

ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION

2016-2019

END OF YEAR REVIEW 2016
TABLE OF ACTIONS



Introduction

Few areas are more pivotal to our ambitions as a nation than education and training. An excellent and innovative education and training system is fundamental to personal fulfilment, the building of a fair society and a successful nation. It is central to sustaining economic success and in converting economic success into building a strong community.

The quality of the service we provide through our education system will determine whether we can deliver the Programme for Government's most important goals:

- To break cycles of disadvantage and ensure that every person has an opportunity to fulfil their potential
- To create sustainable well-paying jobs and strong economic growth
- To solve the great problems through research and innovation, and excel in culture, art and every other field of human endeavour

In launching the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 the Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton, set out a high-level ambition for Ireland's Education and Training system, of becoming the best education and training service in Europe by 2026.

To achieve this ambition we must build on the successes of the past and the strengths of the Irish Education system and we must actively address those areas where there is room for improvement. This will be achieved through the implementation of the hundreds of actions and sub actions in the Action Plan.

Our Action Plan is realistic and is based on a highly consultative approach with key partners in Education and Training and across the wider Government Departments and agencies. The environment in which we operate is both challenging and complex. Political change both nationally and internationally including Brexit; the recovering and growing economy and the related changes in demands for skills and growing demand for upskilling and training for those in employment; the projected changes in demographics and their impact on enrolments and demands for places in Further Education and Training and in Higher Education, all present challenges and opportunities for Education and Training policy and provision. We are also part of a wider programme of public and civil service reform and must deliver on these and other Programme for Government commitments.

Our central vision is that, through adopting a "whole-of-system" approach, the Irish education and training system should become the best in Europe: leading in innovation and a broad range of endeavours, harnessing education and training to break down barriers for groups at risk of exclusion and setting the benchmark for social inclusion, delivering to the highest international standards; equipping learners of all ages to participate and succeed in a changing world.

This is the first report published on progress on the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 which was published in September 2016. It outlines progress made in the first three months of the Action Plan, on actions and sub-actions due for delivery by the end of 2016. Details on the achievements made during this period can be seen in the *Overview* and tables below.

As set out in the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019, an updated annual Action Plan will be published each year which will contain further and more specific actions to be delivered. Publication of quarterly reports, showing the actions achieved in that quarter, will be central to the implementation process. The Action Plan for Education 2017 will be published in tandem with this report.

Overview

The Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 contains 139 actions and hundreds more sub actions under the following five goals:

1. Improve the learning experience and the success of learners
2. Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs
3. Help those delivering education services to continually improve
4. Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community
5. Improve national planning and support services

Actions due for delivery by end 2016

The Action Plan for 2016 – 2019 contained 141 actions and sub-actions due for delivery by the end of 2016. Of these, 116 actions and sub-actions have been achieved, giving a completion rate of 82%.

In achieving these actions and sub-actions, the Department has made significant progress in delivering on its high level ambition to be the best education and training service in Europe by 2026. Actions achieved in the first three months of the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 include:

Quality and Professionalism

- Completed 491 Early Years Education focused inspections to ensure the quality of the nature, range and appropriateness of the early educational experiences for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The early-years education-focused inspections are part of a range of steps being taken to improve quality and standards in the emerging early-years sector.
- Published the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 to make it easier for parents to enrol their children in a school that meets their needs. Publication of the Bill delivers on a commitment in the Programme for Government to publish new School Admissions legislation taking account of current draft proposals and addressing issues including publication of school enrolment policies, an end to waiting lists, introduction of annual enrolment structures, and transparency and fairness in admissions for pupils and their parents.
- Commenced the Fitness to Teach provisions of the Teaching Council Act. For the first time a member of the public, a teacher or an employer is able to make a complaint to the Teaching Council about a registered Teacher. Increased openness and transparency will support high professional standards amongst teachers in the interests of children and parents and enhance the reputation and status of the teaching profession.

Curriculum Reform

- Launched the new Junior Cycle Business Studies and Science subject specifications in September for 1st year students. This is a significant element of the curriculum reform underway via the new Framework for Junior Cycle 2015 which gives

- students better learning opportunities, and rewards and recognises non-academic performance and achievements.
- Gaeltacht Education**
- Published the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 in October 2016. This Policy is the first comprehensive strategy for education in the Gaeltacht since the establishment of the State, and a key achievement in the implementation of the Governments “20-Year Strategy for Irish”. Policy on Gaeltacht Education sets out how we will support Gaeltacht schools to provide high-quality, Irish-medium education to the children of the Gaeltacht.
- Inclusion**
- Funded 430 additional Resource Teachers to provide extra teaching support to children with special educational needs, an increase of 9% in the numbers of resource teachers in twelve months. Resource teachers play a vital role in providing for the educational needs of students with special educational needs.
 - Allocated €900,000 for the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Fund as part of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education in 2016. This €900,000 is the 2016 element of the €2.7million 3-year fund which aims to increase access to teacher education for students from the target groups identified in the National Access Plan.
- Investment**
- Announced the additional allocation of €36.5m to Higher Education (Budget 2017). This is the first significant increase in investment for the Higher Education sector in 9 years, a period in which State investment in higher education fell by 33% (€463million), during a time of growing demographics. This marks the recommencement of investment into higher education.
- Global Connections**
- Launched the International Education Strategy in October 2016. An additional 37,000 International Higher Education and English Language Training (ELT) Students targeted with an aim to increase the economic value of this sector to €2.1bn per annum by 2020, a 33% increase.

Other achievements in this period include:

Under Goal 1: Improve learning experience and success of learners

- Ireland’s 15-year-olds are among the best in OECD countries in reading and are performing significantly higher than the OECD average in mathematics and science (PISA 2015)
 - Reading: Irish students ranked 3rd out of 35 OECD countries, 2nd among EU countries, and 5th out of all countries participating in PISA 2015
 - Science: Irish students ranked 13th out of 35 OECD countries, 6th among EU countries and 19th out of all countries participating in PISA 2015
 - Mathematics, ranked 13th of 35 OECD countries, 9th among EU countries and 18th out of all countries participating in PISA 2015
- Ireland’s fourth and second class students’ mean scores in maths and science are significantly above the international TIMSS 2015 centrepont for both grade levels (TIMMS 2015)
 - Irish fourth class students ranked 9th out of 49 countries in maths (up from 17th out of 50 countries in 2011)
 - Irish fourth class students ranked 19th of 47 countries in science (broadly consistent with 22nd position out of the 50 countries that participated in 2011)
 - Irish second year students ranked 9th of 39 countries in maths, (there is no recent study with which to compare this)
 - Irish second year students ranked 10th of 39 countries in science (there is no recent study with which to compare this)

- Short course in Coding introduced in 22 schools across Ireland, allowing students to engage in technology and design-related activities
- Consultative Advisory Group on the implementation of the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015 to 2020 convened and 800 primary schools now connected with higher broadband speeds
- Primary Language Curriculum (Irish and English) rolled out on a phased basis for Junior Infants to 2nd class
- New Junior Cycle Science and Business Studies specifications introduced in September 2016 in all post primary schools
- Politics and Society at Leaving Certificate Level rolled out on a phased basis to over 40 schools from September 2016
- Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 launched in October 2016
- All Together Now, an anti LGBT bullying resource for primary schools in Ireland, was launched by BeLonG To, the National LGBT Youth Organisation

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

- 430 additional Resource Teachers were allocated to schools to support children with Special Educational Needs in October
- National Higher Education Programme for Inclusion Co-ordinators in Early Years Settings rolled out with 900 practitioners enrolled in Mary Immaculate College for 2016/2017
- €2.7m allocated for the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Fund as part of the National Access Plan. This is a three year fund with €900,000 made available in 2016. One aim is to increase access to teacher education by students from identified target groups in the National Access Plan
- Review of the Student Assistance Fund (Access to Higher Education) published
- Consultation commenced on the assessment of the SNA scheme to identify the most appropriate form of support options to provide better outcomes for students with special educational needs

Under Goal 3: Help those delivering education services to continuously improve

- Teaching Council (Amendment) Act 2015 commenced providing an introduction of new arrangements for the vetting of teachers
- New Post Graduate Qualification in School Leadership announced, aimed at those teachers aspiring to senior school leadership positions. The first intake of students will be in September 2017
- Reform of initial teacher education progressed with the legal incorporation of Church of Ireland College of Education, Mater Dei Institute and St Patrick's College Drumcondra into DCU

- Mentoring Programme for new school leader commenced. Mentors have been assigned to newly appointed Post Primary Principals across the country and Leinster-based newly appointed Primary Principals
- Revised Guidelines on Inspection for Primary schools, Post Primary schools and High Support Units published in September 2016

Under Goal 4: Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community

- Performance Report into Ireland's Higher Education System launched in December 2016, reviewing the performance of the Irish higher education system for the years 2014 and 2015, in critical areas such as access and responsiveness to skills needs
- Draft General Scheme of a Bill published which will provide for a Parents and Learners Charter to improve information and complaint procedures for parents and students relating to schools
- Five new primary schools, three under new schools patronage process and two under reconfiguration of patronage, opened in September 2016, providing for demonstrated parental demand and for plurality of patronage
- Patron bodies invited to apply for patronage of a further four new primary schools to be established in September 2017 and September 2018, providing greater choice for parents and guardians
- Patronage of 9 new Post-Primary schools announced in November 2016, addressing parental demand for diversity. Schools to be established in 2017 and 2018
- Report of the STEM Education Review Group published November 2016. The report outlines 47 actions, with 21 identified for initial priority implementation. These actions will form part of the Action Plan for Education 2017
- €28.5m Minor Works Grant 2016/2017 for primary schools announced in November 2016. The Minor Works Grant enables schools to maintain and improve the essential fabric of their existing facilities
- Action Plan on use of school buildings for afterschool care completed. This was a key commitment contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government

Under Goal 5: Improve national planning and support services

- €10m Capital Grant for Institutes of Technology announced in September 2016. The funding will allow Institutes to undertake necessary improvement works, address urgent health and safety concerns, and to commence programmes of equipment renewal including upgrade of IT facilities
- IMIS (Inspections Management Information System) rolled out to enable inspectors to capture data using mobile devices, streamline reporting, ensure provision of quality data for evaluation and support evidence based policy formation, in September 2016

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Goal 1: Improve the learning experience and success of learners				
Objective	Action No.	Actions for 2016	Achieved/ Not achieved	Comment
Objective 1.1 Improve services and resources to promote wellbeing in our school communities to support success in school and life	1	Support all schools in implementing the “Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention” (2013) and the “Wellbeing in Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion” (2015).	Achieved	
	3	Publish the 2015 Lifeskills survey, providing information on how primary and post-primary schools cater for the wellbeing of their students. The data, on topics such as healthy eating, physical activity, substance misuse, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), bullying, enterprise in schools and education for sustainable development, will inform future priorities and policies on wellbeing.	Not achieved	A draft of the 2015 Lifeskills survey, providing information on how primary and post-primary schools cater for the wellbeing of their students, has been prepared and will be published in Q1 2017.
	6	Undertake an assessment of the provision by the Department of supports to schools in the areas of mental health and social and emotional competence, with a view to providing an enhanced and better integrated service.	Not achieved	An assessment of the provision by the Department of supports to schools in the areas of mental health and social and emotional competence has been undertaken. The report by the Cross-Divisional Working Group on Wellbeing/Mental Health is being finalised and will be completed in Q1 2017.
	8	We will enhance guidance counselling at second level, as resources allow.	Achieved	
	9	Continue to support the development and roll out of anti-bullying training materials for parents, teachers and boards of management and continue to review the implementation of the Action Plan on Bullying, and continue to support anti-bullying awareness initiatives.	Achieved	
	10	Work with DCYA to develop the LGBT youth strategy and implement relevant actions.	Achieved	
	11	Complete development of Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework and Leaving Certificate Physical Education specifications for Department’s consideration.	Achieved	
	Objective 1.2 Deliver a “Step-Change” in the development of critical	12	Deliver curricular resources in early years’ settings to encourage the roll out of Aistear, a curriculum framework designed to engage children in learning about identity and belonging, exploring and thinking, wellbeing and communicating in an enjoyable and challenging way. The Framework also provides guidelines on supporting children’s learning through partnerships with parents.	Achieved

skills, knowledge and competences to provide the foundations for participation in work and society	13	Build on significant improvements in literacy and numeracy achieved since the National Strategy was adopted in 2011:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish Interim Review, and set revised/new targets to 2020. 	Not achieved	The Interim Review of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy is currently being finalised, the publication was delayed to ensure that the Review could take account of the findings from the TIMSS and PISA studies published at the end of 2016. The Interim Review will be published in Q1 2017.
	14	Review the structure of, and time allocation in, the primary school curriculum to ensure that the allocation reflects learners' requirements in new foundation skills that they will need in a changing society:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish a consultation document and conduct a consultation process, with the public and education stakeholders. Findings will feed into the redevelopment of the primary curriculum. 	Achieved	
	15	Introduce and implement new subjects and courses on a phased basis:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparatory work on Primary Maths (including coding) curriculum commenced. 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education about religions and beliefs (ERB) and Ethics. • Policy advice, as provided by the NCCA, will be considered by the Department and will inform implementation options. 	Achieved	
	16	Implement new Junior Cycle subject specifications on a phased basis, up to 2019:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement phase 2 of Junior Cycle (Science and Business Studies). 	Achieved	
	17	Develop new options including short courses and other learning experiences at Junior Cycle. Nine short courses have already been developed by the NCCA for use by schools, and schools can also develop short courses locally, to meet the interests of their learners:	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete additional short course on Philosophy. 	Achieved	
	18	Undertake trialling of new specifications for Leaving Certificate Biology, Physics and Chemistry with a view to increasing take-up:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence trialling Leaving Certificate Sciences in a selection of schools (approximately 24). 	Achieved	
	19	Finalise and implement new specifications for Leaving Certificate subjects: Economics, Art, Applied Maths, Agricultural Science, and Physical Education, as resources permit:		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Physical Education specification (Exam subject). 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCCA will advise Department on actions relating to Art, which will be considered in light of available resources. 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete specification for Agricultural Science. 	Achieved	
	20	Review senior cycle programmes (including Leaving Certificate Applied) and vocational pathways in senior cycle with a view to recommending areas for development, as resources permit:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence post-implementation review of post-primary Maths. 	Achieved	
Objective 1.3 Increase subject choice for learners in Senior Cycle to equip them with the skills and knowledge to participate in a changing world	22	Implement, on a phased basis, new specification for new subject – Politics and Society for Leaving Certificate:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1 – rollout to 41 schools. 	Achieved	
	23	Conduct a scoping exercise on introduction of computer science subject at senior cycle, prior to introduction:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete first phase of research. 	Achieved	
Objective 1.4 Improve the transition of learners at critical stages in the education and training system	27	Implement reforms to improve transitions and remove barriers to progression to the levels of the education and training system. The Systems Performance Framework for HE will be reviewed and a revised framework developed – it is intended that this will address the issue of broadening undergraduate entry, as part of this next Systems Performance Framework which will be put in place for Higher Education Institutions later this year. (See Goal 4, Objective 4, Action 98.):		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information campaign prior to the introduction of a new grading system and common points scheme to inform learners of the changes taking place. 	Achieved	
Objective 1.5 Increase the use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment so that learners are equipped with the	28	Implement the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015 -2020 to enhance teaching, learning & assessment. The Strategy aims to realise the potential of digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment so that Ireland’s young people become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens to participate fully in society and the economy:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Steering Committee to guide implementation and agree implementation plan. 	Achieved	

necessary skills to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing learning environment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key priorities; adapt the UNESCO ICT Competency Framework for Teachers for the Irish context; update e-Learning Planning Resource; and bring remote learning into the classroom through the use of new technologies. 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve broadband services to schools, allocate grants for ICT equipment and make available advice and support materials for schools. 	Achieved	
	29	800 primary schools upgraded to higher broadband speeds	Achieved	
	30	Subject to the availability of resources, work with SOLAS to implement the Strategy for Technology Enhanced Learning in FET 2016-2019, through the actions outlined below. The Strategy sets out 18 practical actions, associated timelines and performance indicators to build on existing capacity and good practice in technology-enhanced learning, and expand access to and continuously improve and innovate FET provision:	Achieved	
Objective 1.6 Enable learners communicate effectively and improve their standards of competence in languages	32	Roll out Primary Language Curriculum (Irish and English) across all primary schools:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Junior Infants to 2nd Class, on a phased basis. 	Achieved	
	33	Strengthen Irish language learning in Gaeltacht areas:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish Strategy. 	Achieved	
	35	Implement the Foreign Languages in Education Strategy:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish the Foreign Languages in Education Strategy. 	Not achieved	Foreign Languages in Education Strategy is being finalised. The Strategy will be published in Q1 2017.	

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

Objective	Action No.	Actions for 2016	Achieved/ Not achieved	Comment
Objective 2.1 Improve the learning experience and learning outcomes for learners impacted by disadvantage	36	Support the implementation of the AIM (Access and Inclusion) initiative led by DCYA in ECCE centres through dormant accounts funding of a new national higher education programme for Inclusion Co-ordinators in early years settings.	Achieved	
	37	Publish a new action plan for educational inclusion which will include a new transparent and robust Assessment Framework for the identification of schools and allocation of resources under a new School Support Programme. This will be subject to a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework and will include improved support for school leadership, creating networks and clusters for teachers and schools, better integration between the work of schools and local community supports, and greater use of the Home School Community Liaison programme:	Not achieved	New Action Plan for Educational Inclusion is at advanced draft stage following completion of additional consultation. Review Report is also being finalised. Publication is expected in Q1 2017.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a strategy for communicating the new Action Plan. 	Not achieved	Communication strategy for the Action Plan on Educational Inclusion will be developed in tandem with the Action Plan in Q1 2017.
	38	Implement strands of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, so that higher education becomes more representative of the population in general, through the following actions:	Achieved	
		Publish review and implement recommendations on the Student Assistance Fund.	Achieved	
	39	Identify measures to reduce non-completion in higher education:		
		Working group established.	Achieved	
	40	Issue call for proposals to increase participation in initial teacher education by access target groups.	Achieved	
	41	Issue call for measures to engage directly with disadvantaged communities, to promote the benefits of higher education.	Not achieved	Funding secured for HEIs to engage directly with "disadvantaged" communities to promote the benefits of higher education. HEA to issue Call for Proposals (Strand 2 of PATH) in Q1 2017.
	42	Prepare a report on the barriers to lone parents accessing higher education, and publish the report's recommendations in advance of Budget 2017.	Not achieved	Draft report on the review of barriers to lone parents accessing higher education is being finalised and is due for publication in Q1 2017.

	43	Increase financial supports for postgraduate students with a particular focus on those from low income households, as resources allow.	Achieved	
	45	Ensure FET is meeting the specific needs of unemployed people and other groups impacted by disadvantage:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ETBs working closely with Intreo Offices under new protocols expanding provision to DSP client groups in line with Pathways to Work 2016-20. 	Achieved	
Objective 2.2 Target policies and supports for learners with special education needs to support their participation and progression across the continuum of education	49	Develop and pilot a new model for allocation of teaching resources for children with special education needs:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete review of pilot and prepare for implementation. 	Achieved	
	50	Consult with education partners on implementation of sections of the EPSEN Act and on the provision of services to children with Downs Syndrome.	Not achieved	Work has progressed on this action, with further consultation to be completed in Q1 2017.
	51	Undertake a comprehensive assessment of the SNA scheme to identify the most appropriate form of support options to provide better outcomes for students with special educational needs:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following development of Terms of Reference the NCSE will commence a comprehensive stakeholder and public review. 	Achieved	
	52	Work with relevant Government Departments and agencies to introduce a new in-school speech and language service creating stronger linkages between parents, teachers and SLTs:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commence discussions with D/ Health and HSE with a view to developing implementation plan for new model. 	Achieved	
	53	Establish an Inclusion Support Service under NCSE to assist schools in the provision of education to children with special education needs.	Not achieved	Work is underway to establish an administrative support structure in the NCSE to accommodate the new Inclusion Support Service. This is due for completion in Q1 2017.

Goal 3: Help those delivering education services to continuously improve

Objective	Action No.	Actions for 2016	Achieved/ Not achieved	Comment
Objective 3.1 Increase the quality of Early Years to deliver a better learning experience for young children	54	Support the implementation of Aistear, the early years curricular framework:	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop 10 hours of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) resources for Aistear in early years. 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update and maintain the online Aistear Síolta Practice Guide to support the early years' workforce in their work 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train 50 additional Síolta mentors from City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs) and Voluntary Childcare Organisations (VCOs) and train all existing mentors (15) to deliver Aistear CPD. 	Achieved	
	55	Support the development of the workforce within the early years sector.		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft a report for consultation on revised occupational role profiles, which will inform the review of education and training programmes in the sector scheduled for 2017 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 900 preschool staff enrolled on National Level 6 Programme for Inclusion Co-ordinator. 	Achieved	
	56	Implement a national programme of Early Years Education-focussed Inspections (EYEl)s which will provide advice and support a progressive improvement in standards, leadership and teaching methodologies for the over 4,000 early years settings providing the ECCE-programme:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500 EYEl)s conducted and 450 inspection reports published. 	Achieved		
Objective 3.2 Develop the continuum of teacher education to equip teachers with the right skills for 21st century teaching and learning and improve	57	Consider the Report of the Technical Group on Teacher Supply and in the first instance seek to improve the data deficit identified by the Group that constrained their capacity to identify specific actions, with progress on the data issue as resources permit.	Not achieved	The Technical Working Group Report on Teacher Supply is being considered. The report is due for publication in Q1 2017.
	58	Continue the reform of initial teacher education (ITE) and teacher induction:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All incoming and existing ITE students of DCU, St. Patrick's College Drumcondra and Mater Dei Institute of Education registered as DCU students. 	Achieved	
	59	Expand the range of supports available through the Centre for School Leadership:		

school leadership		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce, on a phased basis, a mentoring programme for newly appointed school principals: 200 experienced school leaders have been trained to support newly appointed post-primary principals across the country, and Leinster-based newly appointed primary principals. Roll out this service to all primary principals as resources permit. 	Achieved	
	60	Develop and introduce a new postgraduate qualification for aspiring school leaders.		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence course, following a tender process and the appointment of a programme course provider, facilitating 200 participants annually. 	Achieved	
	61	Change the leadership and middle management structure and the functions carried out in schools by the holders of posts of responsibility:		
		Discussions with primary and post-primary partners aimed at improving the flexibility of the post-holders structure, transforming the current schedule of duties towards a more flexible, distributed and accountable model, where roles and responsibilities are shared and adapted to particular situations and contexts	Achieved	
		Discussions with ETBI to develop a project which will encourage ETBs to adopt a more flexible and targeted approach to the deployment of principals and deputy-principals	Achieved	
	63	Provide dedicated professional support to teachers to support the implementation of curricular change:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Professional Development Service for Teachers will provide CPD to support the Primary Languages curriculum and to support the implementation of Children First in schools. 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Junior Cycle for Teachers support team will provide CPD to support the implementation of Junior Cycle reform. 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEPS will support schools to implement the “Wellbeing in Schools” guidelines. 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NCSE will support schools to implement the new SEN allocation model. 	Achieved	
	64	Regulation of the teaching profession:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Fitness to teacher provisions of the Teaching Council Act. 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Council to finalise draft National Framework for Teacher CPD, following stakeholder consultation, as resources permit. 	Achieved	
	67	Develop proposals for a Schools Excellence Fund, to promote excellence and innovation, in the context of available resources.	Achieved	

Objective 3.3 Improve quality, promote excellence and innovation, and increase autonomy for schools	69	Roll out the newly-issued Looking at Our School 2016 – a new quality framework for school self-evaluation, with standards for teaching, learning, leadership and management, to help schools to better plan for continuous improvement:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue revised School Self-evaluation Guidelines to all primary and post-primary schools, and manage a programme of SSE advisory visits to schools. 	Achieved	
	70	Issue revised guidelines on inspection to all schools, including those in high support units, special care units and children detention centres.	Achieved	
	71	Undertake a planned programme of inspection and advisory visits in all schools, increasing the frequency of evaluative and advisory visits, as resources permit.	Achieved	
	72	Deliver a new inspection model to evaluate and report on quality of education provision in mainstream settings for learners with special education needs.	Achieved	
	73	Publish inspection reports in accordance with agreed arrangements for the various inspection models, including new inspection models for primary schools. The reports will be more accessible to parents, with clearer evaluative judgements.	Achieved	
	74	Manage the monitoring of, and interventions in, poorly performing schools, through the School Improvement Plan and oversee the monitoring of those requiring improvement.	Achieved	
	76	Mainstream quality assurance mechanisms for inspection work in schools.	Achieved	
Objective 3.4 Promote high quality learning experiences in Further Education and Training and Higher Education	77	Implement the Further Education and Training Professional Development Strategy 2016-2019, in order to enhance the skills of those involved in the delivery, administration and management of FET programmes through targeted and consistent training and support:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish the Strategy 	Achieved	
	78	Build capacity within the ETB sector to achieve the delivery of the FET Strategy goals, focussing particularly on Organisational Design, Change Management and Quality Assurance.	Achieved	
	79	Implement the Programme Learner Support Service (PLSS) to provide a FET database which provides information on outcomes and supports linkages with other data sets, to allow for the follow-up of learners upon course completion; measurement of course impact on learners' socio-economic status; and the planning of support services and investment priorities:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct review of the pilot for this database. 	Achieved	
	80	Improve the impact of PLC, VTOS and BTEI schemes, by reviewing each programme, publishing the review, and setting out time-bound implementation plans:		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the PLC evaluation, and consider the recommendations for implementation. 	Not achieved	SOLAS are working with ESRI to finalise a report and to respond to its recommendations. The report will be ready for publication in Q1 2017.
	81	Commence the pilot roll-out of the National Professional Development Framework for Higher Education Practitioners with results of first call for proposals. The Framework will provide guidance for professional development and give direction to other stakeholders (for example institutions, higher education networks, educational/academic developers, policy makers and student body representatives) for planning, developing and engaging in professional development activities.	Achieved	
	82	Complete the review of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. The Forum mobilises expertise and inputs from across the HE sector to extend and shape best practice in all institutions:	Not achieved	The review of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education is underway and is scheduled for completion in Q1 2017.

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

Objective	Action No.	Actions for 2016	Achieved/ Not achieved	Comment
Objective 4.1 Increase opportunities for schools to support their local communities through the utilisation of schools buildings and facilities out of hours	83	Explore options for using school buildings for afterschool care, as resources allow:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish interdepartmental group, meet with stakeholder groups and prepare a proposed model of implementation. 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present joint DES/ DCYA action plan for afterschool care options, the delivery of which will be dependent on available resources. 	Achieved	
	84	Explore possibility of linking additional funding to out of hours use of school buildings, as resources allow:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold meetings with stakeholder groups and prepare a proposed model of implementation. 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop guidelines for the use of school buildings out of hours 	Not achieved	Initial consultation with stakeholders regarding draft guidelines for use of school buildings out of hours has been completed. Further engagement with stakeholders will take place, with the guidelines for use of school buildings out of hours due for publication in Q2 2017.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement arrangements for the administration of potential funding to be made available to schools in 2017, as resources allow 	Not achieved	Arrangements for the administration of potential funding to be made available to schools will be implemented, if required, in 2017.
Objective 4.2 Strengthen the role of parents and students, and deliver progress in providing greater school choice	85	Introduce a stronger complaints procedure and charter for parents and learners:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring the Heads of Bill to provide for a Parents and Learners Charter to the Oireachtas Committee on Education – the proposed legislation will take account of developments in relation to an Education Ombudsman. 	Achieved	
	86	Strengthen the focus on reducing school costs for parents by:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will issue a new circular to school authorities and ETBs regarding school uniform policy and other costs and the need to put a greater emphasis on reducing the cost of school uniforms and other costs. The views of the National Parent Councils and other education partners will be considered and will feed into the development of the circular. 	Achieved	
	87	Advance the legislation in relation to school admissions to make enrolment easier for children and parents.	Achieved	
	88	Establish 400 multi-/ non – denominational schools:		

		Map out new approaches to reach this target.	Achieved	
		Open five new primary schools– three under new schools patronage process and two under reconfiguration.	Achieved	
		Complete the patronage processes for nine new post-primary schools due to open in 2017 and 2018.	Achieved	
		Commence the patronage processes for three new primary schools due to open in 2017.	Achieved	
	90	Revise protocols to ensure that no small school closes against the wishes of parents and facilitate amalgamations where desirable:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise Protocol and write to patrons of one – teacher schools, asking them to initiate local discussions to address future sustainability issues. 	Achieved	
Objective 4.3 Enhance our capacity to meet national and regional skills needs	91	Develop innovative responses to skills gaps across key priorities areas of the economy including ICT, languages, biopharma.	Achieved	
	92	Establish the National Skills Council, which will use data on skills requirements to proactively address emerging skills gaps, and develop a revised mandate for the Expert Group on Future Skills Need:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise mandate for, appoint members to, and formally launch, the National Skills Council. 	Not achieved	A mandate for the new National Skills Council is being finalised, with establishment of the Council scheduled for Q1 2017.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and finalise mandate for Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. 	Not achieved	A review of the mandate for the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs is being finalised in light of the establishment of the National Skills Council, and will be completed in Q1 2017.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor implementation of the National Skills Strategy 2025 and provide annual reports to the National Skills Council. 	Achieved	
	93	Oversee the work of the Regional Skills Fora and measure performance. The Fora aim to provide a cohesive education-led structure for employers and the Further and Higher Education systems to work together in identifying and addressing the skills needs of their regions:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal launch of the Regional Skills Fora. 	Not achieved	The Department has established a network of 9 Regional Skills Fora. The formal launches of the fora are due to be held in Q1 2017.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate the work of the Fora, with the support of all of the members of the fora and other dissemination mechanisms such as the Regional Skills Fora website (www.regionalskills.ie). 	Achieved	

	94	Regional Skills Managers serve on Action Plan for Jobs committees to facilitate coordination between the Fora and relevant stakeholders in relation to regional skills priorities and Regional Skills Fora – related actions in the Regional Action Plans for Jobs.	Achieved	
	98	Develop new Systems Performance Framework for Higher Education for the period to 2021.	Not achieved	A review of the indicators and targets to be included in the new Systems Performance Framework is underway and will be finalised in Q1 2017.
	99	Agree Annual Service Plans between SOLAS and ETBs and monitor progress against agreed quality and performance targets. The plans will include projected programme inputs, outputs and outcomes.	Achieved	
	100	Complete review of the current national ICT Skills Action Plan 2014 – 2018 and publish revised plan.	Not achieved	A review of the current national ICT Skills Action Plan 2014 – 2018 is underway. Further analysis is required on issues raised during the review. New plan to be published in Q1 2017.
Objective 4.4 Create a greater diversity of learning opportunities beyond school	101	Strengthen the apprenticeship and traineeship systems through enhancing the range of courses and increasing student places; achieve Government targets of over 100 apprenticeship schemes, and a cumulative target of 50,000 apprenticeship and traineeship registrations to 2020. This is a total of 31,000 apprenticeship registrations and 19,000 traineeships over the period to 2020. This would involve an annual average of 6,000 apprenticeships and 4,000 traineeships:		
		• Develop and finalise a roadmap to deliver the Programme for A Partnership Government’s apprenticeship commitments.	Achieved	
		• Up to 10 new apprenticeship programmes commence.	Achieved	
		• Achieve target of 3,390 apprentices on existing programmes.	Achieved	
		• Networks of Employers have been created to facilitate ETB/ employer partnerships to identify training needs, design training programmes, recruit learners and deliver training (on and off the job). Based on the pilot career traineeship scheme in the hospitality and engineering sectors, involving seven ETBs, further programmes are being developed for roll – out. SOLAS plan forecast that that there will be 5,000 traineeships registrations in 2019.	Achieved	

	102	Continue to work with Skillnets to deliver enterprise-led training and continue to develop the model in accordance with the Skillnets Statement of Strategy 2016-2019. The Strategy is being developed to be closely aligned to the National Skills Strategy (NSS) and the needs of enterprise, and will be framed upon the following 3 key themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Increased Enterprise Participation of employers in the Skillnets training networks model to improve the productivity, capability and competitiveness of enterprise o Enhanced relevance, effectiveness and Impact of training including an increased focus on the effective diagnosis and prioritization of skills needs and measurement of impact of training on enterprise o Increased Supply of New and Specific Skills (skills that are vital to the competitiveness and growth potential enterprise) to the Irish labour market which address current, emerging and future skills needs of enterprise Skillnets currently provide education and training programmes to 34,000 employed people to allow them to upskill or reskill.	Achieved	
	103	Develop a policy framework for Workforce Development to guide Further Education and Training activity, aligning with the National Skills Strategy, and in consultation with partners.	Achieved	
	105	Oversee development and annual calls for Springboard+:		
		• A review of Springboard 2011-2016 will inform any improvements to the programme.	Achieved	
		• Annual competitive calls for participants, with courses provided based on the most up-to-date analysis of skills gaps.	Achieved	
Objective 4.6 Create a stronger focus on Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation	110	Benchmark entrepreneurial activity in HE and work with the HEA to ensure an ambitious and implementable plan to identify and address skills gaps, ICT and STEM needs:		
		• Finalise and publish HEInnovate report on Entrepreneurship in Higher Education.	Not achieved	HEInnovate report will be finalised and implementation commenced in Q1 2017.
		• Develop new Systems Performance Framework for the period 2017 – 2021. See action no. 98		
	111	Develop new Entrepreneurship Education Policy Statement.	Not achieved	Development of an Entrepreneurship Education Policy Statement has been progressed and is due for publication in Q2 2017.
	113	Implement the Arts in Education Charter, subject to the drawdown of Dormant Account Funding:		
		• 21 Teacher/Artist Partnership Residencies in 21 Primary schools in each Teacher Education Centre.	Achieved	

Objective 4.8 Position Ireland as a desirable location for international students	119	Publish an International Education Strategy 2016-2020, with a High Level Working group established to implement all of the actions.	Achieved	
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Goal 5: Improve national planning and support services

Objective	Action No.	Actions for 2016	Achieved/ Not achieved	Comment
Objective 5.1 Strengthen strategic oversight and focus on delivery for results	120	Implementation of the Action Plan for Education and Skills will be monitored quarterly with annual reports on progress. Refreshed plan developed annually.	Achieved	
	121	Improve strategic policy capability, oversight, evaluation of programmes and policy, governance and programme and project management structures to deliver on Government-wide public service reform commitments, with reporting on the IRDP and a Programme for a Partnership Government commitments, in line with best international practice:	Achieved	
	122	Provide greater strategic direction in the Department's governance, management and use of data:		
		• Finalise the Department's Data Strategy.	Achieved	
	124	Report of the Expert Group on Future Funding in Higher Education to be examined by the Oireachtas Committee on Education and feedback will inform policy direction.	Achieved	
	126	Publish the second higher education systems performance report for the period 2014 – 2016, and develop a new Systems Performance Framework for Higher Education for the period 2017 – 2021 which will include new targets for the development of human capital, critical skills, access, teaching and learning, research and other national and regional priorities.	Achieved	
	127	Advance legislative reform in the Higher Education sector:		
		• Publish the General Scheme of the Higher Education Reform Bill.	Not achieved	Higher Education Reform Bill has not progressed due to competing priorities in the Higher Education sector. A general scheme for the Higher Education Reform Bill will be drafted in 2017.
	128	Support the operation of a high quality school system through the annual provision of teaching and financial supports to schools, based on agreed criteria and enrolment data.	Achieved	
	129	Provide payroll and pension services to teachers and school staff in all schools (except the ETB sector), issuing payments to over 102,000 people on a fortnightly basis.	Achieved	
Objective 5.2. Deliver appropriate	131	Complete 50 large-scale projects ongoing from the 2012 – 2016 construction programme, as resources permit.	Achieved	
	132	Implementation of 2016 – 2021 Construction Programme, as resources permit.		

infrastructure for learning environments		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an additional 62,000 permanent school places – 19,000 at primary level and 43,000 at post-primary level 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion/ commencement of 310 new and extension school projects (156 at primary level, 124 at post-primary and 30 in special schools) 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a Minor Works grant and a Summer Works programme where funding allows. 	Achieved	
	134	Continue with capital investment in Higher Education, as resources permit:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress the GrangeGorman PPP project. 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the 2016 – 2021 Capital Plan in respect of Higher Education, as resources allow. This includes the provision of €150m Exchequer funding and the progression of €200m worth of Public Private Partnership projects for the Sector. 	Achieved	
	135	Improve the quality of internet connectivity for schools in line with technical developments and available resources.	Achieved	
Objective 5.3 Improve the quality of the national support services and shared services	136	Strengthen DES management systems through shared services: Embed the use of Financial Shared Services in DES	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake “shared services ready” projects within the DES and participate in “build and test” phases of the overall project. 	Achieved	
	137	Improve the quality of services across the sector through the introduction of shared services, subject to resources:	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the awareness and engagement of the schools sector with the operation and use of the central procurement arrangements so as to maximise savings for schools. 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect the ETBs’ head offices and training centres to one network provider, Government Networks, allowing inter-office connectivity and future agreements for associated services, such as VOIP. Target 25 ETB Head Office/Sub Offices and 19 ETB Training Centres connected to Government Networks. 	Not achieved	An additional 6 sites were added to the list of sites for connection to Government Networks, bringing the target to a total of 50 sites. 43 of the 50 sites have been connected to Government Networks and the remaining 7 will be completed by Q2 2017.
	138	Improve business processes and the implementation of educational reform through the use of ICT:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Department’s ICT Strategy 2015 – 2019, which prioritises innovation, integrated systems, strengthened information governance, improved customer experience, costs optimisation, and reusable applications. 	Achieved	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the IMIS (Inspections Management Information System) to enable inspectors to capture data using mobile devices, to streamline the overall inspection reporting process; ensure the provision of quality data for evaluation purposes; and support evidence-based policy formulation. 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Primary Online Database to automate the annual primary school census returns, to provide more robust data for internal business processes, including capitation grants and teacher allocations. 	Achieved	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the Post-Primary Online Database to facilitate the implementation of the Junior Cycle Reform programme, allowing for the input of short courses and assessments, followed by the generation of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement. 	Achieved	
		Implementation of the Student Grant Appeals online application, to streamline the overall appeals process and provide greater efficiencies.	Achieved	
	139	Provide safe, efficient and cost effective school transport services for eligible children.		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a review of the concessionary charges and rules element of the School Transport Scheme. Review is conducted, and actions agreed prior to the 2017 budget process. 	Achieved	