ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION

2016-2019

END OF YEAR REVIEW 2018

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

End Year Review of Action Plan for Education 2018

1.0 Background and Introduction

“Central to the education of our children, young people and lifelong learners should be respect and decency - how we treat and look after one another. The basis of humanity.

I see the education sector as a collective. Our drive and focus should be united, to nurture the next generation.

Is iomaí uair ráite é, ach is fiú é a rá arís - Ní neart go cur le chéile."

Joe McHugh, Minister for Education

Minister Joe McHugh was appointed Minister for Education and Skills in October 2018. A new statement of strategy which will build on the successes achieved to date in creating the best Education System in Europe will be published early in 2019. The development and consultation process associated with the new statement of strategy will provide the Minister with an opportunity to listen to key stakeholders and to take a comprehensive look at progress made to date, to assess the pace and scale of change and measure how the Action Plan is delivering. This end of year review for 2018 will inform the goals and ambitions for the Education and Training sector for the next three years.

The end of year review of the Action Plan for Education 2018 is the second annual review under the broader strategic framework of the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019. Action Plan 2018 set out a series of time-bound actions to be achieved by the Department and the sector under five key strategic goals. The underpinning reform programme is designed to equip learners with the skills and knowledge that they need to achieve their potential and to participate fully in society and the economy. Annual plans are designed to build on the success of the past and on the strengths of the Irish Education system. Plans are also designed to actively address areas of weakness or where there is room for improvement.

The Action Plan for Education 2018 is one step in a cohesive and holistic approach to change in a complex and dynamic environment. It formed a bridge between the significant achievements of 2017 and our ambitions into the future. The Plan set out the actions to be achieved in response to the needs of learners, employers and society at every level in the education and training system in the context of significant national and international change including Brexit, changing skill demands and changing demographics.

Key Themes

The 2018 Action Plan, and the ones that have preceded it, have had at their heart quality and continuous improvement, inclusion and skills as seen through the lens of the learner.

The quality provision of education from early years to fourth-level continued to be a driver of activity. Action Plan for Education 2018 saw a continued focus on, not only, how learning happens, but how it is delivered and how it could be improved at all levels. This focus on quality was allied to a continued effort to ensure that all citizens can access and participate in education regardless of the barriers they face. Recognising education as an engine of social and economic growth, the Action Plan built on previous work to provide learners with the skills needed to prosper not just now but also into the future.

These themes of quality, inclusion and skills impacted across the range of the Department's activities from school buildings, leadership training and apprenticeships to attracting international students, interfacing with industry and third-level research. The diverse and challenging goals and objectives in the Action Plan were tied together by a collective focus on these themes. This continuity of focus was essential to achieve our ambitions for our Education system in the longer term.

Alongside continuity there must be change. Reform and innovation continued to mark how we did our business and how we measured success during 2018. Achievements during 2018 were another step in achieving our ambitions for a system that meets the need of citizens across a range of activities; builds on and towards success; and formed a chapter in an ongoing narrative of improvement. These achievements also represented the Education and Training sector's active commitment to civil and public service reform and wider whole of Government reform under the Programme for Government.

Our key achievements in 2018 included: promoting and encouraging quality, excellence and innovation, meeting critical skills gaps, leading in key enabling technologies, championing inclusion and increasing participation in lifelong learning.

Policy emphasis across the continuum of education from early years to higher education included taking action to strengthen STEM; using digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment; increasing competence in foreign languages; initiating a review of senior cycle programmes; tackling disadvantage, strengthening inclusion and supporting transitions; building leadership capacity and actively supporting a professional workforce; continuously improving quality including embedding new models of inspection; strengthening entrepreneurship and innovation; focused engagement with enterprise; and enhancing career opportunities and developing strong alternative pathways including FET, traineeships and apprenticeships.

Since the launch of the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 and Statement of Strategy, we have made real progress towards achieving our goals and objectives. 85% of actions targeted for delivery by the end of 2018 have been achieved. Actions not achieved at the end of 2018 have been rescheduled and/or redefined and included in the Action Plan for Education for 2019 as appropriate.

Reports on progress during 2018 have been published every quarter and are available on the Department's website www.education.ie

2.0 Strengthening strategic vision across the continuum of education and training

We have recently undertaken an intensive period of policy and strategy development and publication. A range of integrated national education and training strategies have been developed to underpin and drive "whole of system" change across the continuum of education. In 2018 work, including policy development, review and the publication of action/implementation plans, was advanced under the following strategies and policies within the overall strategy framework for the sector:

Key Strategies
STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026
Languages Connect, Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026
National Strategy on Literacy and Numeracy for learning and Life 2011-2020
National Skills Strategy 2025

Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020
Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022
Ireland's International Education Strategy 2016-2020
Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019
National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030
Framework for Junior Cycle
National Strategy on Education for Sustainable development in Ireland 2014-2020
20-Year Strategy for the Irish language 2010-2030
Shared Services Strategy 2017-2020
DEIS 2017 (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools)
Resource Teacher Allocation Model

3.0 High level reforms since the introduction of the Action Plan in 2016

	What have we done (what's different) and why?	Impact
Enhanced the quality of education and training provision	Introduction of new Early Years Education focused inspections in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme to improve the quality and standards in the emerging early-years sector.	Early Years Education Inspection Model introduced in April 2016 – 1889 inspections completed by the DES Inspectorate since 2016. Review of EYEI, published in 2018, endorsed through consultation with Early Years stakeholders and partners. Early findings identified positive impact on practice particularly in relation to validation of the professional role of Early Years practitioners in early education. EYEI data support the development of national policy e.g. First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028. (November 2018).

	Commencement of a number of provisions in the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 which introduce changes in the admissions process in schools 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.	Provisions commenced include Section 11 which prevents recognized primary schools from using religion as a selection criteria in school admissions; section 64 which bans schools from charging admission fees, section 66 which deals with co-operation between Boards and section 8 which provides a power for the Minister to compel a school to open a special class.
	A new Schools Excellence Fund to encourage schools to work in clusters to explore and apply new innovative solutions and to improve learning outcomes for students. The Fund currently has four strands SEF – Step Up, SEF – Digital, SEF – DEIS and SEF - Creative. In Higher Education we introduced a Higher Education innovation fund to improve student learning outcomes, flexible learning opportunities, student progression, and the recognition of prior learning.	SEF Step UP Nine schools, each focusing on a cross-curricular project, are participating in the Step Up Project. Each school has used a School Self Evaluation approach to plan for improving aspects of the implementation of the framework for Junior Cycle in the subject areas of English, Business Studies and Science. SEF Digital There are 33 Digital Clusters with a further 10 STEM clusters operating under an associated Banner. There is a good evidence to suggest that the teachers in the clusters are engaging in innovative, and in some cases, ground-breaking practice. SEF DEIS Currently 20 clusters are participating in the SEF-DEIS programme. Approximately 60 schools at early years, primary and post-primary levels are involved in the programme. Early indications from schools involved in programme since 2018 suggest that there has been good learning among teachers in relation to aspects of the programme. This is particularly evident in the development of better awareness among teachers in the different sectors of the need to ensure that student transitions from e.g. primary to post-primary schools are better

		supported. This means that schools are working through the process of how best to build on student learning. SEF Creative There are 23 Creative Clusters involving 73 schools through the network of Teacher Education Centres. Most of the schools are primary.
	Updated child protection procedures disseminated to schools. The new procedures give direction and guidance to school authorities and to school personnel in relation to meeting their new statutory obligations under the Children First Act, 2015 and in the continued implementation of the best practice (Non- statutory) guidance set out in the Children First National Guidance 2017. Following research and initial consultation we developed and commenced a trail implementation of Child Protection and Safeguarding inspections to monitor school compliance with requirements under the Children First Act. The Act sets out new reporting requirements for registered teachers and requires all schools to produce a Child Safeguarding Statement.	The significantly enhanced oversight measures in the procedures, including oversight at school and Department level, will help ensure best practice and full compliance by schools with the Children First Act 2015, Children First national Guidance 2017 and with the Department's requirements as set out in the procedures for schools. The child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections were finalised following extensive consultation with trail schools and the education partners.
	The strategy for education in the Gaeltacht to support Gaeltacht schools to provide high-quality, Irish-medium education to the children of the Gaeltacht continued to be implemented.	105 Gaeltacht primary schools (80%) and 28 Gaeltacht post-primary schools (97%) are receiving additional resources by participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme. These additional resources, which include additional Irish-language support hours, Inspectorate advisory visits, CPD and a grant, are supporting the delivery of high quality Irish-medium education, including immersion education in Gaeltacht schools. A report, summarising the views of schools on the implementation of the Scheme, as reported to inspectors during advisory visits to the schools, was published in December 2018. It showed positive reactions from schools to the Scheme.

	Service agreements between SOLAS and the ETBs setting and monitoring progress against targets for performance and delivery. Enhanced quality assurance in the ETBs through the development of a new ETB sectoral approach and model for curriculum and programme development, assessment and validation.	The Strategic Performance Agreements between SOLAS and the sixteen Education and Training Boards (ETBs) sets out the context, strategic priorities and individual ETB's contribution to the achievement of key national Further Education and Training (FET) sector targets over the period 2018-2020. These agreements provide the platform for the next stage of the development of the FET system, with a review of the funding model to support the agility of ETBs in responding to learner needs.
	Quality reviews of programmes conducted including Youthreach, VTOS/SST and PLC programmes and implementation of the recommendations from the PLC review.	The purpose the quality reviews is to generate policy-relevant knowledge concerning the outputs and outcomes of the programmes and the effectiveness of provision. The quality reviews will also make recommendations on how the programmes can be developed in the future.
	Compacts agreed between the HEA and HEIs setting and monitoring progress against targets from the System Performance Framework 2018 to 2020.	The new System Performance Framework outlines the Government's six key objectives for higher education for the period up to 2020 and sets out how institutions are to be assessed during these years. These key objectives formed the basis of the next iteration of strategic dialogue process between the Higher Education Authority and the Higher Education Institutions. These compacts between the HEA and the institutions will be agreed and published by Q1 2019.
Strengthening Leadership, Teaching and Work force planning	Increased regulation of the Teaching profession including commencement of the Fitness to Teach provisions of the Teaching Council Act to enhance the reputation of the teaching profession and to increase openness and transparency to support high professional standards amongst teachers in the interests of children and parents. 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. The central role of the Teaching Council in the vetting of registered teachers has also been put on a statutory basis.	All registered teachers have been Garda vetted by the Teaching Council and the Council has recently commenced a programme of periodic re-vetting of all registered teachers.

	Establishment of the Teacher Supply Steering Group and development and implementation of the Action Plan for Teacher Supply, with actions across a range of policy areas.	Agreement with HEIs for additional 4-year undergraduate post primary initial teacher education programmes for 2019/20 and 2020/19, including in targeted subjects. Additional funding of €1m for the Student Assistance Fund for Professional Master of Education students for 2018/19. Teaching Council has commenced a review of the implementation of ITE school placement guidelines. Stakeholder consultative forum and regional focus groups held. "Teaching Transforms" campaign (digital, radio and video) launched to promote the teaching profession, supported by a new dedicated webpage.
	New graduate and undergraduate programmes and qualifications introduced to enhance the diversity, quality and supply of primary, post-primary and FET teachers and to deliver high quality education and training.	A new undergraduate programme in DCU that enables deaf and hard of hearing people who use Irish Sign Language (ISL) to enter primary teaching has will be accepting students for the first time in September 2019. This programme is receiving funding from the Department of Education and Skills under the PATH 1 inclusion programme.
	Centre for School Leadership established and review completed, Coaching, Mentoring and a New Post Graduate Qualification in School Leadership introduced as part of a package of reforms to build a strong leadership team in our schools and across the sector. Measures recognise the influence of strong school leadership on learners' experiences and outcomes.	Evaluation of work undertaken by the Centre for School Leadership and research into effective supports for school leaders has been published. www.cslireland.ie.
Wellbeing	**Wellbeing** for students and the wider school community has been brought into focus with the development and publication of the Department's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018-2023), and the commencement of its implementation, which aims to build learning environments that promote health, wellbeing and personal development.	The *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (2018-2023) published in July 2018 will inform how schools can best promote wellbeing within the school community. The policy statement and framework for practice provides for the first time, an

	The number of National Education Psychologists increased to support and strengthen wellbeing.	overarching structure encompassing existing, ongoing and developing work in the area of Wellbeing Promotion in schools. It is the Department's aim that by 2023 all schools and centres for education will have embedded a dynamic School Self-evaluation process focusing on Wellbeing Promotion. The increase in NEPs staffing affords additional time to support DEIS schools both in terms of broadening coverage and providing teacher training to build capacity, inter alia, in promoting pupil resilience and positive behaviour management.
Curriculum and Assessment Reform	New Framework for Junior Cycle introduced changing the approach to the first three years of post-primary education to give students the opportunity to develop a wider range of knowledge and skills, to reward and recognise non-academic performance and achievement and place a central focus on the students' qualify of life, wellbeing and mental health. It is designed to equip students for further learning, for work, for responsible and active citizenship and for healthy living.	2018 saw the second cohort of students receive Junior Cycle Profiles of Achievement (JCPAs). The JCPA includes a student's results in State Examinations, in Classroom Based Assessments, their participation in short courses and any other additional areas of learning and achievement including extra-curricular activities. Specific recognition is given in the JCPA for students with special educational needs for their achievements in Priority Learning Units.
	Primary Language Curriculum (Irish and English) rolled out for Junior Infants to 2nd class to further develop bilingualism in young learners which will in turn enable and support language learning.	
	New strategy and implementation plan for foreign languages "languages connect" launched to improve proficiency, diversity and immersion not only to increase the number of students taking up a foreign language but also diversifying the range of languages available to schools and increasing students' depth of knowledge in a language.	The new Modern Foreign Languages specification for Junior Cycle was introduced in September 2017. The new specification (200 hours), generic for all four junior cycle languages, provides examples of learning for each of the languages: French, German, Spanish and Italian. Additionally, as part of the *Framework for Junior Cycle*, schools are now able to offer 100-hour short courses as part of their

	junior cycle programme. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has developed a short course in Chinese Language and Culture, while the Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI) has developed a generic language short course specification (modelled off the NCCA's generic short course specification) and short courses in Japanese and Polish. A short course in Lithuanian has also been developed by the PPLI in conjunction with the Lithuanian Embassy. At Senior Cycle, the range of curricular languages is expanded to include Japanese, Russian and Arabic. Students from European countries may also opt to sit 'non-curricular' languages for state examinations. For 2018 these examinations are offered in the following subjects: Latvian, Lithuanian**,** Romanian, Slovenian, Modern Greek, Finnish, Polish, Estonian, Slovakian, Swedish, Czech, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Portuguese, Danish, Dutch, Croatian, and Maltese. Work is currently underway on new specifications for new learners of Mandarin Chinese for Leaving Certificate and curricular specifications for heritage speakers for Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese.
New Policy Statement 2017-2026 and implementation plan 2017-2019 for STEM education launched to equip learners with analytical, creativity and critical thinking skills to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.	Ongoing Curricular reform with the introduction of Computer Science at Leaving Certificate, finalised specification for Leaving Certificate Applied Mathematics, ongoing redevelopment of the New primary mathematics curriculum. Ongoing CPD for teachers and engagement with Industry.
New targets for literacy and numeracy set following a review of the Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life strategy to measure improvements particularly in numeracy. Specific targets were also set for literacy and numeracy within disadvantaged schools aimed at	Implementation of the Primary Languages Curriculum for Junior Infants to second class.

	decreasing the gap in standards between DEIS and non DEIS schools.	Redevelopment of the Primary Mathematics Curriculum ongoing and introduction of the new Junior Cycle Mathematics specification.
	New grading system and new common points scheme for the Leaving Certificate implemented as part of the reform programme to improve the transitions process to support students in the transition from second-level into higher education.	The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) published research on the early impacts of the revised grading scheme for Leaving Certificate examinations which was introduced in June 2017. The research, commissioned by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment on behalf of the Transitions Reform Group, shows that overall, more students are taking higher-level subjects, especially Irish, English and Mathematics, as a result of the new grading system. These students, by taking higher level, are exposing themselves to higher order thinking in preparing and studying for their exams. An expected initial outcome, is that because these students are now taking Higher Level examinations, we are seeing less students achieving higher marks at Ordinary Level. There has also been a reduction in the number of students who are randomly awarded a course in higher education as a result of the changes, the research showed. The findings also indicated that students adopted the new grading scheme without much difficulty. Further info available at: https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2019-press-releases/PR19-01-16.html.
	Review of Senior Cycle (Leaving Certificate) commenced to explore the learning experiences of senior cycle students and generate a shared vision for senior cycle. This provides a strong base from which to shape a curriculum that genuinely meets the needs of all learners for years to come. The last significant changes to the structure of senior cycle were undertaken over twenty years ago.	As part of the review process, the NCCA held a Conference on Senior Cycle Review: International Perspectives on 20 February 2018. Delegates at the conference were advised of the results of NCCA research into upper secondary education in nine other jurisdictions, which formed the initial part of the NCCA's review.

		The NCCA are engaged with a network of 41 schools, staff, students and parents as part of its consultation process and have completed the first consultative cycle, with a theme of 'The purpose of senior cycle and Futures thinking'. This involved a school-based review in September 2018, followed by national consultation seminars in October 2018 and the production of a summary report in November 2018. The second consultative cycle is underway, running from November 2018 to February 2019, with a theme of 'Pathways and Flexibility'.
Inclusion	New DEIS plan implemented to concentrate effort on key areas for improvement. The new plan sets new goals to be achieved in terms of improved outcomes for children in relation to standards, retention and attendance to ensure better outcomes for children and to develop better progression pathways for learners in DEIS schools.	Work is continuing on the implementation of the various 108 Actions under DEIS with a focus on targeting extra resources as closely as possible at those students with the greatest level of need.
	New methodology for the identification of schools in the DEIS programme implemented to ensure that children at the greatest risk of disadvantage are included in the programme and that resources are matched to identified educational need in schools.	
	New model for allocating Special education Teaching Resources to mainstream primary and post primary schools introduced. The new model provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching need to each schools based on that school's educational profile. This approach is designed to end the unfairness which existed in the previous system, whereby many parents were unable to access the assessments need to qualify for educational resources.	Individual school profiles have been created which are needs based and gives schools autonomy to decide how to deploy the resources they have, based on the needs of pupils.
	Introduced the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Fund as part of the National Plan for Equity of Access to increase access to teacher education for students from the target groups identified in the National Access Plan…to work towards a situation where the teaching profession is more reflective of the population.	

Global Connections	International Education Strategy launched to support Ireland to become internationally recognised for the development of global citizens through our internationalised education system and a market leader in attracting international student talent.	
Structures and Landscape	Technological Universities Act commenced and first Technological University announced marking a significant change to the Higher Education Landscape. Technological Universities will focus on science and technology programmes that are vocationally and professionally oriented. They will address the social and economic needs of their region and will engage in industry-focused research.	First Technological University Established.
	DCU Institute for Education established through the legal incorporation of Church of Ireland College of Education, Mater Dei Institute and St Patrick's College Drumcondra to strengthen and streamline initial teacher education.	
	A new online patronage process system (OPPS) has been developed by the Department which provides objective information and allows parents to express their preferences in relation to the patronage model and language of instruction in respect of the new schools being established. Parental preferences, as well as other considerations such as the extent of diversity of provision in an area (including Irish-medium provision), are key to the decision-making process on the patronage and language of the new schools opening to meet a demographic need.	The OPPS provides greater information to parents in relation to the patronage options available to them and facilitates parents in expressing their preferences in relation to the patronage model and language of instruction of the new schools being established in their area.
	A new Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity Process has been developed to provide more multi-denominational and non-denominational schools across the country, in line with the choices of families and school communities and the Programme for Government commitment for 400 multi-/non-denominational schools by 2030. This process, which involves the transfer of live schools as opposed to the amalgamation and closure model of the patronage divesting process, is aimed at significantly increasing patron diversity and envisages that in areas where sufficient demand for more patronage diversity is identified through a consultation process, existing denominational patrons will be asked to give consideration to reconfiguring existing primary school	The first reconfiguration has successfully taken place, with Two-Mile Community National School in Kerry opening in September 2017 under the "Early Movers" provision of this new process. It re-opened under the ETB's patronage as a Community National School in September 2017.

	provision in consultation with local school communities, through transferring an existing functioning school to a multi- or non-denominational patron. The "Early Movers" provision of the process allows for any school community to directly engage their current patron, outside of the main process, and to seek a transfer of patronage to a multi-denominational patron, fast-tracking the patronage reassignment.	Two further multi-denominational Community National Schools were opened in September 2018 following the transfer of patronage from the Catholic patron to the local ETB.
Digital	Announcement and implementation of the Digital Strategy for schools to realise the potential of digital technologies to enhance teaching learning and assessment so that Irish young people become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens to participate fully in society and the economy.	All new curricula now include clear statements on the use of digital technologies and the development of digital skills. Two new junior cycle short courses have been introduced: Programming and coding and digital media literacy; ICT is a mandatory element of initial Teacher Education programmes; significant progress has been made on strengthening the ICT infrastructure and broadband services in primary and post primary schools.
	Technology Enhanced Learning Plans are in place for each ETB to provide for infrastructure, pedagogy and CPD as well as the development of a content sharing and management infrastructure to facilitate sharing and development of learning resources amongst teachers.	Projected that 15,000 beneficiaries would participate in Online learning including eCollege in 2018.
	A range of digitalized and online services introduced including: Development of aistearsiolta.ie an on-line implementation resource for Early Years practitioners Payment of state exam fees online Online transport appeals process On line marking of state exams piloted in 2017 Online reporting template to transfer information to all primary schools from state-funded ECCE settings SOLAS system – when did it go live? FBSS Digital e-hub (pilot) for students attending post primary schools in the Gaeltacht to provide a wider and more equitable choice of subject options through Irish.	
Skills	New Skills Strategy implemented to help drive Ireland's growth both economically and societally over the next decade. National Skills Council established to oversee implementation of the strategy.	The National Skills Council oversees research from a number of sources including, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit in SOLAS and the Regional

		Skills Fora. The Council meet on a quarterly basis the main strategic discussion items for Council's focus during 2018 included: Lifelong Learning, the Workplace of the Future the National Training Fund and Work Ready Graduates.
	Nine regional Skills Fora established to strengthen engagement between Education and Training providers and Employers and Enterprise.	The Regional Skills Fora managers engaged with over 1,000 enterprises in 2018, compared with some 700 in 2017. Although engagement is across a range of economic sectors, Manufacturing, Construction and ICT were the main areas of engagement. 75% of this engagement was with Small, Medium and Micro enterprises. This is considered a key achievement of the Regional Skills Fora, as it empowers smaller companies to think strategically about their skills needs and how best to address them.
	Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeships and Traineeship in Ireland implemented to increase the number and range of Apprenticeships and Traineeships available, to strengthen the partnership between employers and education and training providers and to promote work based learning.	As of end 2018, 18 new apprenticeships have been developed in a variety of sectors from financial services and ICT to hospitality. The second phase of the national promotional campaign Generation Apprenticeship includes a stepped-up focus on employers. Work is underway in SOLAS on a new employer portal initiative which will provide capability to approved employers to advertise apprenticeships, as well as other value-added services.
Effective and efficient systems	Education Shared Business Service Centre established in Blanchardstown. Projects underway to deliver shared services in payroll and finance to the 16 Education; payroll shared services for the Higher Education sector; upgrade of the School Employee's Payroll to full shared service standards. Upgrade of payroll software through EduCampus for the Institutes of Technology stabilising services for that sector is now complete and Trinity College has also been upgraded as a pilot University site for transition payroll shared services.	

	Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) signed setting out the relationship between the OGP and the sector. Further work has been progressed with a view to providing the Education and Training sector with a sector wide procurement shared service, while remaining aligned to the Office of Government Procurement model.	
Investment	Estimates 2017: €9.07bn an increase of 5.1%. €8.47bn Current and €0.6Bn Capital Allocation Estimates 2018: €10.08bn an increase of 5.8%. €9.34bn Current and €0.74bn Capital allocation for 2018 Estimates 2019: €10.77bn an increase of 6.7%. Current €9.83bn €0.94bn Capital allocation for 2019.	€1.7bn (18.7%) increase in investment in Education and Skills over the last 3 years 2017 to 2019 Over 4,000 additional teaching posts in schools Increased investment in Special Education including funding for over 2,900 Special Needs Assistants Additional new and replacement school places Large scale school projects €339m (21.4%) increased investment in Higher Education €61m (9%) increased investment Further Education and Training, including in the areas of Apprenticeships and Skillnets.

4.0 Key Enablers of future development

Budget 2019

Budget 2019 marks the third year of a major reinvestment in the education and skills sector. In 2019, the budget for the Department of Education and Skills will increase by €678 million, a 6.7% increase on 2018. This will bring Government expenditure on education and skills to its highest ever level of nearly €10.8 billion. This includes the highest ever capital allocation for education, €941 million, a €196m increase on 2018.

Over the three Budgets encompassed by the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019, annual investment in education will have risen by nearly €1.7 billion, an increase of over 18% on 2016 levels. This reflects the government's commitment to delivering on our plan to have the best education and training service in Europe.

Key measures in Budget 2019

Additional posts in schools: Budget 2019 will see numbers employed in our schools reach the highest ever level. Over 1,300 additional posts in schools will be funded, including 950 additional SNA posts and 372 teaching posts to cater for growth in student population and additional special classes. As a result of the 2019 allocation, there will be 70,313 teachers and over 15,900 SNAs employed in our schools.

Increased School Funding: Schools will receive a 5% increase in capitation from September 2019. Over the course of the school year 2019/20, an additional €10 million will be allocated to primary and post primary schools, of which €4 million will be allocated in 2019.

€300m Human Capital Initiative: A major new Human Capital Initiative is to be established within the National Training Fund to allocate €300 million from the Fund's surplus, over the period 2020-2024 to meet the future skills needs of the economy and provide additional investment at levels 6-8 in higher education. This investment will underpin the provision of additional capacity across the higher education sector to meet the priority skill needs of enterprise, to drive regional jobs growth and development, and support key economic sectors in responding to the challenges of Brexit.

Focus on innovation and excellence: The School Excellence Fund, the government's initiative to encourage and support local innovation will increase by 25% to over €2.5 million, allowing more schools to collaborate in clusters to experiment with novel solutions to common challenges.

Support for school leadership & wellbeing: Building on measures in previous budgets to enhance school leadership, further investment is being made today to provide teaching principals in primary schools with one additional release day and four additional release days for those in schools with special classes. 10 additional psychologists will be recruited to the National Education Psychological Service to support wellbeing in schools.

Improving outcomes for children with additional care needs: Nearly €5 million is being allocated to support the implementation of the Comprehensive Review of the SNA scheme, which is intended to support a new school inclusion model to deliver the right supports at the right time to students with additional care needs. The Government has significantly increased investment in special education in recent years.

Building state of the art schools: under Ireland Project 2040, we will deliver an ambitious school building programme, which will support the creation of up to 23,000 new and replacement school places in 2019. It is expected that over 45 large scale school projects will reach substantial completion in 2019. €50 million will be allocated in 2019 to facilitate the further roll-out of the investment programme to upgrade ICT infrastructure in all schools – a 67% increase on 2018 – in line with our ambition to embed computer science and coding across the curriculum.

Gaeltacht Education: The budget for implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education has increased from €2.3m in 2018 to almost €5m in 2019.

Higher Education: A package of €56 million in additional current funding will be invested in higher education initiatives in 2019 alongside €41 million additional funding for pay deals and pensions in the sector. This will fund provision for 3,500 additional places, initiatives to support innovation and performance awards, teaching and learning capacity, 1,000 additional places on Springboard+, research funds for Institutes of Technology/TUs, part-time and flexible learning. There will be also be a strengthening of counselling services in higher education. Total funding in higher education will be €339m higher in 2019 than in 2016 (current funding increase of €257m since 2016 and capital funding increase of €82m since 2016).

Apprenticeships and Skills: Funding is being made available to support for 7,000 apprenticeship registrations, 5,000 traineeship enrolments and 10 new apprenticeship schemes, in line with our overall commitment to double the number of apprenticeships. There is also significant investment in workforce learning and development with €6 million additional funding for Skillnet Ireland and €11 million for employee skills development initiatives.

Public service pay: €122m to implement the Public Services Pay and Stability Agreement, and the recent outcome of discussions on new entrant salary scales.

Reform of the National Training Fund: The NTF levy will rise by 0.1% in 2019 and 2020 in order to fund investment in education and training relevant to the skills needs of the economy. The Government is committed to reform of the Fund to ensure that it continues to be responsive to the world of work through the implementation plan to deliver on the independent review of the NTF published in 2018.

Meeting the demand for new schools and addition school places

Under project Ireland 2040, we continued to make progress to increase our infrastructural capacity in order to meet demographic and other demands. A total of 49 large scale projects were completed in 2018. These projects comprised of 13 new school buildings and 36 large scale extension. These projects delivered over 6,356 additional permanent primary schools places and 5,435 post primary places were created. Furthermore a total of 2,868 permanent additional school places were delivered under the devolved Additional Accommodation Scheme.

Progress on design and build structural issues in identified schools

Following structural investigations carried out in October 2018 at 42 schools delivered by Western Building Systems and the precautionary interventions that were taken at 22 of those schools to ensure safe occupancy, the Department focused on arranging for more detailed structural assessments across all of the schools involved. This second-phase investigation programme will inform what permanent remediation works are required for each school. The detailed investigation and remediation programmes will be carried out as quickly as possible.

The Department is committed to a programme-level review of its Design & Build Programme, which was the methodology used to deliver the schools in question. The review will include aspects such as procurement, quality control, workmanship and oversight and will be informed by the second-phase assessment programme. It will be an independent review, conducted by a person or entity from outside of the Department.

Progress on the legislative programme

The Technological Universities Act, 2018 and The Education (Admission to Schools) Act, 2018 were enacted in March and July 2018 respectively.

The Technological Universities Act, 2018 provides for the development of a new Technological University model. The TU4Dublin consortium comprising the Dublin Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown and Institute of Technology Tallaght (to be named Technological University Dublin and known as TU Dublin) became the first Technological University with TU Dublin formally coming into existence on January 1st, 2019.

Three other consortia of Institutes of Technology are currently engaged with the assessment process seeking to become designated as technological universities:

Munster Technological University (MTU), consisting of Cork and Tralee Institutes of Technology Technological University for South-East Ireland (TUSEI), consisting of Waterford and Carlow Institutes of Technology; and,

Connacht Ulster Alliance (CUA), consisting of Galway-Mayo, Sligo and Letterkenny Institutes of Technology.

The Education (Admission to Schools) Act, 2018, is intended to achieve a more structured, fair and transparent decision making process by schools regarding enrolment and amongst other things, removes the role of religion in school admissions for virtually all primary schools; requires all schools to publish their admissions policies; provide for the Minister to require a school to open a special class for children with special educational needs where the National Council of Special Education deems it necessary; and provides for Irish medium schools to give priority to Irish speaking children.

In addition to the two Acts, the **Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill, 2018** was published on August 1st and by year end had advanced to Committee Stage in Seanad Eireann. This Bill, on enactment, will amend the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012 which established Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the national agency with responsibility for external quality assurance and qualifications across the further and higher education sectors.

During 2018 work on the Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill to provide for a Parent and Student Charter in every school and the Retention of Certain Records Bills has advanced substantively and publication of both during 2019 is the objective.

Advancing the Shared Services agenda

The shared services initiative to deliver payroll and finance to the 16 Education and Training Boards have made strong progress in 2018. The implementation of the new payroll software is in the final stages and it is expected that shared services payroll operations will be live for the initial sites in Q2 2019. It is expected that the migration of the other ETBs to the shared services model for payroll will follow with 2 sites migrating each quarter until full deployment is achieved. The finance project RFT to procure the IT finance solution for the ETBs published in December 2018. There has been strong interest from the major suppliers at the bidder's day and it is expected to evaluate the tender responses in Q1 2019 and award the contract later this year.

The refurbishment of Education Shared Business Services Centre site in Blanchardstown to accommodate the ETB payroll and finance shared services commenced in 2018 and should be complete in Q2 2019, recruitment of operations staff also commenced in Q3 2018 and will continue as the services are rolled out in the coming years.

Work has also advanced on payroll shared services for the Higher Education sector. The upgrade of payroll software through EduCampus for the Institutes of Technology stabilising services for that sector is now complete and Trinity College has also been upgraded as a pilot University site for transition payroll shared services. The project team have completed data gathering on the full "hire to retire processes" in order to provide the sector with additional data on how shared services payroll will impact the sector, the 2015 business case is being revised and will be completed in 2019. It is expected that this momentum will continue into 2019 rolling out the recommendations of the revised business case.

The business case for the upgrade of the School Employee's Payroll to full shared service standards has been completed and external stakeholder engagements have taken place during 2018 while the team have documented the current processes and automations and developed the future processes to underpin the future functional and technical requirements.

In 2018, the Department signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) setting out the relationship between the OGP and the sector. Further work has been progressed with a view to providing the Education and Training sector with a sector wide procurement shared service, while remaining aligned to the Office of Government Procurement model.

Section 4: Progress in 2018 towards the achievement of the five strategic goals

1.0 GOAL 1: Improve the learning experience and the success of learners

Goal 1 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, and get maximum benefit from, their education and training experience. 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.

As a result of successful achievement of the actions associated with this goal participation rates, retention rates and the performance of Irish students at all levels of the system should be ranked amongst the best in Europe.

Good progress has been made towards the achievement of this goal. The most recent PIRLS report published in 2017 shows that Ireland's 4th class primary school children are among the best in Europe and OECD countries for reading skills. Irish pupils' overall reading achievement score has improved by 15 points since the last cycle of the PIRLS study which was in 2011. The percentage of Irish pupils who have advanced reading skills rose from 16% in 2011 to 21% in 2016, which is much higher than the international average in PIRLS. Irish pupils also performed exceptionally well on the new online reading assessment in ePIRLS. Only one other country (Singapore) outperformed Ireland on this test. Ireland is currently 2nd in EU28 for percentage of people aged 20-24 with at least upper-secondary education at 94%. School retention rates in Ireland show that Ireland's Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate school completion rates are among the highest in Europe. Early leavers from education and training overall is at 6.3%, this is down by over 40% from 10.8% in 2011, improving Ireland's ranking in this measure by 7 places to 7th in Europe. (EU-28).

In 2018 we took concrete actions to embed and support the new **Wellbeing initiatives** in schools; we published the Department's Wellbeing Policy Statement for schools; expanded NEPS, recruiting new Education Psychologists; published a Wellbeing Practice Framework to inform Planning and Evaluation in schools.

We continued with our programme of **curricular reform and increasing subject choice.** We continued to build on our strong improvements under "Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020"; as part of the review of structure of, and the time allocation in, the Primary School Curriculum we initiated a new longitudinal study on children's experience and developed an overview of a redeveloped primary curriculum. We continued the development of the new primary mathematics curriculum.

We introduced Mathematics, Home Economics, History, Music and Geography for first years as part of phase 4 of Junior Cycle reform and strengthened Senior Cycle options through the phased implementation of Leaving Certificate Computer Science and PE as a Leaving Certificate examination subject and non-examinable framework, and the national rollout of Leaving Certificate Politics and Society. We trialled new assessment methods and commenced work on reviewing senior cycle programmes (including Leaving Certificate Applied) and vocational pathways, with a view to recommending areas for development. Work on Senior Cycle Review continued including holding an international conference and publishing a report on International Developments in Upper Secondary Education; the commencement a review of work experience at post-primary level and consultation on the Senior Cycle Review Discussion Paper.

Significant changes to the process of Leaving Certificate examination appeals was announced, substantially cutting the time involved in the appeals process.

In the area of **Critical Skills Development** we took action 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 2018 we worked to further build the evidence base to inform **STEM** policy and the supply of teachers of STEM subjects. Partnerships between schools and businesses were strengthened to encourage greater extracurricular activity in STEM and a 3 year STEM education awareness campaign was launched. Work to **improve proficiency in, and increase the diversity of take-up of, languages**, in order to provide greater opportunities to learners and meet skills needs continued throughout 2018. "Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017 – 2026" published late in 2017 builds on the bilingualism developed through learning Irish and English at primary level, and aims to improve language proficiency, diversify and increase the uptake of languages, increase awareness of the importance of language learning, and enhance employer engagement in the development and use of trade languages. An Advisory Group was established to oversee the implementation of the strategy which in 2018 included an audit of foreign language provision in post primary schools; drafting Leaving Certificate specification in Mandarin, Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese; the introduction of a short course in Lithuanian and an increase in the number of schools providing Chinese as a short course; an increase of 25% in the number of Language Assistants in Spanish, German, French and Italian and an increase in the uptake of Erasmus.

To advance language curriculum (Irish and English) we published Assessment Guidelines for Junior Cycle Gaeilge and a review of the Junior Cycle English specification; we continued to roll out the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 including the provision of additional resources and supports and continuing professional development (CPD) for schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme. A 3 year e-hub pilot project is in the process of being implemented to extend the range of subject options through Irish for students in post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht, resources have been provided to facilitate the delivery of an online higher-level Leaving Certificate Physics course to students in selected Gaeltacht schools from September 2019 and a specific package of additional resources has been provided to address the challenges faced by island post-primary schools to support and improve their educational provision through the medium of Irish. A new Masters programme in Irish-Medium and Gaeltacht Education (M.Ed) providing up to 30 new places per annum commenced in Mary Immaculate College in Limerick in September 2018 and plans are at an advanced stage for the commencement of a new Irish-medium B.Ed. programme for primary teachers in Marino Institute of Education from September 2019.

We developed plans to deliver better **transitions for learners** across the continuum of education and training. We improved information transfer from pre-school to primary to facilitate early interventions where appropriate through the introduction of online reporting templates to improve the transfer of information about the progress and achievement of leaners between all schools and state-funded ECCE settings; we commenced the implementation of the DES Programme recognition framework, Guidance Counselling and introduced the 3 areas of learning presented in the NCGE's Whole School Guidance Framework to support students' participation in work and society.

We continued to promote the increased use of **digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment** to help our young people develop 21st century skills and become global citizens able to participate fully in society and the economy. We continued to implement the "Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020" and the "Strategy for Technology Enhanced Learning in Further Education and Training 2016-2019", with the aim of transforming teaching and learning in education settings including the development of new assessment opportunities that are more suited to modern requirements. Substantial progress has been made in the implementation of the Digital Strategy for Schools and the 2018 Digital Strategy Action Plan builds on that progress. Clear statements on the use of digital technologies was included in all subject specifications under development in 2018 and the

effective use of digital technologies in teaching and learning was an integral part of the design and development of all Department funded continuous development programmes (CPD).

Throughout 2018 we worked to support schools to plan for the implementation of the Digital Learning Framework; we updated the Digital Learning Planning Guidelines to guide and encourage embedding of the use of digital technologies in teaching, learning, leadership and management; we introduced the Schools Excellence Fund (Digital) to support the innovative use of digital technologies; encouraged strategic partnerships with relevant cultural, education and sporting bodies; we worked to improve broadband services, grants for ICT equipment, and advice and support materials.

We supported the development and embedding of digital capacity in the teaching and learning activities of HEIs; worked to develop a consistent digital experience for third-level students and developed a strong evidence base for enhanced third level pedagogy through targeted research and development projects.

We further developed the Department's response to the potential impact of **Brexit** on our education system and to the delivery of the Action Plan for Education 2016- 2019. This allowed us to respond to the evolving negotiations around the process in a considered way throughout 2018. In the context of Brexit the Department is increasing financial provision for the purposes of enhancing research colorations between institutions in the UK and Ireland.

Key indicators of progress and success for Goal 1 in 2018

Literacy	
The most recent PIRLS report published in 2017 shows that Ireland's 4th class primary school children are among the best in Europe and OECD countries for reading skills. Irish pupils' overall reading achievement score has improved by 15 points since the last cycle of the PIRLS study which was in 2011. The percentage of Irish pupils who have advanced reading skills rose from 16% in 2011 to 21% in 2016, which is much higher than the international average in PIRLS. Irish pupils also performed exceptionally well on the new online reading assessment in ePIRLS. Only one other country (Singapore) outperformed Ireland on this test. These findings are consistent with a number of other recent, major reports including the National Assessments of English, Reading and Mathematics 2014 and PISA 2015.	
Numeracy	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**

Increase the percentage of students taking higher level maths at the end of Junior cycle to 60% by 2020. Increase the percentage of students taking higher level maths at the end of Senior Cycle to 30% by 2020 from a base of 22% in 2012.	Measure at end 2016 was 55% and 57% at end 2017, at June 2018 57%. Measure in 2016 shows 28% and 30% for 2017 and 31.5% for 2018. The percentage of students achieving a grade H4 or above in HL maths has increased from 16.3% in June 2017 to 18.3% in June 2018.
Retention	
Ireland is currently 2nd in EU28 for percentage of people aged 20-24 with at least upper-secondary education at 95%. The rate in 2018 was 95% with 93% for boys and 96% for girls. School retention rates in Ireland show that Ireland's Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate school completion rates are among the highest in Europe. Early leavers from education and training overall is at 5% in 2018 with males at 6% and females at 3%.	
Attainment	
The percentage of 20-24 year olds in Ireland whose highest level of education is at least upper secondary level education is the 2nd best in Europe at 94%.	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase tertiary attainment among 30-34 years olds to 60% by 2020. The percentage of persons 25-34 with a post-leaving qualification is continuing to increase.	Measure in 2016: 52.9% (Systems Performance Framework) Measure in quarter 2 2018 was 57%, with 53% for males and 60% for females. Measure for males in quarter 2 2018 was 65%, up from 60% in 2015, and measure for females was 75%, up from 70% in 2015.
Strengthening transitions	
A new grading system and new common points scheme for the leaving Certificate was introduced	

There were 964 CAO offerings at level 8 in 2017 (Universities offering 529, Institutes of Technology 412 and Colleges 23 entry routes). This is down from 1036 in 2014. One of the targets for the transitions programme is to reduce the number of entry routes. 80,345 applicants to the CAO in 2017 were scored using the new Common Points Scale.
Wellbeing
The number of NEPS Psychologists was increased and time allocation to DEIS schools was increased to ensure learners with emerging and a complex learning and emotional needs have access to supports of an educational psychologist.

TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Extension of incredible years teacher programme in DEIS primary school. Increase reach from c20,000 leaners in 130 school to 104,000 learners in 646 (2019). Extension of Friends programme in DEIS schools. Increase reach from c25,000 learners in 275 schools to 172,000 learners in 831 DEIS schools, with 8,600 teachers involved (2019).	December 2018: A further 678 teachers completed the programme and a further 683 completed the first 3 modules of this 6-module programme. (Potential impact on a further 18,440 children, totalling to 69,700, from original baseline of 20,000). December 2018: A further 500 teachers completed the programme in 2018 (potential impact on a further 10,000 learners, totalling to 58,860, from original baseline of 25,000).
Up to 400 additional primary schools with 30 mbp/s broadband in 2018.	Some 300 additional primary schools with 30mbs broadband for 2018 this is under our projected figure due to delays in the roll out on the Eir300k national broadband plan.
4,100 HE students doing Erasmus+ 2018/2019.	3716 in the 2016/2017 academic year. 4009 in the 2017/2018 academic year.

2.0 GOAL 2: Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs.

Inclusive education is a fundamental principle of our education and training system. Education and training are key to breaking the cycle of disadvantage. Ireland has had measures in place to support the diverse needs of students of all ages for many years. While considerable progress in advancing equity and equality of opportunity has been made, significant challenges remain if we are to ensure that children and young people from different backgrounds and needs are adequately supported so that they can experience success in the education system.

Actions under Goal 2 have been designed to improve the educational outcomes of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs. **As a result of successful achievement of the actions associated with this goal the profile of learners progressing through the education system should become more representative of the population in general.**

Good progress towards the achievement of this goal was made during 2018 with the most recent review of DEIS showing real improvements in terms of educational outcomes and in the progression through school for students involved. In particular the latest evaluation of DEIS published by the ERC shows improvements in reading and mathematics amongst students in DEIS schools. In addition, DEIS schools have a markedly improved retention rate with just a 1.8% gap existing between DEIS and non-DEIS schools at Junior Certificate level for the 2011 cohort and the gap in retention to leaving certificate between DEIS and non-DEIS schools falling from 13.3% for the 2005 cohort to 8.5% for the 2011 cohort.

In 2018 we accelerated the progress made to date in opening up **opportunities for learners at risk of disadvantage.** We supported clusters of schools under the DEIS Strand of the Schools Excellence Fund; we continued to support the new DEIS schools to optimize the use of available supports to improve student outcomes and we worked with HEIs to deliver the targets for increased enrolment among disadvantaged learners, we enhanced NEPS support to schools participating in DEIS.

We continued to drive on the steadily **increasing inclusion** of children in the education system. We completed a comprehensive assessment of the SNA scheme and commenced work on developing proposals to implement the recommendations; we piloted a new In-School speech and Language Therapy Service to develop greater linkages between educational and therapy support and assist schools to develop their capacity to support children with speech and language needs in schools.

We developed an evaluation framework to assess the impact of the new model for resource teacher allocation and we reviewed the new model which is designed is designed to facilitate earlier intervention and more integrated. The model was reviewed to ensure that the resources that are being provided will secure the best possible outcomes and to update school profiles in 2018 to enable new allocations in 2019. We trialed the use of SEN inspection model in post primary schools aimed at embedding best practice models in teaching and learning, with a view to mainstreaming in 2019.

We developed further the measure to improve **access to higher education** for under-represented groups. We carried out a mid-term review of the national Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, gathering baseline data and setting new targets to be achieved; we allocated funding to regional clusters of higher education institutions under PATH to enable delivery of key elements of the national Access Plan and to support regional and community approaches to access; work was advanced on examining measures to increase participation by Lone Parents.

2.1 Key indicators of progress and success for Goal 2 in 2018

Retention (DEIS)

Analysis show particularly significant improvements in retention rates in schools in the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) scheme. The gap in retention rates to Leaving Certificate between DEIS and non-DEIS schools continues to narrow, halving from 16.8% for the 2001 cohort to 8.5% for the 2011 cohort.	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Achieve 90% retention rates in second-level DEIS schools by 2025.	The Leaving Certificate Retention Rate in DEIS Schools for the 2011 entry cohort (sat Leaving Certificate in 2016 or 2017) is 85% while the gap between DEIS and non-DEIS is 8.5%.
Literacy (DEIS)	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Reduce the percentage of 6th class students in DEIS band 1 primary schools scoring at level 1 or below in National Assessments for English, Reading and Mathematics to 40% by 2020.	Measure was 66.4% in 2009 and 47% in 2014.
Increase the percentage of 15 year olds in DEIS post-primary schools scoring at level 5 or above for reading literacy in PISA to 10% by 2020.	Measure in 2012 was 4.8% and 7% in 2015.
Decrease the percentage of 15 year olds in DEIS post-primary schools scoring at level 1 or below for reading literacy in PISA to 12% by 2020.	Measure in 2012 was 25.4% and in 16% in 2015.
Increase the percentage of 6th class students in DEIS Band 1 primary schools scoring at level 3 or above for reading literacy in National Assessments for English, Reading and Mathematics to 27% by 2020.	Measure in 2009 was 11.9% and in 2014 was 21.3%.
Numeracy (DEIS)	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase the percentage of 6th class students in DEIS Band 1 primary schools scoring at level 3 or above for mathematics in National Assessments for English, Reading and Mathematics to 27% by 2020.	Measure in 2009 was 12.9% and 18.7% in 2014.

Reduce the percentage of 6th class students in DEIS band 1 primary schools scoring at level 1 or below for mathematics in National Assessments to 42% by 2020.	Measure was 66.4% in 2009 and 49.9% in 2014.
Increase the percentage of 15 year olds in DEIS post-primary schools scoring at level 5 or above for mathematics in PISA to 10% by 2020.	Measure in 2012 was 5.2% and 6% in 2015.
Decrease the percentage of 15 year olds in DEIS post-primary schools scoring at level 1 or below for mathematics in PISA to 16% by 2020.	Measure in 2012 was 37.3% and 22% in 2015.
Overall Performance Scores compiled by the ERC.	The measure for DEIS schools in 2016 was 61.9% (up from 61.6% in 2014) compared with 70.3% in non-DEIS schools (up from 70.0% in 2014).

Attendance rates (DEIS)

The mean percentage of student days lost in DEIS Urban Band 1 primary schools has improved slightly between 2012/13 (8.7% of student days lost) and 2015/2016 (8.1% of student days lost). In comparison with non-DEIS Urban schools the variance is 2.2% for 2015/16 The percentage of days lost in DEIS post-primary schools in 2015/16 was 10.4% compared with 7.4% in non-DEIS post-primary schools.

Access to Higher Education

The latest data available from the HEA shows that access to third level by disadvantaged groups is improving. In particular, the number and share of students from disadvantaged backgrounds rose from 22% to 26%, and of students with a disability rose from 7% to 11% between 2012/13 and 2014/15. (From 9,147 to 11,189 and 2,561 to 3,343 respectively).

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Increase participation of new entrants in higher education by those from the non-manual worker group (18 to 20 age cohort) to 30% by 2019.	Most recent measure in 2016 shows this rate to be 27%.
Increase participation of new entrants in higher education by those from the semi/unskilled manual worker group (including the agricultural	Most recent measure in 2016 shows this rate to be 36%.

worker group, 18-20 age cohort) to 35% by 2019.	
Increase participation in higher education by people with disabilities (percentage of all new entrants to higher education) to 8% by 2019. % of total new entrants who are disabled.	Measure in 2012 was 6.4%, in 2015 was 7.8%, in 2016 was 10.3% and in 2017 was 10.6%.
Number of disabled persons (new entrants) in HE.	Figure was 4,677 in 2017, up from 4,488 in 2016.
Increase number of self-declared Irish Travellers in higher education (full and part-time undergraduate new entrants) to 80 by 2019.	Measure in 2012 was 35 students and in 2015 was 36 students. There were 48 students in 2017.
Teaching Posts and Special Needs Assistants	
13,400 Special Education Teaching posts in place 2018.	13,395 special education teacher posts in place at the end of 2018.
14,850 SNAs in place in 2018.	14,973 SNAs were allocated by the NCSE at end 2018.

3.0 GOAL 3: Help those delivering education services to continuously improve

Quality of provision is the cornerstone to the success of the education and training system. We recognise 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.

As a result of successful achievement of the actions associated with this goal leadership, management, quality frameworks, teaching methods, and initial and continuing training will be operating to the highest standards across the continuum of education and training provision. Innovation and excellence will be recognized and experiences shared and celebrated.

Quality assurance throughout the education and training system was a focus of our work in 2018. A comprehensive suite of inspection models was rolled out across the early years and school sectors, including team inspections of large scale early years settings. In 2018, the Inspectorate carried out 691 early years education inspections, 1,978 inspections/advisory visits in recognised schools, centres for education and other settings, 2,788 inspections of newly-qualified primary teachers (17/18 school year) and 881 advisory visits associated with the School Self-Evaluation process. School Governance Section and the Inspectorate continue to manage the monitoring of, and interventions in, poorly performing schools. 2,337 inspection reports for early years and schools were published providing parents and other key stakeholders with greater access to key information about their child's school or early years setting.

Evaluation and review of programmes in FET continued with the completion of an evaluation of the Youthreach programme, commencement of the evaluation of the VTOS/SST programme and implementation of the recommendations from the PLC review. Compacts with Higher Education Institutions and Strategic Performance Agreements in FET between SOLAS and the 16 Education and Training boards (ETBs) continued to drive and set targets for quality delivery across the sectors.

We made significant strides in building **strong leadership and improving teacher education and address teacher supply issues** during 2018. Investment in leadership across the system continued with the further rollout of coaching and mentoring for principals, supports for changes to the leadership and middle management structure of schools, the development of a management and leadership capability framework and upskilling programme for the Higher Education sector and implementation of the Professional Development Strategy for the Further Education and Training (FET) sector. We established the Teacher Supply Steering Group to oversee the development and implementation of an Action Plan for Teacher Supply. The Action Plan was published in 2018 with actions across a range of policy areas.

We published an evaluation of the Centre for School Leadership and developed supports and programmes to meet the needs of teachers at all stages of their careers; principals engaged in the Coaching service and all school Principals have access to a mentor; a group mentoring programme was established and teachers enrolled on the new post graduate diploma in school leadership. We continued to reform teacher induction through supporting the growth phase of "Droichead" the Teaching Council's national induction process for all newly qualified teachers. We continued to enhance quality assurance in the ETBs through the development of a new ETB sectoral approach and model for curriculum and programme development, assessment and validation.

In addition to the national programme of Early Years Education-focused inspections and the publication of reports we published a national report on **the quality of early year's provision** to

provide advice and to support progressive improvement in standards, leadership and teaching methodologies. We continued to support the Siolta (national quality framework) and Aistear (early childhood curriculum framework) including a new coordination system to track engagement, coordination of the Siolta quality assurance programme validation process, development of aistearsiolta.ie an on-line implementation resource; we coordinated national, regional and other CPD opportunities for Siolta Aistear, validators and mentors.

Building on the model introduced in 2017 work continued in 2018 to expand the Excellence Fund which is designed to encourage excellence, innovation and collaboration through school clusters in a range of areas including Step-up, Digital, DEIS and Creative arts. **Clustering of providers** was also encouraged through and the Higher Education Innovation Fund. We developed the SEF – Step Up project to advance collaborative working between post-primary schools, the Inspectorate and JCT support service to encourage self-evaluation and improvement in teaching and learning in selected priority areas and we commenced advisory visits by the inspectorate and delivery of dedicated CPD for teachers by JCT in schools, under the pilot project.

During 2018 we carried out work to develop a range of inspection models that will be used to monitor school compliance with the **enhanced Child Protection and Safeguarding** requirements. Following a research phase in schools, we developed a specialised Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection model. We conducted trial implementation in schools, concluded consultations with partners and published a related Guide.

During 2018 we continued to develop a more strategic approach to the provision of **CPD**. We commenced the development of a new evidence-based strategic policy framework for the provision of CPD to enable targeted funding towards priorities including excellence and innovation, leadership, disadvantage, digital transformation, STEM and Languages; we implemented a programme of work to enhance the governance of Education Centres and provided support for the implementation of the Primary Languages ~~e~~Curriculum (infants to second class), new senior cycle subjects and Junior Cycle reform. A comprehensive programme of support was also rolled out to all schools to meet enhanced Child Protection and Safeguarding requirements. HEIs implemented a CPD Framework for all academic staff through the Systems Performance Framework arrangements.

We continued to work to improve the **quality of teaching and learning** across the sector. We published a review of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education with implementation plan setting out timelines and targets for agreed actions; we made TRACE+ awards recognising higher education disciplines in their commitment to the development of excellence in teaching and learning. We developed arrangements for data systems to support the evaluation of outcomes from FET programmes and completed a **progress review of the Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019;** continued to support the work of the Teaching Council in regulating the teaching profession. We finalised a skills forecast model for the early years workforce to 2030; We implemented the 2018 actions in the FET Professional development Strategy; developed a new ETB sectoral approach and model for curriculum and programme development, assessment and validation; published a new FET policy framework on employee development, Skills to Advance, in alignment with the National skills strategy and commenced implementation.

3.2 Key indicators of progress and success for Goal 3 in 2018

Inspections	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**

Increase the number of Early Years Inspections to 600 in 2017 from an initial 22 in 2015. 491 were conducted by end 2016.	1,912 inspections have been conducted to the end of 2018: 22 in 2015, 491 in 2016, 708 in 2017 and 691 in 2018. .
Publish 1,000 Early Years inspection reports in 2017 from an initial base of 200 in 2016.	To date (08 February 2019) 1,291 EYEI reports and 52 Follow Through Reports published on the Department's website.
Conduct 3000 primary and post-primary school inspections.	1,978 inspections/advisory visits carried out in recognised schools, centres for education and other settings to end 2018. A further 2,788 inspections of newly-qualified primary teachers conducted in the 17/18 school year.
Support schools in implementing the School Self-Evaluation process through 800 advisory visits (2018).	A range of support materials provided to schools and 881 visits carried out in primary (591) and post-primary (290) schools.
Clustering for innovation and excellence	
School Clusters for Schools Excellence Fund, HEI Clusters under higher education strategy, ETB Clusters for Apprenticeship development.	

4.0 GOAL 4: Build stronger bridges between Education and the wider community.

Schools, education and training institutions and providers are at the heart of their communities. Goal 4 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.

Research, development and innovation are seen as critical to Ireland's economic and social development in the years ahead. We want to attract talent from around the world to our education institutions, engage in world-class research and collaborations and we want to ensure quality standards and best international practice for learners in Ireland.

As a result of successful achievement of the actions associated with this goal there will be stronger linkages between education and the wider community particularly parents, employers and the international community to the benefit of learners, society and the economy. There will be increased choice of school type and parents and students will have a stronger voice in the system. There will be stronger links with industry resulting in an enhanced talent base and learners will be equipped to meet skills gaps in critical areas. Our higher education institutions will be attracting talent from around the world and will be engaged in world-class research.

The Education (Admission to Schools) Act, 2018 enacted in July 2018 represents a major change to admissions policies particularly in Primary schools. The Act is aimed at achieving a more structured, fair and transparent decision making process by schools, regarding enrolment. The Act removes the role of religion in school admissions for virtually all primary schools; requires all schools to publish their admissions policies; provides for the Minister to require a school to open a special class for children with special educational needs where the National Council of Special Education deems it necessary and provides for Irish medium schools to give priority to Irish speaking children. Progress towards increasing the diversity of school type, in order to **offer parents more choice** was also made with patronage surveys being rolled out to pre-school parents; a new Online Patronage process (OPPS) was launched allowing parents to express preferences for the and the finalisation of protocols for the initial identification Phase of the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process which lays the ground work for agreeing more detailed arrangements for the implementation phase and transfer of patronage of schools following consultation. We continued to progress work on the introduction of a stronger complaints procedure and charter for parents and students through the ongoing drafting of the Education (Parent and Student) Charter Bill.

Further Education and Training (FET) continued to provide a wide range of programmes and supports designed to meet the needs of diverse individuals at different stages of the learning pathway. Within the context of the annual FET Strategic Performance Agreements, ETBs are requested by SOLAS to consider the needs of a broad range of learners, as well as low participation cohorts, in the planning of all FET. Funding applications to SOLAS from ETBs are required to outline details on how the needs of priority cohorts will be prioritised and addressed. We continued to implement the **Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland** to promote and encourage work based learning and strengthen partnerships between employers, higher education and further education and training providers. During 2018 work continued on the revision of existing Craft Apprenticeship and the development of new national apprenticeships. 18 new apprenticeships have been developed (cumulatively) spanning a variety of sectors from financial services and ICT to hospitality. We completed a review of pathways to participation in apprenticeship to inform future policy. In addition,

24 new traineeships have been developed in areas such as hospitality, engineering, logistics and animation.

Other work on **meeting skills needs** continued in 2018. The number of learning networks through Skillnets was increased; we published the a new FET policy framework on employee development, Skills to Advance, in alignment with the National Skills Strategy and commenced implementation; Springboard+ focused on priority areas identified by the National Skills Council offering upskilling and reskilling opportunities to people irrespective of their employment status; we developed an ICT Skills 2018 -2026 Action Plan which will be published early in 2019. We continued to develop innovative responses to skills gaps; supported stronger links between education and enterprise through the National Skills Fora; identified new partners for the Skills for Growth initiative and rollout out an audit tool for enterprise nationally; we continued to work to increase the evidence base and monitor effectiveness through surveying employers and enterprise. We oversaw an independent review of the National Training Fund to ensure funding to invest in education and training relevant to the skills needs of the economy. This investment, through the Human Capital Initiative will underpin the provision of additional capacity across the higher education sector to meet the priority skill needs of enterprise, to drive regional jobs growth and development, and support key economic sectors in responding to the challenges of Brexit.

Other work progressed and actions achieved toward this goal include: contributing to the national Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development; work on a strategy to attract world-leading researchers; supporting lifelong learning including the development of an Upskilling Pathways Plan – New Opportunities for Adults which aims to help adults acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills; commencing the Creative schools initiative; funding mechanisms to incentivise flexible learning opportunities; introduction of a new System Innovation and Transformation fund for Higher Education and methodologies to recognise a wider set of knowledge transfer metrics to drive research and innovation in Higher Education.

4.1 Key indicators of progress and success for Goal 4 in 2018

School Choice	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase the number of multi-/non-denominational schools to 400 by 2030. The percentage of pupils attending small schools is remaining constant. The percentage of pupils in Irish medium schools is rising.	Number of multi-/non-denominational schools is 115 in 2017 and 119 in 2018. The figure in 2018 was 4.4% and in 2016 was 4.4%. The figure in 2018 was 8.1% up from 7.9% in 2016. The number of Irish medium schools was 49 in 2018 up from 48 in 2016.
Strengthen innovation, entrepreneurship and research	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**

The total number of post-graduate researchers is rising.	There were 10,015 in 2017 (full and part-time, masters and PhD). There were 6,888 full-time PhD students in 2017 up from 6806 in 2016. The number of part-time of PhD researchers has risen from 1358 in 2014 to 1625 in 2017.
Address skills needs	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase number of available Springboard+ places by 30% by 2021 in both universities and Institutes of Technology. From a base of 4836 in 2011/12. Target to provide 4,476 Springboard+ places in 2017/2018. Increase ICT skills through the provision of places on ICT skills conversion courses, as part of Springbaord+. Offer 1,995 places in the 2017/18 year. Measure for 2015/2016 was 1,133 and 1,650 in 2016/17. Increase the number of FET opportunities offered to over 320,000 in 2017 from a base of 263,276 in 2012. Increase the number of in-employment upskilling, through Skillnets+ to 55,000 in 2018 from a base of 37,293 in 2012. Measure in 2016 was 44,413.	Springboard+ 2017 provides for 6,471 places on 208 courses over the academic year 2017/18. 1040 ICT conversion courses offered in 2017/2018. There were 324,503 beneficiaries in FET in 2017. The number of beneficiaries in 2018 will be available in April 2019. Total Skillnets places provided for in 2018 was 54,600 participants cumulatively of which those for the unemployed were 3,000.
Apprenticeships	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Cumulative 25 new apprenticeship programmes (2018). Total apprenticeship places.	As of end 2018, 18 new apprenticeships have been developed in a variety of sectors from hospitality, engineering and logistics. There were 590 new registrations on new programmes in 2018. There were 5,058 new registrations on craft programmes in 2018. Total enrolments on Apprenticeship programmes 12,851 in 2017, up from 6,913 in 2014.

Lifelong learning	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase the number of HE entrants (overall) studying on a flexible/part-time basis to 22% by 2019 and 25% by 2021. Systems performance framework in HE. Measure shows 19% for 2015/2016 Increase the numbers of HE entrants studying on a flexible basis by 25% by 2021	Measure shows 20% for 2016/2017 and 21% for 2017/2018 2017/18 21% or 48,071 of total enrolments are flexible/part-time learners.
International	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Grow the number of international student numbers to 44,000 students by 2020. This measure includes students studying abroad in Irish universities.	The total number of international students who study in Ireland and Overseas Campuses is 31,771 in 2017.
Strengthen relationship with employers	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Participation in Erasmus+ in Higher Education and other Study and Work Placements Abroad to reach 4,400 by 2022 in accordance with international strategy.	3716 in the 2016/2017 academic year. 4009 in the 2017/2018 academic year.
Research	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase of 475 new postgraduate research enrolments in disciplines aligned to enterprise and other national needs by 2020. The total number of post-graduate researchers.	Measure shows 2,235 in 2014/15. Measure in 2017 was 10,015, up from 9,802 in 2016.

5.0 GOAL 5: Improve national planning and support services

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.

As a result of successful achievement of the actions associated with this goal the Department and its agencies will be working in partnership and consultation to create the right structures, develop the right policies, use the right funding instruments, provide the right service supports and deliver effectively and efficiently.

Good progress has been made towards the achievement of this goal in 2018 with the successful achievement of 85% of the 292 actions from Action Plan for Education 2018. Under project Ireland 2040, we continued to make progress to increase our infrastructural capacity in order to meet demographic and other demands. A total of 49 large scale projects were completed in 2018. These projects comprised of 13 new school buildings and 36 large scale extension. These projects delivered over 6,356 additional permanent primary schools places and 5,435 post primary places were created. Furthermore a total of 2,868 permanent additional school places were delivered under the devolved Additional Accommodation Scheme.

During 2018 we continued to advance **legislative reform** including the enactment of the Technological Universities Act to underpin the development of a new model of higher education in Ireland and the Education (Admission to Schools) Act which is intended to achieve a more structured, fair and transparent decision making process by schools regarding enrolment. In addition to the two Acts, the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill, 2018 was published on August 1st and by year end had advanced to Committee Stage in Seanad Eireann and work on the Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill to provide for a Parent and Student Charter in every school and the Retention of Certain Records Bills were advanced substantively.

We further advanced work on **shared services and centralised procurement** to strengthen management systems across a range of services in the Department and the sector. We rolled out the Financial Services Support Unit (FSSU) to the Community and Comprehensive schools sector; progressed the development of Payroll Shared Services for the ETB sector for implementation in 2019; went to market in late 2018 to procure an integrated Financial Shared Services solution for the ETB sector; developed the evidence base for a business case to introduce HR/Payroll Shared Services in the Higher Education sector and upgraded ICT systems to support the shared service agenda for that sector; completed a business case and began engagement with the market for the upgrade the Department's payroll function to shared service standards; reviewed the performance of the Legal Shared Services centre of Excellence; and continued to work with the Financial Management Shared Services Centre to prepare for the move to Shared Financial Services for the DES. We further developed the Education Sector Procurement hub and the sectoral procurement initiatives to maximise the benefits of centralised procurement, and to facilitate progress towards a single procurement.

To **enhance corporate governance** across the education sector we developed protocols and schedules for reviews of DES agencies; rolled out corporate governance training courses; commenced a programme of targeted rolling reviews and developed financial penalty for serious governance breaches in HEIs. Three year **Strategic Performance Agreements** between SOLAS and the 16 ETBs are now in place and **Compacts** between the HEA and the HEIs have been agreed under the Systems Performance Framework in Higher Education**.**

We **enhanced the Department's ICT capabilities** during 2018 including the development of an online School Transport Appeals application; implementation of e-Correspondence and implementation of an online system for the payment of examination entry fees and we worked to **strengthen the governance and management of the Departments data resources.**

We established a division within the Department to **improve strategic policy capability,** evaluation of programmes and policy, governance and programme and project management structures.

In 2018 the relevant authorities for the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020 (PEIL) co-financed by the EU through the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) were designated. Over the course of the Programme the EU will contribute some €613m to ESF and YEI supported activities in Ireland. During 2018, payment applications submitted to the Commission resulted in receipts of €116m, of which €109m was paid into the Department's Vote. The mid-term evaluation of the PEIL, undertaken by Fitzpatrick Associates and published in December, found that the Programme was progressing well and contributing significantly to a range of important education, labour market, and social inclusion policy goals and objectives as Ireland's economic recovery continues its path.

As has been well documented, General Data Protection Regulation became effective from 25 May 2018. The Department established a (GDPR) Readiness Project which ran until May 2018 to ensure that the Department would have the relevant actions completed to be compliant with the GDPR. The Department has had a Data Protection Officer (DPO) in place, along with a support team, whose role is to inform and advise staff of the Department who carry out processing of personal data of their obligations pursuant to the GDPR and to other data protection provisions. A key focus for 2019 will be how best to provide training in data for staff, particularly for the established Data Steward Network and keeping abreast of developments as we enter the first full year of GDPR operation to best assist the Department to be compliant.

The Department developed a 3 year **Workforce Plan** in late 2018, which forecasts our resource requirements and is aligned to the Department's business objectives, to help ensure that the Department has both the capability and capacity required to deliver on its strategic goals and objectives in the coming years. This plan feeds into the rolling three year integrated Civil Service Workforce Plan to contribute to a more effective recruitment planning framework for this Department and the wider civil service.

In addition, the Department's **Human Resources (HR) Strategy 2018-2020**, which was launched in early 2018, aims to create a HR environment which builds the capacity of our staff to meet the strategic objectives of the Department.

During 2018 we further developed the Department's response to the potential impact of **Brexit** on our education system and to the delivery of the Action Plan for Education 2016- 2019 allowing us to respond to the evolving negotiations around the process in a considered way.

5.1 Key indicators of progress and success for Goal 5 in 2017

School Transport
In the 2017/18 school year over 117,000 children, including over 12,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 4,500 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually providing safe, efficient and cost effective school transport services for children.

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Provide safe, efficient and cost-effective school transport for on over 6000 routes in 2018.	School transport operated 6,800 routes in 2017/18 school year.

School Building Programme

Under project Ireland 2040, we continued to make progress to increase our infrastructural capacity in order to meet demographic and other demands. A total of 49 large scale projects were completed in 2018. These projects comprised of 13 new school buildings and 36 large scale extension. These projects delivered over 6,356 additional permanent primary schools places and 5,435 post primary places were created. Furthermore a total of 2,868 permanent additional school places were delivered under the devolved Additional Accommodation Scheme.

Goals and indicators:
Construction activity in 2018 and 2019 will involve over 130 large-scale projects and circa. 280 smaller scale projects under the Additional Accommodation Scheme. These projects will deliver:

- Circa. 40,000 school places (includes additional and replacement)
- The replacement of over 600 prefabs which is a key element of our prefab replacement programme.
- Enhanced sports facilities through the construction/modernisation of 48 PE Halls at post-primary level and 82 General Purpose rooms at primary level. The enhancement and modernisation of PE facilities in schools will also facilitate community usage of these facilities.
- Over 200 modern science laboratories which will support the delivery of the reformed science curricula and the roll-out of Computer Science as a leaving certificate subject

Payroll and pension services provided to teachers and school staff in all schools (except the ETB sector), issuing payments to 120,000 people on a fortnightly basis throughout 2018.

Patronage

7 new schools were established in 2017 under the new schools process, 3 new primary schools, all of which are multi-denominational in ethos and four new post-primary schools, 3 of which are multi-denominational and one of which is denominational in ethos.

The first reconfiguration has successfully taken place, with one primary school opening in September 2017 under the "Early Movers" provision of the Schools Reconfiguration process following a transfer of patronage from the Catholic Bishop to the ETB as a Community National School.

In 2018, 6 new schools were established under the new schools process, comprising 1 primary school and 5 post-primary schools, all of which are multi-denominational in ethos.

One new multi-denominational school was established in 2018 under the patronage divesting process. In addition, in the case of two schools, a transfer of patronage from denominational to multi-denominational took place enabling these primary schools to continue to serve their local communities under new multi-denominational patronage from September 2018.