



# DEIS

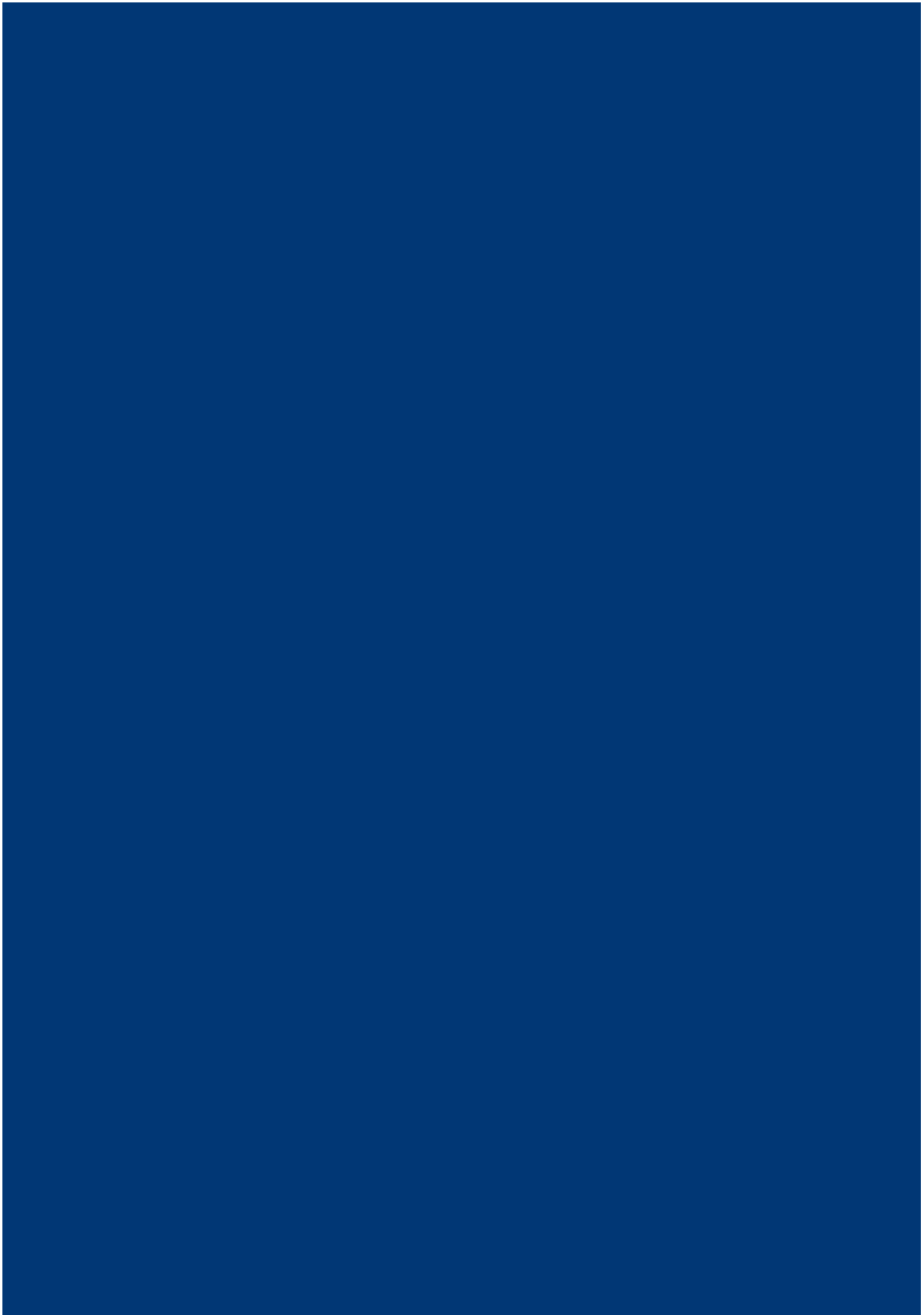
(Delivering Equality Of Opportunity In Schools)

An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion

## Summary



MAY 2005





## Foreword

Every young person deserves the support and encouragement they need to reach their full educational potential. This is a major priority both for me, as Minister for Education and Science, and for the Government.

This new action plan for educational inclusion is the outcome of a full review of all the measures put in place to support pupils from disadvantaged areas over the last two decades. In deciding on the measures now required, I have drawn on the experience of students, parents and family members, teachers and other education professionals and other partners active in this area. Our new approach will involve an additional investment of €40 million per annum and 300 extra staff in the education system upon full implementation. This represents an increase of one-third on the current annual investment of some €120m in specific supports for addressing educational disadvantage from pre-school through second-level education.

This additional investment is both an important and necessary element of the action plan. However, I consider that the more integrated and focused approach it adopts, supported by a much increased emphasis on target-setting and measurement of progress and outcomes will be equally as important to its success. Furthermore, research and evaluation will be essential tools underpinning our new plan.

This initiative is about building on the success stories we have had in tackling educational disadvantage, and addressing shortcomings where we have been less successful. It is about doing what is right for our young people.

Ba chóir go mbeadh deis ag gach duine oideachas den scoth a fháil.

**Mary Hanafin, T.D.**  
Minister for Education and Science



## *The New Action Plan - Introduction*

This new action plan will put in place an integrated, strategic approach to addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education (3 to 18 years). It will build on the success of existing measures for tackling educational disadvantage, while identifying and effectively addressing the issues that reduced their overall effectiveness in the past.

This plan is one element of a wider continuum of interventions to address disadvantage, which include second-chance education and training and access measures for adults to support increased participation by under-represented groups in further and higher education. A further element of this continuum is the ongoing development of provision for pupils with special educational needs in light of the enactment of the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act (2004) and the establishment of the National Council for Special Education.

## *Why do we need a new approach?*

While considerable progress has been made through the implementation of a wide range of measures to address educational disadvantage, rates of educational under-achievement and early school leaving remain much higher for pupils from disadvantaged communities than for other pupils. This situation is a primary motivating factor for the action now being taken.

Particular priority must be given to addressing the following issues:

### **Strengthening Early Education supports**

Investment in early education provision supporting the most vulnerable can be a powerful intervention yielding lifelong educational benefits.

### **Improving Literacy & Numeracy standards**

Research has shown that those with low levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy are significantly more likely to experience educational failure and to leave the education system without qualifications.

### **Placing a renewed emphasis on the involvement of parents, family members and the community in children's education**

Parental, family and community involvement, especially in areas of socio-economic deprivation, does not just benefit the children and the school – it is a crucial dimension of lifelong learning.

### **Enhancing attendance, educational progression, retention and attainment**

There is a clear link between pupils' attendance patterns and their educational attainment. Successful progression by pupils from primary to second-level is of particular importance. Children and young people at risk of early school leaving can benefit from extra supports, both academic and non-academic (including sporting and cultural activities), made available during and outside of school time.



### **Supporting recruitment and retention of principals and teaching staff**

There is a need to ensure that schools serving disadvantaged communities can continue to attract and retain well-qualified personnel to positions of leadership and teaching on an ongoing basis.

### **Strengthening planning, target-setting and measurement of progress and outcomes**

Planning, co-ordination and processes for monitoring and evaluating progress need to be further developed at every level.

### **Strengthening professional development**

Focused professional development supports need to be provided for principals and teaching staff working in schools serving disadvantaged communities.

### **Enhancing integration and co-ordination both within the education sector and cross sectorally**

The education system operates in a context of broader social and economic circumstances and must work in partnership with others in the best interests of the children and young people it serves.

## What are the main elements of the new Action Plan?

### The plan's core elements comprise:-

- a standardised system for identifying, and regularly reviewing, levels of disadvantage
- a new integrated School Support Programme (SSP) which will bring together, and build upon, existing interventions for schools and school clusters/communities with a concentrated level of educational disadvantage. The differences between urban and rural disadvantage will be taken into account in targeting actions under the programme.

A broad indication of the number of schools which will be included in the SSP is as follows:

Primary	Second-Level
600 schools comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 300 urban/town</li><li>• 300 rural</li></ul>	150 schools

In addition, supports will continue to be provided for schools where the level of disadvantage is more dispersed.

The action plan will be implemented on a phased basis over five years and will involve an additional annual investment of some €40m on full implementation. About 300 additional posts will also be created across the education system generally.

Existing measures will be streamlined and integrated. The plan will also complement and support provision for students with special educational needs, targeted supports for Traveller students and students for whom English or Gaeilge is not their first language, and supports for second-chance education and training.



## *What are the key actions involved?*

- a new initiative on early education
- additional financial supports
- smaller class sizes in targeted urban/town primary schools and teacher/co-ordinator support for rural primary school clusters
- a reduction in thresholds for the appointment of administrative principals in targeted primary schools
- extended availability of Home/School/Community Liaison and School Completion Programme services
- measures to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes
- measures to enhance student attendance, educational progression, retention and attainment
- greater curricular choice and expansion of the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs)
- promotion of increased access to third-level
- a more developed planning process and an in-depth programme of research and evaluation
- enhanced professional development for principals and teachers and a new scheme of paid sabbatical leave
- increased integration of services and partnership working.



## *How will existing schemes and programmes be affected?*

The following existing schemes and programmes will be integrated into the SSP on a phased basis over the five-year implementation period:

- *Early Start*
- *Giving Children an Even Break* (incorporating the primary Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and *Breaking the Cycle*)
- the Support Teacher Project (primary level)
- aspects of the Early Literacy Initiative, including the Reading Recovery initiative and the Junior Certificate School Programme Literacy Strategy and Demonstration Library Project
- the Home/School/Community Liaison Scheme
- the School Completion Programme (which is being funded under the National Development Plan with assistance from the European Social Fund)
- the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme for second-level schools and related projects in second-level schools supporting access to third-level.

The primary and second-level School Books Grant Schemes will continue to operate as before but will take account of the identification process being introduced by this action plan.

*How will individual schools and the communities they serve benefit from the School Support Programme when fully operational?*

### Supports to urban/town primary schools and school clusters/communities in SSP

- For the 150 primary schools serving communities with the highest concentrations of disadvantage:
  - access to early education for children, aged from three up to school enrolment, who will subsequently attend these primary schools
  - maximum class sizes of 20:1 in all junior classes (junior infants through 2nd class) and 24:1 in all senior classes (3rd class through 6th class)
- For all 300 urban/town primary schools participating in the SSP:
  - allocation of administrative principals on lower enrolment and staffing figures than apply in primary schools generally
  - additional non-pay/capitation allocation based on level of disadvantage
  - additional funding under school books grant scheme
  - access to the School Meals Programme
  - access to a literacy/numeracy support service and to specific literacy/numeracy measures
  - access to Home/School/Community Liaison services
  - access to a range of supports (both academic and non-academic, and including after-school and holiday-time supports) for young people, based on best practice identified through the School Completion Programme
  - access to transfer programmes supporting progression from primary to second-level
  - access to planning supports
  - access to a range of professional development supports
  - eligibility for teachers/principals to apply for sabbatical leave scheme.

**Note:** The following class size reductions provided to urban/town primary schools under previous schemes will continue in operation in the schools concerned:

- *Breaking the Cycle:* 32 schools benefit from maximum class sizes of 15:1 in junior classes and 27:1 in senior classes
- *Giving Children an Even Break:* 211 schools benefit from maximum class sizes of 20:1 in junior classes and 27:1 in senior classes.

### Supports to rural primary schools and school clusters/communities in SSP

- access to a teacher/co-ordinator, serving a cluster of schools or alternative additional financial supports to underpin the development of home, school and community linkages, the implementation of literacy and numeracy measures, planning supports etc.
- additional non-pay/capitation allocation based on level of disadvantage
- additional funding under school books grant scheme
- access to the School Meals Programme
- access to after-school and holiday-time supports
- access to transfer programmes supporting progression from primary to second-level
- access to a range of professional development supports
- eligibility for teachers/principals to apply for sabbatical leave scheme.

### Supports to second-level schools and school clusters/communities in SSP

- For second-level schools with the highest concentrations of disadvantage:
  - enhanced guidance counselling provision
  - provision for school library and librarian support (will be extended to the 50 SSP schools with the highest concentrations of disadvantage over five years)
- For all 150 second-level schools participating in the SSP:
  - access to Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)
  - additional non-pay/capitation allocation based on level of disadvantage
  - additional funding under school books grant scheme
  - access to the School Meals Programme, with co-ordination provided at cluster level
  - access to Home/School/Community Liaison services
  - access to a range of supports (both academic and non-academic, and including after school and holiday-time supports) for young people, based on the best practices identified through the School Completion Programme
  - access to transfer programmes supporting progression from primary to second-level
  - access to planning supports
  - access to a range of professional development supports
  - eligibility for teachers/principals to apply for sabbatical leave scheme.

In addition to the above early education and school-based measures at primary and second-level, a new Family Literacy Project will be implemented, targeting SSP school communities generally.

## To Find Out More

The full version of *DEIS (Delivering Equality Of Opportunity In Schools) – An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion* is available on the Department of Education and Science website at [www.education.gov.ie](http://www.education.gov.ie)

Hard copies may be  
obtained by contacting:

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