places and effective referral services managed by NEES, SOLAS and further education and training providers to meet the needs of the unemployed.

What we will do		Performance Indicators
2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the implementation of the National Skills Strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress on achieving the National Skills Strategy goals.
2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish SOLAS, the new further education and training authority, to reform, co-ordinate and fund further education and training programmes nationally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of SOLAS on an administrative and statutory basis. • Transfer of FÁS Training Centre premises and appropriate FÁS regional staff to the VECs.
2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure co-ordination with the D/Social Protection on the establishment of SOLAS and the roll-out of NEES. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective coordination and governance mechanisms in place as set out in <i>Pathways to Work</i>.
2.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish formal links between the NEES and SOLAS and VECs to ensure appropriate referral of unemployed people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate structures and service level agreements (SLAs) in place.
2.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the provision of high quality, learner centred, relevant and flexible educational and training opportunities to allow people, particularly jobseekers and people with disabilities, to upskill and reskill. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased provision of programmes accredited by FETAC, especially Levels 1 and 2. • Increased participation by target groups, such as, jobseekers, people with disabilities and the low-skilled in further education and training programmes. • Increased provision of flexible, relevant, learner centred further education and training programmes which respond to learner and national skills needs. • Increased progression rates to training or further and higher education or employment.
2.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with providers to incorporate literacy training into a wide variety of further education and training programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of courses incorporating literacy modules. • Increased literacy skills
2.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct evaluations of further education and training programmes with a view to ensuring maximum efficiency and effectiveness of provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of recommendations arising from evaluations.
2.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with providers to implement a robust quality assurance process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of a more structured self-evaluation process by service providers. • Implementation by providers of robust quality

What we will do		Performance Indicators
		assurance processes, externally agreed and validated by FETAC (and subsequently the amalgamated qualifications and quality assurance agency).

Goal 3

Provide high quality learning, research and innovation opportunities in the higher education sector.

Higher Education has an important role in supporting personal opportunity, social, civic and cultural development. It is also recognised as an increasingly important element of national infrastructure for supporting enterprise development, innovation and economic growth. Within that context, supporting quality teaching and learning, research and innovation in higher education and enhancing the capacity of the sector to respond to changing needs of learners, the economy and society are a priority. The Department aims to promote access to higher education particularly for under represented groups and provide flexible learning opportunities. Our long term objectives are to increase the levels of overall educational attainment in the workforce and increase participation of under-represented groups in higher education.

Long term objectives

- Support Ireland's economic renewal, growth and quality of life through the development of an innovative, flexible and responsive higher education system that provides access for a greater range of people and that has high quality teaching, research and engagement as its hallmark.

What we will do	Performance Indicators
3.1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a new policy and operational framework, including funding, for higher education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progress in implementing the actions identified in the National Strategy for Higher Education Implementation Plan aimed at addressing objectives for excellence in teaching and learning, research and engagement and addressing sustainability and funding, system development, governance and performance issues.
3.2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with the Higher Education Authority and the new Qualifications and Quality Assurance Agency in providing effective policy support, oversight and leadership for the higher education sector in meeting the needs of the learner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase in flexible approaches to learning in higher education.• Continued development of the Quality Assurance Framework for higher education, including the development of subject benchmarks and a review of the external examiner system.
3.3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support the implementation of the National Skills Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progress on achieving the National Skills Strategy goals.
3.4 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support the Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation ("SSTI") objectives of developing world class research in higher education institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhanced arrangements for technology transfer in place.• Growth in PhD, Masters and early stage researcher numbers towards the achievement of SSTI human capital targets.
3.5 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote equity of access to higher education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding for financial support schemes.• Targeted actions, initiatives and interventions to promote access and retention among under-represented groups in higher education• Increased participation rates among under-represented groups.
3.6 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement a new strategy to enhance the internationalisation of Irish education services and promote Ireland internationally as a centre of excellence in education and training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase in the number of international students in higher education institutions and in the number of students studying English in Ireland.• Increase in the outward mobility of Irish academic staff and students in line with EU objectives and the objectives of the Bologna Process.
3.7 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement a programme of legislative and administrative reform of student maintenance grants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementation of a single student grant awarding authority.• New single unified scheme for student maintenance grants in place.• Level of customer satisfaction with new student grants system.

Goal 4

Plan and provide appropriate infrastructure for learning environments

We aim to provide appropriate infrastructure for learning environments so that all learners have access to a modern learning environment. We must ensure that we provide accommodation to meet demand for school places in areas where enrolments are rising. Delivery of building projects in the education sector will contribute to economic activity, create jobs around the country and increase our productive capacity. Construction costs have reduced significantly in recent years and we will seek to achieve the best value for the taxpayer.

Long term objectives

- Implementation of a five year plan for educational infrastructure at primary and second level.
- Provision of high quality facilities for the higher education sector.

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What we will do		Performance Indicators
4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify, plan towards and commence meeting accommodation needs identified to 2016 based on demographic trends and data on existing school stock.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progress on major schools projects. Number of schools for which:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Sites have been purchased○ Briefs have been formulated○ Design teams have been appointed.○ Construction commenced on site○ Projects have been completed
4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use diverse methodologies for the construction of major projects on the primary and post primary school building programme in line with specific project timelines.	
4.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete the higher education projects where construction has commenced while transferring day-to-day administration to the Higher Education Authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completion of the relevant projects.
4.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop enhanced financial management, appraisal, audit and asset management systems used for infrastructure projects to ensure value for money and effectiveness in capital expenditure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of audits and spot-checks carried out.• Enhanced systems in place to support the selection and delivery of infrastructure projects.
4.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve communication and coordination with external stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhanced cooperation with local authorities in site identification and local planning.• Regular publication of information on the allocation of funding and status of building projects on the Department's website.• Provision of comprehensive technical guidance to design teams to ensure development of cost-effective appropriate solutions within agreed timelines.
4.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Negotiate the transfer of school infrastructure currently owned by 18 religious orders cited in the Ryan Report, at no extra cost, to the State.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Process for transfer of school infrastructure in place.• Transfers that have taken place.

4. Ensuring the Department is responsive, capable and efficient.

The Department needs to be responsive, capable and efficient in achieving our goals and objectives. We are committed to providing high quality services to our customers and working effectively with our stakeholders.

We want to ensure that we deliver value to the taxpayer and are accountable for how we deliver services and their effectiveness.

We will continue to improve the way we do our work, ensuring we have effective structures and systems both in the Department and the wider education system.

We will continue to support and develop our staff and aim to improve performance at all levels of the organisation. We will encourage effective team work, collaboration and effective internal communication. In particular, during the period covered by this Statement of Strategy, we will work to address the findings arising from the Organisational Review of the Department.

The recent **Organisational Review** of the Department, which incorporates the views of our own staff and those of our main stakeholders, presents us with a number of challenges to address. We are committed to meeting these challenges over the period of this strategy statement.

The review identifies the Department's most significant strength as its dedicated, committed, hard working staff. We will work to ensure we enable our staff to perform to the best of their ability and contribute to the achievement of the Department's goals and objectives.

What we will do	Performance Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the <i>Public Service Reform</i> initiative across the Education sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in implementing <i>Public Service Reform</i> initiatives.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen our role as sector leaders and ensure shared understanding of issues and work programmes; agreeing Service Level Agreements with our agencies and education providers where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular structured engagement between senior management in the Department, its agencies and other stakeholders. Service Level Agreements agreed with relevant agencies and education providers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In accordance with Children First, support the education system in providing a safe environment for all children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures in place for department staff on reporting child welfare and protection concerns brought to their attention. Provision of Child Protection Guidelines for schools to support their role in this area. Development of appropriate child protection policies and procedures by agencies of the Department.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commence work on establishing 16 Education and Training Boards in line with the Programme for Government commitment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in drafting legislation to provide for the restructuring and rationalisation of Vocational Education Committees. Progress in implementing a programme of restructuring and rationalisation of the VEC sector.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the modernisation of the education sector through a partnership process that promotes good industrial relations practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the Department's / Agency Action Plan under the Croke Park Agreement. Industrial peace in the Education Sector underpins enhanced service delivery.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the Organisational Review Programme Action Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in implementing the Organisational Review Action Plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support our staff in performing to the best of their ability by improving internal communication, ensuring efficient deployment of staff resources, providing quality training opportunities including on-the-job training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training needs identified through PMDS are addressed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to improve the quality of our information, analysis and evaluation capacity and expertise to inform the development of policy and service delivery options; improving our ability to identify and manage emerging issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of our information management systems. Policy analysis expertise improved through appropriate training.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide high quality services to the Government, Minister, Ministers of State and wider political system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback provided by Ministers and members of the wider political system.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a formal change management work programme to ensure a planned and disciplined approach to identifying and exploiting organisational efficiencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of business process reengineering projects undertaken. • Progress in implementing business process improvement plans.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that programmes are delivered in the most efficient manner and that programme implementation is managed well and aligned with other work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department structures and processes reconfigured to meet changing needs. • Implementation of business plans reviewed annually. • Available IT systems used appropriately to streamline business processes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and implement the measures decided by Government arising from the Comprehensive Expenditure Review. In this context we will manage our budget effectively and prioritise activities for maximum impact and efficiency, including through the implementation of the Performance Budgeting approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review for the Education sector. • High standards of financial management and controls are maintained as verified by external monitoring bodies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance our use of ICT to improve the way we do our work; to facilitate the use of shared services, to deliver on-line services and information to the public and the wider education and training system, including a new customer focussed website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress in implementing the Department's ICT Strategy. • New website delivered in 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the effectiveness of our risk management, control and governance processes through the work of our Internal Audit Unit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress in implementing recommendations arising from internal audit reports.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake regular evaluations of key spending areas through the Value for Money and Policy Review programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value for Money and Policy Reviews completed and recommendations implemented.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide education and training related data to the public and organisations such as Eurostat, the OECD, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Statistics pamphlet published within agreed timeframe annually. • Improvements made to the National School Annual Census. • Improvements made to the availability and access to education statistics through the Department's website.

5. Cross Cutting Issues

The Department invests substantial time and resources in contributing to a significant number of cross-departmental committees and groups dealing with a wide range of economic and social issues. Within the context of overall Government priorities for Education, we will continue to contribute to the development and implementation of cross-cutting policies and services including implementation of the National Children's Strategy, the 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language, the National Drugs Strategy, Reach Out, RAPID and Limerick Regeneration.

Education and training is an important element of our engagement at EU level and we will continue to actively contribute to the development of education and training through co-operation, collective decision making and participation in programmes of action at EU and international levels. Education and training will feature in the programme for Ireland's Presidency of the EU in 2013. We also provide for a range of international scholarships, exchanges and bilateral education and cultural programmes. Implementing the International Education Strategy – *Investing in Global Relationships* – will also be a priority in the coming years. Developing the international education sector will provide us with an opportunity to enhance Ireland's reputation abroad. As well as contributing to economic activity in the shorter term, it is an investment in Ireland's future business, trading, cultural and tourism relationships.

We will continue to work to develop co-operation and common action in education between both parts of the island of Ireland, in the context of the Good Friday Agreement. Within this context, we have and will continue to develop, support and participate in a range of programmes and joint initiatives designed to increase mutual understanding and promote closer co-operation. A number of these programmes extend beyond the island of Ireland, involving cooperation with education authorities and other relevant institutions in Britain, the United States and the EU with a view to maximising the positive contribution they can make to North / South co-operation.

6. Monitoring and Reporting on the Implementation of our Strategy

Progress in achieving the goals set out in this strategy statement will be regularly monitored and reviewed by the Secretary General and the senior management team in the Department through the business planning process. The high level goals will be reflected in the targets and tasks agreed with individual staff each year.

The Department's Annual Output Statement and Annual Report will provide details on how the financial inputs provided for each goal translate into outputs and relate resources to outcomes. We will revise our annual reporting arrangements in line with the Programme for Government commitment to provide Public Service Delivery Reports. We will provide regular reports on the implementation of the Programme for Government.

The C&AG conducts ongoing audits of our receipts and expenditures and of our systems, procedures and practices. He also conducts Value for Money examinations of specific functions and programmes. The outcomes of these audits and investigations are published in the C&AG's Annual Report. Relevant officials will report as required to relevant Oireachtas committees on aspects of the Department's activities which the committees may wish to examine.

APPENDIX 1 – Programme for Government Commitments

Commitment	Related Actions over period of this Strategy Statement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will - within the first 100 days – resource a Jobs Fund which will provide resources for an additional 15,000 places in training, work experience and educational opportunities for those who are out of work. • We will provide a range of initiatives to increase access to further higher level education for the unemployed. • We will make Literacy and basic workplace skills a national priority, with literacy training incorporated into wider variety of further education and training. • Within this total, we will provide 30,000 additional training places across the education and training system, distributed in line with the recommendations of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. • We will expand training options for jobseekers across the VEC, further and higher education sectors to facilitate upskilling of the labour force. • We will address the widespread and persistent problem of adult literacy through the integration of literacy in vocational training and through community education. • We will also facilitate people with disabilities in achieving a greater level of participation in employment, training and education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant elements of Jobs Initiative announced in May 2011 are being implemented. • A new further education and training authority, SOLAS, is being established. SOLAS will reform, co-ordinate and fund the wide range of training and further education programmes around the country so that they have a learner-centred focus and are integrated, flexible, value for money and responsive to the needs of learners and the requirements of a changing economy. • The Higher Education Authority (HEA), which is managing Springboard on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills, is finalising the first stage of the evaluation of Springboard 2011. This will inform the new Call for Proposals for Springboard 2012 which is expected to issue before the end of February 2012. It is anticipated that the selection process will be finalised and new programmes announced by the end of April 2012. • Following on from the Labour Market Activation Fund which operated in 2010 and 2011, a new fund will be introduced in 2012 specifically targeted at the long term unemployed. This fund amounting to €20 million, from the National Training Fund, will deliver upwards of 6,500 education and training places.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A National Strategy for International Education will be implemented, to develop the 'Education Ireland' brand, to encourage more international students to study here and to create new jobs in the sector. • Our objective will be to double number of international students studying in Ireland, particularly targeting students from India, China and the Middle East. • This policy will be pursued in line with employment, academic and skill requirements of overall economy and education sector. • We will overhaul the student visa system and ensure advertising, diaspora policies and quality assurance systems are strategically developed to best position the international education sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the International Education Strategy – <i>Investing in Global Relationships</i> is underway.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a full review of the Hunt and OECD reports into third level funding before end of 2011. Our goal is to introduce a funding system that will provide third level institutions with reliable funding but does not impact access for students. • We will review the recommendations of Hunt report on higher education. A reform of third level will be driven by the need to improve learning outcomes of undergraduate degree students, as well as providing high quality research. • We will initiate a time-limited audit of level 8 qualifications on offer and learning outcomes for graduates of these courses. • We will introduce radical reform in third level institutions to maximise existing funding, in particular reform of academic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HEA prepared an interim report on the sustainability of the existing funding framework for higher education which was submitted to the Minister in November 2011. The HEA will be carrying out substantial additional work to fully inform the development of proposals on how we can sustainably fund higher education into the future. • Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for Higher Education underway.

<p>contracts and will encourage greater specialisation by educational institutions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will explore the establishment of a multi campus Technical University in the South East. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools will publish annual reports. We will require schools, with the support of the Inspectorate, to draw up five year development plans for their schools and individual teachers. The system for evaluating schools will be reformed so parents have access to more information when choosing a school for their family. A new system of self-evaluation will be introduced, requiring all schools to evaluate their own performance year on year and publish information across a wide range of criteria. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a range of documents to support school self-evaluation with a pilot project in 2011/2012. Schools will complete self-evaluation reports annually by end of 2014. External schools inspection models will be developed to complement school self-evaluation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will give greater freedom and autonomy to school principals and boards to raise educational standards by devolving more responsibility locally, with greater freedom to allocate and manage staff with required flexibility and to delegate management responsibilities to teachers as school priorities require. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The introduction of new initiatives to provide greater flexibility at school level will be considered.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A priority in education will be to recruit, train and support the highest calibre of teachers. School leadership will be fundamental to furthering this aim. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reform of initial Teacher Education underway in the context of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative functions, relating to maintenance, school building projects and coordination of support services currently carried out by principals will be devolved locally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will be progressed in the context of the restructuring and rationalisation programme for the Vocational Education Committees.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education will be a priority for this Government. It will endeavour to protect and enhance the educational experience of children, young people and students. To that end, it will endeavour to protect frontline services in education, and seek efficiencies in work and school practices, in line with the Croke Park Agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will be prioritised in the context of the preparation of the annual estimates and ongoing engagement with stakeholders in relation to implementation of the Croke Park Agreement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will review Junior and Leaving Certificate systems and implement reforms necessary to encourage greater innovation and independent learning, building on the NCCA's work in this area. Maths and science teaching at second level will be reformed, including making science a compulsory Junior Cert subject by 2014. Professional development for maths and science teachers will be prioritised. A bonus points system for maths, which is linked to specific maths or science courses, will be introduced to encourage greater participation in courses where skills shortages currently exist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of Junior Cycle curriculum and assessment arrangements underway. Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. This is being pursued as part of the rollout of Project Maths and in the context of the curriculum and assessment reforms currently underway with a view to ensuring all students have reached a required level of competency and skills in mathematics and science by the end of compulsory education. A scheme of bonus points for students taking leaving certificate higher level maths is being implemented from 2012.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A national literacy strategy for children and young people will be developed as a matter of urgency, with school-level targets that are related to national targets. Every school will be required to have a literacy action plan, with demonstrable outcomes. Responsibility for achieving these outcomes will be vested in the school principals, who will also receive continuous professional development to support the implementation of the strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy published on 8th July 2011.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-service and in-service training in teaching of literacy for all primary and secondary school teachers will be improved, with dedicated literacy mentors to work intensively with teachers in most disadvantaged primary schools. • DEIS primary schools will be required to teach literacy for 120 minutes per day; non-DEIS schools to teach literacy for 90 minutes per day. This time includes incorporating structured literacy tuition into teaching of other subjects. • A longer term aim of this Government will be to position Ireland in the top ten performing countries in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). 	
<p>This Government will end the treatment of ICT in education as a stand-alone issue, but will integrate it across education policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will begin with merging the National Centre for Technology in Education with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. • A new plan to develop ICT in teaching, learning and assessment will be developed. This plan will incorporate the integration of ICT policy across other agencies, such as the Professional Development Services for Teachers, the State Examinations Commission, and Project Maths. • The primary priority for investment in ICT in the immediate term will be the integration of ICT in teaching and learning across the curriculum and investing in broadband development to ensure schools have access to fibre-powered broadband. Investment in ICT will be maximised through pooling of ICT procurement. • Greater use of online platforms will be made to offer a wide range of subjects and lessons online, and to enable schools to 'share' teachers via live web casts. These online lessons will be made available through a new Digital School Resource, bringing together existing resources from National Council for Curriculum Assessment, Department of Education and other sources as a cost effective means of sharing expertise between schools. • We will engage with the publishing industry to develop more online learning resources and new mediums for their learning materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and consultation will be carried out to assist in development of a new plan for the integration of ICT across education policy. The first organisational step in this process is to integrate the functions of the NCTE with the NCCA and the Department's support services which is underway. • DES and the Department of Communications Energy and Natural Resources are funding the roll out of the 100Mbit/s connections with the aim of having all schools connected by the end of 2014. These priorities will continue to be pursued over the period of the Strategy Statement within available resources. • Schools will be included in national procurement frameworks where appropriate. • Existing resources will be reviewed in the context of the organisational integration of the functions of the NCTE with the NCCA and the support services. Options for design and delivery of an integrated national resource will be explored. Recommendations for implementation will be made in light of available resources. • Consultation with the publishing industry will continue over the period of the Strategy Statement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This Government will prioritise school building projects in a revised national development plan. • The objective of this Government will be to progressively phase out the inefficient renting of school prefabs. In the interim the negotiation of prefab rental contracts will be part of a reformed public procurement policy to encourage greater value for money, transparency and reduce dependency on temporary accommodation. • The devolution of an annual capital budget to schools will be piloted to allow school to plan for capital projects. • The Department of Education's central 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium Term Education Capital Investment Framework published 10 November 2011. • Schools Building Programme for 2012 announced 19 December 2011. • Details of the five year education infrastructure plan will be published in the first quarter 2012. This will outline when the major school projects needed to cater for demographic growth will be completed. Publication of the plan will also enhance the transparency and openness in the school building system. • Use of diverse methodologies for the construction of major projects on the primary and post primary school building programme in line with specific project timelines.

<p>database of school accommodation will be overhauled to ensure a complete inventory of school buildings and associated structures is maintained so deficiencies are easily identifiable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In areas of demographic growth, Shared Educational Campuses will be the preferred model for future development of educational infrastructure. New schools will be built to grow with their communities and to provide for more interactive, child-friendly model of education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to progress the development of the existing databases is underway in consultation with the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI). • Research underway into the future design requirements of school accommodation; site acquisitions for new schools underway.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will negotiate the transfer of school infrastructure currently owned by 18 religious orders cited in Ryan Report, at no extra cost, to the State. In principle, school buildings and land will be zoned for educational use, so that they cannot easily be sold and lost to system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work ongoing in relation to the contributions towards the costs of the Response to Redress by the 18 religious congregations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will consider recommendations of the review of the DEIS programme and use it as a platform for new initiatives to deliver better outcomes for students in disadvantaged areas. • We will examine how to make existing expenditure on educational disadvantage more effective, and innovative ways in which teenagers at risk of leaving school system can stay connected, for example through use of ICT-based distance learning and projects such as iScoil. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An evaluation of DEIS has been undertaken by the Educational Research Centre and a report of this evaluation will be published in Q1 2012. The evaluation will inform any future changes to the current programme.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will publish a plan for the implementation of the EPSEN Act 2004 to prioritise access for children with special needs to an individual education plan. The priority will be to move to a system where necessary supports follow a child from primary to second level and to achieve greater integration of special needs-related services. • We will support diversity in education of children with special needs, recognising that both intensive education and mainstreaming can be seen to work for individual children. • We recognise the critical importance of early diagnosis of autism and early intervention and address current deficits in this area. We will reverse the cut to the number of psychologists in National Educational Psychological Service in Budget 2011. • We will examine supports in place for gifted students and create improved links with third level institutions on regional basis, to provide gifted students with access to new programmes or educational resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the costs involved and current fiscal constraints, addressing this issue will be very challenging. Consideration is being given to how the objectives of the EPSEN Act can be delivered to improve educational outcomes for students with special needs. • We will continue to implement this approach as part of the continuum of provision for children with special needs ranging from support in a mainstream class to a special class / unit to special schools. • Will be considered in the context of the annual estimates for 2012 and implementation of the Employment Control Framework for the Education Sector. • Links with third level institutions will be improved over the period covered by this strategy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will initiate a time-limited Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector to allow all stakeholders including parents to engage in open debate on change of patronage in communities where it is appropriate and necessary. The Forum will have concise terms of reference and will sit for a maximum of 12 months. • The Forum's recommendations will be drawn up into White Paper for consideration and implementation by Government to ensure that education system can provide sufficiently diverse number of schools, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum on Patronage and Pluralism established. • Will be progressed in context of recommendations arising from the work of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism and of new policy approach on the patronage of new schools. • Educate Together recognised as a patron for second-level schools. • New policy on new school patronage established and being implemented.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> catering for all religions and none. We will give parents and local communities the opportunity to have a say in the patronage of existing and future schools, for example by direct ballot. We will also move towards a more pluralist system of patronage at second level, recognising a wider number of patrons. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People of non-faith or minority religious backgrounds and publicly identified LGBT people should not be deterred from training or taking up employment as teachers in the State. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This issue will be progressed in consultation with officials in D/Justice, Equality and Law Reform.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We support the relocation of DIT to Grangegorman as resources permit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exchequer infrastructure investment has been postponed and planning is underway.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will merge the existing accreditation authorities; National Qualifications Authority, FETAC and HETAC to increase transparency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualifications and Quality Assurance Bill being progressed. The Interim Board and CEO Designate of the new body have begun the detailed planning required for the amalgamation and have established a central Planning Group and a number of Task Force Project Groups, comprised of members of staff of the bodies concerned. It is intended that administrative preparations for amalgamation proceed in parallel with the passage of legislation to ensure the early establishment of the body following enactment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will update the out-dated drugs awareness programmes in schools to reflect current attitudes and reality of recreational drug use amongst teens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A working group is being established to update the existing guidelines.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will encourage schools to develop anti-bullying policies and in particular, strategies to combat homophobic bullying to support students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on addressing the issue of bullying, including homophobic bullying, being progressed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will undertake a thorough reform of the Irish curriculum and the way in which Irish is taught at primary and second levels of education. We will reform the curriculum so more emphasis is put on oral and aural skills. We will allocate 50% of marks to the oral Irish exam at Leaving Certificate level. We will aim to double the proportion of Irish students sitting the Higher Level Leaving Certificate exam by 2018. We will take steps to improve the quality and effectiveness of the teaching of Irish at second level. When these steps have been implemented, we will consider the question of whether Irish should be optional at Leaving Certificate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is to give immediate priority to the revision of the curricula for Irish for Irish medium schools, at primary level. The NCCA is to prioritise the revision of the syllabus for Irish in Irish-medium schools as part of the junior cycle reforms. Work is continuing on the development of texts and resources for schools through the work of An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta. A working group has been established, under the auspices of the Department of Community, Equality and the Gaeltacht, to scope out and agree the steps to be taken in the short term to progress implementation of the 20 year Strategy for the Irish Language.