



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

Annual Report 2019

Department of Education and Skills

June 2020



EUROPEAN UNION
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Foreword by the Minister

I welcome the publication of the Department's Annual Report for 2019 which outlines the significant work undertaken during last year.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been hugely challenging for the whole country and the unified response has been immense.

Along with the actions across Government, a huge amount has happened in the education and skills sector since schools, colleges, universities and other settings closed on March 12th.

Ba mhaith liom mo mhór-bhuíochas a ghabháil leis na múinteoirí, na tuismitheoirí, na daltaí agus na scoileanna as ucht na hoibre ar fad atá déanta go dtí seo i mbliana. Tá sibh tar éis tuiscint agus misneach a thaispeáint in ainneoin na deacrachtaí atá ag teacht chun cinn le cúpla mí anuas.

I have no doubt the dramatic pace at which issues are addressed will continue. It is a credit to everyone involved in the sector, as well as the parents – not least the decisions around Leaving Certificate 2020. It exemplifies the spirit of being 'In This Together'.

In March 2019, I launched the Action Plan for Education which sets out more than 280 deliverable actions for this year to continuously improve our education system.

I chose the title Cumasú – empowerment through learning, to symbolise our drive to prepare people in a balanced way for life and work. It emphasises the need for young people and students to aim high and to fulfil their potential while developing the skills to think critically and to adapt and innovate with a resilience and wellbeing

Over the past few years, using the Action Plan framework, great progress has been made and I want to thank everyone who was involved. I see the education and training sector as a united one, where we engage in a common effort to nurture the next generation. I am committed to continuing with the reforms underway, in a carefully managed and paced way. I want to ensure that there is a logical sequence to what's being implemented on the ground.

In 2019 I was able to bring in a new and more compassionate approach to Leaving Certificate students who suffer a close family bereavement during the state examinations.

Again I want to thank Rhona Butler for telling her story and asking me to act. The death of a loved one is a deeply traumatic event for any young person, which will only be compounded if it occurs in the midst of exams.

It is an important reform. For future years, when the exams are being held, it ensures Leaving Certificate students who lose a close family member are given a chance to sit alternative papers.

In October last year I announced that History would be given a special core status in the Framework for Junior Cycle. I believe that an understanding of history is vitally important for the generations coming after us.

Those key decisions for our students show how our education system is responsive and progressive.

Ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil chomh maith leis an Roinn as ucht na hoibre agus na tacaíochta atá tugtha acu ó thaobh tuilleadh béime a chur ar an nGaeilge sna scoileanna agus sa chóras oideachais go ginearálta.

I am pleased that I have been able to lead the renewed focus on Irish in our education system during my time in the Department. This included designating five new primary schools as Irish-medium, amending criteria to be considered in relation to Irish-medium education as part of patronage processes, launching a review of Irish-medium education policy as well as the CLIL project teaching subjects such as PE using our language.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of the Department's officials and my colleagues, Ministers of State, Mary Mitchell O'Connor and John Halligan.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all those working in the education and training sector for their work in 2019, which so greatly contributed to the Department's achievements.

Joe McHugh T.D.

Minister for Education and Skills



Foreword by Minister of State Mitchell O'Connor

During 2019 we continued to progress the reform agenda in the Higher education sector. I welcome the publication of this Annual Report, which highlights the work carried out by the Department to ensure this transformation is facilitated, and advanced.

The Technological Universities Act, 2018 provides for the development of a new technological university model. Technological University Dublin (known as TU Dublin and comprising the former Dublin Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown and Institute of Technology Tallaght) became the first technological university, formally coming into existence on January 1st, 2019.

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 was signed into law in July 2019. It will pave the way for the development of an International Education Mark as part of quality assurance of providers.

A Framework for consent in Higher Education Institutions was launched in April 2019. The framework aims to ensure the creation of an institutional campus culture which is safe, respectful and supportive. The Framework draws from international best practice and research to provide institutions with standards and guidance on what works to create a safe and supportive culture.

Access to higher education continues to improve, particularly for those in under-represented groups in society. Late last year the *Action Plan to Promote Traveller Participation in Higher Education* was launched. The plan was developed in consultation with Traveller representative groups, and aims to support and advance Traveller participation in higher education.

Mary Mitchell O'Connor
Minister of State for Higher Education



Foreword by Minister of State Halligan

I welcome the progress made in 2019 in the skill's area and note the publication of the Department of Education and Skills' Annual Report 2019. Last year was a productive year for the skills' area, as my colleagues and I continued to work towards making the education and training system one that is flexible, responsive and meets the needs of life-long learners.

This report notes a number of important achievements made with this vision in mind.

A new suite of courses under SpringBoard+ 2019 was launched, bringing the total number of courses under the programme to 285 and the number of places available to over 9,000. Eleven new apprenticeship programmes were launched in 2019 in a diverse range of areas including Media, ICT, Engineering, Construction and Sales.

Skillnet Ireland's provision was expanded in key skill areas, including the establishment of new learning networks to provide training to small business owner managers and develop new certified programmes.

2019 also saw the expansion of the EXPLORE programme, which provides learning opportunities to those in employment, but not engaged with the education and training system, or existing upskilling programmes, and helps address the low level of participation in lifelong learning amongst the Irish workforce.

I would like to acknowledge the work of my colleagues in the wider education and training sector, for their continuous engagement and contribution.

John Halligan

Minister of State for Training, Skills, Innovation,
Research and Development



Statement from the Secretary General

I am pleased to introduce the 2019 Annual Report of the Department of Education and Skills, which documents the progress made during the first year of our three year Statement of Strategy 2019-2021. The Department outlined in its Strategy Statement an ambitious path to progress initiatives and strategies with the aim of providing an education and training system that aims to equip learners with the knowledge and skills that they need to achieve their potential and to participate fully in society.

In November 2019, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) celebrated its 20 year anniversary. In addition to providing support to schools, NEPS is centrally involved in the development and implementation of the Department's policies in relation to special education and social inclusion. NEPS has also taken a lead role in the development of the Department's Wellbeing Policy and Framework for Practice (2018-2023). This recognises the important role that schools play in promoting the wellbeing of young people.

It is also very positive to see the results of surveys and international comparisons demonstrating positive outcomes for learners in Irish education and training, in particular the recent PISA results which show Ireland's 15 year-olds are among the best in the world in reading literacy and that post-primary schools in Ireland can be considered relatively equitable in comparison with other countries. These positive outcomes all reflect the collaboration and engagement across many parts of our Department as well as with our fellow Government Departments and our partners in education and training.

Preparing for Brexit remained a key focus for the Department throughout 2019 with the Department overseeing the passage of Part five of the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act, 2019 to enable the payment of SUSI grants to Irish students in the UK, in the absence of a withdrawal deal. The Department continued to engage with stakeholders in the Education Sector on Brexit preparations, with the Department now focusing on ensuring that the interests of the Education Sector are protected in the context of the future relationships negotiations.

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

Seán Ó Foghlú
Secretary General

Our Mission

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

Goals 2019-2021

Our Goals



GOAL 1

We will shape a responsive education and training system that meets the needs and raises the aspirations of all learners.



GOAL 2

We will advance the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special educational needs in order to support them to achieve their potential.



GOAL 3

We will equip education and training providers with the skills and support to provide a quality learning experience.



GOAL 4

We will intensify the relationships between education and the wider community, society and the economy.



GOAL 5

We will lead in the delivery of strategic direction and supportive systems in partnership with key stakeholders in education and training.

The Department's performance in 2019 is measured against the key outputs and performance indicators outlined in the *Statement of Strategy 2019-2021*.

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

Overview of key actions delivered during 2019

Education and training matter to people, the aim of the Department's Strategy Statement is to provide a way to help people realise their full potential to lead richer lives, and to help our society develop. This Annual Report details the Department's activities during 2019 and reports on the progress made towards implementation of our Strategy Statement.

GOAL 1



In 2019, work continued on **Wellbeing**, piloting a new school inclusion model integrating pupil centred services, evaluating the pilot of the In-School Therapy Demonstration Project and continuing to expand the number of NEPS psychologists who support implementation of the *Wellbeing Policy and Framework for Practice 2018 – 2023*.

Development of the **primary curriculum** continued with a report on coding and computational thinking being published which identified three aspects of digital competence; creating with technology, understanding technology, and using technology as fundamental to the inclusion of coding and computational thinking in a curriculum and charted short and long-term steps to achieve inclusion. From September 2020, all post-primary schools will be required to offer History as a Junior Cycle subject and all students entering first year at that time will be required to study History as part of the curriculum.

In the area of **critical skills development** action was taken to build momentum behind our ambition for STEM, foreign languages, closing the gap in literacy and numeracy, and adopting the transformation of learning made possible by digital technology.

In November 2019, the **Human Capital Initiative** was launched representing an investment of €300m, over 5 years 2020-2024 to provide additional capacity across the Higher Education Sector to meet priority skill needs for enterprise.

GOAL 2



Work continued to support **learners at risk of disadvantage** and **increase inclusion** through the further expansion of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) strand of the Schools Excellence Fund (SEF). Guidelines were developed for schools to support successful transitions at the key stages of pre-school to primary and primary to post-primary school.

The process of allocating special education teachers to schools was reviewed to ensure that data is available and there is engagement with the sector so that school profiles were updated to enable new allocations to be made for the 2019/20 school year. Approximately 37,500 pupils with additional care needs are being supported by SNAs in the current school year.

Measures to improve access to higher education for underrepresented groups including travellers, lone parents and for the deaf and hard of hearing were further developed. Further financial supports were delivered through a €1 million increase in the Student Assistance Fund (SAF) for Professional Master of Education students, the continuation of the Pilot Student Support Scheme, a grant support scheme for asylum seekers in third level education, and several improvements made to the 2019/20 Student Grant Scheme in order to benefit some of the most disadvantaged students.

GOAL 3



A new Aistear CPD programme was rolled out and a self-evaluation framework was developed to support the implementation of Sfolta (the national quality framework) and Aistear (the early childhood curriculum framework) via the National Sfolta Aistear Initiative new model for delivering mentoring and training supports under the National Sfolta Aistear Initiative; professional award criteria and guidelines for initial professional education degree programmes for the sector were launched.

The Department's Inspectorates work programmes during 2019 included the provision of a number of new inspection models. A national programme of early years inspections provided advice and supported progressive improvement in standards, leadership and learning activities within that sector.

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 was signed into law in July 2019 which paves the way for the development of an **International Education Mark (IEM)** as part of quality assurance of providers.

Work to deliver the **Teacher Supply Action Plan** progressed with the development of a Teacher Workforce Data Model to facilitate future planning for teacher demand and supply.

Reform initial teacher education (ITE) ensures that teachers are equipped with the right skills for 21st century teaching, learning and assessment. The publication of a review into teacher education, "The Structure of Teacher Education in Ireland: Review of Progress in Implementing Reform", shows constructive engagement by the centres for teacher education with the HEA on progressing the programme of change in this area.

GOAL 4



In 2019, **linkages with society and employers** were strengthened across several areas of activity. Learners were supported with the publication of an independent review of career guidance and the implementation of priority actions in the review. A new suite of courses under Springboard+ 2019 was launched, bringing the number of courses under the programme to 285 and the number of places available to over 9,000. Options for learners continued to expand, with the creation of the first ever technological university – **Technological University Dublin**.

The publication of the ICT Skills Action Plan 2019-2022 provides strategic direction for the design and provision of services in this important area.

Lifelong learning and upskilling continued to be supported by expanding the EXPLORE programme, which helps to address the issue of Ireland's low level of participation in lifelong learning amongst the workforce, implementing the 'Skills to Advance' programme enhancing the skills of adults currently with low skills levels, and supporting implementation of *Upskilling Pathways – New Opportunities for Adults*, an EU Initiative to help low skilled adults acquire basic levels of literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

Skillnet Ireland's provision was expanded in key skill areas, including the establishment of new learning networks to provide training to small business owner managers and develop new certified programmes. The **Regional Skills Fora** and the **Skills for Growth** initiative were supported by the development of new partnerships to make it easier for more employers to identify their future skill needs, and a new pilot programme was designed for first time upskilling SMEs.

A global focus was **maintained** throughout 2019 by successfully continuing to work on achieving the actions and targets in the **International Education Strategy 2016 –**

2020 with 30 high-level international education visits from partner countries.

Reflecting increasing interest in the broad area of climate change, the Department reported on the education sector's actions outlined in Ireland's first "**National Sustainable Development Goals Implementation Plan 2018-2020**". This will inform the development of a successor plan, which will be worked on in 2020.



Capital expenditure in the school sector amounted to €665 million. Capital expenditure on higher education infrastructure was €65million.

Within the HE and FET sectors, procurement commenced under the PPP Programme to increase capacity in TUs/IoTs, advanced construction of Grangegorman PPP Projects, supported small-scale and necessary infrastructure works and improvements in IOTs and TU Dublin with €10 million in capital grants and €8.1 million in Apprenticeship Equipment Grants was also paid to participating HEIs.

Continuing reform of the **higher education funding** model, the Higher Education Performance Fund was developed and implemented. Funding was provided for leadership and capacity building in HEIs, for teaching and learning capacity building in HEIs and for research and innovation in IoTs and TUs.

Further work advanced on **shared services and centralised procurement** to strengthen management systems across a range of services in the Department and sector.

Progress on the five key Strategic Goals in 2019

During 2019, the Department made significant progress in achieving the goals detailed in the *Strategy Statement* and *Action Plan for Education 2019-2021*. The *Annual Report 2019* acknowledges the significant and systematic progress that was made under each of our five goals:

Goal 1: We will shape a responsive education and training system that meets the needs and raises the aspirations of all learners.

This goal is about building learning environments for all learners that promote health, wellbeing and personal development. Positive, agile and responsive environments provide opportunities for all learners to fully participate in, and get maximum benefit from, their education and training experience. This means the development and review of curriculum and assessment, enabling transitions and embracing the power of digital technologies across the continuum of education and training are key to better outcomes for learners, society and the economy.

Review of the year under this Goal

- Significant changes to the process of Leaving Certificate exams included providing special arrangements students who suffer a close family bereavement to sit alternative papers in July and reducing the timeframe for receiving results.
- New Circulars were published which specify the exceptional circumstances in which a school may grant an exemption from the study of Irish.
- A Foreign Language Content and Language (CLIL) project was rolled out in Transition Year.
- The longitudinal study of the Digital Learning Framework and its implementation in Schools was commenced. Delivery of an online higher-level Leaving Certificate Physics course was commenced through Irish from e-Hub Gaeltacht schools to students in other post-primary Gaeltacht schools.
- Additional NEPS psychologists have been recruited to enhance access to the NEPS service and increase the range of NEPS in-school supports.
- A consent framework was launched for deployment by the higher education institutions.
- DES supported the implementation of legislation providing for rent predictability measure in purpose-built third level student accommodation.

Further details under this Goal are set out below.

1.1 Curriculum at primary level

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) continues work on the redevelopment and review of the primary curriculum. As part of this work, the NCCA is engaging widely with stakeholders in education and other interested individuals and groups including working directly with schools across the country on their priorities and needs for a redeveloped primary curriculum. The NCCA will publish a draft overview of a redeveloped primary curriculum in early 2020. This draft will be the basis for an extensive consultation, which will determine the overall shape and direction of a redeveloped curriculum.

The Primary Languages Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile (PLC/CTB), which sets out children's language learning for English and Gaeilge, was introduced to schools on a phased basis in 2016, from junior infants to second class. Work on PLC/CTB continued and in September 2019 the Primary PLC/CTB, Stages 1–4 (junior infants to sixth class) was launched.

The PLC/CTB is supported by a re-developed online support space and by a sustained model of professional development, delivered by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). The sustained support will be delivered over the course of three years.

Published in 2019:

- *Publication in hardcopy of the Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile for stages 1 – 4 (junior infants to sixth class)*
[Circular 45/2019 \(Primary\) - Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile, Stages 1–4 \(junior infants to sixth class\), Support and Implementation](#)

1.2 Curriculum at post-primary level

Implementation of the new Framework for junior cycle is proceeding having commenced in September 2014, with the introduction of the new specification for English. All subjects have, since September 2019, had new specifications introduced in line with the Framework for junior cycle. A comprehensive continuing professional development (CPD) programme for teachers is used to support the introduction of these new specifications.

Of the 21 subjects available under the Framework for junior cycle only four – Mathematics, Gaeilge, English and History – are compulsory. The requirement to study History at junior cycle comes as a result of the decision of the Minister of Education and Skills, in October 2019, to award History special core status within the Framework for junior cycle.

The direction of junior cycle reform is consistent with practice in other high-performing education systems such as New Zealand, Queensland, Estonia and Finland, where schools have been given greater autonomy and flexibility in developing the programmes they offer.

The Report on the Review of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in primary and post-primary schools was published by the NCCA in December 2019.

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

In late 2016, the NCCA commenced an extensive review of Senior Cycle programmes and vocational pathways. Throughout the 2018/19 school year, the NCCA engaged with a representative sample of 41 schools in the initial consultation cycles of the review. Each cycle concluded with a national seminar involving representatives from the collaborating schools and the education partners. The first of two consultation cycles focused on the purpose of Senior Cycle and futures thinking, with the second consultation cycle focusing on pathways and flexibility.

In August 2019, the NCCA began a public consultation on the review of senior cycle. This was accompanied by the publication of the *Interim Report on Senior Cycle Review*, as well as the *Senior Cycle Review Consultation Document*. The consultation invited individuals and organisations to provide feedback on the areas for development emerging from the review to date via an online survey, by making a written submission or by attending a regional focus group meeting. As part of this phase of consultation over 150 attendees from across the education sector heard views from a range of speakers and engage in roundtable

discussions. The deadline for submissions by interested parties was 01 November 2019. The NCCA are now developing a final advisory report, which is due in Q2 2020.

Leaving Certificate Physical Education (LCPE) (examinable) and Senior Cycle Physical Education (non-examinable) were introduced on a phased basis to 80 schools from September 2018, with students to sit the first LCPE examinations in 64 schools in June 2020. Work in 2019 was aimed at supporting schools in delivering the new subjects, and with regard to LCPE, providing guidelines around assessment arrangements including for the Physical Activity Project.

Phase 1 of Leaving Certificate Computer Science commenced in September 2018, with 40 Schools offering the subject to 5th year students. Work continued to support schools in delivering the new subject, including the operation of a trial run of the computer based component of the examination in order to familiarise schools with this component ahead of the first Leaving Certificate examination, which was due to take place in May 2020.

The specification for Leaving Certificate Politics & Society, which was first introduced in 2016, received some minor adjustments which took effect from September 2019. 16 new schools indicated an intention to offer the subject to new fifth years commencing in September 2019 by signing up for the programme of CPD offered by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST).

Revised specifications for Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science and Economics were being introduced from September 2019, with first examination to take place in June 2021.

In light of the content of the revised specifications for Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science and Economics, the subject Agricultural Economics was discontinued from September 2019.

Published in 2019:

- *Circular 55/2019 - Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle with particular reference to school year 2019/20*
https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0055_2019.pdf

1.3 Supporting Candidates who lose a close relative at examinations time

Under an extension of the emergency provisions of the Scheme of Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE Scheme), the State Examinations Commission (SEC) has introduced on a pilot interim basis a limited provision for supporting Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied candidates who experience the death of a close relative during the period of the written examinations. The new measure is detailed in SEC Circular S58/19.

1.4 Gaeilge

In September 2019, the Department updated its guidance in regard to the granting of exemptions from the study of Irish. The new guidance note specifies the exceptional circumstances in which a school may grant an exemption from the study of Irish. The guidance was informed by an extensive public consultation process.

Also in September 2019, the Department published an expression of interest to early years settings, primary and post-primary schools, to participate in a 3 year pilot project in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), teaching and learning Irish through another subject such as PE. 19 settings/schools were selected for the pilot and planning for CPD for participating teachers was commenced with a view to rolling out CLIL in the classroom after Easter 2020.

Published in 2019:

- *Circular 0052/2019 (Primary) - Exemptions from the study of Irish*
https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0052_2019.pdf
- *Circular 0053/2019 (Post-primary) - Exemptions from the study of Irish*
https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0053_2019.pdf

1.5 Foreign Languages

During 2019, awareness raising (www.languagesconnect.ie) about the importance of learning a foreign language continued. A #ThinkLanguages event was held for over 3,000 Transition Year students and Languages Connect attended a wide range of conferences and events. A Foreign Language Content and Language Learning (CLIL) project was rolled out in TY.

The Department issued a guidance note in regard to the availability of additional allocation of teaching hours to assist in the diversification of foreign languages in the curriculum. On foot of the roll out of Circular 31/2019 schools could be considered for an additional allocation of hours to schools taking up lesser taught foreign languages (Italian, Japanese and Russian).

The number of Foreign Language Assistants coming to Irish schools was further increased from 139 in 2018/19 to 166 in 2019/20, up from 120 in 2017/18. Foreign Language Associates were also recruited across the country to support Languages Connect. The Associates also support communities of practice for foreign language teachers nationwide.

Funding was again provided for school exchanges and for teacher upskilling.

Published in 2019:

- *Circular 31/2019 - Diversification of Foreign Languages provision in the Curriculum*
https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0031_2019.pdf

1.6 Literacy and Numeracy

With a view to improving literacy and numeracy outcomes implementation continued of the “Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2011-2020” with the new actions as set out in the Interim Review 2017-2020. The inaugural Literacy and Numeracy Forum was held in October 2018 with the second annual forum held in October 2019. These events were designed to promote and encourage quality, excellence and innovation in literacy and numeracy, and which, inter alia, showcased exemplars in the Irish school system.

1.7 Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM)

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

1.8 Digital Strategy

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

The Strategy is organised around four key themes:

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

Arising from the Strategy, the Department is currently implementing the “Digital Strategy Action Plan 2019”. Progress of this Plan is being monitored by the Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) which includes representation from the Department, industry, academic experts, practitioners/teachers and the technology voluntary sector.

The Digital Strategy, in recognising that schools’ ICT infrastructure required updating and investment, provides for a fund of €210m in the form of an ICT grant. By end of 2019, an investment of €110m had been distributed to schools to help them update their equipment and implement the Digital Strategy. The balance of the funds will be distributed over the remaining period of the Strategy.

1.9 Digital Learning Framework

The Digital Learning Framework (DLF) for teachers was developed to assist and guide schools on the embedding of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment. The DLF was made available to all schools in September 2018. Its dissemination was accompanied by an extensive continuous professional development (CPD) programme including national seminars, workshops, webinars, online and direct school supports. This CPD programme continued throughout 2019.

In January 2019 the Educational Research Centre (ERC) was commissioned by the Department to conduct a three year longitudinal study of the implementation of the DLF. The main objective of the study, covering 280 schools, is to evaluate the implementation of the DLF from the multiple perspectives of school principals, digital learning team leaders, teachers and learners over the agreed period.

Its first report, a baseline report, was completed in 2019 (published in January 2020, available at <http://www.erc.ie/2020/01/14/erc-publishes-baseline-report-on-digital-learning-framework-national-evaluation/>). This report aims to describe the system at the beginning of the implementation phase. This will be followed by longitudinal surveys and focus group interviews with teachers and students planned for 2020 and 2021, with a final report expected in 2022. End of year reports from the ERC over the course of the study help inform ongoing CPD provision to schools and the final report will help inform future policy development in the area of digital technology in education.

1.10 ICT technical support in schools

The digital strategy recognises that schools require external technical support in relation to their ICT equipment, infrastructure and systems so that they can support teaching, learning and assessment as well as the school's administration and planning systems. It also recognises that the provision of technical support to all schools is very complex and finding a solution that meets all demands, in a very diverse digital environment that exists across the school system requires careful consideration. To assist schools there is a range of advice on technical support available on the PDST-tie website, a Department funded teacher support service.

An expert group is also continuing to examine the issue of technical support solutions for schools. The Group is considering the various technical support requirements of schools, having regard to the available sources of data to identify the optimum approach. It is envisaged that there will be stakeholder consultation to inform solutions.

1.11 Support the three-year Schools Excellence Fund Digital and STEM programme

Recognising and facilitating the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning is the focus of the School Excellence Fund (SEF) – Digital and STEM. The three-year programme commenced in 2018, and continues to progress, across 40 clusters, involving some 220 schools and is supported by €1m funding. A very successful showcase event was held in May 2019. Projects displayed included robotics, coding, digital storytelling, and STEM projects. The aim of the programme is to support and encourage schools to collaborate on the innovative use of digital technologies in teaching and learning. Learnings from the clusters will be disseminated to the wider system to assist other schools and to inform policy in the area. *H2 Learning* has been appointed to evaluate the programme and to extract learnings that can be implemented through the wider system. An interim report will be available after Year 2 of the programme.

1.12 Teacher Allocations

In 2019, 70,929 teaching posts were allocated at primary and post-primary level. The redeployment process in 2019 involved the redeployment of 192 permanent teachers at primary level and 46 permanent teachers at post-primary level. On completion of the process to redeploy permanent surplus teachers at primary level, a supplementary redeployment panel is used for filling any remaining permanent posts. In 2019, there were just under 1,300 teachers on the supplementary redeployment panel.

1.13 New Allocation Model for SEN Teaching Resources

At primary level, 9,322 special education teaching posts were allocated to primary schools. More than 1,390 of these posts are shared among schools, with almost 2,750 schools involved in a sharing arrangement. 4,206 whole time equivalent posts were allocated under the SEN model to post-primary schools for the 2019/20 school year.

1.14 Section 29 Appeals

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

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

- In 2019, the Department received a total of 462 Section 29 appeal applications. A total of 288 (62%) of these appeals went to a full hearing. Of those appeals that went to a full hearing, 98 were upheld including 22 upheld in part and 190 were not upheld.

1.15 Gaeltacht Education Policy 2017-2022

The overarching goal of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 is to ensure the availability of high quality Irish-medium education in Gaeltacht areas to support and promote the use of Irish as the main language of Gaeltacht communities. Since the commencement of the implementation of the Policy in early 2017, a budget in the region of €8m has been allocated for the provision of a range of additional supports to strengthen educational provision through the medium of Irish in Gaeltacht schools. This includes a budget allocation of €4.8m in 2019.

1.16 Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme

105 primary schools and 29 post-primary schools participated in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme in 2019. Schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas had the option to seek recognition as Gaeltacht schools on the basis of implementing specific language-based criteria to strengthen immersion education and on condition that they were participating in a language-planning process, provided for under the Gaeltacht Act, 2012. Additional resources were provided to participating schools including additional teaching hours, an annual grant for the purchase of Irish-medium resources, CPD delivered by An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) and 162 Inspectorate advisory visits to Gaeltacht schools were carried out.

1.17 E-hub Pilot Project and Forás Language Development Programme

Students in selected schools in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme also had the opportunity to take part in the e-hub and Forás pilot projects.

The e-hub pilot project, formally launched in April 2019, aims to utilise online delivery to extend the subject range available through the medium of Irish to students in Gaeltacht post-primary schools, starting with Leaving Certificate Physics. In September 2019, students based in 5 Gaeltacht schools became the first cohort to undertake the online Leaving Certificate Physics programme using a blended-learning model delivered by two e-Hub teachers from their base schools. A total of 7 post-primary schools participated in the project in 2019.

The Forás language development pilot programme aims to assist junior cycle students who have an evident need to develop their Irish-language skills over a transitional period in order to access the curriculum through the medium of Irish. This pilot provides for the allocation of one additional whole-time equivalent teacher to each of two selected post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht.

1.18 Evaluation of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme

During 2019, the Gaeltacht Education Unit and the Inspectorate commenced working with the Educational Research Centre (ERC) on a joint three-year Research and Evaluation Study to assess the impact of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme in participating primary and post-primary schools. This included carrying out 18 case-studies in 18 Gaeltacht schools (12 primary and 6 post-primary schools) in 2019.

1.19 New Irish-medium teacher education programmes

A key aim of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 is to increase the supply of teachers who can deliver high quality Irish-medium education in primary and post primary Gaeltacht schools. Up to 60 places have been funded annually for two new teacher

education programmes through the medium of Irish to increase the number of teachers who can provide high quality education through Irish in primary and post-primary schools.

A further 30 new funded places were provided in 2019 for the part-time blended learning Masters in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht Education for primary and post-primary teachers and principals, which commenced in Mary Immaculate College in September 2018.

Marino Institute of Education commenced the delivery of a 4-year Irish-medium Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) initial teacher education programme for primary teachers with 30 funded places for each new student cohort from September 2019. The commencement of this programme, which is the first B.Ed. programme for primary teachers delivered entirely through the medium of Irish, marked a significant step in the implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education and in the history of Irish-medium education.

1.20 Island Schools

Gaeltacht post-primary island schools continued to receive a specific package of additional supports to support them in meeting the unique challenges which they face. These additional resources, provided as part of the overall implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education, include increased teacher allocation and an additional annual ring-fenced budget for each island post-primary school. These supports are in addition to the supports the schools receive as part of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme.

1.21 An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)

Additional supports and resources continued to be provided to COGG to support their central role in the implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education and the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme. They included the provision of CPD for the 134 schools participating in the Gaeltacht Schools Recognition Scheme.

Published in 2019

- *Circulars 0009/2019 and 0010/2019 were published for primary and post-primary schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme. Circular 0011/2019 was published for schools considering joining the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme in 2019.*

1.22 National Educational Psychological Service

During 2019 NEPs sanctioned psychologist staffing numbers were increased from 194 whole-time equivalent (w.t.e) to 204 w.t.e. to support implementation of the *Wellbeing Policy and Framework for Practice 2018 – 2023* in schools, while providing schools with the range of NEPS in-school supports available to all, including casework, consultation, intervention, training and supporting communities of practice.

During 2018 NEPS psychologist staffing numbers rose from a starting position of 172 w.t.e. to 198 w.t.e. by year's end. In all some 33 new NEPS psychologists were recruited negated somewhat by the loss of seven w.t.e. staff to retirement or resignation.

1.23 Wellbeing Policy Statement

Focus on Wellbeing continued, piloting a new school inclusion model integrating pupil-centred services and evaluating the pilot of the In-School Therapy Demonstration Project.

Further investment was made to provide teaching principals in primary schools with one additional release day and four additional release days for those in schools with special classes.

1.24 Human Capital Initiative

The Human Capital Initiative was launched late in 2019, representing an investment of €300m, over the five years 2020-2024. The initiative aims to provide additional capacity across the higher education sector to meet priority skill needs for enterprise. It will form a key part of the country's strategic response to addressing the skills needs of the economy, mitigating Brexit risks, responding to digitalisation and the future world of work, and preparing Ireland for other challenges that the economy may face. In December 2019, Government investment of €24 million in Pillar 2 of the HCI created over 3,000 new places on 138 full-time undergraduate courses in 22 public and private higher education institutions to commence in autumn 2020 and 2021.

1.25 Consent Framework for the Higher Education Institutions

In April 2019, the Minister of State for Higher Education launched the *Framework for Consent in Higher Education Institutions: Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive – Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions*. The framework aims to ensure the creation of an institutional campus culture which is safe, respectful and supportive. It has been developed by an Expert Advisory Group comprising academics, students and leaders in the area of sexual health among students. The Group was tasked with devising standards that all institutions will be required to implement. The Framework draws from international best practice and research to provide institutions with standards and guidance on what works to create a safe and supportive culture.

It sets out aims for students, for the Higher Education Authority, the Department of Education and Skills, for higher education institutions themselves and for staff of institutions. Funding was provided by the Department in 2019 to assist with the implementation of the Framework. The four key outcomes of the framework will be:

Institutional culture: Effective structures in place, with institutions assigning responsibility by a management team member to implement the framework, including stakeholders in the process.

- Institutional Processes: Recording and reporting of statistics of incidents.
- Institutional policies: Dedicated policies consistent with the aims of the Framework, with clear lines of responsibility, reporting, transparency, and implementation supported by institutional leadership.
- Targeted initiatives: for students and staff, including direct student facing activities that promote an understanding of consent, an education plan to support students and staff,
- Systems for measuring the effectiveness of initiative s and accessible trauma-informed services.

1.26 Implementation of legislation providing for rent predictability measures in PBSA

The Department worked together with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to pass the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019. This legislation was brought in in May and contains provisions designed to ensure that students residing under license in student-specific accommodation are able to avail of the same rent predictability measures that are available to tenants in Rent Pressure Zones. These students can now be assured that their rent will not increase by more than 4% per annum.

Students in student-specific accommodating are now also able to utilise the dispute resolution facilities provided by the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB).

Goal 2: We will advance the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special educational needs in order to support them to achieve their potential.

The principle of inclusion and access for all is central to our approach to enhancing our education and training systems to ensure that children and young people from different backgrounds are adequately supported and can avail of the opportunities to maximise their potential through learning. The Department has a range of strategies in place to assist, support and encourage those with special educational needs or those who are at risk of educational disadvantage to engage with, and benefit from, high calibre education and training services.

Review of the year under this Goal

- A two-year pilot programme was established in 2019 in specific Traveller and Roma Communities to target attendance, participation and retention/school completion.
- The OECD's 2018 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) results, showed that our 15 year-olds are among the best in reading literacy and are performing significantly higher than the OECD average in maths and science.
- A demonstration project for the delivery of in-school Speech and Language, and Occupational Therapy supports progressed over the 2018/19 school year, as part of school inclusion.
- €7.5m in funding over three years under the PATH Strand 3 Higher Education Access Fund which is intended to support regional clusters of higher education institutions to attract 2,000 additional students from groups currently under-represented in higher education.
- Strands of the Data Plan to support the *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2021* were progressed.
- The Department led the interdepartmental implementation of the recommendations in *An Independent Review to Identify the Supports and Barriers for Lone parents in Accessing Higher Education*.

Further details under this Goal are set out below.

2.1 Access and Inclusion in Early Years Settings

2.1.1 Early Start

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

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

In 2019, non-pay funding amounting to €216,000 was paid out to Early Start Units from this subhead.

2.1.2 Supporting Inclusion and Diversity

The Department plays a support role in the ongoing development of the Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) which was launched in June 2016 by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA). This is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. In 2019 DES/EYEP, which sits on the cross-sectoral implementation group steering the initiative, continued to provide supports to the AIM model through participation in its working groups.

A consortium led by Mary Immaculate College, in partnership with Early Childhood Ireland and Froebel, Maynooth University, is delivering the award winning “Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) programme” <http://lincprogramme.ie/> nationwide to 900 students per annum over four years to train Inclusion Coordinators – a key role that has been identified to help support children with a disability in pre-school – to work in every early years setting. An additional capitation is paid by DCYA to services which employ an Inclusion Coordinator. The fourth cohort of students graduated in 2019.

2.2 Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)

2.2.1 DEIS Identification

Work continued during 2019 on refining the DEIS Identification Model. All schools at both primary and post-primary level are being assessed using this new methodology based on their enrolments from 2018/19 and the latest data available from Census 2016 under the HP Deprivation Index.

2.2.2 DEIS Plan Implementation

In the 2019/20 school year there are 890 schools in the DEIS Programme serving in excess of 185,000 pupils. This represents approximately 20% of the overall school population (total of 3,962 schools and 930,671 pupils).

The breakdown is as follows:

Primary Urban Band 1	230
Primary Urban Band 2	104
Primary Rural	358
Post-Primary	198

The Department spent in the region of €125 million on the DEIS Programme in 2019. This includes the provision of 418 Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) coordinators in urban primary and post-primary DEIS schools, additional teaching resources in DEIS Urban Band 1 schools, DEIS grants, enhanced Guidance provision in DEIS post-primary schools and enhanced school book grant paid to DEIS schools.

At the end of 2019, approximately 90% of the 108 Actions in DEIS Plan are complete or ongoing.

2.2.3 School Excellence Fund – DEIS

The SEF is a key Action under the DEIS Plan and its aim is to allow schools to trial creative and innovative interventions with the intention that the learning from successful approaches will be shared across the school sector. Tranche 3 of SEF-DEIS was launched in May 2019.

2.2.4 National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy – Education Pilot

Responding to specific actions in the National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017- 2021 and in DEIS Plan, a two-year pilot programme in four areas to target attendance,

participation and retention/school completion was established in 2019 in specific Traveller and Roma Communities.

Each of the four pilot areas will have the additional resource of 1 educational welfare officer, 1 HSCL coordinator and 2 Traveller/Roma education workers. The teams will work together with parents, children and young people, schools, Traveller and Roma communities and service providers to address the barriers impacting on Traveller and Roma children's attendance, participation and retention in education. Three of the areas, Dublin North, Tuam and Enniscorthy/Bunclody commenced work in September 2019. Information Workshops were held with the Pilot schools in May 2019 and an induction programme for the pilot teams took place in September 2019.

2.2.5 Monitoring and Evaluation of DEIS

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is a key element of the DEIS Programme. DEIS Plan includes specific actions on the development of a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to ensure that the additional resources provided to schools under the programme are used effectively to deliver improved educational outcomes, and that good practice is identified to be shared and inform future policy. Work commenced in late 2019 on the development of the M&E Framework.

2.2.6 ERC Evaluation

The latest report on the evaluation of the DEIS programme by the Educational Research Centre, *The Evaluation of DEIS at Post-Primary Level: Closing the Achievement and Attainment Gaps*, was published in January 2019. It shows that the achievement and attainment gaps between DEIS and non-DEIS post-primary schools continue to narrow, both in terms of performance at Junior Certificate level and retention rates. It is also encouraging to see a rise in the percentage of students in DEIS schools taking English and Mathematics at Higher Level.

2.2.7 DEIS Seminars 2019

DEIS Schools are required to set specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time specific targets, including targets for literacy and numeracy, CPD, leadership, attendance, participation and retention, and to evaluate them annually. To assist schools in this process, in May 2019, the Inspectorate hosted a series of regional DEIS seminars for DEIS School Principals and DEIS Coordinators from the schools new to DEIS or upgraded from Band 2 to Band 1 in 2017.

2.2.8 PISA 2018

The findings from PISA 2018 published in early December 2019 show Ireland's 15 year-olds are among the best in reading literacy and are performing significantly higher than the OECD average in mathematics and science.

2.2.9 Retention to Leaving Certificate in DEIS Post-primary Schools

Schools participating in DEIS have seen their Leaving Certificate retention rates improve since the introduction of DEIS from 80.1% for the 2006 entry cohort to 84.7% for the 2012 entry cohort, further evidence that the programme is having a positive effect in tackling educational disadvantage.

2.3 Special Education Needs

2.3.1 Catering for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

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

The Department is committed to ensuring that all children with special educational needs can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in inclusive mainstream school settings through the primary and post-primary school network. Where children with special educational needs cannot be provided for in mainstream settings, the Department provides for specialised special class and special school places.

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

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

2.3.2 Allocation of Special Teachers to Mainstream Schools

Over 13,500 special education teacher posts are currently allocated to mainstream primary and post primary schools. The total number of special education teachers (SETs) has increased by 38% since 2011, from 9,740 in 2011, to over 13,500 at present. Budget 2020 provided an additional 120 special education teacher posts which means that 13,620 special education teaching posts will be available for allocation to mainstream primary and post-primary schools by the end of 2020.

Special education teachers support the mainstream class teacher by providing additional teaching support for pupils with special educational needs in schools.

Based on policy advice received from the National Council for Special Education, the new allocation model, developed in 2017, was developed to create a profile for each school which is needs-based and gives schools autonomy to decide how to deploy the resources they have, based on the needs of pupils. School profiles are updated every two years. The model was introduced in 2017 with school profiles reviewed in 2019.

2.3.3 Special Schools

There are 124 special schools providing specialist education for approximately 8,000 pupils with special educational needs, in hospital and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) units annually with over 1,500 teachers. Children attending special schools benefit from a reduced pupil teacher ratio ranging from 6:1 to 11:1 depending on disability categorisation.

2.3.4 Special Classes

Since 2011, the number of special classes in mainstream schools has increased by almost 200% from 548 to 1,618 for the 2019/2020 school year. This included very significant additional provision for Autism special classes. Since 2011, the NCSE increased the number of Autism special classes from 330 in 2011 to 1,353 across the country in the 2019/20 school year. This includes 156 new Autism classes comprising of 6 Early Intervention, 100 primary Autism special classes and 50 post-primary Autism classes.

Budget 2020 provided for an additional 265 special class teacher posts in 2020 which will allow for the opening of additional classes where required.

2.3.5 Special Needs Assistant Scheme

15,950 whole time equivalent special needs assistant posts were provided to schools, as at December 2019, to provide for the care needs of over 37,000 children with special educational needs attending primary, post-primary, and special schools.

Since 2011, the number of SNAs available for allocation to schools has increased from 10,575 to over 16,000 at present. This is an increase of 50% in the total allocation. Budget

2020 has provided an additional 1064 SNAs for schools which will bring the allocation made up to 17,014 SNAs in 2020.

2.3.6 Assistive Technology Scheme

In 2019, 2,056 payments were made to primary schools, and 906 to post-primary schools, towards the cost of assistive technology, amounting to over almost €2.5m. The type of equipment provided under the assistive technology scheme is varied, and includes audiology supports for children with hearing impairment, equipment to assist children with visual impairment, and computer equipment for children with physical or severe communication disabilities, where it has been outlined that the equipment is essential to access the curriculum.

2.3.7 Irish Sign Language Scheme

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

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

Approximately 233 children and their families were supported with ISL tuition during the 2018/19 school year, while in the region of 69 tutors were employed to teach ISL, amounting to expenditure in the region of €327,000 annually.

2.3.8 Special Education Home Tuition Scheme

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

In 2019, €17.3m in grant funding issued to parents towards the provision of home tuition. 1,692 home tuition grants were sanctioned during the 2018/19 school year.

2.3.9 July Education Programme

The July Education Programme provides for special classes to cater for children with autism who choose to extend their education services through the month of July. The Department also provides for a July Programme for pupils with a severe or profound general learning disability. Where school based provision is not feasible, home-based provision may be grant-aided through the Home Tuition Scheme.

Since the July Programme was introduced in 2001, the number of children accessing the scheme each year shows an increasing trend year on year. In total, 232 schools participated and 3405 students availed of the programme in 2019. 7125 pupils availed of the home-based July Programme provision in 2019, with an expenditure amounting to €15.5 m in 2019.

2.3.10 Middletown Centre for Autism

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

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

2.3.11 In-School Speech and Language Therapy

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

The demonstration project is designed to develop and test a model for the delivery of in-school speech and language and occupational therapy support, in a defined regional area, across a range of schools, in conjunction with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and supplementing existing HSE therapy services. The demonstration model is focusing on developing greater linkages between educational and therapy supports. The project is taking place in Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) 7 Region of South West Dublin, Kildare, and West Wicklow.

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

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

In total, 150 settings are participating in the demonstration project, which include 75 schools, including a representative sample of primary, post-primary, and special schools are taking part in the project. Additionally 75 pre-school settings associated with primary schools participating in the project are being included in order to provide for therapy interventions to be made at the earliest possible time and to create linkages between pre-school and primary school provision.

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

The demonstration project to provide in-school and pre-school therapy services will continue, as part of the School Inclusion Model, over the course of the 2019/20 school year.

The project has been evaluated over the course of the 2018/19 school year with the evaluation of the demonstration project in the process of being finalised.

2.3.12 NCSE Support Services

The NCSE Support Service, which incorporates the Special Education Support Service, the Visiting Teacher Service for children with visual or hearing impairment, and the National Behaviour Support Service, provides advice and support to schools on the education and inclusion of students with special educational needs. It provides in-school support, CPD for teachers and support to schools on the management of challenging behaviour. It enhances the multi-disciplinary capacity of the education system through providing access to expert knowledge in areas such as autism, speech and language and challenging behaviour.

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

The NCSE Comprehensive Review of the SNA Scheme, published in May 2018, found that the SNA Scheme, as currently configured, works well in meeting the needs of younger children and students for whom it was originally designed, and is greatly valued by parents, students and schools, however, it was found to be less effective for older primary and post-primary students.

In February 2019, Government approved the trialing of a new School Inclusion Model (SIM) for the 2019/20 school year which comprises:

- the establishment of a pilot of a new service model for children with special educational and additional care needs which involves 75 participating schools in the Community Healthcare Organisation area (CHO 7) for the 2019/20 school year. The new service model has the following elements:
 - a new frontloaded allocation model of SNAs allocated in line with profiled need having regard to the approach taken by the New Allocation Model for Special Education Teachers which was introduced in September 2017,
 - expansion of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) to support pilot schools, and
 - continuation of the pre-school and in-school demonstration project in the pilot area to ensure a wrap-around service for the pilot schools;
- the establishment, on a pilot basis, of an NCSE Regional Support Team in the Community Healthcare Organisation area (CHO 7) where the pilot is taking place, to include specialists in relevant disciplines (speech and language T]therapists, occupational therapists, behaviour practitioners), in order to inform teacher CPD and best practice in schools in that area;
- the development of a National Training Programme for SNAs and a pilot roll-out;
- the provision of a nursing service for children with complex medical needs in schools to complement existing HSE-supported nursing provision; and
- the trialing in the NCSE of a new functional operating model in order to better reflect the establishment of the NCSE Support Service and regional teams, and to more fully integrate supports for the piloting of the new model.

Budget 2019, provided €4.75 million for the implementation of the recommendations of the *Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme*, including the implementation of a new service pilot.

The pilot commenced in 75 schools in September 2019.

2.3.14 Psychological Supports

In the academic year 2018/19 the Department's psychologists were involved in new casework, which includes assessment and consultation, in relation to 8,561 students.

Additionally, under the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments process, private psychologists provided assessment to schools for 1,792 pupils. Additionally, it is estimated that teacher support & development was provided to c. 22,000 teachers in processes to build their capacity in the areas of wellbeing promotion, literacy development, problem-solving and the provision of a continuum of support.

During this period also, NEPS psychologists assisted in 306 Critical Incidents attending at 114.

2.4 Equity of Access to Higher Education

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

2.4.1 Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH)

PATH 1 supports the objective in the National Access Plan to increase access to initial teacher education for students from the target groups identified in the National Access Plan such as Lone Parents and Travellers and students with a disability. Under PATH 1, the Department, through the HEA, invited the six centres of teaching excellence, in partnership with relevant local stakeholders, to compete for PATH 1 funding by submitting proposals in accordance with a set of prescribed criteria. Funding of these initiatives is now underway. The HEA commenced an assessment of Early Implementation of PATH 1 in 2019.

PATH 2 provides €6m to be invested in “The 1916 Bursaries Fund” over three years for the most socio-economically disadvantaged students from under-represented target groups. Lone Parents and ethnic minorities, including Travellers, will also be target groups for this fund. Under a three year initial pilot, commencing in 2017, Bursaries will be awarded to 600 students in the 3 academic years who have been identified by their HEI as being the most socio-economically disadvantaged students in the target groups. An operational assessment of the early stage implementation was undertaken by the HEA and submitted to the Department for consideration. A significant development in 2019 was securing Ministerial approval to continue the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) on a permanent basis and to roll-out PATH 2; 1916 Bursary Fund for a further three year period. Funding for the roll out of bursaries was secured in Budget 2020.

The roll-out of funding continued under PATH 3 which will provide €7.5m over three years to a Higher Education Access Fund which is intended to support regional clusters of higher education institutions to attract 2,000 additional students from groups currently under-represented in higher education.

The Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) supports participation by students with a disability in full-time programmes of further and higher education. The fund provides financial assistance to students experiencing financial difficulties while attending third level. Students can be assisted towards rent, childcare costs, transport costs and books/class materials.

The number of students supported by the Fund has grown from 3,800 in 2008 to 14,512 in 2018. €9.6 million was allocated through the Fund in 2019. As part of the 2019 allocation and going forward, part-time students will continue to be supported under the FSD.

€10.1m was allocated in 2018/2019, which supported a total of 13,816 students. This funding for students attending the Professional Masters in Education was allocated to the fund in 2019/2020, bring SAF funding to €10.1m.

Arising from the Data Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education commissioned by the HEA, developed by Trutz Haase Consultant and published in 2018, the HEA published for the first time in 2019 a report *A Spatial & Socio-Economic Profile of Higher Education Institutions in Ireland* the findings of which will inform the new targets of socio-economic disadvantaged that will be set in the next National Access Plan.

2.5 Student Grants

Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) received 96,100 applications for the 2019/20 academic year, of which circa 76,500 are expected to qualify for grant support. Expenditure on student grant supports in 2019 amounted to approximately €347m.

2.5.1 Student Grants Appeals Board

The Student Grant Appeals Board had 26 meetings in 2019 and made determinations on 797 appeals.

2.5.2 Scholarships and Bursary Scheme

There were 432 beneficiaries of Department Bursaries in the 2019/20 academic year and a total expenditure of €1.26m in the 2019 financial year, supporting students who transitioned to higher education from DEIS schools.

Legislation developed in 2019:

- *The Student Grant Scheme 2019 (S.I. No. 152 of 2019),*
- *The Student Support Regulations 2019 (S.I. No. 151 of 2019)*

Changes to the Student Support Act 2011 were drafted and published under the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2019, to enable the continued provision of grant support to students studying in the UK and UK nationals studying in the State. These provisions were not commenced as a deal was reached between the EU and the UK and they were intended to cover a potential no deal scenario.

Goal 3: We will equip education and training providers with the skills and support to provide a quality learning experience

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

Review of the year under this Goal

- There was a planned programme of inspection and advisory visits in schools and alternative education settings carried out and associated reports published.
- 342,408 units of continuing professional development were provided for primary and post-primary teachers in a wide range of subject areas throughout 2019.
- Schools Excellence Fund Step-Up project in operation in post-primary schools, in conjunction with the JCT.
- The 18 month cluster programme "Excellence through Collaborative Leadership and Management Scheme" was commenced.
- The implementation of the new model of Special Educational Needs Inspections in post-primary schools was commenced.
- An extensive consultation process has been undertaken by the Department on the updating of the Higher Education Authority legislation.
- The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 was passed into law in July 2019.
- Senior Academic Leadership Initiative to improve the gender balance at the senior academic level in the higher education sector.

Further details under this Goal are set out below.

3.1 Early Years Education Inspections

In light of the *First 5: A whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families*, the Inspectorate began work in 2019 on extending the EYEI model to include children from birth to 3. The extension of the EYEI Model to include babies, toddlers, and young children in Ireland is in keeping with the national commitment contained in the strategy "to develop, enhance and implement standards and reform regulation and inspection systems".. During 2019, the Inspectorate engaged in international research and literature review and in consultation with early years settings and with relevant stakeholders. The model will be further developed in 2020.

3.2 Teacher Supply

3.2.1 Implement the Teacher Supply Action Plan

Following the publication of the Teacher Supply Action Plan in November 2018, the Teacher Supply Steering Group, chaired by the Department's Secretary General, continued to progress a range of actions across a number of key policy areas to address the significant challenges some schools experience in recruiting teachers.

Key actions taken in 2019 included the introduction of new undergraduate initial teacher education programmes in targeted post primary subjects, the establishments of substitute teacher supply panels for primary schools on a pilot basis, the publication for consultation in November 2019 of the technical report *Teacher Demand and Supply in Ireland 2020-2036* and the launch in December 2019 of *Sub Seeker*, a new substitute teacher recruitment portal developed by the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD).

Two national consultative forums for stakeholders were held in May and November 2019.

Published in 2019:

- *Teacher Demand and Supply in Ireland 2020 – 2036 - A Technical Report*
<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/developing-a-teacher-demand-and-supply-model-for-ireland-2020-2036.pdf>

3.3 Quality in Early Education

The Department plays a key role in ensuring that early years education delivered in pre-schools funded through the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme, and in Early Start pre-schools, supports children in their learning and development through the implementation of *Síolta*, the national quality framework, and the *Aistear* curriculum framework. In 2019, the Department continued to work with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), Better Start National Early Years Quality Development, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and other stakeholders in order to achieve this objective.

By the end of 2019, over 2500 Early Years Education Inspections were carried out in early learning and care settings delivering the free pre-school in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme funded by the Department and Children and Youth Affairs. Allowing for fluctuations in the number of ELC settings on contract each year to deliver the ECCE Programme, this represents approximately 55% of the total population.

Analysis of inspection reports from June 2017 to December 2019 is being compiled for publication in 2020. The indications are that the early trends identified in the first review of EYEI, *Insights and Future Developments – A Review of Early-Years Education-Focused Inspection: April 2016 – June 2017* published in January 2018 are still valid.

The focus of the EYEI quality framework on process quality, early learning and professional pedagogy and practice is widely welcomed as recognising and validating the work of early years professionals and their contribution to supporting children's learning, well-being and development at this critical stage of life. Whilst the findings of EYEI continue to identify many strengths in the provision and practice of early education in ELC settings, challenges identified in the initial report continue to be identified. These challenges are primarily centred on the development and implementation of curricula informed by *Aistear*, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. There are also capacity issues in relation to promoting partnership with parents and supporting transitions from pre-school to primary school.

A key trend since 2017 is the notable increase in the inclusion of children with disabilities in ELC settings. These children are being supported with a range of measures provided as a result of the introduction of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) including the deployment of trained inclusion coordinators in many settings.

In 2019, the DES Inspectorate was asked to extend the scope of EYEI to allow for evaluation of provision for children aged 0-6 years. Work to develop an extended quality framework and inspection processes to facilitate this work commenced in 2019 and will be completed through consultation and field trials in 2020.

3.3.1 Síolta/Aistear

The National Síolta/Aistear Initiative (NSAI), which commenced in 2016, is supporting the coordinated wider implementation and rollout of both frameworks, including the development of material, resources and CPD for early years practitioners. The Department is working in partnership with DCYA, Better Start and the NCCA on this initiative with two national Development Officers in post to support the work of the initiative. The Department leads the work of the NSAI Steering Group and agrees an annual work plan for the initiative.

In 2019, a revised mentoring model was developed and a national Síolta Aistear implementation office established to centralise and manage the delivery of the initiative. The NSA implementation office oversees the work of more than 80 Síolta Aistear mentors across a range of organisations who provide training and mentoring supports to early learning and care practitioners.

In 2018, a new nationally approved CPD Programme, “Aistear and Play” was developed by an expert group led by the Department and the NCCA for rollout from the new implementation office in 2019. Two roll outs of this CPD took place in 2019, with approximately 120 early years settings accessing the training. The Department is leading on an evaluation of this CPD which began in 2019 and will conclude in 2020. The NSA implementation office also coordinates a range of CPD opportunities for mentors delivering supports as part of the initiative.

3.3.2 Professional Qualifications and Standards

To support the further enhancement of professional qualifications and standards within the ELC Sector, and following on from extensive work by the Department in 2018, the Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines (PACG) for Initial Professional Education (Level 7 & 8) Degree programmes for the Early Learning and Care (ELC) sector were published in 2019 following approval by both the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. All new programmes must be consistent with the approved PACG in order to qualify for enhanced funding from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, and to this end the two Ministers have established a Qualifications Advisory Board (QAB), and course providers have been invited to submit proposals for new programmes for review by that Board.

3.3.3 Workforce Development Plan for the ELC sector

The Workforce Development Plan for the ELC sector is crucial to the goal of giving early years practitioners the skills and support they need to provide a quality learning experience for young children. It is also an objective of First 5, the whole-of-Government strategy for babies, young children and their families. Implementation of the Workforce Development Plan is being led by this Department and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. In 2019, the Steering Group for the development of the Plan was established, as well as a Consultation Group representing a wide range of stakeholders in early learning and care. Extensive preparations were made for a nationwide series of consultations with practitioners and providers, following which the Workforce Development Plan is scheduled to be completed by early 2021.

3.4 Teacher Education

The Department views teacher education as a continuum from initial teacher education to induction and CPD. The Department promotes the quality of teaching and learning through the provision of quality Teacher Training programmes, CPD and supports for Principals and Teachers in their work. This is done through the Teacher Education Programmes, Education Centres and Support Services for teachers at Primary and Post-Primary Level.

In 2019, 342,408 units of CPD were provided for primary and post primary teachers in a wide range of subject areas. These included support for the introduction and implementation of the Primary Languages Curriculum, new subject specifications under the *Framework for Junior Cycle* and both new and revised subject specifications at Leaving Certificate. Furthermore, over 600 places were provided on college-based post-graduate programmes in Leadership and Special Educational Needs.

Professional development support for the implementation of the relevant actions in the areas of The Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM), Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools (DEIS), Languages Connect, Literacy and Numeracy, Health & Wellbeing and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) continued to be prioritised in 2019.

3.4.1 Standards in Initial Teacher Education

Under Section 38 of the Teaching Council Act, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes are subject to review and accreditation by the Teaching Council.

The Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers were developed by the Council, to set out the requirements for all programmes.

In 2015, the Council completed its first review and accreditation cycle of programmes. The Teaching Council is currently in the process of reviewing the *Criteria and Guidelines* for accreditation of ITE programmes. The Department is linking with the Teaching Council to input to this process.

In 2019, the Teaching Council conducted a series of consultation sessions with key stakeholders on the draft Standards document. This consultation period was extended into 2020, taking account of feedback received.

It is expected that the revised document, which will be entitled *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education*, will be published in Q2, 2020.

3.4.2 Initial Teacher Education graduates

In 2018, there were 1,192 graduates from State-funded primary concurrent and consecutive ITE programmes and 1,286 graduates from State-funded post-primary concurrent and consecutive ITE programmes. In addition, there were 632 primary and 160 post-primary graduates on consecutive programmes from Hibernia College in 2018. Estimated figures only are available for 2019, it is expected that there will be some 1200 primary graduates and over 1350 post-primary graduates from State-funded programmes, with some 600 primary and 160 post-primary expected to graduate from Hibernia College.

3.4.3 Post-primary subject curricular requirements

The Teaching Council has carried out a review of the Curricular Subject Requirements for registration at post-primary level. The aim of the project is to increase flexibility and streamline the process while protecting the standards. The Council engaged in stakeholder consultation across all subjects, which was completed in Quarter 2, 2019. Stakeholders

included: teachers, teacher unions, Department inspectorate, subject associations, and Higher Education Institutions.

The Teaching Council has completed revised curricular subject criteria which are under consideration by the Department.

3.4.4 School Placement

School Placement is a critical part of ITE as it enables the student teacher to experience teaching and learning in a variety of contexts, and to participate in school life in a way that is structured and supported.

The area of school placement has been the subject of a review by the Teaching Council, which commenced in 2018. The Council convened a School Placement Working Group to carry out the review. The membership of this group included, representatives of the Council and the Department, Higher Education Institutions, unions and management bodies, and the HEA. The Council also engaged with principals and student teachers, through sub-groups and focus groups.

In 2019, the Working Group produced a Report which has been submitted to the Council and Department and is due to be published in 2020. Following this, implementation will be progressed.

3.4.5 Policy Statement on Initial Teacher Education

In 2019, the Department commenced work on the development of a Policy Statement for ITE.

The aim of the Policy Statement is to identify and document the processes, to ensure clarity and cohesion in this important area. The process is also helping to identify gaps which will need further attention.

In order to develop the Policy Statement, the Department has engaged in an extensive consultation process, which included meeting all 15 ITE providers and inviting written submissions from stakeholders. A Consultative Forum in November 2019 brought together providers, student teachers, schools, education partners and agencies to discuss the themes that have emerged.

Work will continue throughout 2020 to complete the development of the Policy Statement for ITE, guided by a Steering Committee. The expected date of publication of the Policy Statement has been extended to the end of 2020.

3.4.6 Cosán

The Department is committed to supporting the development and embedding of Cosán, the Teaching Council's National Framework for Teachers' Learning. A stakeholder event in October 2019 brought together a wide range of stakeholders and representatives from the Irish education system to explore the opportunities Cosán can offer.

3.4.7 Development of a research-based framework for the evaluation of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

In 2019, the Department, in conjunction with the Educational Research Centre (ERC), began a three year project to develop an evaluation framework for CPD, which will help ensure that CPD provision meets the needs of teachers, schools, students and the Department efficiently and effectively and ensure the best use of available resources.

3.4.8 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

In 2019, the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) provided a comprehensive professional development programme to support teachers and school leaders.

At primary level, CPD support for the implementation of the Primary Languages Curriculum (PLC) for all classes – junior infants to sixth class and special settings, was a key priority. All schools were offered a full-day whole-staff seminar in Term 1 2019, facilitated by PDST/ NCSE. Leadership seminars were also delivered to school principals addressing the theme of Leading Curriculum Change for the PLC.

At post-primary (senior cycle), support continued in 2019 for schools providing new subject specifications – Computer Science, Physical Education and Politics & Society. Support was also targeted at teachers of revised subject specifications introduced from September, 2019 – Agricultural Science and Economics.

In addition, the PDST offers a comprehensive programme of elective CPD events. These are attended by teachers in their own time and cover all relevant curricular areas and pedagogies.

Sustained school support and in-school provision delivered during visits from PDST personnel is also a key element of the CPD provided for teachers by the PDST.

The face-to-face support typically provided during workshops and school visits is supplemented by blended approaches including webinars, MOOCS and online communities of practice.

DEIS schools continue to be prioritised by all support services across all areas, including DEIS specific literacy and numeracy programmes, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) and cross-sectoral cluster projects.

3.4.9 Continuing Professional Development – Junior Cycle Reform

A comprehensive professional development programme delivered by Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) to support teachers of Junior Cycle continued to be rolled out in 2019. This included seminars for school leaders, whole-staff workshops in schools, subject specific workshops via school clustering and events hosted in education centres and school visits. A total of 75,287 CPD units were provided by the PDST in 2019.

Some 118 school cluster days were arranged by JCT. With the cluster model of CPD delivery, several schools in a geographical region close to students on the same day to ensure that all teachers in each of these schools can come together for the purpose of attending Junior Cycle related CPD.

The increased use of interactive webinars by the support services as a mode of CPD delivery has had a positive impact on service delivery by making CPD more accessible.

JCT webinars are interactive events where teachers may ask questions and have them answered live. All webinars are recorded and are subsequently uploaded to the website at www.jct.ie. JCT broadcast webinars all year round, but have a concentrated event each March/April time which is called #JCTWOW – our Weeks of Webinars event.

3.4.10 National Induction Programme for Teachers

The National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) supports the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs), both primary and post-primary, into the teaching profession in Ireland. *Droichead* is the integrated professional induction framework for NQTs.

In 2018/2019, the number of primary and post-primary NQTs supported through *Droichead* were 1,580 and 1,194 respectively.

NIPT, in collaboration with ESCI – the Education Support Centres Ireland network, also facilitates an Induction Workshop Programme (IWP) for NQTs. The IWP consists of a series of workshops facilitated by practising teachers. Subject to an overall minimum of 20 hours of

professional learning, NQTs may combine school-based professional learning activities with off-site workshops. Engagement in the IWP is a requirement for all NQTs not engaging in the *Droichead* process who wish to be fully registered with the Teaching Council. Each workshop consists of 2 hours of professional development. In 2018/2019 there were 1,022 workshops with 12,082 attendees.

3.4.11 Education Centres

Currently, the network of Education Centres consists of 21 full time and 9 part time centres distributed across 6 regions. Three of the full-time Centres provide the administrative headquarters for Department funded professional development support services for teachers (JCT, NIPT, PDST as well as the Centre for School Leadership). A range of other smaller professional development support programmes and initiatives are administered across other Centres – this would include Active School Flag, Summer Camps, and Teacher Professional Networks etc.

The principal activity of Education Centres is to organise the local delivery of national programmes of teacher professional development on behalf of this Department. Each Education Centre has a defined geographical area of responsibility. Education Centres also provide services for schools, teachers, parents, boards and other relevant persons supporting them in carrying out their functions in respect of the provision of education.

3.5 School Leadership

The Centre for School Leadership (CSL) is a partnership between the Department, the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN), and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD), and was established in September 2015 with a role in leading, supporting, enhancing and advising on high-quality programmes (Mentoring, Coaching & Aspiring Leaders) to develop and support school leadership, particularly principals across the primary and post-primary school network.

The Post Graduate Diploma in School Leadership (PDSL) has been offered across 8 centres since September 2018. The NQF Level 9 programme had an intake of 274 participants for the third cohort in September 2019. The course is provided by a University of Limerick (UL) led consortium in conjunction with University College Dublin (UCD) and the National University of Ireland (NUIG).

Since September 2017, each newly appointed principal in a primary or post-primary school has access to a trained CSL mentor. Over 500 experienced principals are now trained as mentors. Principals in their second year of appointment have access to a group mentoring programme which is operated through IPPN and NAPD. A total of 751 Principals have availed of one to one coaching since 2017. A further 136 Principals are currently availing of team coaching, which is available to leadership teams in Primary and Post Primary Schools who have previously taken part in one to one coaching. The focus of the coaching is on developing the skillsets required to meet the standards stated in the Looking at Our Schools publications.

In 2019 the Department commenced a scheme designed to support projects which show innovative approaches to school leadership and management. The Excellence through Collaborative Leadership and Management scheme is designed to support schools in harnessing and optimising internal leadership, management capacity and collaboration at all levels. Twenty four projects were chosen as part of the demonstration model.

The PDST Leadership Team engages almost 100 associates with significant experience in school leadership and professional development. In addition the leadership team provide

support to individual schools through PDST School based Support. The team are also involved in supporting school clusters with the Centre for School Leadership, and the Schools' Excellence Fund as well as supporting curriculum leadership across all PDST teams.

The school leadership and professional development programme encompasses the following strands; PDST Leadership Misneach: Misneach is the National Programme of Induction for Newly Appointed Principals in primary and post primary schools. PDST Forbairt: Forbairt is a professional development programme for experienced school leaders designed to facilitate the Principal and Deputy Principal and one other leader in the school in planning and working as a team. PDST Meitheal: Meitheal is a participant-led leadership development programme that is responsive to the individual professional needs of school principals. Primary Language Curriculum Leadership Seminars: One Day seminars in relation to the Leading Curriculum Change were provided for 2019. Leadership Seminars: A number of one day seminars on Leading and Managing School Priorities and Plean Scoile were made available to primary school principals. Tánaiste Summer Course 2019: The Tánaiste Summer Course is a leadership development course for primary deputy principals. In post primary, PDST offered participants support and training in the key professional areas of school leadership Middle Leadership-Cross Sectoral Workshops: Comhar is a pilot programme for middle leaders. Líonra: Líonra is a professional network for Deputy Principals which is supported by the PDST Leadership Team. Lionra participants are deputy principals who have completed the Tánaiste programme. SSE Taking Stock full day seminars: This seminar is designed to support newly appointed post-primary school principals, deputy principals and SSE co-ordinators.

3.6 Quality Inspections

3.6.1 Standards of provision in schools

The Inspectorate regularly publishes detailed analysis of the findings from its inspection programme in the form of the *Chief Inspector's Report*. The last such report was published in early 2018 and covered the period 2013 – 2016. The report for the period 2017 – 2019 will be published in early 2020. It will draw on a range of inspection data to comment on overall standards of teaching and learning and leadership and management in early years settings, schools and centres for education. The report will also provide an analysis of standards of provision in specific priority areas such as STEM education and inclusion.

3.6.2 New Models of Inspection

Two new inspection models were introduced in 2019. The Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection Model (CPSI) and the Evaluation of Provision for Students with Additional and Special Educational Needs in Post-Primary Schools (SEN-PP) model. Work also began on extending the Early Years inspection model to include children from birth to age three.

3.6.3 The Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection Model (CPSI)

CPSI inspections are primarily intended to monitor the implementation of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017* in a sample of primary and post-primary schools annually. They also enable reporting to the Department's Schools Division and to the Child Protection Oversight Group (CPOG) of the Department on the extent to which the procedures are implemented in a sample of schools. Information gathered during CPSI inspections also informs the further development of child protection and safeguarding requirements.

Each CPSI results in oral feedback to relevant school personnel and a written report on the inspection findings which outlines the level of school compliance with each of the 10 overarching checks.

The reports arising from these inspections are also published on the Department's website following the normal quality assurance procedures of the Inspectorate and the procedures set out in *Publication of School Inspection Reports: Guidelines* (DES, 2015).

In the January – June 2019 period the Inspectorate provided information seminars for school leaders on the CPSI inspection model. Overall more than 3,000 principals attended briefing sessions on the new inspections in the first half of 2019 and a live webinar is available at www.education.ie on the new model.

The Inspectorate has also undertaken 26 Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections in primary schools and 21 in post-primary schools in 2019.

3.6.4 Evaluation of Provision for Students with Additional and Special Educational Needs in Post-Primary Schools (SEN-PP)

The SEN – PP model is designed to provide comprehensive and in-depth evaluative information on four key areas relating to a schools provision for students with additional and special educational needs:

- the learning outcomes of relevant students in post-primary schools
- the learning experiences of relevant students in post-primary schools
- the extent to which schools are using the resources they receive to effectively identify and meet the needs of these students
- the extent to which the structures and systems that school management have put in place foster inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of all students with additional and special educational needs

The model is designed to link strategically with a similar evaluation model in primary schools, with the Department's resource allocation model for special educational needs, with the published Department guidelines to schools on the deployment of additional resources and with the publication of *Looking at Our School: A Quality Framework for Post Primary Schools*.

In 2019 the Inspectorate published 14 reports arising from this model.

3.6.5 Research projects

During 2019 the Inspectorate engaged in three research projects to support the implementation of national strategies and in two research projects to enhance the effectiveness of its own work.

3.6.6 The research projects to support the implementation of national strategies were;

- **STEM Education**

The Inspectorate conducted a research project on STEM education in a total of 101 schools and settings visited as part of the routine inspection programme in 2019.

In addition to observing teaching and learning in 218 sessions/lessons during those visits, inspectors discussed STEM education with the setting/school management and with teachers/practitioners.

- **Digital Learning**

Specific research into digital learning was conducted in 90 early-years settings, primary and post-primary schools visited during the inspection programme in 2019.

- **Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)**

The Inspectorate convened a Modern Foreign Languages working group in 2018 with a remit to research the initial implementation of *Languages Connect*. The working group conducted its research during 2019.

Reports arising from these three projects will be published in 2020. The reports will provide a benchmark for the education system and policy makers more broadly in relation to how the three policies are being implemented and to inform actions that may need to be taken to ensure that national objectives can be achieved. In addition, the reports will serve as a resource for education practitioners at early-years, primary and post-primary levels through providing illustrations of effective practice in the three areas as observed in the course of the research projects.

3.6.7 Research Projects to enhance the effectiveness of the work of the Inspectorate

The Evaluation Support and Research Unit (ESRU) of the Inspectorate engaged two research projects during 2019 with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of its own work.

Publications by Inspectorate in 2019:

- *A Guide to Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections* (January 2019)
- *A Guide to the Evaluation of Provision for Students with Additional and Special Educational Needs in Post Primary Schools* (January 2019).

3.7 Evaluation of the Youthreach programme

In the Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2014-19, Goal 4 aims to improve and integrate the planning and funding of FET and commits SOLAS to organise and conduct a schedule of evaluations of FET programmes to ensure effective progression of learners and relevance to the labour market. As part of this series of reviews SOLAS commissioned an independent evaluation of the national Youthreach programme.

The Youthreach programme provides two years integrated education, training and work experience for unemployed early school leavers without any qualifications or vocational training who are between 15 and 20 years of age. The evaluation, launched in June 2019, provides a comprehensive evaluation of the Youthreach programme and demonstrates the positive impact of Youthreach for learners. SOLAS developed a response document to the evaluation which sets out a number of recommendations to further improve and develop the Youthreach programme going forward.

3.8 Higher Education Reform legislation

The Higher Education Authority Act, 1971 established the Higher Education Authority (HEA), set out the functions of the HEA and provided for the governance of the HEA. The Act also provided that the HEA is the statutory funding authority for the universities, institutes of technology and a number of other designated institutions and provided for the financial monitoring of the designated higher education institutions by the HEA. The Act established the HEA as the advisory body to the Minister for Education and Skills in relation to the higher education sector. The Act has been updated on a number of occasions. However current legislation does not fully reflect the functions, governance and authority of a modern oversight / regulatory body for the higher education sector.

Work has now commenced on updating the Higher Education Act, 1971. The updated legislation is intended to provide the HEA with any necessary authority in relation to revised functions, governance and other related matters which more fully reflect its current central role and responsibilities in relation to higher education. The development of a revised legislative framework also provides an opportunity to examine changing and/or expanding

the role of the HEA in the future and addressing other areas within higher education which may need a clearer statutory underpinning.

An extensive consultation process has been undertaken by the Department of Education and Skills on the updating of the HEA legislation during 2018 and 2019 including a request for written submissions in July 2018, a consultation forum in November 2018 and a further request for written submissions in July 2019. Following review by Government, a report of the Consultation process was published in July 2019. This report outlines the views expressed by participants in the 2018 written consultation process and at the consultation forum. It also provides the response by the Department of Education and Skills to the views expressed and issues raised in the consultation process and provides an overview of the proposed legislation. An outline of the Legislative Proposals for the reform of the Higher Education Act, 1971 was also published at the same time.

The views of stakeholders on the consultation report and the legislative proposals were sought by the end of September 2019. The views received from the consultation process are being considered and further consultation is taking place with key stakeholders in the development of the legislation. The Government approved the preparation of a General Scheme of a Bill to replace the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971 in July 2019.

3.9 Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 was enacted into law in July 2019.

This Act introduces necessary legislative amendments to the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 to address a number of issues that have been identified as impeding QQI from exercising some of its intended functions in relation to the quality assurance of the further and higher education sectors. A number of these issues were identified following a comprehensive review by QQI of its powers under the 2012 Act.

Key amendments made to the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012 include the following:

- To give QQI the explicit authority to 'list' awarding bodies and to include their qualifications in the Framework
- To provide a legal basis for QQI to examine the bona fides and financial capacity of providers including their compliance with employment law
- To strengthen and improve the approval process for quality assurance procedures
- To facilitate the introduction of the International Education Mark (IEM)
- To provide for a national scheme for the protection of enrolled learners
- To grant Institutes of Technology awarding powers up to level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications
- To establish a pathway for higher education institutions, whose primary source of income does not derive from the Exchequer to access, and use the title of "university".

The legislative amendments contained in the Bill are, in the main, technical and enabling provisions which are designed to facilitate the introduction of deferred policies and to clarify, strengthen and make the operation of existing policies more efficient.

3.10 International Education Mark (IEM)

The legislative amendments necessary to facilitate the introduction of the International Education Mark (IEM) are contained in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019. This Act was signed into law in July 2019.

The IEM is a core component of the Government's policy for the English language sector and will provide a full quality framework for the provision of education to international learners in the future. Only those providers who meet the robust quality assurance procedures of QQI will be allowed to carry the Mark. Once fully implemented, providers must gain authorisation from QQI to use the IEM in order to be eligible to recruit international students. It provides learners, or potential learners, with the necessary confidence that providers with the IEM have been quality assured by QQI.

3.11 Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI)

Following publication of the Report of the Gender Equality Taskforce, Higher Education Institutions were invited to submit applications for funding under the Senior Academic Leadership Initiative Call 2019. Following a competitive process, the HEA approved 20 new and additional senior academic leadership posts to the successful 12 HEIs. Recruitment into these posts will be initiated in 2020 by the relevant HEIs. It is envisaged that 45 senior academic leadership posts will be awarded to HEIs over three years (2019 – 2021) to assist in accelerating gender balance at senior levels. The Senior Academic Leadership Initiative aims to help achieve equality of outcome in the higher education sector. New and additional senior academic leadership posts will be funded in areas where; there is clear evidence of significant gender under-representation, where this appointment will have significant impact within the HEI and the relevant faculty/department/functional unit. Where they would be a proportionate and effective means to achieve accelerated and sustainable change within an institution

3.12 Athena Swan Ireland Awards

The Athena SWAN Ireland Awards Ceremony 2019 was held in October 2019. The awards celebrated in the 2019 ceremony bring the total number of Athena SWAN awards in Ireland to 37, consisting of 11 institutional awards and 26 departmental awards. Further information is available at: <https://hea.ie/policy/gender/athena-swan/>

Goal 4: We will intensify the relationships between education and the wider community, society and the economy

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

Review of the Year under this Goal

- A consultation process took place with partners concerning the regulations required to commence sections of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018.
- The Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill was published and completed all stages of the Seanad by the end of 2019.
- A total of 5,664 workers engaged in the 'Skills to Advance' programme, which enhances the skills of adults currently with low skill levels.
- New apprenticeship and traineeship programmes were developed and participation in existing programmes also expanded.
- 300 schools are now in the Creative Schools Initiative.

Further details under this Goal are set out below.

4.1 School Patronage

During 2019, we worked to increase the diversity of school type and offer parents a greater voice in choosing new patrons. We completed the Online Patronage Process system for primary schools being established in September 2019, commenced the patronage process for schools being established in September 2020 and explored opportunities for expanding Irish-medium education outside the Gaeltacht. Five new primary schools being established between 2020-2022 have been designated for Irish-medium education.

4.2 School Admissions

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

Consultation on the regulations required for commencement of certain sections of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 began in February 2019.

Through the work of the Primary Education Forum, the Minister committed to extending the lead in time for schools by a further year, with the implementation of new arrangements for school admissions taking effect for the 21/22 school year.

4.3 Student and Parent Charter

The Minister published the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill in September 2019. The key aim of the Bill is to improve how schools engage with students and their parents by

requiring each school to prepare, publish and implement a Student and Parent Charter in accordance with national charter guidelines.

The Bill was initiated in the Seanad and completed all stages of the Seanad by the end of December 2019.

4.4 Voice Project

4.4.1 The Student Voice Project

The Student Voice Project aims to improve the Inspectorate's interactions with children and young people in Early Years settings, primary and post-primary schools. The project is informed by a rights based approach to supporting children's voice as embodied in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In addition, the principles of the Lundy Model of Child participation with its emphasis on Space, Voice, Audience and Influence have been used to underpin the project. The project is designed in three phases,

- Phase 1: the Inspectorate's interactions with children and young people before inspection
- Phase 2: the Inspectorate's interactions with children and young people during inspection
- Phase 3: the Inspectorate's interactions with children and young people after inspection

Phase 1 was completed in 2019 with phase two commenced in quarter four 2019. The project has continued into 2020.

4.4.2 The Parents' Voice Project

The overall objective of the parents' voice project is to enhance the Inspectorate's engagement with parents before and during inspections and to take account of the needs and perspectives of parents when reporting on inspection findings.

The project links strategically with *Cumasú: The Action Plan for Education 2019*, with particular reference to the strategic action in Goal 4 to: 'strengthen the role of learners and parents in their engagements with the education and training system.' It is also aligned with *First 5: A Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families*, with particular reference Goal A: Strong and supportive families and communities. The project will also be informed by the work of the Parents and Learners' Unit of the Department in developing the Students and Parents Charter.

An initial research phase of the project commenced in Q2 2019 and a project plan was developed in Q3 and Q4 2019. Outputs will be delivered over several phases starting with a phase 1 trial in Q1 2020.

The Inspectorate also commenced research projects to examine and support the implementation of national strategies such as Creativity and Education for Sustainable Development.

4.5 Skills Development

4.5.1 National Skills Strategy

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

4.5.2 National Skills Council

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

In 2019, the strategic discussion items included Workplace of the Future, and Regional Skills Needs.

4.5.3 Regional Skills Fora

The purpose of the nine Regional Skills Fora (RSF) is to help to foster stronger links between employers and the Further and Higher Education and Training section within each region. The work plan within each region is driven by key stakeholders in the region including employers, enterprises and education and training providers thereby ensuring that the responses developed are tailored to identify skills needs.

In 2019, the RSF engaged with over 1,400 enterprises across all regions. This showed an increase in overall activity of 42.4% from the 2018 figure of 1,052. The RSF engage with all sectors and size of enterprises with particular focus on Small and Medium enterprises. Part of RSF engagement is signposting industry to existing provision of education training and services in addition to involving industry with educational provision.

4.5.4 Skills to Advance

The Department launched a new policy framework for employee development, *Skills to Advance*, in 2018. *Skills to Advance* 'enables targeted support for vulnerable groups in the Irish workforce, with a particular focus on those who have lower skills levels and who need more opportunities to advance in their working lives and careers, to sustain their employment and to avoid displacement or to avail of emerging job opportunities.

The 2019 target for *Skills to Advance* was to have 5,000 employees, whose skills level is below Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), engaged in state supported skills development. This target was surpassed with a total of 5,664 workers engaging in *Skills to Advance* throughout 2019. An additional €6.3m has been secured for *Skills to Advance* in Budget 2020.

4.5.5 Skills for Growth

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

4.5.6 EXPLORE Programme

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

256 people participated in EXPLORE during 2018, this figure increased to 488 people completing the programme in 2019. The programme initially focused on the manufacturing sector and based on the programme's success it is now planned to roll out the initiative into other sectors of the economy including the logistics and supply chain management and the hospitality sector.

4.4.7 Springboard+

In June 2019, Springboard+ 2019 was launched, providing for over 9,000 places on 275 courses across the country in the academic year 2019/20. A key change since 2017 in the Springboard+ programmes was the expansion of the eligibility for all courses regardless of the employment status of the applicant

The 9,151 places on offer under Springboard+ 2019 represent an investment of €34.3m from the National Training Fund with co-funding under the European Social Fund, as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020.

All courses approved for funding under Springboard+ are selected by an independent panel with experts from industry and education following a competitive tendering process. In particular, courses with a proven track record in getting people back into employment are recommended for funding.

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

In order to keep up with technological advances, Springboard+ 2019 included courses in the areas of Blockchain, Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity, Virtual Reality and Smart Factory Technology.

There was a positive response to Springboard+2019 with almost 80% of places filled by those who are in employment. 17% of places are filled by the unemployed and almost 4% by returners.

Almost 90% of the courses provided under Springboard+ 2019 were delivered in a more flexible format, including online, blended or distance learning, which aligned with the continued opening up of courses to learners irrespective of their employment status. As well as aiding participation for those in employment, increased flexibility allows people from all across the country to access programmes in regions other than where they resided.

4.4.8 Apprenticeship

Eleven new apprenticeship programmes were rolled out during 2019 in a diverse range of areas, including hospitality, ICT and retail. By year-end, a total of 54 apprenticeship options were available to learners, comprising 25 craft apprenticeships and 29 new (post-2016) apprenticeship programmes.

Registrations continued to rise across both craft and new apprenticeships with 6,177 new registrations during 2019, representing an increase of almost 10% on the 2018 figure of 5,648.

Progress continued on measures to ensure that apprenticeship opportunities are more readily accessible to all. In 2019, a call for proposals to provide 500 pre-apprenticeship places resulted in the approval of an additional 31 PLC 'Pathways to Apprenticeship' programmes to commence in 2020. SOLAS launched an 'Apprenticeship Jobs' platform in April to enhance the accessibility of apprenticeship job vacancies and a new online facility for approving new apprenticeship employers went live in October to streamline the application process for employers wishing to take on apprentices.

The second phase of the national Generation Apprenticeship promotional campaign included a stepped-up focus on employers through increased targeted advertising, briefings with employer and employer representative groups, employer badges, employer of the year awards and employer ambassadors. Over 25 employer ambassadors were on board at the end of 2019, spanning 25 apprenticeships and 5 regions.

4.5 Creative Youth

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

4.5.1 Creative Schools

The Creative Schools initiative was launched in early 2018 with 150 schools beginning participation in September 2018. These schools were all given the opportunity to continue into a second year of the initiative from September 2019, while a further 150 schools were selected as part of an application process.

Of the 300 schools now in the initiative, each participating school has access to a "Creative Associate", who is essential in embedding inspirational and sustainable creative practices in teaching and learning. "Creative Associates" are a mixture of practising artists and teachers, with an understanding of creativity and its potential to transform the lives of children and young people.

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

4.5.2 Creative Clusters

In September 2018, 73 schools were selected to participate in a network of Creative Clusters as part of the Schools Excellence Fund and the Creative Ireland Programme. These schools were given the opportunity to continue in the initiative for another year, while a further 76 schools enrolled from September 2019.

Creative Clusters encourages and recognises excellence and innovation in our schools, while giving the schools the freedom to determine their own goals to be achieved.

Schools are supported by a Creative Cluster Facilitator, and work together to collaborate, share ideas and develop plans on achieving their goal.

4.5.3 Creative Youth Partnerships

A new initiative to promote creativity for young people as part of the Creative Ireland Programme is being piloted in three education and training boards.

These partnerships, which are in a development phase, will be networks which enable information sharing, collaboration between local creative youth service providers to bring about better use of existing resources, practices and initiatives in an ETB area, while providing new opportunities for young people to access creative initiatives.

The three ETBs involved in the pilot are:

- Kerry Education and Training Board
- Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board
- Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board

Each ETB received €100,000 in 2019 to help develop their partnership and begin operating activities. The development to date included engagement with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Hub na nÓg.

4.6 Education for Sustainable Development

The *National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) 2014 – 2020* continued to focus attention on sustainability in the education system and raising awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The 2019 forum, held in November 2019, was opened by Minister Mitchell O'Connor and the keynote speaker was Ms. Mary Robinson. Following on from the High Level Political Forum at the UN in July, the forum focused on SDG 4 – quality education, and highlighted a range of areas where the Department was working to ensure that Ireland meets its Agenda 2030 targets for SDG 4.

4.7 Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the EU Programme for Education, Training and Sport for 2014-2020. Under the Programme in 2019, the European Commission provided funding totalling €30,756,525 to Irish beneficiaries, project promoters and partners. This is an increase of approximately 4.07% on the 2018 figure. Funding is provided for mobility, organisational partnerships and policy work.

Funding from the European Commission for Erasmus+ (2014-2020)						
Category	2014 (€)	2015 (€)	2016 (€)	2017 (€)	2018 (€)	2019 (€)
Erasmus+ schools	1,307,671	2,863,261	2,600,299	3,496,583	3,573,704	5,720,808
Erasmus+ VET	4,278,442	3,904,761	4,012,928	4,229,305	7,081,514	7,749,997
Erasmus+ adult education	1,644,297	931,820	922,225	910,517	1,738,565	1,014,500
Erasmus+ youth	2,898,321	3,036,979	3,117,912	4,949,204	3,982,183	3,226,560
Erasmus+ HE	7,705,791	9,430,206	9,341,690	11,185,937	13,177,679	13,044,660
Total	17,834,522	20,167,027	19,994,964	24,771,546	29,553,645	30,756,525

4.8 International Education

Throughout 2019, Ireland has successfully continued to work on achieving on the actions and targets as outlined in the Government's "International Education Strategy 2016 – 2020". The aim of the strategy is to support the development of global citizens through Ireland's high quality international education system, by attracting talent from around the world to our education institutions, equipping Irish learners with the skills and experience they need to compete internationally, engaging in world-class research and international collaborations, and addressing global challenges.

In 2019, we received 30 high-level international education visits from partner countries such as China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, the UAE and Vietnam. These visits have allowed the Department of Education and Skills to learn about the challenges that other education systems are encountering and the policies that these countries are currently developing to overcome these challenges.

These visits have also allowed the Department to assist other countries in building their capacity across their entire education area. Some of the topics addressed during these visits included: future skills needs, higher and further education policy, social inclusion, teacher training and curriculum developments.

The Department's Ministers and senior officials also led delegations of our higher education institutions to 16 locations, to countries such as China, the UAE, Finland, Korea, Japan, Russia and the USA. These visits allowed us make the necessary high-level linkages at Government level to further develop our links in core and high potential markets.

Also in 2019, under the Government of Ireland International Academic Mobility Programme, the Department awarded grants to the value of €500,000. This has allowed academics and staff from Irish HEIs to avail of mobility opportunities to deepen their collaborations with partner institutions in partner countries.

In addition, the Department of Education and Skills in partnership with Irish higher education institutions, provided funding, which included a full fee waiver and a living allowance for 60 international students to study in Ireland under the Government of Ireland Scholarship Scheme.

4.9 Publish the 'ICT Skills Action Plan 2019 – 2022'

Technology Skills 2022: Ireland's Third ICT Skills Action Plan was published in 1 February 2019. It seeks to deliver 47,000 IT Graduates by 2022 and sets out the priority actions which will be undertaken in the four-year period 2019-2022 to meet the demands for high-level ICT skillsets in the Irish economy. It sets out to provide appropriate education and training pathways for people to train, learn and upskill in a variety of high-level ICT skills which are sought after by a diverse range of industries, aiming to meet Ireland's needs for graduates skilled in computing and electronic and electrical engineering to support and drive economic performance over the coming years.

The plan is informed by research conducted by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN). The ambitious targets in the plan will increase the total number of graduates with high-level ICT skills by more than 5,000 every year by 2022.

Goal 5: We will lead in the delivery of strategic direction and supportive systems in partnership with key stakeholders in education and training.

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

Review of the year under this Goal

- A preferred solution to upgrade the teacher's payroll function to shared service standards was developed.
- A Code of Practice for the Governance of Education and Training Boards was published.
- A Framework for an integrated strategic approach to tertiary education was developed.
- The Department provided €5m in respect of performance funding to the HEA.
- TU Dublin was formally established as the first technological university in the State.

Further detail under this Goal are set out below.

5.1 Action Plan for Education 2019

In 2019, the Department continued to support the management and implementation of the reform agenda across the education and training sector. The *Action Plan for Education 2016- 2019* set out the high-level priority actions for the sector for the year, with progress measured against targets through published quarterly progress reports. This ensured that progress against stated goals and objectives was regularly monitored throughout the year.

Since the launch of *Cumasú: Statement of Strategy 2019-2021*, the Department has made significant progress towards achieving its goals and objectives. 89% of actions targeted for delivery by the end of 2019 have been achieved.

Published in 2019:

- Action Plan 2019 and Progress Reports.
<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/>

5.2 Public Sector Reform Programme

During 2019, the Department worked closely with the Reform Delivery Office and the Reform Evaluation Unit in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to support the implementation of *Our Public Service 2020*, launched in December 2017. This framework supports continuous development and innovation across the public service.

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

In 2019, the Department continued to promote the use of appropriate structures and processes to ensure Management Board oversight and governance of the development and implementation of commitments under the Public Service Reform agenda, and to promote Project and Programme Management structures and methodologies throughout the organisation.

5.2.1 Shared Services Implementation

The shared services agenda made significant progress in 2019. The Education Shared Business Services (ESBS) Centre was developed in readiness for the commencement of the Payroll Shared Service responsible for paying 27,000 ETB employees.

The phased implementation of Payroll Shared Service for ETBs began with the migration to the ESBS of the payroll functions of three ETBs in 2019.

In late 2019 work began on a new centralised managed payroll service in the ESBS to process payments for some 50,000 ETB apprentices and trainees on behalf of SOLAS and the ETBs.

Planning has also progressed for the phased implementation of Finance Shared Service for ETBs. eInvoicing services are already being provided to the ETB sector, including ETB schools, and were further developed in 2019.

Work was also undertaken in relation to the higher education sector. Detailed mapping and analysis of the current payroll and related HRM processes in the sector was completed and Trinity College operated as a pilot university site for transition to payroll shared services. Based on this, an approved business case was developed to inform an appropriate implementation plan to progress shared services within higher education institutions.

Building on work carried out in 2018, a preferred solution to upgrade the teachers' payroll function to shared service standards was developed, in order to better serve its 120,000 payees. This included peer review of the business case and procurement of technical expertise to design a payroll application.

In 2019, we continued to work with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) to provide the education and training sector with a sector-wide procurement shared service, while remaining aligned to OGP regulations. This included advancing work to align and integrate procurement functions into a single shared procurement service for the sector.

5.2.2 ETB/SOLAS Programme Board

In 2019, the Department's ETB/SOLAS Programme Board continued to actively support and enable the implementation of the overall reform programme for the ETB/SOLAS sector. This Programme Board is chaired by the Department's Secretary General and its membership includes members of the Department's senior management team, along with the General Secretary of ETBI, the CEO of SOLAS and the chief executives of two ETBs.

During 2019 the Programme Board continued to oversee key shared service projects for the ETB sector. The ETB Payroll project successfully operationalised payroll shared services for three ETBs: Dublin-Dún Laoghaire; Cavan-Monaghan; and Laois-Offaly ETBs. Work continued with other ETBs to prepare them for migration to the shared payroll in waves over the period 2020-22. The ETB Finance project brought to near completion the procurement of a single integrated system, with a common design, processes and accounting definitions for finance administration for the ETBs. Senior operational staff were appointed who will be responsible for delivering the finance service. Work began in late 2019 on an Apprentice and Learner Payroll project to provide a centralised managed payroll service to process payments for some 50,000 ETB apprentices and learners on behalf of SOLAS and the ETBs.

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

5.3 Code of Practice for the Governance of Education and Training Boards

The Department, following extensive consultation with ETBs, Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) and the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) published a *Code of Practice for the Governance of Education and Training Boards* in January 2019.

The Code reflects the current regulations and the latest edition of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies published by DPER. The revised Code has a greater focus on the culture within the ETBs, requiring boards and executives to “set the tone at the top” so that good governance is embedded into all areas of ETBs.

ETBI established a Governance Steering Group which included representation from ETB boards, ETB executive, ETBI and the Department of Education and Skills and arranged for roll out of a comprehensive training programme on the Code.

The theme of the training project is “Setting the Tone from the Top” and involves delivery of six specific training programmes over a minimum of 22 sessions between October 2019 and June 2020.

Published in 2019:

- *Circular Letter 0002/2019 Code of practice for the Code of Practice for the Governance of Education and Training Boards*
https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0002_2019.pdf

5.4 Data Protection

In January 2019 the Department established the Data Compliance and Support Section bringing together the related areas of data protection, data governance, freedom of information and records management under the management of a single Principal Officer who was also appointed as data protection officer (DPO).

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) applies from 25 May 2018 in conjunction with the Data Protection Act 2018. The legislation confers rights on individuals as well as responsibilities on those persons processing personal data. The Department’s Data Protection Policy sets out how the Department seeks to process personal data and ensure that staff understand the rules governing their use of personal data to which they have access in the course of their work.

The Department is committed to protecting the rights and privacy of individuals in accordance with this legislation. The Department is ensuring that it only lawfully and fairly processes personal data about employees, clients, suppliers and other individuals in order to achieve its mission and functions.

The Data Compliance and Support Section works to assist all staff in being aware of obligations from data protection legislation and in ensuring that the Department remains compliant.

Following on from the introduction in 2018 of **General Data Protection Regulation** (GDPR), a key focus in 2019 was on ensuring GDPR compliance. We strengthened the governance and management of the Department’s data resources by developing Corporate Data

Governance and Data Management Frameworks, a Data Strategy and a Data Governance Compliance programme.

5.5 Data Governance

Optimising the use of data is a key action under “Our Public Service 2020”. Sharing data across Government will facilitate better service delivery, support better decision making, increase the ease of access to services and drive efficiencies. The Department continues to participate in central initiatives and collaborate with partners both within the education sector and the wider public service as required to ensure the most effective flow of data.

A key element of Action 24 of Civil Service Renewal, the National Data Infrastructure (NDI), has been progressed by the NDI champions group, chaired by the Central Statistics Office with representatives from all key Departments and Offices. The group has been expanded out to the wider public sector and will allow for the project to be progressed across the Public Service. The NDI summarises the coverage of record-level PPSNs and Eircodes for key data holdings of Government Departments and agencies under their aegis. The Department continues to encourage collection of PPSNs and Eircodes in support of this work.

5.6 Further Education and Training Strategy 2020-24

Under the Further Education and Training (FET) Act 2013, SOLAS must submit a strategy for the development of FET every 5 years to the Minister for his approval. The strategy provides the framework for the development of the FET system over the period and guides how FET is planned, funded, supported and delivered on the ground. The first FET Strategy covered the period 2014-19. The second Strategy will cover the period 2020-24.

The development of the second FET Strategy, led by SOLAS, began in 2019, and will be framed around a vision for future FET in Ireland. It will outline how FET will provide pathways for a diverse group of learners, will support societal participation and strong communities, will prepare people for successful careers and a lifetime of learning and development and will be a major driver of Ireland’s next critical phase of economic and social development. The key priorities of the strategy are set out across three core pillars: Building skills, Creating pathways and Fostering inclusion. Alongside these priorities, the new Strategy will address enabling themes around staffing and structures, digital transformation and capital infrastructure.

The second FET Strategy is due for publication in 2020.

5.7 Reform of the National Training Fund

An independent review of the National Training Fund was commissioned by the Department of Education and Skills as part of a package of reforms announced to accompany the decision in Budget 2018 to increase the NTF levy. The review was informed by an extensive programme of engagements with a diverse range of stakeholders. This review was published by the Minister for Education and Skills in August 2018. The report made 14 specific recommendations across 4 key areas:

- Reform of the future direction of the NTF
- Utilising the NTF to support investment in Higher Education
- Enhancing enterprise engagement and input to NTF priorities
- Improvements in monitoring/evaluation of the NTF.

An Implementation Plan to deliver these recommendations was published alongside the announcement of Budget 2019 along with details of a new NTF advisory group. This advisory group is a permanent resourced structure to optimise enterprise engagement on NTF priorities. The membership of the group consists of key stakeholders from the enterprise sector, Department officials, and bodies who have a strategic and oversight role in

delivery of skills provision. The Group has met on three occasions in 2019 and have informed the priorities and direction of funding from the NTF for Budget 2020.

Budget 2019 saw a number of steps being taken to align with the recommendations set out in the Independent report including additional support for close to labour market skills requirements, use of part the surplus in the Human Capital Initiative, increased focus on supporting in-company training, supporting close-to-labour-market skills programmes in areas of identified skills needs in Higher Education and a reallocation of NTF funding of Further Education and Training for employment programmes below NFQ Level 5 to the Exchequer.

5.8 Develop a framework for an integrated strategic approach to tertiary education

A twin track approach is being taken to greater integration: the development of a long term strategy; and ongoing integration of operations across tertiary education.

In 2019 drafting of a consultation paper for an integrated strategy for tertiary education commenced.

Greater integration of operations was achieved in the following ways:

- policy and funding of both FET and HE was transitioned to a single tertiary division in the Department of Education and Skills
- a work stream commenced to look at the FET/HE balance in meeting future skill needs, within a wider comprehensive funding model evaluation, supported by the European Commission Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM)
- the legal framework for SOLAS has integrated within it a requirement for consultation and collaboration with HEA. A similar provision was included in planning for the HEC Bill in 2019
- Work on a Department-led Quality Review began in 2019. Though initially focussing on the HE sector, the review has been scoped in a way that will, in the longer term, provide a comprehensive framework for tertiary education
- QQI completed planning for the first external reviews of ETBs in 2020, bringing the approach to the external quality assurance of FET closer to that for HE
- QQI commenced a project on Level 5/6 FET and HE award types in the NFQ
- QQI also embarked upon standards development across FET and HE in priority domains of learning
- there was progress in developing Memoranda of Understanding between ETBs and HEIs through the Regional Skills Fora and innovative projects continued to emerge through shared clusters across tertiary education within regions
- the Transitions Group commenced an investigation of the long term outcomes for FET learners who progress to HE.

5.9 Develop Higher Education Performance Fund

Following from an independent Review of the Allocation Model for Funding Higher Education Institutions being completed in 2018 progress was made during 2019 on a number of the thirty three recommendations, including the following:

5.9.1 Recommendation to Develop a Higher Education Performance Fund to reward HEs for positive performance

During 2019 €5m was provided in respect of performance funding to the HEA. This funding was allocated for positive performance as part of the strategy and performance dialogue.

The €5m was awarded to institutions based on review of impact assessment case studies submitted by HEIs that demonstrated progress in implementing performance compacts.

5.9.2 Recommendation 28 Implementation of fund for Leadership and Capacity Building in HEIs

Funding was provided by DES in 2019 to the HEA for management and leadership capacity of Governing Bodies and senior managers within higher education institutions. Following detailed submissions for funding from THEA and the IUA, initiatives approved for three-year funding by the HEA board included:

- Appointment of a shared institutional research resource to improve management information and underpin decision making across the institutes (THEA)
- An annual conference to promote IoT capability and facilitate collaboration across the sector (THEA)
- A management and leadership development programme, delivered over 3 years (THEA)
- Governance Support Programme (IUA)
- Leadership Development Programme (IUA)
- Data analytics and Management (IUA)

5.9.3 Recommendation 20 – Implementation of fund for Teaching and Learning Capacity Building in HEIs

Arising from this recommendation, an amount of €5m was provided to the HEA by the DES in 2019. The investment was intended to provide professional development and training for higher education staff in areas that will enhance wider teaching and learning approaches, from developing pedagogies, enhancing methodologies and incorporating new modes of delivery, including digital technologies. The €5m was allocated to the sector in 2019 in proportion to core grant share.

The National Forum for Teaching and Learning managed a review process to ensure the proposals to be funded aligned to one of the four strategic priorities of the National Forum. Proposals were reviewed by an international panel as part of this process. The €5m allocation was augmented by the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (€0.6m) giving a total of €5.6m. Allocations under the Teaching and Learning initiative were paid to institutions in November 2019.

5.9.4 Recommendation 13 – Implementation of a new research and innovation fund for IoTs and TUs

In 2019 an additional allocation of €5m was provided by the DES to the HEA as a research and innovation grant for the technological sector. In line with the recommendation, this funding was allocated to the technological sector based on postgraduate completions (20%), competitive research funding (40%) and knowledge transfer metrics (40%). The metrics for allocation were agreed with the sector and the €5m was allocated and paid to all institutions in 2019 in line with the agreed metrics.

5.9.5 Finalise terms of reference and commence review of the Free Fees scheme (Higher Education)

The Review of the Free Fees Initiative will be assessed by the Department following completion of the *Review for increased future sustainability in Higher and Further Education* which includes the economic assessment of the policy options presented in the *Cassells report*.

5.9.6 Undertake the economic analysis of the options included in the Expert Group Report on Future Funding for Higher Education requested by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education

The development of a sustainable funding model for higher education is essential in light of the centrality of higher education – both in terms of human capital development, research and innovation – to underpinning the future development of Ireland as a knowledge economy against the backdrop of rapid technological change.

A comprehensive economic evaluation of the funding options presented in the *Report of the Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education* commenced in Q4 2019 in consultation with the European Commission's DG Reform Programme, by the appointed expert independent international consortium as led by AARC and including Indecon and LE Europe.

5.10 Establishment of Technology University Dublin (TU Dublin)

On 1st January 2019, Dublin Institute of Technology, IT Tallaght and IT Blanchardstown were dissolved and TU Dublin was formally established as the first technological university in the State.

The Munster Technological University consortium, comprising Cork IT and IT Tralee, submitted an application seeking TU designation. In May 2020 a decision was made by the Minister to grant TU status to the consortium.

5.10.1 TU Research Network (TURN)

The TURN high level working group was established in February 2019 to examine and report on how new and emerging TUs may achieve sectoral and national strategic objectives and the supports required to do so most effectively and efficiently. TURN's report *Connectedness & Collaboration enabled by Connectivity* was presented to the Department in November 2019 and makes a series of 12 recommendations to provide TUs with a solid foundation for development and progression.

Published in 2019:

- **TURN Report**
<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/connectedness-collaboration-through-connectivity.pdf>

5.10.2 TU Transformation Fund

Budget 2020 allocated new multi-annual funding of €90 million for TU development and progression from 2020 to 2022.

5.10.3 2019 Higher Education Landscape Restructuring Fund

Funding of €14.25 million was allocated under the Higher Education Authority 2019 call for submissions for higher education landscape restructuring, consolidation and collaborative projects. This funding included €11.8 million for the development and progression of technological universities and €2.45 million for other collaborative HEI projects aligning with the objectives of Project Ireland 2040, initial teacher education policy and strengthened regional clustering collaboration and co-operation between higher education and further education and training institutions, including on a cross-border basis.

5.10.4 RCSI University Authorisation Order

In December 2019 Minister McHugh signed the first authorisation order which permits the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, as an education provider, that does not derive its primary income from Exchequer funding, to describe itself as a university in the State following compliance with specified statutory conditions.

5.11 Education (Admission to Schools) Act, 2018

The Education (Admission to Schools) Act, 2018 allowed for significant developments in 2019. It is intended to achieve a more structured, fair and transparent decision-making process by schools regarding enrolment. A number of commenced sections of the Act had an immediate impact in 2019, including a ban on charging admission and enrolment fees, removing the role of religion in school admissions for virtually all primary schools, and providing for schools to be able to cooperate with each other in managing their admission processes. The Minister also required schools to open special classes for children with special educational needs where the National Council of Special Education deemed it necessary and local arrangements were not forthcoming. In this way, the Act provided for enhanced access to mainstream services for local children needing school places. Preparations were also made during the year for commencing further sections of the Act early in 2020.

5.12 Payroll and Pensions

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

In 2019, the Department processed superannuation benefits for over 1,500 teachers and non-teaching staff. As part of the superannuation process, the Department also provided for over 1,300 transfers of pensionable service to/from other public service bodies, administered over 880 notional service requests, processed over 1,140 family law queries, and processed in the region of 115 applications for professional added years for employees in the education sector. In 2019 there were further improvements to the pension modeller on the Department's website, where pension scheme members can obtain an estimate of pension benefits. The Pension Unit continues to issue pension benefit statements to scheme members and is actively working on improvements to increase the number of statements that can be issued. These improvements are part of a wider project that is underway to improve the capacity and performance of the Pension Unit through streamlining and modernising processes and procedures.

5.13 Building Programme 2019

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

Under Project Ireland 2040, the Department continues to make progress to increase the infrastructural capacity in the schools sector, in order to meet demographic and other demands. In 2019, capital expenditure for the school sector amounted to €665m.

Rollout of Project Ireland 2040 in the school sector has involved overall construction activity during 2018 and 2019 of 139 projects with a value in excess of €1m. There were also 401 projects with a project value less than €1m at construction during this period.

The completion of these 540 projects (139 and 401) is expected to deliver more than 40,000 permanent (additional and replacement) school places and replace circa 600 prefabs.

A total of just over €29m was paid out from the Department under the Minor Works Grant in 2019 for the school year 2019/20.

5.13.1 Summer Works and Emergency Works Schemes

There were 405 Summer Works Projects approved in December 2019 for delivery in 2020 (163 Life Safety Systems and 242 External Works projects).

During 2019, there were 484 projects approved under the Emergency Works Scheme. Total expenditure in 2019 under the Emergency Works Scheme came to just over €26m.

5.13.2 Property Acquisitions

During 2019, 9 property transactions were completed. These were to meet education accommodation requirements nationwide but particularly in areas experiencing significant demographic growth.

Three schools were delivered via Public Private Partnership (PPP) in 2019, bringing to 33 the total number of operational PPP Schools.

Agencies such as ETBs, the National Development Finance Agency, a number of Local Authorities as well as the Grangegorman Development Agency and the Office of Public Works continue to assist in the delivery of almost 80 major school projects.

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

Work continued to progress the acquisition of sites in relevant areas during 2019. Engagement with officials across the Local Authority sector has been of significant benefit in supporting site acquisition processes and in providing greater certainty in relation to planning outcomes associated with sites. The Department also avails of professional expertise to assist in the identification and assessment of potential site options.

5.13.3 School projects compliance checks

During 2019, the Department commenced compliance checks of over 120 projects in schools that had received devolved funding and completed their projects by the end of 2018, to ascertain if works were carried out in accordance with the Department's guidelines.

5.13.4 Website Information

The current status of large scale projects being delivered under the school building programme is published on the Department's website on a regular basis. In the case of smaller devolved projects information is published on a weekly basis listing the name of the school, the type of project and dates of approval.

5.13.5 Higher Education Capital Projects

Capital expenditure on higher education infrastructure in 2019 was €65m. Funding was used to progress a number of key projects, including the Maynooth University Technology Society & Innovation Building, the Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT) - Coonagh Campus & IT Sligo's K block. In addition a number of critical infrastructure upgrades were supported in the IoT sector including in Athlone Institute of Technology, Galway- Mayo Institute of Technology - Castlebar, LYIT Killybegs and Waterford Institute of Technology. Devolved Grant payments totalling €10.7m were paid to the 11 IOTs and TU Dublin for minor works and equipment, including ICT upgrades. €8.1m in Apprenticeship Equipment Grants was also paid to participating HEI's in 2019.

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

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

5.13.6 Energy Efficiency in Schools

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

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

The Department and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland are currently involved in an energy efficient retrofit pilot scheme for schools which commenced in 2017. This is taking place in advance of the major programme of retrofits scheduled to commence in 2023, as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

The pilot programme is testing and evaluating different design approaches, solutions and delivery mechanisms. For 2019, 17 schools were selected in five geographical clusters, covering all four provinces and including a mix of urban and rural areas. Each school was assessed comprehensively to ensure that the measures were suitable for that school and would deliver value to both the school and the pilot. Design teams were appointed to each cluster, with medium to deep energy efficiency works delivered over the summer. The upgrades targeted a 33% energy efficiency improvement and upgrades to doors and windows, insulation, lighting and heating upgrades as well as renewable technologies.

This collaboration and research is helping to shape the future direction of energy efficiency in schools, and will continue with a view to delivering a programme of retrofits commencing in 2023 as NDP funding permits.

5.14 School Transport

In 2019 120,000 children, including over 14,200 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €219m. Children with special educational needs were transported to schools on over 3,100 at a cost of over €120million in 2019.

5.15 BREXIT and the Education Sector

Following the ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement by the UK Government in December 2019, the Department ceased No Deal contingency planning. The publication of the negotiating mandates for the Future Relationship between the EU and the UK will be published in 2020. During the course of the forthcoming negotiations, this Department will be focussed in particular on UK participation in EU programmes such as Erasmus + and Horizon 2020, commitment to PEACE PLUS programme and continued recognition of professional qualifications.

The Departments International Cooperation Unit continued with its preparedness strategy in the context of the conclusion of the EU-UK negotiations on 31st December 2020, including assisting in the passage of an amendment to the Student Support Act 2011, which will provide for the continued payment of SUSI grants to Irish students studying in UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and UK students in Irish HEIs as well finalising with the UK the

Memorandum of Understanding on the Common Travel Area, insofar as education is concerned. The latter issue was raised by the Minister for Education and Skills with Secretary of State for Education, when they met in London in October 2019.

5.16 European Social Fund (ESF) Operational Programme

Some 70,000 people participated on co-financed activities under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020 during 2019.

The second round of projects under the Gender Equality activity was launched in October 2019 with additional funding of €5.8m to support women's entrepreneurship and participation in the workforce.

EU Receipts of €73.8m were lodged to the Education Vote in respect of PEIL expenditure declarations during 2019.

A Citizen's Summary of the 2018 Annual Report on the PEIL was published on www.esf.ie in July 2019.

5.17 Department Expenditure

The Department's expenditure outturn in 2019 amounted to €10.9 billion. This included €9.5 billion in gross voted current expenditure, €508 million in current expenditure on the National Training Fund and capital expenditure of €941 million.

The Department's 2019 budget allocation represented a nearly 7% increase on its 2018 level. This increase provided for, among other things, 1,300 additional posts in schools, including additional teachers and SNAs, 5% increase in schools capitation, implementation of a range of policy measures in the areas of schools excellence funds, supports for school leadership and wellbeing, improving outcomes for children with additional care needs and enhanced investment in tertiary education, including additional Apprenticeship and Springboard provision.

5.18 Internal and EU Audit Unit

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

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

Annual audit programmes are prepared under the auspices of the Audit Committee and both the Internal Audit Section and the ESF Audit Authority report to the Committee on the conduct of these programmes and the finalisation of audit reports. A total of nine reports were finalised in 2019 and the unit tracks, on a quarterly basis, progress on the implementation of recommendations arising from audit reports.

No internal Protected Disclosures were brought to the attention of the Head of Internal and EU Audit Unit or the Audit Committee in 2019.

5.19 Dealing with Past Abuse

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

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

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

In 2019, additional cash contributions amounting to €8.8m were received on a voluntary basis from congregations. Six further properties were fully transferred to the State under the 2009 voluntary offers and three properties fully transferred under the 2002 Indemnity Agreement.

The total offers made by the congregations under the two rounds amount to €480.6m while to end December 2019, total contributions amounting to €238 million had been received, see Table below.

Summary of original offers made plus amounts realised				
	Offered (€m)	Realised (€m)	To be realised (€m)	Percentage of offer realised / yet to be realised
2002 Indemnity Agreement	128	124.94	3.06	98%/2%
2009 Voluntary offers (*)	352.61	113.34	239.27	32%/68%
	480.61	238.28	242.33	50%/50%

* The values of a number of properties fully transferred to the State are not yet available.

It is unlikely that the full value of the amounts offered in 2009 will be achieved due to lower valuations on completed property transfers or disposals, offers not accepted, etc.

The Department continued to furnish the Council of Europe with bi-annual plans detailing the individual and general measures that are being taken to implement the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) Judgements in the Louise O’Keeffe case. An ex gratia scheme was instituted in July 2015 by the Government as a response to those who instituted legal proceedings in relation to day school child sexual abuse and who had discontinued those proceedings in the wake of judgments of the High and Supreme Courts, but before the subsequent ECtHR judgment in the Louise O’Keeffe case. Applications for the ex gratia scheme that were declined could be referred to an independent assessor, Mr Justice Iarfhlaith O’Neill. Following Mr Justice O’Neill’s determination in July 2019 that the prior complaint condition for eligibility for a payment from the ex gratia scheme was incompatible with the judgement of the ECtHR, the ex gratia scheme is being reviewed.

The Retention of Records Bill provides for the retention of certain records of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, the Residential Institutions Redress Board and the Residential Institutions Redress Review Committee. It was published in February 2019.

Appendix A – Key indicators of progress and success of Action Plan for Education 2019

Key Indicators for Goal 1

Policy area	Indicator	Measure
Wellbeing	Number of dedicated days for support and development activities in schools by NEPS psychologists	5,285 (2018)
The provision, take up of and success of post primary students in STEM subjects	% LC students achieving H4 or above in higher level maths	56.8% (2018)
	% LC students achieving O4 or above in ordinary level maths	56.1% (2018)
	% boys' schools offering a STEM subject other than maths or a science	96.0% (2018)
	% girls' schools offering a STEM subject other than maths or a science	56.1% (2018)
	% mixed schools offering a STEM subject other than maths or a science	93.1% (2018)
	% 6 th year boys taking 2 or more STEM subjects (excl maths and biology)	40.0% (2018)
	% 6 th year girls taking 2 or more STEM subjects (excl maths and biology)	8.0% (2018)
The provision, take up and success of post primary students in foreign languages	% LC students achieving grade H4 or above in any foreign language	31.5% (2018)
	% post-primary schools offering at least two foreign languages	74.1% (2018)
	% 6 th year boys studying at least one foreign language	69.0% (2018)
	% 6 th year girls studying at least one foreign language	86.5% (2018)
Retention rates to Leaving Certificate	% of Students sitting Leaving Cert	91.6% (2017)

Key Indicators for Goal 2

Policy area	Indicator	Measure
Retention rate differences between DEIS and non-DEIS schools	% gap in retention rates in post-primary DEIS and non-DEIS schools	8.7% difference (2018): 94.4% retention in non-DEIS schools and 84.7% retention in DEIS

Policy area	Indicator	Measure
		schools
Retention rate differences between DEIS and non-DEIS schools	% gap in senior cycle retention rates in post-primary DEIS and non-DEIS schools – started 5th year but did not sit Leaving Cert	6.1% difference (2018): 9.2% drop out rate in DEIS schools and 3.1% drop out rate in non-DEIS schools
Access to Higher Education by under- represented groups	% of new entrants to Higher Education that are people with a disability	10.6% (2017/18)
	% Mature entrants of total entrants in HE (full-time undergraduate)	8.4% (2017/18)
	% of 20 year olds in disadvantaged areas who are students (Census)	47.4% (Census 2016)
	Number HE students studying on flexible basis (part-time and remote), and that number as a percentage of total number of HE students	52,267 (based on 2017/18 and 2018/19 figures, provisional), 22.04% of total student numbers (provisional)
	Number of students receiving supports in the form of grants, and that number as a percentage of total number of HE students	66,774 (based on 2017/18 and 2018/19 figures, provisional), 36.11% of total student numbers (provisional)
	Number of (self-declared) Irish Travellers in HE	61 (2017/18)
Special Education Needs (SEN) Size and Capacity	Number of SNAs	15,950 (2019)
	Number of SETs in mainstream schools (WTEs)	13,530 (2018/19)
	Number of special schools	114 (2018/19)
	Total number of pupils in special classes	6,229 (primary, 2018/19) 2,136 (post-primary, 2018/19)
	Total number of pupils in special schools	7,728 (2018/19)

Key Indicators for Goal 3

Policy area	Indicator	Measure
Early Years Inspections	Number of inspections of ELC centres	691 (2018)
Inspections in primary and post-primary schools	Number of inspections in primary schools including probation	3,566 (2018)
	Number of inspections in post-primary schools	608 (2018)
Other inspections including School Self Evaluations (SSE)	Number of advisory visits	1,473 (2018)
Publication of inspection reports	Number of EYEI reports published	813 (2019)
	Number of primary and post-primary inspection reports published	996 (2019)
CPD provision	Number of primary schools receiving support from the PDST	1,931 (2018)
	Number of post-primary schools receiving support from the PDST	416 (2018)

Key Indicators for Goal 4

Policy area	Indicator	Measure
Catholic ethos schools	% of total school enrolment in Catholic ethos primary schools	89.9% (2019)
	% of total school enrolment in Catholic ethos post- primary schools	50.5% (2019)
Irish Medium schools	% of total school enrolment in Irish medium primary schools	8% (2019)
	% of total school enrolment in Irish medium post- primary schools	3.6% (2019)
Number of multi denominational schools	Number of multi/non denominational primary schools	150 (2019)
	Number of multi/non denominational post-primary schools	352 (2019)
Alternative Leaving Certificate pathways	% Students taking Leaving Cert Applied	4.9% (2018)
	% Students taking Leaving Cert Vocational Programme	26.1% (2018)
Number of early school leavers post-primary	% of early school leavers – started 5th year but did not sit Leaving Cert	2,433 (2017)

Policy area	Indicator	Measure
Transition rates from post-primary to Higher Education	% transitioning from post-primary to higher education	64.0% (2017)
Skills, upskilling and re-skilling	Number of Springboard+ places	9,000 (2019)
	Number of Skillnet learners	56,182 (2018)
	FET enrolments at NFQ levels 1-4	71,364 (2018)
	FET enrolments at NFQ level 5	37,354 (2018)
	FET enrolments at NFQ level 6	8,358 (2018)
	Total graduates Major, Minor and Special Purpose	211,320 (2018)
Research	Total number of postgraduate researchers (full-time, part-time, Masters and PhD)	10,015 (2017)
	Number of PhD full-time and part-time	8,513 (2017)
	Number of research masters full-time and part-time	1,502 (2017)
Apprenticeship	Total number of apprenticeship registrations	17,829 (2019)
Lifelong Learning	% of adults aged 25-64 who participated in formal and or non-formal learning, annual average (Eurostat)	12.5% (2018)
	Persons age 25-34 who achieved an award on the NFQ- any level	57,034 (2017)
	Persons age 35-44 who achieved an award on the NFQ- any level	45,691 (2017)
	Persons age 45-54 who achieved an award on the NFQ- any level	32,804 (2017)
	Persons age 55-64 who achieved an award on the NFQ- any level	16,751 (2017)
	Persons age 65+ who achieved an award on the NFQ- any level	2,982 (2017)
	Persons age 65+ who achieved an award on the NFQ- any level	2,982 (2017)
International students	International students a % of full-time HE students in Irish public and private higher education institutions	12.5% (2017)
	Number of higher education students from Ireland funded to participate in Erasmus+	4,900
	Number of English language students studying in Ireland	121,462 (2018)

Key Indicators for Goal 5

Policy area	Indicator	Measure
Capacity and routes for School Transport	Number of school transport routes	6,856 (2018)
	Number of mainstream pupils on school transport	104,704 (2018)
	Number of SEN pupils on school transport	12,751 (2018)
Number of schools	Number of primary schools	3,240 (2019)
	Number of post-primary schools	723 (2019)
Number of FET and HE providers	Number of QQI registered FET providers	365 (2018)
	Number of third level Institutions and colleges funded by the HEA	18 (2018)
	Number of third level Universities funded by the HEA	7 (2018)
Capital Programme	Number of additional permanent places (primary)	6,718 (2019)
	Number of additional permanent places (post-primary)	4,287 (2019)
	FET, HE	10 projects in construction, of which 2 were completed (2019)

Appendix B – Corporate Data

Supporting the Parliamentary Process	2019
Parliamentary Questions responded to	4,918
Memoranda for Government Received for Observations	208
Representations received by Minister and Minister of State Offices	6,605
Responses to Topical Issues	30
Responses to Adjournment (Commencement) Debates	29

Information Services	2019
Email enquiries received through info@education.gov.ie	7,377
Visitors to our website www.education.ie	3.28m
Freedom of Information Requests Received	512
Decisions Made	475
Subject Access Requests Received	54
Closed	54
Press Releases Issued	201
Twitter followers	43,300

Annual Programme of Inspection in Schools and Centres for Education 2019

The Inspectorate completed a total of **4,742** inspections/advisory visits to schools and settings in 2019 as outlined in Tables 1 to 6 below.

Table 1: Summary of Inspectorate activities, 2019

Summary of Inspections	2019
Inspections of early years settings participating in the ECCE Programme*	664
Inspections of primary schools (including inspection of the work of teachers on probation)	1,969
Inspections of post-primary schools and centres for education	702
School self-evaluation advisory visits	971
Visits to Early Years settings as part of Research and Development Work	40
Other inspections, advisory visits and evaluation activities	396
Total Inspections/Advisory visits to early years settings, schools, centres for education and other educational settings	4,742

*Early Childhood Care and Education Programme

Table 2: Inspections of Early years' settings participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme, 2019

Early years Education-focused Inspections	2019
Early Years Education-focused Inspection	592
Early Years Education-focused Inspection: Follow-through	72
Visits to Early Years settings as part of Research and Development Work	40
Total Early years Education-focused Inspections	704

Table 3: Inspections and evaluations in primary schools, 2019

Primary Inspection/Evaluation Activity	2019
Whole-School Evaluation	11
Whole-School Evaluation - Management, Leadership and Learning	97
Evaluation of Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS* Schools	19
Incidental Inspection	374
Follow-through Inspection	140
Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Education Needs	40
Curriculum Evaluation	178
Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections: Primary	25
Total of school Inspections	884
Inspection of the work of teachers on probation	1,085
Overall total	1,969

*DEIS: An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion

Table 4: Inspections and evaluations in post-primary schools and centres for education, 2019

Post-primary Inspection/Evaluation Activity	2019
Whole-School Evaluation - Management, Leadership and Learning	65
Subject Inspection	282
Programme Evaluation	17
Evaluation of Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS* Schools	18
Incidental Inspection	162
Follow-through Inspection	111
Evaluation of Centres for Education	4
Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections: Post Primary	21
Evaluation of Provision for Students with Special Educational Needs	22
Total of School Inspections	702

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

Table 5: School Self-Evaluation Advisory Visits 2019

School Self-Evaluation Visits	2019
School self-evaluation advisory visits to primary schools	724
School self-evaluation advisory visits to post-primary schools	247
Total Self-Evaluation Advisory Visit	971

Table 6: Other inspections and advisory visits, 2019

Other Inspections/Evaluations of Provision for Students and Young People	2019
Inspection of Coláistí Gaeilge (Irish Colleges)	21
Inspection of Special Care Units	6
Inspection conducted for the purpose of school recognition	2
Inspection conducted under Section 24 of the Education Act 1998	1
Inspections in the European Schools	12
Inspection of summer literacy/numeracy camps for children	6
Inspection of campaí samhraidh for children (Irish-medium summer camps)	5
Evaluation of summer Continuing Professional Development courses for primary teachers	44
Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme: advisory visits to schools	144
Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme: Case Study Visits	18
School Excellence Fund DEIS: advisory visits to schools	130
School Excellence Fund Step-Up: advisory visits to schools	7
Total other Inspections/Evaluations of Provision for Students and Young People 2019	396

Table 7: Publication of reports, 2019

Publication of Inspection Reports	2019
Early Years Education Focused Inspections (early years)	721
Early Years – Follow Through (early years)	92
Curriculum Evaluation Model (primary)	171
DEIS (primary and post-primary)	43
CPSI (primary and post-primary)	22
Programme Evaluation (post-primary)	21
Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (primary)	37
Evaluation of Provision for Students with Special Educational Needs (post-primary)	14
Subject Inspections (post-primary)	274
WSE-MLL (primary)	98
WSE-MLL (post-primary)	66
Follow-Through (primary and post-primary)	231
WSE modified (primary)	11
Centres for Education	5
Evaluation of Schools at Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres	3
Total number of Reports Published	1,809
(Note: the number of reports published in 2019 differs from the number of inspections conducted in 2018 as not all reports are publishable and not all relate to inspections conducted in 2019)	

Table of Prompt Payments 2019

Year	2019	
	Number	Value (€)
Details		
Payments made within 15 days	8785	€453,009,650
Payments made between 16-30 days	3043	€47,526,720
Payments made in excess of 30 days that were <u>subject</u> to LPI and compensation costs	83	€1,041,138
Payments made in excess of 30 days that were <u>not subject</u> to LPI and compensation costs	1702	€8,515,356

Year	2019	
Details	Number	Value (€)
Total Payments	13613	€510,092,864
Amount of late payment interest (LPI) paid		€3,002
Amount of compensation costs paid		€4,550.00
Total Invoices with LPI & Compensation	83	€7,552

Energy Consumption & Expenditure in 2019

The Department of Education and Skills has an energy management and reduction programme in place to reduce energy consumption by 33% by 2020. With a reduction of 28.1% being achieved to date, the Department is exceeding the projected reductions required. A programme of equipment and facility upgrades together with behavioural changes has helped drive this energy efficiency. Ongoing upgrades of our lifts in the Dublin campus, major building works in Tullamore and the upgrade of the heating and conversion from oil to natural gas in the same office will help improve energy efficiency further.

Department Expenditure on Energy Costs (incl. VAT)					
Category	2009 (€)	2016 (€)	2017 (€)	2018 (€)	2019 (€)
Electricity	586,570	385,304	335,012	332,390.	287,533
Gas	83,337	107,697	112,118	116,555	112,861
LPG and Oil	43,115	12,717	16,392	24,686	18,980
Total	713,022	505,718	463,522	473,631	419,373

Public Sector Duty

Under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014, all public bodies are statutorily obliged to have regard to human rights and equality issues in the performance of their functions. In this regard, goals two and five address the Department's legal obligations in this regard.

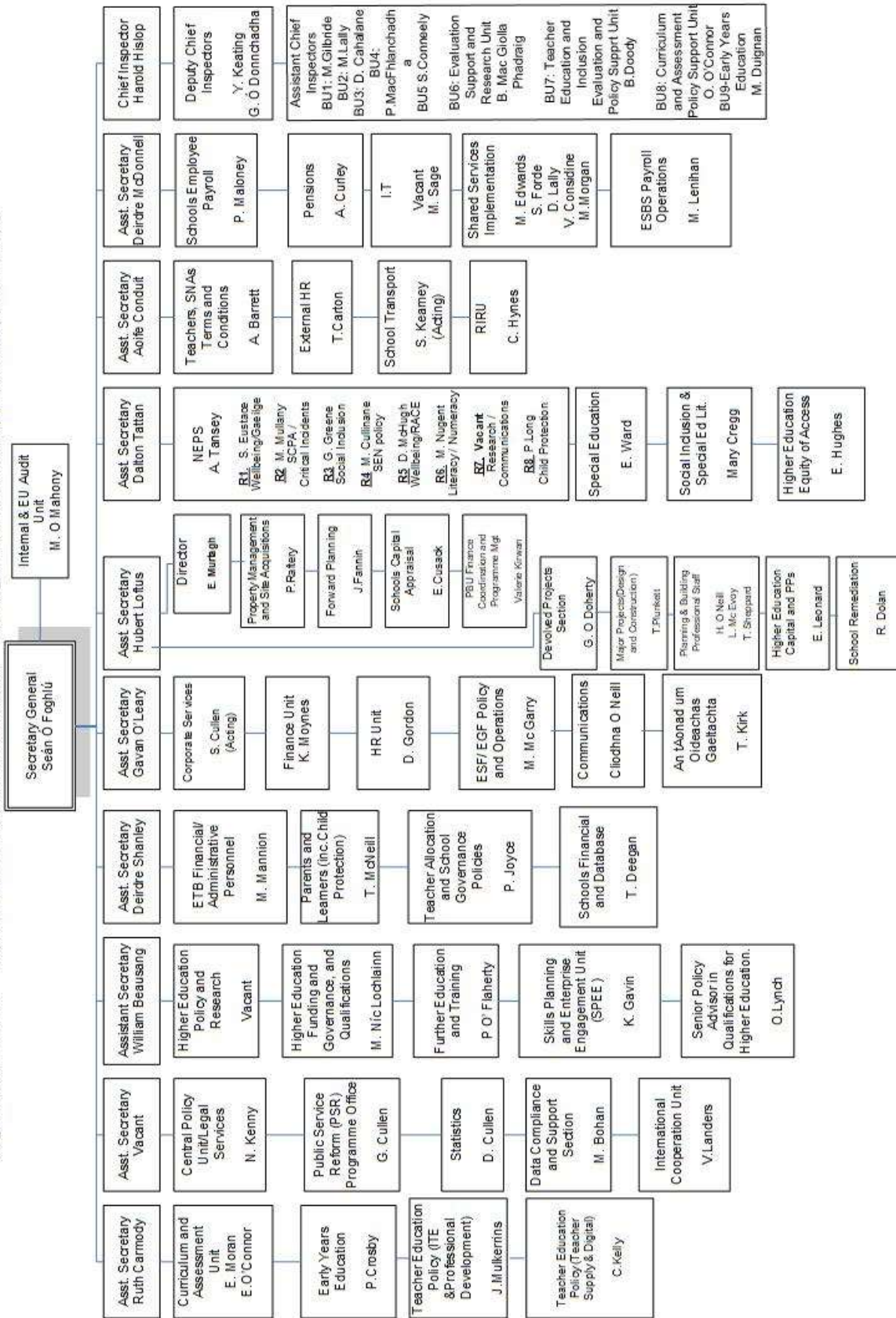
Gender Balance on State Boards

Gender balance on boards under the aegis of the Department at end 2019						
Name of Board	Total Places on Board	Men	Women	Total	Women as % of Total	Single Gender Board?
An Comhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) ¹	12	4	7	11	63.6	0
Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board	9	5	4	9	44.4	0
Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse	6	2	4	6	66.7	0
Grangegorman Development Agency Board	15	6	6	12	50.0	0
Higher Education Authority	15	7	8	15	53.3	0
Irish Research Council	11	4	6	10	60.0	0
Léargas	9	2	3	5	60.0	0
National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)	13	4	7	11	63.6	0
<u>National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)</u> ¹	25	10	14	24	58.3	0
National Council For Special Education (NCSE)	13	6	7	13	53.8	0
Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	10	4	6	10	60.0	0
Residential Institutions Redress Board	11	4	7	11	63.6	0
Residential Institutions Review Committee	5	4	1	5	20.0	0
Skillnet Ireland	13	6	7	13	53.8	0
SOLAS (An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna)	13	6	7	13	53.8	0
State Examinations Commission (SEC)	5	3	2	5	40.0	0
Student Grant Appeals Board	11	5	6	11	54.5	0
The Teaching Council ¹	37	20	16	36	44.4	0
Educational Research Centre ¹	5	3	1	4	25.0	0

Note 1 - At 31st December 2019 there was one unfilled board post, on each of the boards of COGG, the NCCA, Teaching Council and the ERC.

Appendix C – Organisation Chart end 2019

Organisation Chart – Department of Education and Skills – Management Board Responsibilities (Nov 2019)



Appendix D – Bodies under the Aegis of the Department

Non-Commercial Bodies Under Aegis

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

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

Appendix E – Direct Links to our Website www.education.ie

Statistical Information	http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/
Inspectorate Reports	http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/
Education Legislation	http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Legislation/Education-Legislation.html
All Publications	http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/
Circulars and Forms	http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/
Special Education	http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/
School Design	http://www.education.ie/en/School-Design/
Press and Events	http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/
Services and Information for Parents	http://www.education.ie/en/Parents/
National Educational Psychological Service	http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/NEPS-Home-Page.html
Services and Information for Education Staff	http://www.education.ie/en/Education-Staff/
Services and Information for Learners	http://www.education.ie/en/Learners/

Appendix F – Acronyms

Acronym	
AIM	Access and Inclusion Model
CAO	Central Applications Office
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPOG	Child Protection Oversight Group
CPSI	Child Protection & Safeguarding Inspection Model
CSL	Centre for School Leadership
CTB	Curaclam Teanga Bunscoile
DE	Department of Education – Northern Ireland
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DLF	Digital Learning Framework
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EGFSN	Expert Group on Future Skill Needs
ELC	Early Learning and Care
ESCI	Education Support Centres Ireland Network
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ESF	European Social Fund
ESRU	Evaluation Support and Research Unit
EYEI	Early Years Education Inspection
EYEPU	Early Years Education Policy Unit
FET	Further Education and Training
FLAG	Foreign Languages Advisory Group
FSD	Fund for Students with Disabilities
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HCI	Human Capital Initiative
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institute
HSCI	Home School Community Liaison
IAG	Implementation Advisory Group
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IEM	International Education Mark
ILEP	Interim List of Eligible Providers
IPPN	Irish Primary Principals Network
ISL	Irish Sign Language
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
IWP	Induction Workshop Programme
JCSP	Junior Certificate School Programme
JCT	Junior Cycle for Teachers
LCPE	Leaving Certificate Physical Education
LINC	Leadership for Inclusion
MCA	Middletown Centre for Autism
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOOCS	Massive Open Online Courses
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages
NAPD	National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
NBSS	National Behaviour Support Service
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications

Acronym	
NIPT	National Induction Programme for Teachers
NQT	Newly Qualified Teachers
NSAI	National Siolta/Aistear Initiative
NSS	National Skills Strategy
NTF	National Training Fund
PACG	Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines
PATH	Programme for Access to Higher Education
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
PEIL	Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
PMO	Project Management Office
QAB	Qualifications Advisory Board
RSF	Regional Skills Fora
RTB	Residential Tenancies Board
SAF	Student Assistance Fund
SALI	Senior Academic Leadership Initiative
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEF	School Excellence Fund
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEN-PP	Special Educational Needs in Post Primary Schools
SESS	Special Education Support Service
SET's	Special Education Teachers
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
SUSI	Student Universal Support Ireland
TGD	Technical Guidance Documents
TU	Technological University
TURN	TU Research Network
TUSLA	Child and Family Agency
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United National Convention on the Rights of the Child
VTOS/SST	Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme/Specific Skills Training
WSE-LL	Whole School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning
YEI	Youth Employment Initiative