ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION

2018

Quarter 1 Progress Report

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Introduction

The Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 sets out our Statement of Strategy with a high-level ambition for Ireland's Education and Training system, of becoming the best education and training service in Europe by 2026.

In February this year we published our Action Plan for 2018. Derived from the 2016-2019 strategy and plan, the annual action plan sets out nearly 300 actions specifically targeted to achieve our goals to:

1. Improve the learning experience and the success of learners

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

3. Help those delivering education services to continually improve

4. Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community

5. Improve national planning and support services

The Action Plan for Education 2018 highlights the significant strategic reform programme under way in education and training. It recognises the importance of critical business functions to ensure business continuity and quality of service. The publication of an annual plan within a broader strategic framework enables us to respond in an agile way to the demands of the challenging and complex environment in which we operate while maintaining a strategic focus on sustainable reform.

To ensure an informative and transparent process, our progress during the year will be monitored through published quarterly reports. This is the first such report for 2018. It outlines progress made on actions and subactions due for delivery in the first quarter of 2018. While providing details on the achievements made during this period, the report also provides an update on actions where significant progress has been made, but where it has been necessary to adjust the target date. Where appropriate measures associated with the performance indicators for each Goal have been included.

Overview

Actions due for delivery by end quarter 1, 2018

The Action Plan for 2018 contained 46 actions and subactions due for delivery by the end of quarter 1 2018. Of these, 32 actions and subactions have been achieved, giving a completion rate of 70%.

Actions achieved in the first three months of the Action Plan for Education 2018 include:

Goal 1: Improve the learning experience and success of learners	• Initial baseline data collection and analysis has been carried out, in order to inform policy on the supply of STEM teachers and the current employment situations of newly qualified teachers in STEM subjects. • A Foreign Languages Advisory Group (FLAG) has been established to oversee implementation of Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education. The Group has held its first meeting. • An audit of foreign languages provision in post-primary schools has been conducted. • The School Excellence Fund-Digital has been launched, with 32 clusters, involving 200 schools, selected to take part.
Goal 2: Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs	• The School Excellence Fund- DEIS continues to be rolled out, with the applications received from the ten clusters of schools involved in the first phase considered by the Steering Group

	• Funding for third-level access measures, under PATH 2, was allocated to regional clusters of higher education institutions • Work began on implementing the recommendations in "An Independent Review to Identify the Supports and Barriers for Lone Parents in Accessing Higher Education" • A comprehensive assessment of the SNA scheme was completed
Goal 3: Help those delivering education services to continuously improve	• "Insights and future developments: Review of the Early Years Education-focused Inspection April 2016 – June 2017", a national report on the quality of early years provision, was published. • Developments continue in the area of initial teacher education reform, with progress made in relation to reviews being undertaken by the Teaching Council • A comprehensive programme of CPD to support the implementation of the revised Children First Guidelines has commenced • Work has begun on the development of the Schools Excellence Fund-Step Up strand
Goal 4: Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community	• Work is ongoing with the Expert Group on Future Skills needs to finalise a skills forecast model for the early years workforce to 2030 • Five new Skillnets Learning Networks were established, in areas that address national workforce and sectoral policy. • A competitive call was issued for Springboard+ 2018 course proposals in areas of demonstrated skills needs, and an independent panel has been established to evaluate the proposals received. • Further Education and Training providers and Higher Education Institutions are providing employability statements for courses/disciplines to better inform students, parents and employers.
Goal 5: Improve national planning and support services	• The Technological Universities Bill Legislation has passed all stages and has been signed into law by the President. • The Department is working to enhance corporate governance across the education sector • Implementation of a new HR Strategy for the Department has commenced, in order to support the effective management of the Department's HR function through updated and modern HR practices

Other key developments during quarter 1 include:

- The first schools to study P.E. and Computer Science as Leaving Certificate subjects were announced, with roll-out to commence in September.
- A review of the Relationships and Sexuality Curriculum in schools has been initiated.
- Changes to middle-management in post-primary schools were announced, supported by 1,300 extra promotion posts and following on from earlier changes at primary level.
- Work to implement a Strategy on Teacher Supply commenced, with the establishment of a Teacher Supply Steering Group and a number of actions taken immediately.
- A conference, Senior Cycle Review: International Perspectives, was held and research on the provision of upper-secondary education in nine jurisdictions including Ireland was published.
- €30m has been provided for ICT infrastructure at both primary and post-primary levels.
- An evaluation of the Post Leaving Certificate Programme was published, confirming the positive role of the programme, and making recommendations for its enhancement.
- Significant reform of the higher education sector was announced, with the publication of the Systems Performance Framework 2018-2020, which will provide a framework for the reform.

- Two new Irish-medium teacher education programmes will provide up to 60 extra places annually for teacher education through Irish.
- 42 new primary and post-primary schools, to commence between 2019 and 2021 and which will provide over 20,000 new school places, were announced.
- Contracts were signed for the Grangegorman PPP, which will facilitate the construction of two flagship new buildings at the DIT campus in Grangegorman, Dublin 7.

TABLE OF ACTIONS

Goal 1: Improve the learning experience and the success of learners

Objective 1.1

Improve services and resources to promote wellbeing in our school communities to support success in school and life

Action/ Subaction		Actions/subactions for Quarter 1	Achieved/ Not achieved	Comment
1		**To foster and promote the Wellbeing of all children and young people in schools by ensuring that Wellbeing is at the core of every schools' ethos.**		
	1.1	Finalise and publish the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Wellbeing Policy Statement for schools.	Not achieved	A draft Wellbeing Policy statement has been prepared and will be published in Q2.
	1.2	Issue revised circulars, providing more comprehensive and strengthened guidance to schools on the effective use of external programmes and facilitators relating to Wellbeing.	Not achieved	Draft circulars have been revised and they will be issued with the Wellbeing Practice Framework in Q2.
8		**Work with the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) to support learners to manage their educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices so that they reach their full potential, through the implementation of an enhanced Guidance Counselling Framework to maximise the benefits from the restoration of 500 guidance posts.**		
	8.1	Commence the implementation of the DES Programme Recognition Framework - Guidance Counselling (2016).	Not achieved	A Review Panel is being established to carry out the first phase of implementation of the Programme Recognition Framework.

Objective 1.2 **Deliver a "Step-Change" in the development of critical skills, knowledge and competences to provide the foundations for participation in work and society**				
Action/ Subaction		**Actions/subactions for Quarter 1**	**Achieved/ Not achieved**	**Comment**
13		**Progress delivery of the STEM Education Policy Statement and Implementation Plan to achieve a step change improvement in the STEM education experience and outcomes for learners from early years to post-primary.**		
	13.1	Establish baseline STEM data on participation, attainment, attitudes to STEM, graduate outcomes and STEM related skills needs.	Not achieved	Work is underway on the collation of STEM subject uptake, attainment, graduate outcomes and STEM related skills needs.
	13.2	Undertake baseline data collection and analysis, in conjunction with relevant bodies, to inform policy on the supply of STEM teachers and the current employment situations of newly qualified teachers in STEM subjects.	Achieved	

Objective 1.3 **Increase subject choice for learners in Senior Cycle to equip them with the skills and knowledge to participate in a changing world**				
Action/ Subaction		**Actions/subactions for Quarter 1**	**Achieved/ Not achieved**	**Comment**
14		**Progress development and implementation of Leaving Certificate subject specifications.**		
	14.1	Complete report on trialling of practical assessment component of Leaving Certificate Science (Biology, Chemistry, and Physics) specifications, to inform decision on introduction of revised Leaving Certificate Sciences to all schools from 2019/20 year.	Not achieved	The trial implementation phase is complete and the report is at an advanced stage.
15		**Review senior cycle programmes (including Leaving Certificate Applied) and vocational pathways in senior cycle to create a senior cycle that places the learner at the centre of the educational experience. That experience will enable learners to be resourceful, to be confident, to participate actively in society, and to build an interest in and ability to learn throughout their future lives.**		
	15.1	Deliver conference on Senior Cycle Review, with publication of report on International Developments in Upper Secondary Education	Achieved	

Objective 1.5 **Increase the use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment so that learners are equipped with the necessary skills to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing learning environment**				
Action/ Subaction		**Actions/subactions for Quarter 1**	**Achieved/ Not achieved**	**Comment**
19		**Implement the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015 - 2020 to realise the potential of digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment so that Ireland's young people become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens to participate fully in society and the economy.**		
	19.1	Implement a scheme, as part of the Schools Excellence Fund Initiative, to support the Innovative Use of Digital Technologies in Teaching, Learning and Assessment, through school clusters, and will help schools deliver change, which will assist in enabling self-reflection, evaluation and improvement.	Achieved	
22		**Advance language curriculum (Irish and English) developments across primary and post-primary schools.**		
	22.1	Publish Assessment Guidelines for Junior Cycle Gaeilge.	Not achieved	Work is underway on the Assessment Guidelines for Junior Cycle Gaeilge and it is intended to publish the guidelines at the end of May.
	22.2	Publish review of Junior Cycle English specification	Not achieved	The consultation and review process is complete and the review document is being prepared for publication.

Objective 1.6 **Enable learners communicate effectively and improve their standards of competence in languages**				
Action/ Subaction		**Actions/subactions for Quarter 1**	**Achieved/ Not achieved**	**Comment**
24		**Implement Languages Connect, Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017 - 2026 to promote a society where the ability to learn and use at least one foreign language is taken for granted, because of its inherent value for individuals, society and the economy.**		
	24.1	Establish Foreign Languages Advisory Group to oversee implementation of Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education	Achieved	

	24.2	Complete the audit of foreign languages provision in post-primary schools	Achieved	

Measures of progress and success for Goal 1 in Quarter 1:

Indicator	Target/indicator (year)	Reading/Measurement as at end Q1 2018
Extend the reach of the Incredible Years programme in DEIS primary schools	Complete the final 3 modules of the 6-module programme with 463 teachers; commence continued delivery of the programme targeting a further 735 teachers (2018)	391 teachers completed modules 4, 5 and 6 in Q1. 260 teachers commenced the programme in Q1.
Extend the reach of resilience-building programmes in DEIS primary and post-primary schools	Continue the provision of training for teachers in the delivery of resilience-building programmes that reduce anxiety and promote coping skills and school connectedness in learners, targeting 500 teachers in DEIS primary and post-primary schools (2018)	389 teachers in DEIS primary and post primary received training in the delivery of resilience-building programmes in Q1.
School clusters developed to support the innovative use of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment	Between 10-20 clusters, involving at least 40 schools (2018)	32 clusters have been selected, involving 200 schools
School clusters work together to promote the teaching and learning of STEM subjects	10 clusters, involving at least 30 schools participating (2018)	30 schools in 10 clusters chosen to participate
School clusters use art and creativity to address shared challenges and achieve better learning outcomes	21 clusters are in place, through the network of Teacher Education Centres	Application process is open for interested clusters to apply
Number of primary schools with 30Mbp/s (as defined as baseline in National Broadband Plan) broadband	Up to 400 additional schools (2018)	40 additional primary schools have 30 MbP/s broadband at end quarter 1

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

Objective 2.1

Improve the learning experience and learning outcomes for learners impacted by disadvantage

Action/ Subaction		Actions/subactions for Quarter 1	Achieved/ Not achieved	Comment
26		**Implement the DEIS Strand of the Schools Excellence Fund in participating DEIS schools.**		
	26.1	Approve improvement plans for schools in Tranche 1 and issue initial grants to lead school in each cluster	Achieved	
27		**Implement strands of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, and oversee the delivery of the targets for HEIs so that Higher Education becomes more representative of the population in general.**		
	27.1	Allocate funding to Regional Clusters of higher education institutions for Bursaries under Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) 2 to enable the delivery of a key element of the National Access Plan.	Achieved	
28		**Address the barriers to Lone Parents' participation in Higher Education to increase their participation levels.**		
	28.1	Begin work on implementation of the recommendations in "An Independent Review to Identify the Supports and Barriers for Lone Parents in Accessing Higher Education" and examine measures to increase participation	Achieved	

Objective 2.2

Target policies and supports for learners with special education needs to support their participation and progression across the continuum of education

Action/ Subaction		Actions/subactions for Quarter 1	Achieved/ Not achieved	Comment
32		**Undertake a comprehensive assessment of the SNA scheme to identify the most appropriate form of support options. This will help to enable students with special educational needs to fulfil their potential.**		
	32.1	Complete comprehensive assessment of the SNA scheme	Achieved	

Measures of progress and success for Goal 2 in Quarter 1:

Indicator	Target/indicator (year)	Reading/Measurement as at end Q1 2018
Continue to improve retention rates at second-level DEIS schools	90% (2025)	84.41% for 2015/16 (2010 Cohort) (annual measurements taken for this indicator)
Special Education Teaching Posts	Over 13,400 Special Education Teacher posts in place (2018)	13,305 Special Education Teacher posts in place (currently in the 2017/18 school year)
Special Needs Assistants	Over 14,850 SNAs in place (2018)	14,120 SNA posts in place (currently in the 2017/18 school year)

Goal 3: Help those delivering education services to continuously improve

Objective 3.1

Increase the quality of Early Years to deliver a better learning experience for young children

Action/ Subaction		Actions/subactions for Quarter 1	Achieved/ Not achieved	Comment
38		**Support the further enhancement of professional qualifications and standards within the ECCE sector.**		
	38.1	Publish results of Consultation on draft Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Education in undergraduate programmes for Early Years Practitioners.	Not achieved	Analysis of the consultation stage will be completed shortly, and it is intended to publish the results in Q2.
39		**Implement a national programme of Early Years Education-focussed inspections to provide advice and to support a progressive improvement in standards, leadership and teaching methodologies.**		
	39.1	Publish revised guide to Early Years Education-focussed Inspections following statutory consultation.	Not achieved	The consultation will take place in May, after which the revised guide can be published.
	39.2	Publish national report on quality of early years provision.	Achieved	

Objective 3.2

Develop the continuum of teacher education to equip teachers with the right skills for 21st century teaching and learning and improve school leadership

Action/ Subaction		Actions/subactions for Quarter 1	Achieved/ Not achieved	Comment
40		**Develop a policy on Teacher supply to support the availability of relevant teaching resources across the system in the short-medium and long term.**		
	40.1	Undertake baseline data collection and analysis to inform policy on teacher supply.	Achieved	
41		**Continue the reform of initial teacher education (ITE) and teacher induction to ensure teachers are equipped with the right skills for 21st century teaching, learning and assessment.**		
	41.1	Consider advice from the Teaching Council on entry requirements to ITE programmes and take any appropriate actions.	Achieved	
	41.2	Teaching Council to take account of current national policies in progressing (a) its review of the impact of the reconfigured ITE programmes and (b) its review of	Achieved	

		the criteria and guidelines for ITE programme providers.		
43		**Provide dedicated professional support to teachers to support the implementation of curricular change and Department policy.**		
	43.1	Commence the roll out of a comprehensive programme of CPD to support the implementation of the revised Children First Guidelines.	Achieved	
44		**Continue to expand the range of supports available through the Centre for School Leadership.**		
	44.1	Implement a quality assurance framework for leadership CPD provision.	Achieved	
	44.2	Publish an evaluation of the pilot of Centre for School Leadership.	Not achieved	The evaluation is complete and will be published in tandem with the Implementation Plan shortly.
45		**Continue to develop programmes for teacher professional learning to further enhance the teaching profession.**		
	45.1	Progress the making of further regulations in relation to Education Support Centres.	Achieved	

Objective 3.3 **Improve quality, promote excellence and innovation, and increase autonomy for schools**				
Action/ Subaction		**Actions/subactions for Quarter 1**	**Achieved/ Not achieved**	**Comment**
52		**Develop and commence implementation on a pilot basis of the Schools Excellence Fund-Step Up project to advance collaborative working between post-primary schools, Inspectorate and JCT support service that will encourage self-evaluation and improvement in teaching and learning in selected priority areas.**		
	52.1	Develop proposals for collaborative working between post-primary schools, Inspectorate and JCT support service in selected priority areas, as part of the Schools Excellence Fund-Step Up project.	Achieved	
53		**Develop and implement a range of inspection arrangements to monitor the compliance of schools with the enhanced child protection and safeguarding requirements of the Department's "Revised Child Protection Guidelines 2017".**		
	53.1	Develop and publish details of initial inspection requirements in schools to monitor implementation of child protection and safeguarding arrangements.	Achieved	
	53.2	Commence initial inspection arrangements in schools to monitor implementation of child protection and safeguarding arrangements.	Achieved	

Objective 3.4 Promote high quality learning experiences in Further Education and Training and Higher Education				
Action/ Subaction		**Actions/subactions for Quarter 1**	**Achieved/ Not achieved**	**Comment**
54		**Initiate review of quality in Higher Education.**		
	54.1	Launch a public consultation process, as the first phase of the review of quality in Higher Education.	Not achieved	A consultation paper is currently being finalised which will enable the consultation process to commence.

Objective 3.4 Promote high quality learning experiences in Further Education and Training and Higher Education				
Action/ Subaction		**Actions/subactions for Quarter 1**	**Achieved/ Not achieved**	**Comment**
60		**Enhance quality assurance in ETBs.**		
	60.1	Complete an ETB Executive Self-Evaluation Process and QA Improvement Plan (ETBs).	Achieved	

Measures of progress and success for Goal 3 in Quarter 1:

Indicator	**Target/indicator (year)**	**Reading/Measurement as at end Q1 2018**
Support principals through enabling them to access professional coaching	400 principals (2018)	389 participants currently
Support future school leaders through post-graduate qualifications	200 aspiring school leaders (2018)	247 participants (2017/2018)
Support schools through the annual school inspection programme	3,000 inspections conducted (2018)	1,881 inspections (324 school inspections +1,557 probation teacher inspections) conducted in quarter 1
Increase impact of school inspections through publication of inspection reports on the Department's website and regional seminars	1,000 inspection reports published (2018)	283 inspection reports published in quarter 1
Support schools in implementing the School Self-Evaluation process	800 advisory visits (2018) Commence regional seminars to support school self-evaluation	67 advisory visits conducted in quarter 1

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

Objective 4.3

Enhance our capacity to meet national and regional skills needs

Action/ Subaction		Actions/subactions for Quarter 1	Achieved/ Not achieved	Comment
66		**Make progress towards increasing the diversity of school type, in order to offer parents more choice.**		
	66.1	Finalise drafting and consultation on protocols for the initial Identification Phase of the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process.	Achieved	
	66.2	Roll out first round of patronage surveys to pre-school parents through County Childcare Committees (ETBs) following consultation on survey instrument.	Achieved	
67		**Enhance our response to skills needs within Early Years sector.**		
	67.1	Work with the Expert Group on Future Skills needs to finalise skills forecast model for the early years workforce to 2030	Achieved	

Objective 4.4

Create a greater diversity of learning opportunities beyond school

Action/ Subaction		Actions/subactions for Quarter 1	Achieved/ Not achieved	Comment
74		**Continue to work with Skillnets to deliver enterprise-led training and continue to develop the model in accordance with the Skillnets Statement of Strategy 2016-2019.**		
	74.1	Establish and fund 4 new Skillnets Learning Networks in Sectors (and Regions) highlighted in national workforce and in sectoral policy.	Achieved	
77		**Oversee development of, and annual calls for Springboard +**		
	77.1	Issue a competitive call to HEIs for proposals for Springboard+ 2018 courses, with a particular focus on priority areas identified by the National Skills Council.	Achieved	
78		**Further Education and Training providers and Higher Education Institutions to provide employability statements for courses/disciplines to better inform students, parents and employers.**	Achieved	

Objective 4.6 **Create a stronger focus on Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation**				
Action/ Subaction		**Actions/subactions for Quarter 1**	**Achieved/ Not achieved**	**Comment**
83		**Contribute to progressing the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development as a key component of Ireland's overall national strategy to deliver on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**		
	83.1	Finalise review of overall progress since 2014 of the National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development.	Achieved	

Measures of progress and success for Goal 4 in Quarter 1:

Indicator	**Target/indicator (year)**	**Reading/Measurement as at end Q1 2018**
Increased number of in-employment upskilling, through Skillnets	20% increase, to 55,000 places (2018)	11,000 participants in quarter 1
Provision of upskilling and reskilling opportunities on Springboard courses, as part of Springboard+	4,476 places (2017/18)	5,025 participants on Springboard courses (currently in 2017/2018 academic year)
Increase ICT skills through the provision of places on ICT skills conversion courses, as part of Springboard+	1,995 places (2017/18)	1,702 participants on ICT skills conversion courses (currently in 2017/2018 academic year)
As set out in the Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020, provide new apprenticeships to offer more choice for learners	A cumulative 25 new programmes (2018)	2 new apprenticeships in quarter 1: ICT Network Engineer and ICT Software Developer
Learners avail of the new apprenticeship opportunities	1,500 apprenticeship registrations (2018)	42 registrations on new apprenticeships in quarter 1
Increase the number of new registrations on craft apprenticeships	4,697 new registrations by end 2018	1,160 new registrations on craft apprenticeships in quarter 1
Creative Youth implemented in schools, as part of Creative Ireland	150 primary and post-primary schools take part in the pilot of the Scoileanna Ildánacha/Creative Schools Initiative (2018)	400 applications received
Expand research through a new competitive Frontiers Research Programme	24 awards made (2018)	36 awards made in quarter 1

Goal 5: Improve national planning and support services

Objective 5.1

Strengthen strategic oversight and focus on delivery for results

Action/ Subaction		Actions/subactions for Quarter 1	Achieved/ Not achieved	Comment
92		**Advance legislative reform in the Higher Education sector.**		
	92.1	Enact Technological Universities Bill to underpin the development of a new model of higher education in Ireland.	Achieved	
93		**Commence review of the Free Fees scheme (Higher Education) as part of the reformed funding model for higher education.**	Not achieved	The terms of reference for the review are being finalised.
103		**Progress the work programme to enhance and standardise the alignment of sectoral governance codes in line with DPER's Code of Practice.**		
	103.1	Embed a sub-committee, established under the auspices of the Management Board Committee on Sectoral Governance & Accountability to ensure further enhancement to corporate governance across the education sector.	Achieved	

Objective 5.3

Improve the quality of the national support services and shared services

Action/ Subaction		Actions/subactions for Quarter 1	Achieved/ Not achieved	Comment
110		**Improve the quality of services across the sector through the introduction of shared services.**		
	110.1	Support the roll out of the Financial Services Support Unit (FSSU) to the Community and Comprehensive schools sector.	Achieved	
112		**Enhance the Department's ICT capabilities through delivering the Department's ICT Strategy 2015-2019.**		
	112.1	Develop and implement online School Transport Appeals application.	Not achieved	Testing of the application is being completed and the application is expected to go live in Q2.
	112.2	Implement eCorrespondence, developed by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), under the Build to Share strand of the Public Service ICT Strategy.	Achieved	

116		**Manage EU co-financed programmes and exploit co-financing opportunities.**		
	116.1	Designate the Managing and Certifying Authorities for the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020 (PEIL) co-financed by the EU through the ESF and the YEI.	Not achieved	Responses to the audit authority's queries are being finalised and it is anticipated that this action will be achieved in Q2.
117		**Manage the Department's Human Resources effectively.**		
	117.1	Commence implementation of a new HR Strategy for the Department, in order to support the effective management of the Department's HR function, in order to support the effective management of the Department's HR function through updated and modern HR practices.	Achieved	