DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

ANNUAL REPORT

2016

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

EUROPEAN UNION

Investing in your future
European Social Fund

Published by Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1

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Foreword by the Minister

I welcome the publication of the Department's Annual Report for 2016, which outlines the significant work undertaken by the Department in meeting its goals and objectives during the year.

In September 2016, I launched the first ever Action Plan for Education which has as its central ambition that the Irish education and training system should become the best in Europe over the next decade. I am confident that this is achievable and this report highlights the extent of the significant progress made in 2016 towards the achievement of this ambition.

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

Significant progress was made in improving the learning experience and success of learners through the roll-out of early years inspections, the revision of curricula at primary and post-primary levels and the provision of additional resource teachers to schools to support children with special educational needs. In 2016, a new Leaving Certificate grading system and points system for third level entry was published which will come into force in 2017.

Progress was also made in the programme divestment of patronages and in the provision of school buildings and accommodation with a total of €529.8m spent in 2016 on our school building programme, an increase of over €20 million on the 2015 figure. This will continue to be accelerated and prioritised under the Department's Action Plan for Education 2016-2019.

During 2016, the department also launched its first International Education Strategy which aims to support the development of global citizens through Ireland's high quality international education system.

Significant investment was also made in 2016 in the further and higher education sectors with a new plan to expand apprenticeships and traineeships in place with ambitious targets for each year from 2016-2020, the publication of a report on the future of Higher Education Funding and the commitment in Budget 2017 of an additional €36.5m for the 3rd level sector.

Much has been achieved and together with the staff of my Department and the wider education sector, I am determined to maintain the momentum and progress our ambition to build a strong and successful education and training system that is the best in Europe.

I would like to thank my colleague, Minister of State Halligan, the staff of the Department and all those working throughout the education and training sector for their work and commitment during 2016 and beyond.

Richard Bruton, T.D.

Minister for Education and Skills

Statement from the Secretary General

I am pleased to introduce the 2016 Annual Report which documents the progress made in the first year of our three year Strategy Statement and Action Plan for Education 2016-2019. The report acknowledges the significant progress that has been made to date and the future work that will be undertaken to implement the Strategy Statement and Action Plan.

During 2016, significant progress was made on the transformation of our education system including, reform of primary and post-primary curriculum, the development of a new action plan for inclusion of learners with special educational needs and/or at the risk of educational disadvantage and the launch of a new policy on Gaeltacht Education which will support the provision of high quality Irish-medium education for learners in schools and early years settings in the Gaeltacht.

The launch of the new leaving certificate grading system and the points system for entry to higher education, which will come into effect in 2017, will reward performance in new ways by encouraging higher level learning and will ease the pressure on students to achieve marginal gains in examinations, and encourage more substantial engagement with each subject.

In 2016, work continued to support the major reform of the further education and training sector. This included the launch of the Further Education and Training Professional Development Strategy (2016-2019), the launch of the wwww.fetchcourses.ie website which provides a national FET course calendar, and the launch of a new Strategy for Technology-Enhanced Further Education and Training (2016-2019). These Strategies will support high quality professional development, promote access, and facilitate targeted provision across the sector and ensure that the system is responsive to the needs of learners.

A new International Education Strategy 2016-2020, Irish Educated Globally Connected, was published in 2016. This strategy aims to support the development of global citizens through by attracting talent from around the world to our education institutions, equipping Irish learners with the skills and experience they need to compete internationally, engaging in world-class research and international collaborations, and addressing global challenges.

I want to acknowledge the contribution made by staff in the Department and in the wider education sector to progressing the provision of a quality education and training system for all learners

Seán Ó Foghlú,

Secretary General

Overview of the year

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

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

The Action Plan is based on a highly consultative approach with key partners in Education and Training and across the wider Government Departments and agencies. In the Annual Report 2016, the Department acknowledges the significant and systematic progress being made under each of our five Goals in meeting our ambition of becoming the best education and training service in Europe.

High level overview of some of the key actions delivered during 2016.

Curriculum Reform

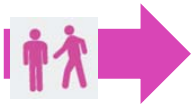
Launched the new Junior Cycle Business Studies and Science subject specifications in September for 1st year students. This is a significant element of the curriculum reform underway via the new Framework for Junior Cycle 2015 which gives students better learning opportunities, and rewards and recognises non-academic performance and achievements.

Gaeltacht Education

Published the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 in October 2016. This Policy is the first comprehensive strategy for education in the Gaeltacht since the establishment of the State, and a key achievement in the implementation of the Governments "20-Year Strategy for Irish". Policy on Gaeltacht Education sets out how we will support Gaeltacht schools to provide high-quality, Irish-medium education to the children of the Gaeltacht.

Investment

Announced the additional allocation of €36.5m to Higher Education (Budget 2017). This is the first significant increase in investment for the Higher Education sector in 9 years, a period in which State investment in higher education fell by 33% (€463million), during a time of growing demographics. This marks the recommencement of investment into higher education.



Inclusion

Funded 430 additional Resource Teachers to provide extra teaching support to children with special educational needs, an increase of 9% in the numbers of resource teachers in twelve months. Resource teachers play a vital role in providing for the educational needs of students with special educational needs.

Quality and Professionalism

Completed 491 Early Years Education focused inspections to ensure the quality of the nature, range and appropriateness of the early educational experiences for children participating in the Early Childhood Care

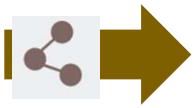
and Education (ECCE) Programme. The early-years education-focused inspections are part of a range of steps being taken to improve quality and standards in the emerging early-years sector.

Published the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 to make it easier for parents to enrol their children in a school that meets their needs.

Commenced the Fitness to Teach provisions of the Teaching Council Act. For the first time a member of the public, a teacher or an employer is able to make a complaint to the Teaching Council about a registered Teacher. Increased openness and transparency will support high professional standards amongst teachers in the interests of children and parents and enhance the reputation and status of the teaching profession.

Global Connections

Launched the International Education Strategy in October 2016. An additional 37,000 International Higher Education and English Language Training (ELT) Students targeted with an aim to increase the economic value of this sector to €2.1bn per annum by 2020, a 33% increase.



Building Programme

A total of €529.7m was spent on delivering upon our Building Programme commitments. This represents an increase of over €20m on the 2015 spend.

General Corporate Information and Data

This section of the Report provides general corporate data and compares activities in previous years noting a significant increase in many activities and additional achievements during 2016. Key education statistics can be found on the statistics page of the Department's website via the following link: www.education.ie

Our Vision

Our vision is to provide the best education and training system in Europe

Our Values

- As a Department of State, we foster a culture of accountability, efficiency and value for money which is rooted in a public service ethos of independence, integrity, impartiality, openness and respect.
- As Civil Servants we espouse the highest standards of professionalism, honesty, objectivity and quality, which are central to fulfilling our roles in supporting the democratic process and serving the citizen.
- We value learning as a public good and recognise its role in the development, cohesion and wellbeing of society. We recognise the learner's place at the centre of policy development
- We value quality and are committed to the principle of continuous improvement and being open to external ideas, challenges and debate. We value relationships and working in collaboration within the education sector and with the wider community

Our Goals

Supporting the Parliamentary Process 2011-2016

Supporting the Parliamentary Process	2011	2015	2016
Parliamentary Questions Responded To	3103	3657	3434
Memoranda for Government Received for Observations	147	160	108
Representations received by Minister and Minister of State Offices	13000	7330	6130
Responses to Topical Issues	60	36	18
Responses to Adjournment (Commencement) Debates	32	41	11

Information Services 2011-2016

Information Services	2011	2015	2016
Email enquiries received through info@education.gov.ie	7000+	6168	9733
Visitors to our website www.education.ie (millions)	1.6m	2.18m	2.25m
Freedom of Information Requests Received Decision Made	 1,170 1,000+	 420 400+	 496 450+
Press Releases Issued	112	126	90
Speeches	22	33	10
Twitter	n/a	20,000	24,469

Annual Programme of Inspection in Schools and Centres for Education

The Inspectorate completed a total of **5,662** inspections/advisory visits to schools in 2016 as outlined in Tables 1 to 5 below. Comparisons to 2011 and 2015 are also provided for reference purposes and these show that the Inspectorate has continued to improve on the extent and rage of its evaluation and advisory activities.

Table 1: Summary of inspections and evaluations, 2011-2016			
Summary of Inspections	**2011**	**2015**	**2016**
Inspections in early years settings participating in ECCE* (including pilot)	n/a	22	491
Inspections in primary schools (including inspection of the work of teachers on probation)	2972	2803	4001
Inspections in post-primary schools and centres for education	769	589	752
Other inspection and evaluation activities	73	401	144
Total inspections in early years settings, schools and centres for education	**3814**	**3815**	**5388**
Total school self-evaluation advisory visits	**n/a**	**787**	**274**

*Early Childhood Care and Education Programme

Table 2: Inspections of Early Years settings participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme, 2011-2016			
Early Years Education-focused inspections	**2011**	**2015**	**2016**
Pilot Early Years Education-focused inspections	n/a	22	33
Early Years Education-focused inspections	n/a	n/a	458
Total of setting inspection visits	**n/a**	**22**	**491**

Table 3: Inspections and evaluations in primary schools, 2011-2016			
Primary Inspection/Evaluation Activity	**2011**	**2015**	**2016**
Whole-School Evaluation	291	220	38
Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning	n/a	n/a	149
Evaluation of Action Planning for improvement in DEIS* schools	16	10	10
Incidental Inspection	404	345	361
Follow-through Inspection	n/a	85	141
Evaluation of provision for Pupils with Special Education Needs	n/a	28	8
Pilot Curriculum Evaluation	n/a	24	12
Curriculum Evaluation	n/a	n/a	60
Total of school inspection visits	**711**	**712**	**779**
School self-evaluation advisory visits to schools	n/a	653	197
Inspection of newly qualified primary teachers in school year	**2261**	**2091**	**3222**

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

Table 4: Inspections and evaluations in post-primary schools, 2011-2016			
Post-Primary Inspection/Evaluation Activity	**2011**	**2015**	**2016**
Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning	100	65	83
Subject Inspection	528	231	291
Programme Evaluation	23	31	29
Evaluation of Action Planning for improvement in DEIS* schools	16	8	10
Incidental Inspection	92	184	246
Follow-through Inspection	n/a	65	77
Evaluation of Centres for Education	10	5	16
Total school inspection visits	**769**	**589**	**752**
School self-evaluation advisory visits to schools	n/a	134	77

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

Table 5: Other inspection activities, 2016	
Other inspections/evaluations of provision for students and young people 2016	
Evaluation reports on Coláistí Gaeilge (Irish Colleges in the Gaeltacht)	25
Inspection of Schools in High Support Units, Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres	8
Inspection conducted for the purpose of school recognition	3
Inspection of summer literacy/numeracy camps for children	5
Inspection of campaí samhraidh for children (Irish-medium summer camps)	5
Evaluation of summer Continuing Professional Development courses for primary teachers	40
School visits (primary and post-primary) in the context of the *Review of the Pilot Project for the New Resource Teacher Allocation Model for Schools 2015/16*	20
Evaluation of Teagasc Colleges	1
Inspections in European Schools	20
Quality Assurance of the administration of PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study)	15
Inspection carried out in the context of Section 24 of the Education Act 1998	2
Total other evaluation activity	**144**

Table of Prompt Payments 2016

Prompt Payments Summary – Department of Education and Skills		
Year	**2016**	
Details	**Number**	**Value (€)**
15 days	8,869 (75.6%)	363,944,543
16-30 days	2,072 (17.7%)	19,609,201
30 days+	797 (6.8%)	5,291,092
Total	11,738 (100%)	388,844,836
Total Disputed Invoices	15	82,756.76

Source: Summary of 2016 Quarterly reports for the Department pursuant to Government Decision No.S29296 of 19th May 2009

Energy Consumption & Expenditure

The Department is obliged to reduce its energy consumption by 33% by 2020 (baseline consumption in 2009). By end 2016, the Department had achieved a reduction of 25.7%. This performance is 6% ahead of schedule to achieve the target by 2020, as monitored by the Sustainable Energy Association of Ireland each year. In addition, by end 2016, the Department had achieved a 29% reduction in its total expenditure on energy compared to 2009.

Year	Total kWh consumed per annum	Progress to date
2009	19,465,880.59	Baseline
2010	19,738,612.41	1.40% over baseline
2011	18,931,538.44	2.75% below baseline
2012	18,624,536.99	4.32% below baseline
2013	17,739,371.02	8.80% below baseline
2014	16,715,580.18	14.00% below baseline
2015	15,847,231.28	19.00% below baseline
2016	**14,011,497.25**	**25.70% below baseline**

Department Expenditure on Energy Costs (incl. VAT)			
Category	**2009 (€)**	**2015 (€)**	**2016 (€)**
Electricity	586,569.83	425,039	385,304.46
Gas	83,336.94	131,518	107,696.62
LPG and Oil	43,114.87	21,936	12,716.52
Total	**713,021.64**	**578,493**	**505,717.60**

Progress on High Level Goals in 2016

Goal 1 - Improve the learning experience and success of learners

Fostering the personal development and wellbeing of learners is critical to developing the resilience of children and young people to enable them to become active citizens. Increasing the range and diversity of subject choice for all learners is an important priority for the Department. It supports student engagement and provides opportunities for learners to develop the critical skills, knowledge and competencies which will enable them to meet the challenges and avail off opportunities to contribute fully to the development of our economy and society. This includes supporting learners and young people to avail of the fullest range of learning opportunities from primary and post-primary through to further and higher education.

Review of the year under this Goal

- A total of €210m was committed in funding for multi-annual ICT Infrastructure Grants to schools over the period of the Digital Strategy and criteria for the distribution of the €30m first tranche of this funding was agreed.
- A new Primary Language Curriculum (Irish and English) was published and Phase 1 of the implementation of the new curriculum was commenced in schools.
- A new policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 was launched to support schools to provide high quality Irish-medium education to children and young people in the Gaeltacht.
- The recruitment of an additional 100 additional guidance counsellors at second level commenced. This brings the number of guidance posts restored to 400 over the last number of years.
- New specifications for short courses at Junior Cycle in the areas of Visual Art, Modern Foreign Languages and Philosophy were published.
- Funding for an additional 11 NEPS Educational Psychologists secured within the 2017 Estimates to prioritise support for students at risk of educational disadvantage and those with special educational needs
- The pilot implementation phase of new science curricula (Physics, Biology and Chemistry) in 24 post-primary schools was commenced.
- A new curriculum in Politics and Society as a Leaving Certificate subject was piloted in 40 post-primary schools was.
- Details of the new Leaving Certificate grading system and the points system for third level entry which will come into force in 2017 were published.
- Ireland's mean scores for 4th class (primary) and 2nd year (post-primary) student performance in maths and science significantly above the TIMMS 2015 international average.
- Ireland's 15-year olds are among the best in OECD countries in reading and performing significantly higher than the OECD average in mathematics and science (PISA 2015)
- A new Strategy for Technology-Enhanced Further Education and Training (2016-2019) which aims to establish technology-enhanced learning as an intrinsic element of further education and training in Ireland was published by ETBI and SOLAS.
- An additional €36.5m in funding for the 3rd Higher Education sector in 2017 and a further €160m over the subsequent three years was secured. This is the first significant investment in the sector in 9 years – a period in which State investment in higher education fell by 33% (€463m), during a time of growing demographics.
- *What do Graduates Do? The Class of 2014: An Analysis of the First Destinations of University Graduates* (the First Destinations Report) was published in 2016. The report highlights many positive employment outcomes for the 2014 graduate cohort. Overall, 65% are in employment with 82 per cent employed in Ireland.

Further detail on these and other work undertaken during 2016 under this Goal are set out below.

1.1 Primary Curriculum and Developments

1.1.1. Curriculum Reform

At primary level, the Department worked closely with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in relation to the implementation of significant reform in order to ensure learners are equipped with the necessary skills and competencies needed to improve the learning experience and success of learners This included the publication of a new Primary language curriculum with implementation of strand 1 (oral language) from September 2016 the other strands reading and writing skills will be implemented from September 2017. The new curriculum is specifically designed for young children in junior infants through to second class. It is anticipated that all strands of the new curriculum will be implemented in primary schools by September 2018.

Work has commenced on the primary language curriculum for 3rd to 6th classes with draft specification developed and consultation on that specification to commence by end 2017.

In addition, work has also commenced in relation to the overall structure of and time allocation in the Primary Curriculum itself. Work is also due to commence on the development of new primary Mathematics curriculum to include computation thinking, starting with first 4 years of primary school.

1.1.2. Religious Beliefs and Ethics

During 2016, the NCCA finalised its report on the outcome of an extensive stakeholder consultation on a draft curriculum for primary schools in relation to Education about Religious Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics. The outcomes of the consultation process and the subsequent policy advice, as provided by the NCCA, will inform implementation options.

1.2. Junior Cycle Curriculum and Development

Implementation of the Junior Cycle Framework 2015 continued during 2016. In September 2016 the new Junior Cycle specifications for Science and Business Studies were introduced to schools.

1.2.1. Short Course Specifications

During 2016, the Department continued to develop new options including short courses and other learning experiences at Junior Cycle. Nine short courses have already been developed by the NCCA for use by schools, and schools can also develop short courses locally, to meet the interests of their learners. The Department completed and published specifications for short courses on Visual Art, Modern Foreign Languages (French, German, Spanish and Italian), and Philosophy for Junior Cycle during 2016. A Coding short course has been available for Junior Cycle students since September 2014. The completion of short course in Coding will be reflected on students JCPA from September 2017.

1.3. Senior Cycle Curriculum and Developments

1.3.1. Physics, Biology and Chemistry

In late 2016, the Department commenced trialling, on a pilot basis, of specifications for Leaving Certificate Physics, Biology and Chemistry in 24 schools with a view to encouraging greater uptake of science subjects. It is envisaged that the new specifications will be rolled out to all schools in September 2019, subject to the successful outcome of trialling, audit of facilities, and scheduling of roll out of other subject specifications.

1.3.2. Politics and Society

The Department commenced phase 1 of the roll out of a new subject specification for Politics and Society for Leaving Certificate to over 40 schools in September 2016. Politics and Society will be an optional Leaving Certificate subject for schools and will be available to all schools from 2018.

1.3.3. Economics and Agricultural Science

Work continued in 2016 on developing new specifications for a number of Leaving Certificate subjects including Economics and Agricultural Science.

1.3.4. Physical Education

Physical Education is being developed by the NCCA as a full subject which can be assessed as a Leaving Certificate subject in a manner similar to other subjects. A draft specification was completed in 2016. In addition, a Senior Cycle, Physical Education framework is being designed to provide schools with a framework within which they can design a P.E. programme for those students who may not choose to take P.E. as part of their Leaving Certificate examination.

1.3.5. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

An Analysis of STEM Education in the Irish School System was published by the STEM Education Review Group (comprising a number of HEIs, Business Experts, NCCA and Irish Maths Teachers Association) in 2016. One of the key recommendations in the report is to publish a STEM Education Policy Statement and Implementation Plan that will guide ongoing reforms in teaching and learning for STEM areas across the school system. It is planned to publish the STEM Education Policy Statement and Implementation Plan in September 2017. Implementation of 21 priority actions identified by the Minister from the STEM report is ongoing.

1.3.6. Computer Science

In 2016, the NCCA commissioned a scoping/research study looking at provision for computer science in the curriculum in a number of countries. The study will provide an evidence base from which to commence the development of a curriculum specification for Leaving Certificate Computer Science in 2017.

1.4. International Assessments (TIMMS & PISA)

The Department provides support to the Educational Research Centre (ERC) for the administration of international assessments in primary and post-primary schools. Results of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 2015) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2015) were published in 2016. TIMSS assesses the Mathematics and Science skills of students at fourth class in primary school and in second year at post-primary school level. PISA takes place every three years and aims to measure how well students, at age 15, are performing in reading, Mathematics and Science. In both TIMSS and PISA, Irish students performed significantly above the average achieved across participating countries. Improvements in performance are greater among the lowest achieving students. While higher-achieving students in Ireland perform at or above average levels, the outcomes of both tests indicate that efforts to improve the performance of our higher-performing students both at primary and at post primary level would still be desirable. This will be addressed in the next phase of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and the STEM Education Policy Statement, both of which are due to be published in early 2017.

1.5. Wellbeing, Bullying and Mental Health in Schools

1.5.1. Lifeskills Survey

The Department published the fourth Lifeskills survey, providing information on how primary and post-primary schools cater for the wellbeing of their students in 2016. The data, on topics such as healthy eating, physical activity, substance misuse, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), bullying, enterprise in schools and education for sustainable development, will inform future priorities and policies on wellbeing.

During 2016, an assessment was undertaken of the provision of supports to schools in the areas of mental health and social and emotional competence, with a view to providing an enhanced and better integrated service. Further consideration will be given to this area in 2017.

1.5.2. Wellbeing Guidelines

Following development and dissemination of the *Well-being in Post Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (2013)* and *Well-being in Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (2015) NEPS psychologists engaged in ongoing work during 2016 with school to promote their adoption and use.*

A DES Cross Division Audit Group to report on activities that relate to the promotion of wellbeing and mental health in the Education System finalised a draft report which identified issues for further consideration by the Management Board.

1.5.3. Professional Development

In 2016, the Department's continuing professional development support services commenced development of a comprehensive programme of support for schools in developing and implementing their student wellbeing programmes.

1.5.4. Anti-Bullying Action Plan

Work continued in 2016 on implementing the Actions in the Action Plan on Bullying. The Actions in the Plan focus on support to schools, education and training, research and awareness raising. Actions supported in 2016 under the Action Plan on Bullying included:

- "Being LGBT in School", a resource for Post Primary Schools to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying and support LGBT students was published by GLEN in 2016. It will support schools in the implementation of the Department's Anti-Bullying Procedures.

- A Stand Up! Pilot project for primary schools was conducted by BeLongTo in 2016 and a report on the project, called "All Together Now" and associated teaching resources were launched in October 2016.

- Funding was provided for the revision of the Stay Safe Programme to address new forms of risk, including cyberbullying, and to incorporate new research, best practice in the area of safeguarding children and changes and developments in the educational context in terms of policies, provision and curriculum.

- Anti-bullying training for Boards of Management commenced in 2016 and funding was also provided for 66 anti-bullying training sessions for 1288 parents organised by the National Parents' Council in 2016

1.5.5. LGBT Youth Strategy

During 2016, the Department continued to liaise with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) on the development of the LGBT Youth Strategy in line with the Programme for Government commitment. The DCYA have lead responsibility on progressing this strategy and the development of relevant actions.

1.6. Guidance Services

In 2016, the Department announced that the equivalent of 100 additional guidance posts would be in place by September 2017. The 400 guidance posts which have now been restored (out of 600 which were previously cut) will be allocated separately and transparently and outside of the quota on the schedule of posts.

1.7. Digital Strategy for Schools

Implementation of the Digital Strategy for schools commenced in 2016. A Steering Committee to guide its implementation and a Consultative Advisory group comprising key stakeholders were established and held their first meetings in 2016. An implementation plan has been developed and key priorities identified including the development of an ICT Competency Framework for Teachers and Schools, the updating of the eLearning Planning Resource, the establishment of a Support Services Planning Group, the development of exemplars of good practice on the effective use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment, the issuing of ICT grants to schools and the provision of improved broadband services to primary schools. Working Groups have been established to deliver on some of these key priorities and their work is currently underway.

Exemplars of good classroom practice showing the effective use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment have been developed and are available to schools on the Department's official education portal Scoilnet and through the PDST (Technology in Education) and other support services websites.

ICT is an integral part of all CPD programmes under development. Under the Schools Broadband Access Programme, the Department provides for the supply of internet connectivity for all recognised primary and post-primary schools. At post-primary level all schools now have high speed broadband. At primary level, under the current programme, the Department continually reviews the availability of services and upgrades schools where the opportunity arises. By the end of 2016, some 800 primary schools were upgraded to improved broadband connectivity.

The Digital Strategy for Schools committed to €210m in funding for multi-annual ICT Infrastructure Grants to schools over the period of the Strategy. A circular setting out the criteria for the distribution of the €30m first tranche of this funding was agreed at the end of 2016 and the process to distribute the funding commenced. This funding is intended to support the development and implementation of an eLearning Plan for each school to embed ICT in teaching and learning over the duration of the Strategy.

1.8. ICT in Schools

The ICT in Schools Programme is focused on the integration of ICT into teaching and learning and promotes the development of pupils' digital literacy.

The programme addresses four broad areas which are the provision of essential ICT infrastructure and networking within schools, the provision of access to broadband connectivity to schools, up-skilling teachers' ICT skills and integrating ICT within the curriculum and providing curriculum relevant digital content and software.

Strategies are pursued through the work of the Department and the PDST Technology in Education, in collaboration with other agencies, support services and representative bodies as appropriate.

1.9. Teacher Allocations

In 2016, almost 66,000 teaching posts were allocated at primary and post primary level. The redeployment process in 2016 involved the redeployment of 183 permanent teachers at primary level

and 66 permanent teachers at post primary level. On completion of the process to redeploy permanent surplus teachers at primary level, a supplementary redeployment panel is used for filling any remaining permanent posts. In 2016 there were over 2,080 teachers on the supplementary redeployment panel.

1.10. Section 29 Appeals

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, an appeal may be made to the Secretary General of the Department of Education & Skills in respect of a decision by a school board of management or a person acting on behalf of a board of management to: - permanently exclude a student from the school, or suspend a student from the school for a cumulative period of 20 school days in any one school year, or refuse to enrol a student in the school. In 2016, the Department received a total of 387 Section 29 appeal applications. 218 of these appeals went to a full hearing. Of those appeals that went to a full hearing 96 (44%) were upheld and 122 (56%) were not upheld.

1.11. Home Tuition

The home tuition scheme supports the provision of education at home for children who, for a number of reasons experience a delay in accessing a school place or whose attendance in school is disrupted. In the 2015/2016 school year, the Department approved 332 applications for Home Tuition under the PLDS schemes.

1.12. Gaeltacht Education Strategy

The Government's Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 was launched in 2016. The overarching goal of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education is to ensure the availability of a high quality and relevant Irish-medium educational experience for all young people living in Gaeltacht areas and in this way to support the use of Irish as the main language of families and Gaeltacht communities. Specifically, the overarching goal is to ensure that a sufficient number of primary, post-primary and early-years settings in the Gaeltacht use Irish as the language of communication and instruction for all areas of learning (apart from English and other languages) in each of the language-planning areas in the Gaeltacht. The Department will oversee the implementation of the Policy on a phased incremental basis over a five-year period and will build on existing linkages with the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional and Rural Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA), COGG and Irish-language agencies.

Publications in 2016: *Polasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta 2017-2022*

1.13. UN Human Rights

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a mechanism of the Human Rights Council (HRC) aimed at improving the human rights situation on the ground of each of the 193 United Nations (UN) Member States. The Department was represented on the Irish delegation at Ireland's examination under Cycle 2 of the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process in Geneva in May 2016.

The Department was also represented on the Irish delegation at the examination of Ireland's implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva in January 2016.

1.14. National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

NEPS provides advice and direct assistance, upon request, to schools experiencing critical incidents, traumatic event which can affect the school community and limit its ability to function. During 2016 the guidelines provided to school for critical incident management (Responding to Critical Incidents - Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools) were updated with new or revised information and

advice have been included in the Guidelines, including elements on suicide / suspected suicide and on the use / relevance of new social media

Publications in 2016: *Responding to Critical Incidents - Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools*

1.15. Technology Enhanced Further Education and Training Strategy

The first strategy for technology enhanced learning in Further Education and Training (FET) was published in 2016 and is available at http://www.solas.ie/SolasPdfLibrary/TEL_Strategy.pdf.

Implementation of the strategy will lead to significant improvement in access to FET learners who are skilled and confident in using technology as part of their work, study and home life and who are more engaged and achieving more from their learning.

1.16. Higher Education

The Higher Education System in Ireland is undergoing a programme of unprecedented modernisation and reform. Through implementation of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, the aim is to develop the higher education system to equip people with the knowledge and skills necessary to live fulfilled and rewarding lives, and to meet the social and economic challenges facing Ireland.

Key elements of the Higher Education Reform Programme include the introduction of the System Performance Framework aligned with performance funding, which sets out national priorities and seven key system objectives for the higher education system against which higher education institutions (HEIs) will be monitored and which forms the basis for the agreement of compacts between the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the HEIs which provide for targets and actions related to enhanced teaching, learning and engagement; system development and restructuring including; mergers; regional clusters and reform of the initial teacher education system.

1.16.1. Systems Performance Framework Report 2016

The second Systems Performance Report was published in late 2016 and this reviewed the performance of the higher education system for the years 2014 and 2015, in critical areas such as access and its responsiveness to skills needs of the economy.

The report outlines how the Irish Higher Education system is performing against international benchmarks. It shows that the higher education system continues to expand and enrol more students, and to provide an increasing supply of graduates for the labour market. Overall student numbers in the sector increased from 196,000 in 2011/12 to about 210,000 in 2014/15. In addition to this general growth, additional programmes have been put in place to address specific skills needs, through the Springboard+ programme and the ICT skills initiatives.

1.16.2. Systems Performance Framework 2017 – 2021

The Department is committed to setting out a multi-year vision for the future of Higher Education which will see the development of a new Systems Performance Framework for Higher Education for the period to 2021. The new Systems Performance Framework will state the national priorities and objectives for the higher education system over the next number of years.

1.16.3 Teaching and Learning Forum

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning is a key system-level infrastructure for the enhancement of teaching and learning in Irish higher education. The National Forum is engaged in a range of activities aimed at providing students with the highest quality teaching and learning experience. Its focus is on 'adding value' by providing a structure through which institutional

and network initiatives can be synergised and leveraged to support a vibrant community of grass-roots' activity.

The Forum published in 2015 its "Roadmap for Enhancement in A Digital World 2015–2017", enhancing the skills base for engagement with digital technologies and pedagogies. There is a need to assess what has been achieved, gaps and identify future priorities to ensure its successful implementation. A national week-long event that will focus on building confidence in digital skills in the community will be held in April 2017.

In 2016 the National Forum published a National Professional Development Framework for all staff who teach in higher education and this is currently being piloted.

The Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund 2016 will support the higher education sector to align their existing provision to the new framework, to develop provision for leaders in teaching and learning enhancement and/or digital champions and will provide opportunities to discipline focused groups to identify and address their specific professional development needs.

1.16.4 Innovation 2020

In December 2015, the Government published Innovation 2020, Ireland's 5-year strategy for research and development, science and technology. A key ambition of the Strategy is to increase total investment in R&D in Ireland, led by the private sector, to 2.5% of GNP. This would mean that over €5billion will be invested per year in R&D by the private and public sectors by 2020, which will represent almost doubling current levels of investment. Among the Department's research targets to be delivered by the strategy are:

- research masters and PhD enrolments will be increased by 30% to 2,250;
- a new Programme of funding for Frontier Research will be introduced by the IRC.

An Implementation Group is responsible for overseeing implementation of the various actions under the Strategy.

Funding of €1.5m was provided in Budget 2017 to enable the Irish Research Council to commence the Action on the Frontiers Research Programme. Funding to expand this programme and for other Actions under Innovation 2020 is being sought under the mid-term Capital review.

1.16.5 Technological Universities

With regard to the institute of technology sector, the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 recommended significant reforms to position the sector to meet national strategic objectives. In particular, the Strategy recommended consolidation within the sector and a pathway of evolution for those consolidated institutes of technology, to allow them to demonstrate significant progress against robust performance criteria and to apply to become technological universities.

The Technological Universities Bill is listed on the Dáil Order Paper and is awaiting Committee Stage. Department officials have had a series of consultations with all of the relevant stakeholders in relation to both the matters raised during the legislative process and the commitments contained in the Programme for Government. The intention is to advance this legislation once this process of consultation has been finalised.

1.16.6 Transition to Higher Education

The Department is working closely with relevant stakeholders, including the HEA, the NCCA, the State Examinations Commission (SEC) and the higher education institutions, to develop a range of measures

designed to support the transition of second level students into higher education as part of a Transition Reform Steering Group. The new changes to the LC Grading system and the Points System for Third level entry which will come into force in 2017 are designed to improve the learning experience of students and reduce the points pressure on students. It will change the focus of learning in the Leaving Certificate, by rewarding performance in new ways and by encouraging higher level learning. Broader grade bands will ease the pressure on students to achieve marginal gains in examinations, and encourage more substantial engagement with each subject. During 2016, Communications and Research sub-group were formed and further detailed information and documentation was published in respect of these reforms.

Furthermore, the Transitions Reform Steering Group have been examining the issue of broadening undergraduate entry to reduce the number of undergraduate entry routes. This has been signalled not only as a means to reduce the complexity of choice for second-level students and the level of competitiveness driving the system, but also as an opportunity to offer a much broader experience for undergraduates with specialisation to follow later in their degree. These developments align with the modernisation of undergraduate curricula and assessment that is underway in institutions across the higher education system. It is intended to address the issue of broadening undergraduate entry, as part of this next Systems Performance Framework.

1.16.7 Completion / Retention Rates

The most recent report by the HEA on retention and progression, entitled 'A Study of Progression in Higher Education 2012/13 to 2013/14' was published in January 2016. This is the fourth in a series of progression analysis released by the HEA and examines those 1st year undergraduate new entrants enrolled in the academic year 2012/13 and traces them to the following academic year 2013/14. The report gives an in-depth analysis of the non-progression rates by NFQ level, sector, discipline, gender, age, nationality and socio-economic group. There are many factors identified as influencing the likelihood of progression such as Gender, Age at commencement, Prior Educational attainment, nationality and socio-economic grouping.

The report shows that 84% of full-time undergraduate new entrants in 2012/13 progressed to their second year of study in 2013/14. The rates of non-progression in 2012/13 varied within and between sectors ranging from 26% and 28% at levels 6 and 7 to 17%, 11% and 6% at level 8 in universities, institutes of technology and colleges respectively.

The report demonstrates that the overall new entrant non-progression rate was 15% in 2007/08 and has remained constant at 16% from 2010/11 to 2012/13. However, rates of progression do vary across the sector and between disciplines and further work will be undertaken to see how students can best be supported to continue on their course or transfer to another programme.

The HEA through the System Performance and Strategic Dialogue process also monitor progression rates within the institutions on an annual basis. Institutes report on retention measures in place within their institutes to combat high non-progression rates.

1.16.8 HEA First Destinations Report: 2015 Graduates

What do Graduates Do? The Class of 2014: An Analysis of the First Destinations of University Graduates (the First Destinations Report) was published in May 2016. This was the 34th survey of graduates, and is a guide to graduate outcomes nine months after graduation.

The survey provides comprehensive information on the destinations of graduates from the 7 Universities. Graduates of Institutes of Technology are not yet included in the survey.

Over 18,500 graduates of level 8 – 10 programmes in the institutions responded to the survey, representing 69% of the total cohort. The report highlights many positive employment outcomes for the 2014 graduate cohort. Overall, 65% are in employment with 82 per cent employed in Ireland.

Publications in 2016: *What do Graduates Do? The Class of 2014: An Analysis of the First Destinations of University Graduates* (the First Destinations Report)

1.16.9 Funding Response in Budget 2017

The Department secured an initial investment of €36.5m for the 3rd level sector next year and €160m over the next three years. This will allow the Department to keep pace with demographic increases and also introduce targeted initiatives in priority areas, in particular disadvantage, skills, research and flexible learning, with thousands of students benefiting under each heading.

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

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

Review of the year under this Goal

- A new action plan for educational inclusion was developed during 2016, including development of a new identification process for the assessment of schools in terms of educational disadvantage, and funding of €5m in 2017 and €15m in a full year was secured in Budget 2017 to support the plan.
- €382m was spent on student grant supports in 2016 benefitting c. 83,000 students representing an increase of 3,000 beneficiaries compared to 2015/2016 academic year.
- Provision of 600 additional resource teachers to schools to support children with special educational needs.
- Budget 2017 also provided for 900 additional special needs teachers to support the introduction of the new Resource Teacher Allocation Model from September 2017.
- A total of 13,015 whole time equivalent special needs assistants were provided for the 2016/2017 academic year representing an increase of 8% (975) in the number of SNAs available to schools for 2015/2016 school year.
- A new National Higher Education Programme for Inclusion Coordinators in Early Years Settings was rolled out, providing places for 900 practitioners each year for the next four years.
- A total of €900,000 was provided to the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) aimed at increasing access to teacher education by groups targeted in the National Access Plan.
- A Review of Student Assistance Fund (Access to Higher Education) was published. A total of 15,772 students benefited from the Student Assistance Fund in the 2015/16 academic year.
- Expenditure on Third Level Access Measures was increased by €3m to €19.2m in respect of in the 2016 financial year.

Further detail on these and other achievements under this Goal are set out below.

2.1 Access and Inclusion in Early Years Settings

In 2016, the Department continued to implement Síolta, the quality framework for early years education, across the sector. The Department is playing a lead role in rolling out the National Síolta Aistear Initiative with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). The Department works closely with DCYA and with the Early Years Support Service, Better Start and other organisations to disseminate the quality principles more widely throughout early years settings.

A key part of improving quality in early years is workforce development. As part of this wider objective, the Department advises DCYA, as part of a qualifications advisory board, on qualifications that are to be included on a qualifications database, used by DCYA to assess contractual and future regulatory criteria.

Following on from the completion in 2015 of surveys of employers and practitioners in the early years sector on the quality of further and higher education training programmes in early childhood education in 2016 the Department fed the results of those surveys into a second phase of the Review of ECCE education and training programmes. Subsequently, the Department commissioned a review of occupational role profiles in Ireland in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) being undertaken by Dr. Mathias Urban of the University of Roehampton. Dr. Urban presented initial findings at the Early Years Forum in Dublin Castle in December 2016 with the final report due by end January 2017.

2.1.1 Early Start/Rutland Street

The Early Start Pre-school Programme was established in 1994/95 in 40 primary schools in designated areas of urban disadvantage throughout the country. The project involves an educational programme to enhance overall development, help prevent school failure and offset the effects of social disadvantage. The Programme can cater for 1,650 children. Each Early Start pre-school child attracts capitation funding of €95.23 per annum. In addition each full and half unit receives non-pay funding in respect of start-up grants for materials/equipment plus an annual grant to foster parental involvement. In 2016, non-pay funding amounting to €0.251m was paid out to Early Start Units.

2.1.2 Supporting Inclusion and Diversity in Early Years Settings

The Department continues to play a leading role in the steering and implementation of aspects of the AIM initiative to support access to ECCE (free universal pre-school) centres for children with a disability. The Department, in conjunction with DCYA and the Higher Education Authority, sought and secured €500k in dormant accounts funding and contracted a consortium of higher education providers to provide a national programme for a higher education special purpose award which will be available, free of charge, to one staff member in each early years setting. The qualification will upskill these practitioners to function as Inclusion Coordinators, a key role that has been identified to help support children with a disability in pre-school. The initiative is being funded by both Departments and will allow 900 practitioners per year for four years to undertake and complete the flexibly delivered programme.

2.2 Action Plan for Inclusion

During 2016, the Department advanced plans for a new action plan for educational inclusion which will include a new transparent and robust Assessment Framework for the identification of schools and allocation of resources under a new School Support Programme. This will be subject to a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework and will include improved support for school leadership, creating networks and clusters for teachers and schools, better integration between the work of schools and local community supports, and greater use of the Home School Community Liaison programme.

DEIS is the Department's main policy initiative to address educational disadvantage at school level. The DEIS Plan 2017 will set out the vision for future interventions in the critical area of educational disadvantage policy and will build on what has already been achieved by schools who have benefitted from the additional supports available under the programme.

There are two key elements which will form part of the Plan:

• The development of a new identification process for the assessment of schools in terms of educational disadvantage;

• The updating of the DEIS School Support Programme which represents the overall 'package' of supports available to schools participating in the programme in order improve educational outcomes for pupils at greatest risk of not reaching their full potential by virtue of their socio-economic circumstances.

The content of DEIS Plan 2017 will be informed by the wide-ranging consultation which took place over the course of 2016 with key stakeholders including education partners, academics, practitioners and service providers.

2.3 Equity of Access to Higher Education

2.3.1 Student Grants

Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) received 105,000 applications for the 2016/17 academic year, of which circa 83,000 will qualify for grant support. This represents an increase of 3,000 beneficiaries over 2015/2016. Expenditure on student grant supports in 2016 amounted to approximately €382m.

Publications in 2016:

- *The Student Grant Scheme 2016 (S.I. No. 153 of 2016),*
- *The Student Support Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 154 of 2016)*
- *The Student Support Act 2011 (Prescribed Persons) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 139 of 2016)*

2.3.2 Student Grants Appeals Board

In 2016, the Student Grants Appeals Board sat on 25 occasions and heard circa 700 appeals from students aggrieved by determinations made by appeals officers. In September 2016, a new Board was appointed to cover the second term of office. This Board will sit for a five year term up to September 2021.

2.3.3 The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education Access Plan 2015-2019 and related Third Level Access Measures

The Plan published in 2015 contains actions that are intended to strengthen participation in higher education for target groups. A Steering Group and two sub-working groups to support the implementation of the Access Plan were set up in 2016. An extra €3m allocation towards measures to support access was secured in Budget 2016. Progress was made on a number of the actions in the Plan in 2016.

The HEA issued a Call for Proposals under Strand 1 of PATH to 6 Centres for Teacher Education seeking proposals to increase participation in initial teacher education by access target groups. An evaluation of submitted proposals took place in December 2016.

An evaluation of the Student Assistance Fund was published, and a review on the Fund for Students with Disabilities was commissioned. A request for tender issued for the development of a Data Plan for Equity of Access to facilitate the further development of access data collection and analysis. A review of the barriers to participation in higher education by lone parents was commissioned and will be finalised in 2017.

A total of 15,772 students benefited from the Student Assistance Fund in the 2015/16 academic year. In excess of 11,000 students benefitted from the Fund for Students with Disabilities in 2015/16

academic year. In total, expenditure on the Third Level Access Measures amounted to €19.2m in the 2016 financial year.

2.3.4 Scholarships and Bursary Scheme

There were 51 beneficiaries of Scholarships and 413 beneficiaries of Bursaries in the 2016/17 academic year and a total expenditure of €1.3m in the 2016 financial year. This is a 7% increase in the number of beneficiaries compared to 2015/2016 academic year.

2.3.5 Working Group on Non-Completion in Higher Education

A working group has been established, on foot of a scoping exercise carried out by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in mid-2016, to examine issues concerning non-completion in higher education and access and inclusion of target groups in continuing education. It is envisaged that the group will complete its work and provide recommendation for consideration by the Department in early 2017.

2.3.6 Lone Parents

During 2016, the Department commissioned a report on the barriers to lone parents accessing higher education and the findings of the report were published in late 2016. The Department will consider these findings and provide recommendations on measures to tackle barriers to access in 2017.

2.4 Access to Further Education and Training by Disadvantaged Groups

During 2016, ETBs continued to work closely with Intreo Offices under new protocols expanding provision to Department of Social Protection client groups in line with Pathways to Work 2016-2020. A total of 12 of the 13 protocols establishing interagency operational frameworks have been signed between ETBs and the Department of Social Protection regional offices and all are in operation

Active inclusion is one of four strategic goals underpinning the Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 and aims to support the participation of individuals of all ages and abilities in further education and training (FET). To support this goal, a research project to identify barriers to participation in FET was commissioned by SOLAS in 2016, the results of which will be published in early 2017. The research will seek to prioritise and propose solutions to barriers and to advance recommendations to ensure that policy on access and participation remains effective and consistent.

2.5 Social Inclusion

In late 2016, the Department progressed plans to develop a cohesive life-course approach to tackling educational disadvantage. This will feed into a planned overall policy statement on social inclusion in education during 2017.

2.6 Special Educational Needs

2.6.1 Catering for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

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

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

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for processing applications from schools for supports for children with special educational needs.

2.6.2 Targeted Supports provided for pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream and Special Schools

By end 2016, there were 12,501 whole time equivalent learning support and resource teachers in mainstream primary and post-primary schools providing additional teaching support to pupils with special educational needs. In addition, over 1,180 teachers provided education to children attending special schools with reduced pupil teacher ratios ranging from 6:1 to 11:1 depending on disability categorisation.

Children with special care needs are also supported by Special Needs Assistants. 12,900 whole time equivalent Special Needs Assistants posts were provided for at the end of 2016 to provide for the care needs of children with special educational needs attending primary, post-primary and special schools. Budget 2017 made provision for an additional 115 SNA posts up to June 2017, which will bring the total number of SNA posts available for allocation to 13,015.

1,840 grants issued to Primary and special schools in 2016 for the purchase of specialist equipment to assist children with special needs in the classroom. The type of equipment provided includes soundfield systems for children with hearing impairment or software and computer facilities for children with communicative disability.

In addition to special school placements there are 1,152 special classes available in 2016/17 school year, which is an increase of over 100% in the number of special classes which were available in 2011, which was 548. This includes 127 Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) early intervention classes, 525 primary ASD classes and 237 post-primary ASD classes, which represents an increase of approximately 16% on 2015/16 classes for children with autism.

2.6.3 Special Education Home Tuition Scheme

The purpose of the Special Education Home Tuition Scheme is to provide a compensatory educational service for children who, for a number of reasons such as chronic illness, are unable to attend school. The scheme also provides a compensatory educational service for children with special educational needs seeking an educational placement. Provision is also made for early educational intervention for children with autism. A total of 1,455 pupils availed of home tuition during the 2015/16 school year.

2.6.4 July Education Programme

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

There has been a steady increase in the number of schools offering the July Programme since it was introduced in 2001. In total, 208 schools participated in the programme in 2016. 5,628 pupils availed of the home-based July Programme provision in 2016.

2.6.5 Resource Teaching Allocations

The overall number of resource teaching posts available has also increased in recent years. The total number of posts allocated by the National Council for Special Education in 2016/17 is 7,429, which is an overall increase of 41% in the number of posts allocated since September 2011 which was 5,265 posts

Over 11,800 Resource Teaching and Learning Support posts were available to schools for the 2016/17 school year which is the highest number of posts that has ever been made available, compared with over 11,000 posts for the 2014/15 school year, 10,305 posts for the 2012/13 year and approximately 9,950 posts for the 2011/12 school year.

2.6.6 Special Needs Assistants

The total number of SNA posts available for 2016/17 is 13,015. As part of Budget 2017, an increase of 115 posts was announced to meet additional demand arising from January to June 2017. This is an increase of almost 23% over the number of posts available in 2011 which was 10,575.

2.6.7 Middletown Centre for Autism Project

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

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

2.6.8 New Allocation Model for SEN Teaching Resources

During 2016, the Department finalised and piloted a new model for allocation of teaching resources for children with special education needs. The new model and the pilot of the new model were the subject of a joint presentation by the Department and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) to the Oireachtas Education Committee in October. School Profiles were completed by the end of 2016 to allow for allocations to be notified to schools in February 2017

2.6.9 SNA Scheme

During 2016, the National Council for Special Education commenced a comprehensive assessment of the SNA scheme to identify the most appropriate form of support options to provide better outcomes for students with special educational needs. As part of this assessment the NCSE will undertake a range of research actions. Further stakeholder review will also take place.

2.6.10 In-school Speech and Language Service

The Programme for Partnership Government includes a recommendation to establish an in-school speech and language service. The Health Service Executive commenced a review of the services currently in place. The results of this review will inform the next steps to be taken to give effect to the commitment in the Programme for Partnership Government.

2.6.11 Inclusion Support Service

The Department is committed to establishing an Inclusion Support Service under NCSE to assist schools in the provision of education to children with special education needs. Discussions were initiated in 2016 to establish an administrative support structure in the NCSE to accommodate the new service. Once the administrative structure is agreed and approved the ISS personnel will transfer to the control of the NCSE.

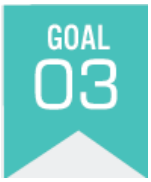
2.7 Psychological Supports

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides support to schools in identifying pupil strengths and needs and in planning for, and reviewing, interventions appropriate to those needs.

In 2016 NEPS psychologists were involved in casework with some 8,266 pupils. Such involvement will normally involve consultation including assessment, agreement about appropriate interventions to meet need, and the production of a report documenting the process. NEPS psychologists also consulted with teachers in respect of an estimated additional 25,000 pupils throughout first and second level schools in addition to those referred above for individual intervention by the psychologist. Under the SCPA process, private psychologists provided assessment to for 1,673 pupils.

During the course of the academic year 2015/16 NEPS psychologists made recommendations to the SEC in relation to over 4,825 applicants for accommodations in the Leaving Certificate Examination under the Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE scheme).

During the period NEPS psychologists also attended and assisted in some 105 Critical Incidents in schools.



Goal 3 - Help those delivering education services to continuously improve

The Department recognises that the provision of a high quality outcomes for learners across the education system depends heavily on sustaining and enhancing the teaching profession. Our teaching workforce is recognised internationally as comprising high calibre teachers. Increased investment in the professional development of teachers across the continuum from initial, induction and early professional development to continuing and advanced development of teachers in leadership roles is a key priority for the Department.

Review of the year under this Goal

- 500 Early Childhood Care and Education (EYEI) inspections were conducted nationally.
- Revised school self-evaluation guidelines (primary and post primary) including the quality framework for teaching and learning were published.
- All sections of the Teaching Council (Amendment) Act 2015 were commenced. This included the Fitness to Teach provisions of the Act.
- A new Post-Graduate Qualifications in school Leadership aimed at teachers aspiring to senior school leadership positions was launched and the first intake of students will be in September 2017.
- Reform of initial teacher education was progressed with the legal incorporation of Church of Ireland College of Education, Mater Dei Institute and St Patrick's College Drumcondra into DCU.
- An additional 650 places were provided on college based post graduate programmes in Learning support, Special Educational Needs (SENs) and Mathematics. This represents an increase of 312 places on the previous year.
- A new website, www.fetchcourses.ie was launched by SOLAS. It provides learners and other stakeholders with access to information on almost 5,000 FET courses nationwide.
- 206,127 places were provided for Continuing Professional Development for primary and post-primary teachers. This represents a 60% increase on the 2011 figure of 130,679.

Further detail on these and other work undertaken under this Goal is set out below.

3.1 Quality in Early Education

The Department plays a key role in ensuring that early years education delivered in pre-schools funded through the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme, and in Early Start pre-schools, supports children in their learning through the implementation of the Aistear curriculum framework. In 2016, the Department continued to work with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and with the NCCA to achieve this objective. Development of the Aistear/Síolta Practice Guide, an online tool for early years' practitioners continued in 2016. The Guide aims to distil the key principles of Aistear and Síolta and allows Better Start to focus its quality support actions on the areas of practice which have been identified though research as most in need of development, such as planning and evaluation, curriculum, identity and belonging.

3.1.1 Síolta/Aistear

The National Síolta/Aistear initiative, which commenced in 2016, is supporting the wider implementation and rollout of both frameworks, including the development of material, resources and CPD for Early Years practitioners. DES is working in partnership with DCYA and the NCCA on this initiative.

3.1.2 Early Years Education Inspections

In 2016, the Department, completed the development of an early-years education-focused inspection model to inspect the quality of education provision in early-years settings participating in the Early

Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. Early-years education-focused inspections are based on a quality framework that is informed by the principles of Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and Síolta: the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, as well as national and international research related to early childhood education and inspection.

Early-years education-focused inspections (EYEIs) are designed to support development of the education dimension of provision in early-years settings. EYEIs are also intended to provide information to parents and the public more generally about the quality of the education dimension of provision in an early-years setting. An extensive national trial of the proposed EYEI Framework was completed in 2016 and after consultation with all stakeholders in the Early Years sector, and a national roll-out of inspection activity commenced. The first EYEI reports were published on the DES website and to the end of the year almost 500 EYEI inspections were conducted nationally.

3.2 Teacher Supply

A Technical Working Group was established following agreement between the Department and the Teaching Council that an analysis of the arrangements for the planning of the teacher workforce should be undertaken. The Final report of the technical working group on teacher supply was received in December 2015 and is due to be published in 2017.

In 2016 the Department regulated the employment terms and conditions governing Teachers and Special Needs Assistants in recognised schools, developed policy in the area and monitored compliance in order to promote effective utilisation of human resources across the primary and post-primary schools sector to ensure that the Department and schools are compliant with employment law, that agreements negotiated in the Industrial relations area are clearly set out and implemented across the school sector and that in general the Terms and Conditions applicable to Teachers and Special Needs Assistants are implemented in a consistent manner across all Primary and Post Primary schools.

Discussions commenced with primary and post-primary partners aimed at improving the flexibility of the post-holders structure, with the aim of moving towards a more flexible, distributed and accountable model, where leadership roles and responsibilities are shared and adapted to particular situations and contexts.

Publications in 2016:

- *Circular Letter 0015/2016 – Seniority of Teachers*
- *Circular Letter 0025/2016 - Promotion and Appeal Procedures for appointment to Assistant Principal, Special Duties Teacher and Programme Co-ordinator*
- *Circular Letter 0057/2016 – Paternity Leave Scheme for Registered Teachers in Recognised Primary and Post-Primary Schools*
- *Circular Letter 0058/2016 – Paternity Leave Scheme for Special Needs Assistants in Recognised Primary and Post-Primary Schools*
- *eHandbook: Terms & Conditions of Employment for Registered Teachers in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools – Edition 1*

3.3 Teacher Education

In 2016, 206,127 places were provided for Continuing Professional Development for primary and post primary teachers this is an increase of over 60% on the 2011 figure of 130,679. These included places for teachers of children with special educational needs, school leaders, subject areas and programmes.

Furthermore almost 650 places were provided on college based post graduate programmes in Learning support, Special Educational Needs (SENs) and Mathematics.

3.3.1 Teaching Council (Amendment) Bill 2015

All sections of the Teaching Council (Amendment) Act 2015 were commenced during 2016. The purpose of the Act is to underpin the central role of the Teaching Council in the vetting of teachers and to allow, on a statutory basis, the Teaching Council to implement fitness to teach provisions.

3.3.2 Reform of Initial Teacher Education and Teacher Induction

During 2016, the Department continued to reform initial teacher education (ITE) and teacher induction structures and process. All incoming and existing ITE students of DCU, St. Patrick's College Drumcondra and Mater Dei Institute of Education registered as DCU students.

The Church of Ireland College of Education, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra and Mater Dei were incorporated into DCU in 2016. The legal incorporation is in accordance with Department policy on the restructuring of initial teacher education.

The Department continued to support the Teaching Council's Droichead induction and probation process in 2016. Inspectors conducted a significant number of visits to probationary teachers, supported Professional Support Teams and Newly Qualified Teachers participating in the Droichead programme, In addition support to the National Induction Programme for Teachers was provided

3.3.3 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Primary

In 2016, the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) developed CPD to support the Primary Languages curriculum and the implementation of Children First in schools.

Whole staff seminars together with customised school supports comprising year 2 of the 3 year CPD framework to support the Primary Language Curriculum commenced roll out in October 2016.

PDST also continued to implement the Continuing Professional Development Framework of support for the revised Stay Safe Programme. PDST continue to develop and provide CPD support in priority areas.

3.3.4 Continuing Professional Development – Post-Primary (Junior Cycle Reform)

In 2016, the Junior Cycle Support team delivered CPD to School Leaders and teachers of English, Science & Business Studies in ETB schools and some teachers in C&C schools during the last school year. Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) support service is now designing and preparing CPD seminars for the following subjects: English, Science, Business Studies, Modern Foreign Languages, Art & Design and Irish.

A comprehensive professional development programme to support teachers of Junior Cycle continued to be rolled out in 2016. This included seminars for school leaders, whole school CPD, subject specific seminars, school visits and the introduction of cluster based whole school CPD days.

3.3.5 Supports for Special Educational Needs (SEN)

During 2016, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) supported schools in the implementation of the new SEN allocation model. The new model is aimed at providing better outcomes for children with special educational needs, and at addressing potential unfairness of the current model. Guidance on the revised model for allocating special education teaching resources was developed and distributed to 47 Pilot Schools. Following the completion of the pilot and policy advice from the NCSE the new model will be rolled on to all schools in 2017.

3.3.6 Suicide Prevention

The Department is committed to facilitating the delivery of SafeTalk and ASIST suicide training programmes for teachers through the Education Centre network. The Department will continue to liaise with the Department of Health and Children and the National Office for Suicide Prevention to progress arrangements on the training programmes to be facilitated through the Education Centre network.

3.3.7 NEPS Teacher Training Supports

NEPS psychologists provide training for teachers to implement evidence-based programmes and practices that promote resilience and social and emotional competence in children and young people. The service has prioritised the delivery of two programmes in particular:

- The Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programme (TCM) which is a classroom-based prevention and early-intervention programme designed to reduce conduct problems and promote children's pro-social behaviour. In 2016 NEPS provided training to 320 teachers nationally.
- The Friends programmes which are school-based, anxiety prevention and resilience-building programmes that enable children to learn effective strategies to cope with and manage all kinds of emotional distress – worry/stress/change/anxiety. NEPS psychologists provided training to 1,000 teachers nationally in 2016.

3.4 School Leadership

Following completion of a procurement process in 2016 a new post graduate programme for aspiring school leaders will be in place from September 2017. The course will be provided by a University of Limerick (UL) led consortium in conjunction with University College Dublin (UCD) and the National University of Ireland (NUIG).

Centre for School Leadership (CSL) has recruited and trained 200 experienced school leaders to mentor newly appointed principals. All newly appointed primary principals in the Leinster area who are participating in the Misneach leadership programme have been assigned a mentor. All newly appointed post primary principals who are participating in the Misneach programme have been assigned a mentor.

A new coaching service for school principals will be in place by January 2017 following completion of a procurement process in 2016. Principals can engage with up to 11.5 hours of coaching support. There are a panel of coaches in place in six regions nationwide.

In addition, the Department is committed to introducing a professional coaching service for serving principals, allowing up to 400 principals per annum to access professional coaching.

3.5 Cosán

The Teaching Council launched Cosán, Framework for Teachers' Learning following consultation with the profession and other stakeholders. Cosán acknowledges teachers' commitment to professional learning, and sets out a framework for recognition of that learning, in the context of teachers' status as registered professionals.

Cosán, the national framework for teacher learning, is being developed by the Teaching Council with a view to full implementation in 2020.

3.6 School Excellence Fund

During 2016, the Department continued to develop proposals for a Schools Excellence Fund, to promote excellence and innovation. This work will continue in 2017.

3.7 Quality Inspections

In 2016, the Department's Inspectorate completed its work on the development of a quality framework for schools. The framework contains domains and standards under two dimensions: teaching and learning and leadership and management. The framework provides an outline of effective practices in the two dimensions and is intended for use by a range of education partners for a variety of purposes. It was published in *Looking at Our School 2016* in September 2016, following extensive consultation with the education partners. It will be used by inspectors in their advisory and evaluation work and schools will be encouraged to focus on the teaching and learning dimension in the context of their work on school self-evaluation.

3.7.1. Development of models of inspection

In 2016, following a significant review of, and consultation about the range of inspection guides, an inspection guide for each of the sectors in which inspections take place was prepared. The following guides were published in September 2016:

- *A Guide to Inspection in Primary Schools*
- *A Guide to Inspection in Post-Primary Schools*
- *A Guide to Inspection in High Support Units, Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres*

3.7.2. School Self-Evaluations

The Department continued to support schools to embed effective school self-evaluation (SSE) practices. Inspectors continued to engage in advisory visits and produced and published a range of additional SSE support materials in 2016.

As the first cycle of SSE in school was completed in June 2016, the Department prepared new circulars outlining the SSE requirements from 2016 to 2020. Following consultation, feedback from schools, education partners and inspectorate colleagues, and advice from the national SSE advisory committee, the new circulars were published in June 2016.

Revised School Self-Evaluation Guidelines (primary and post-primary) were prepared and, following consultation, were published in September 2016. These guidelines include the quality framework for teaching and learning, which should continue to be the focus of SSE in schools.

3.7.3. Irish-language curricula

The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) continues to support teachers in the delivery of Irish-language curricula at both primary and post-primary levels. Particular emphasis is placed on in-school support and provision of support materials online. A range of relevant continuing professional development (CPD) events are provided based on national education priorities.

3.7.4. Inspection of Irish-language courses in Coláistí Gaeilge

Following consultation with the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA), and Comhchoiste Náisiúnta na gColáistí Samhraidh (CONCOS), the umbrella organisation for the Irish-language colleges, inspection reports on a sample of Irish-language courses provided by Coláistí Gaeilge were published in both languages for the first time on the Department's website in 2016. These Irish-language courses for post-primary students and senior primary pupils are generally three-weeks in duration and are mainly organised during the summer months.

Inspections of Irish-language courses assure the quality of the education provided for students and provide advice and support to the teachers, principals and the management committees of colleges. Inspection reports are based on the inspector's observation of teaching, learning and cultural activities, interaction with students, discussion with management, and inspection of relevant documentation. At the end of each inspection, the inspector provides the teachers and the principal of the Irish-language course with feedback on the quality of educational provision in the setting.

3.7.5. Quality in Special Educational Needs

During 2016, the Department completed a review of the *Pilot Project for the New Resource Teacher Allocation Model for Schools 2015/16.* A total of forty-seven schools, representative of the range of school type, size and location, piloted the new allocation model during the school year 2015/16. Inspections were carried out in twenty of the pilot to ascertain the extent to which the new resource allocation model facilitated schools to use the additional teaching resources more equitably and fairly for students in need of additional support. The Department also examined the extent to which schools welcomed the flexibility the new resource allocation model provided them to deploy the resources they received to meet the needs of students with special educational needs. In addition, the Department reviewed the manner in which schools were able to use the additional teaching resources they received under the model to engage with the five themes of the pilot and thereby provide a better educational service to students with special educational needs.

A composite report on the findings of evaluations conducted over a three-year period in schools and settings attached to High Support Units, Special Care Units and the Children Detention Centres was prepared for publication in 2016. The Department is committed to conducting an annual programme of inspection in these settings. There are eight such settings in the State. The composite report highlights many aspects of good practice in teaching and learning which are evident in the schools. Initial and ongoing assessment practices and the setting of good targets are among the areas identified that require improvement. A number of challenges faced by the schools are also highlighted in the report. These include the impact of short and frequent learner placements in some of the schools on the ability of teachers to plan successfully for their students' learning. The report will be published in early 2017.

3.7.6. Inspections Guides

Publications in 2016:

- *A Guide to Inspection in Primary Schools*
- *A Guide to Inspection in Post-Primary Schools*
- *A Guide to Inspection in High Support Units, Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres*
- *Looking At Our School 2016 – A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools*
- *Looking At Our School 2016 – A Quality Framework for Primary Schools*
- *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020 (Post-Primary)*
- *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020 (Primary)*
- *Standardised Achievement Tests: An Analysis Of The Results At Primary School Level For 2011-12 And 2012-13*
- *Review of the Pilot of a new Model for Allocating Teaching Resources for Pupils with Special Educational Needs*

3.8. Further Education and Training Professional Development

3.8.1. FET Professional Development Strategy

The Further Education and Training Professional Development Strategy 2016-2019 was published in 2016, providing for future focused and targeted professional development, increasing FET sector

capability, supporting sustainable funding and resourcing of provision. The strategy, which is the first of its kind, was developed by SOLAS in close collaboration with Education and Training Boards Ireland

(ETBI) and its member Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and reflects a comprehensive evidence gathering, stakeholder consultation and research process.

Publications in 2016: *Further Education and Training Professional Development Strategy 2016-2019*

3.8.2. Quality FET in the ETB Sector

The Department is committed to building capacity within the ETB sector to achieve the delivery of the FET Strategy goals, focussing particularly on Organisational Design, Change Management and Quality Assurance.

A total of 13 of 15 Director of Further Education and Training posts have been or are expected to be filled arising from a recruitment competition organised by the Public Appointments Service (PAS). PAS agreed to hold a new competition in late 2016 to fill the remaining Director of FET vacancies. In the interim, the relevant ETBs were given approval to fill these vacancies on a temporary acting basis. Work will then commence on the organisational structure in the FET area of ETBs below the Director level.

A dedicated Change Programme Manager has also recently been appointed in ETBI to support the reform programme across a range of areas. The Change Programme Manager is currently drafting a work plan in consultation with the ETB sector.

A quality assurance project commenced in 2016, supported by a dedicated resource in ETBI and overseen by a QA Strategy Steering Group. Work is focusing on new QA arrangements in ETBs, leading to re-engagement with QQI on approval of revised procedures. The QA strategy group is working towards a documented sectoral QA strategy by 2017. In addition, a collaborative ETBI QQI policy implementation planning group has been established and a schedule of meetings agreed and a sectoral plan for implementation of new QQI Guidelines and Policies will be devised and agreed.

3.8.3. FET Learners Database

During the year, work continued on development of the Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS) for the FET sector which when complete will provide the sector with a national data infrastructure, providing a national FET course calendar, a FET programme database and a learner database. As part of the process FET programmes database and the course calendar database were implemented and as part of that process, the website www.fetchcourses.ie was launched providing learners and other stakeholders with access to information on almost 5,000 FET courses nationwide.

3.8.4. Review of PLC Provision

To ensure delivery of high quality further education and training provision to meet the needs of both learners and employers, evaluation of the effectiveness of all FET provision will be carried out. In 2016 the evaluation of the largest FET programme, the Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) which provides for almost 70,000 beneficiaries each year was undertaken, the outcomes and recommendations of which will be published in 2017.

3.9. Irish Survey of Student Engagement

The main source of national data on teaching and learning – Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) – continues to show high levels of student satisfaction. The national report of the results of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement were published in December 2016.

Results at national level have been relatively stable from year to year and reflect relatively well on the higher education system, overall. Questions from the ISSE explore students' engagement with their learning and learning environments. Student engagement with institutional life is a vital ingredient to ensure that students develop key skill-sets such as critical thinking, problem-solving, writing skills, and team work and communication skills. Students appear to be relatively satisfied with the preparation that they are being given for employment, with 64% of all participating students selecting *often* or *very often*, when asked if they were improving knowledge and skills that will contribute to their employability. Some of the other key findings from the 2016 survey are as follows:

- 82% of all participating students selected 'Good' or 'Excellent' when asked how you would evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution.
- 75% of all participating students selected 'quite a bit' or 'very much' when asked how much their experience had helped them to think critically and analytically.

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

Building bridges between education and training providers and different social and economic communities is a key objective of the Department's strategy to deliver on its commitments to create a world class education system. Connecting communities such as employers, the unemployed, parents, students and other stakeholders will assist us in understanding each other's challenges and enable us to jointly create innovative solutions which can be delivered at local, regional and national levels.

Review of the Year under this Goal

- An Action Plan on the use of school buildings for afterschool care was completed and guidelines for the use of school buildings out of hours will be published in 2017
- The National Skills Strategy, a key pillar in the Government's plan to build sustainable economic growth was published, the purpose of the Strategy is to provide a framework for skills development that will help drive Ireland's growth both economically and societally over the next decade
- A Schools Admissions Bill was published aimed at addressing issues including publication of school enrolment policies, an end to waiting lists, introduction of annual enrolment structures, and transparency and fairness in admissions for pupils and their parents.
- Legislation was developed to provide for a Parents and Learners Charter which will improve information and complaints procedures in schools.
- Progress was made on the roll-out of the Department's Patronage and Divestment Strategy the aim of which is to create 400 new multi-denominational and non-denominational schools by 2020.
- A total of 8,926 participants were supported on Springboard courses under both Springboard+ 2015 and Springboard+ 2016. The total overall spend in respect of Springboard in 2016 was €20,438,000.
- 2,070 participants took part in full and part time ICT Conversion Courses under Springboard+ 2015 and Springboard+ 2016. The total overall spend in respect of ICT Conversion Courses in 2016 was €7,380,000.
- New apprenticeships arising from the Government's initiative to expand apprenticeship into a range of new areas was launched in 2016.
- 3,700 apprenticeship places in craft trades were provided. This represents a 19% increase in the number of registrations in 2015 and almost a tripling of registration made in 2011 and 2012.

Further detail on these and other work undertaken during 2016 under this Goal are set out below.

4.1 Use of School Buildings

The Department together with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs conducted a joint consultation with stakeholders to consider proposals to establish a model for using school buildings and premises out of hours and for afterschool care. The subsequent joint action plan was submitted to the Minister for consideration in late 2016. These proposals will be further considered in early 2017.

4.2 Inter Departmental Group (IDG) on School Age Childcare (SAC)

In view of the commitments in the Programme for Government, an Interdepartmental Group on School Age Childcare was established comprising representatives from the Department and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to consider how best the commitments could be delivered. The subsequent joint Action Plan on School Age Childcare was completed and submitted to both Ministers for consideration in 2016.

4.3 Parents and Learners Charter and Education Ombudsman

The Department brought forward a Memorandum for Government seeking approval to submit, for pre-legislative scrutiny, the Heads of a Bill to provide for a Parents and Learners Charter to the Oireachtas Committee on Education. The purpose of the Bill is to improve access by parents and students to information from schools and to improve schools complaint procedures. The proposed Bill will also take account of developments in relation to an Education Ombudsman.

4.4 Reducing Costs for Parents

Consultation took place to develop a new Circular which will issue to school authorities and ETBs regarding school uniform policy and other costs and the need to reduce costs for parents. The views of the National Parent Councils and other education partners will feed into the development of the Circular. It is envisaged that the new Circular will be in place in advance of the 2017/2018 school year.

4.5 School Admissions Bill

The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill was published and passed second stage of the legislative process in 2016. The Bill reflects the commitment to publish new school admissions legislation taking account of current draft proposals and addressing issues including publication of school enrolment policies, an end to waiting lists, introduction of annual enrolment structures, and transparency and fairness in admissions for pupils and their parents.

The Bill has a number of key features: - It

• obliges all schools to admit pupils where there are available places (80% of schools).

• provides for schools to explicitly state in the school's admission policy that it will not discriminate against an applicant for admission on any of the grounds specified in equality legislation.

• includes a requirement that school enrolment policies must include details of the school's arrangements for any students who do not wish to attend religious instruction

• places a ban on schools charging parents to apply for a place in school.

• allows the NCSE and the Child and Family Agency to designate a place for a child in a school.

Publications in 2016: *The Education (Admissions to Schools) Bill 2016*

4.6 School Patronage

The divestment of schools and establishment of new schools to provide for greater diversity of school type is a key priority for the Department. The patronage of all 11 Community National Schools transferred from the Minister to the relevant ETB in 2016.

Under the patronage divesting process, two new primary schools opened in Mayo and Dublin, both under the Patronage of Educate Together to provide for greater choice for parents in these areas of relatively stable population growth.

In 2016, five new primary schools opened in County Mayo and Dublin and six new post-primary schools opened in Counties Dublin, Cavan and Cork to meet demographic needs. After the Department identified that these new schools were required to meet demographic growth in these areas, a separate process was conducted in relation to the patronage of each school. All patron bodies and prospective patrons were invited to make an application under this process and parental preferences were central to this, with prospective patrons required to provide evidence of demand for their particular type of school patronage. Six of these new schools are multi-denominational, 3 are Co-

Educational and 2 are Catholic.

The Department has enhanced the current patronage process for new schools to facilitate parents in expressing their preference for Irish medium education by incorporating a specific medium of instruction choice for parents as part of the assessment process of a proposed new school. This brings greater clarity to the expression of parental preference for Irish-medium instruction in the patronage assessment and recommendation process at both primary and post-primary levels. It serves to inform decisions concerning a school's medium of instruction and brings greater visibility to consideration of the level of demonstrated demand for education through the medium of Irish.

Publications in 2016:

- *Report for New Schools Establishment Group Patronage for new primary schools to open in September 2016*
- *Report for New Schools Establishment Group on the Patronage Process for New Post-Primary Schools Opening in 2017 and 2018*

4.7 School Amalgamations

During 2016, the Department commenced the drafting of protocols and consultation with the patrons of one- teacher schools, asking them to initiate local discussions to address future sustainability issues. Discussions in this regard will continue in 2017 as appropriate actions will be implemented in the context of budgetary circumstances.

4.8 Skills Development

4.8.1 National Skills Strategy

The National Skills Strategy was published in 2016. With over 120 Actions involving over 50 stakeholders, the purpose of the Strategy is to provide a framework for skills development that will help drive Ireland's growth both economically and societally over the next decade. The continued implementation of the Strategy is comprehended in the Action Plan for Education which provides a central statement of the wider reform agenda across education and training.

4.8.2 Springboard+ 2016

Springboard+ is a specific initiative that strategically targets funding of free, flexible reskilling opportunities at higher education level for unemployed and previously self-employed people in areas of emerging skills needs. All courses approved for funding under Springboard+ are selected by an independent panel with industry and educational expertise following a competitive tendering process.

During 2016, 8,926 participants were supported on Springboard courses under both Springboard+ 2015 and Springboard+ 2016. The total overall spend in respect of Springboard in 2016 was €20,438,000.

Springboard+ also included ICT Conversion Courses under the ICT Action Plan 2014-2018. In addition to full-time ICT Conversion Courses, under Springboard+ 2016 two-year part time ICT Conversion Courses were offered for the first time on a pilot basis. During 2016, 2,070 participants took part in full and part time ICT Conversion Courses under Springboard+ 2015 and Springboard+ 2016. The total overall spend in respect of ICT Conversion Courses in 2016 was €7,380,000.

An analysis of Springboard+ 2011-2016 published in Q4 2016 showed that:

- 80% of Springboard+ participants (2011 – 2015) are no longer on the live register

- Employment rates 3-6 months after graduation have increased from 37% in 2011 to 61% in 2014
- Online only courses have increased from 10% of places in 2011 to 15% in 2016 – giving access to courses from anywhere in the country
- 16% of participants had no previous higher education qualification and employment rates for level 6 graduates have increased from 21% in 2011 to 58% in 2014, with more of these graduates also progressing to further study
- The initiative has also supported access to lifelong learning and reskilling opportunities with 63% of participants aged between 30 and 49 years and 10% aged 50 to 65.

4.8.3 National Skills Council

The National Skills Strategy 2025 and the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019, provides for the establishment of the National Skills Council (NSC) and a refreshing of the mandate of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) as key elements of a new national skills infrastructure. Work on the establishment of the Council was ongoing throughout 2016 and the Council is expected to be established in early 2017. When established it will oversee research and provide advice on the prioritisation of identified skills needs and how to secure the delivery of identified needs. Information will be provided to the Council from a range sources, including the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit in SOLAS and the Regional Skills Fora.

4.8.4 Regional Skills Fora

To help foster stronger links between employers and the education and training sector, the Department has established a network of 9 Regional Skills Fora each with a Manager. The Regional Skills Fora have developed work plans and will submit progress reports to the Department on a quarterly basis. At this point the nine Regional Skills Fora have been established for just over six months and are at varying stages of development. Early indications from their work are positive about the potential of the Fora to have a major impact at regional level in bringing together the key stakeholders to develop swift responses to emerging needs and also to build better data around the needs of enterprise and employers in the region. Ongoing interaction with the Fora is planned to ensure their work is fully supported and we will be prioritising the production of robust information to be presented to the National Skills Council when established.

A Regional Skills Website www.regionalskills.ie was launched in May 2016 as a communications tool for employers and education and training providers. By using the data from the SOLAS Skills and Labour Market Research Unit, the website provides access to a detailed profile for each of the 9 regions drawn from all relevant skills research and datasets to provide a basis for informed dialogue on skills needs. Each Regional Skills Forum Manager updates the website in relation to their region on a regular basis.

4.8.5 ICT Skills Action Plan

The 2nd System Performance Report for Higher Education, published in December 2016, shows that the number of graduates from ICT-related programmes at levels 8 to 10 has increased from 2,362 in 2012 to 3,341 in 2014. Through Springboard+ and ICT conversion courses, more than 3,500 graduates achieved ICT qualifications at levels 6 to 9 in 2014 and 2015. Given the increasing demand for ICT professionals, the Department of Education and Skills is currently reviewing the ICT Action Plan and a new plan is to be published in 2017.

The ICT programmes provided under Springboard+, including a part-time ICT Conversion Programme, introduced in 2016 and open to people irrespective of their employment status, forms part of a suite of measures to increase the supply of ICT graduates as part of the implementation of the ICT Skills

Action Plan 2014 - 2018. In addition to the targeted Springboard+ ICT courses, HEA funds additional places on mainstream Computer Science courses at Level 8. In 2016 an additional 400 places were funded. The Information Technology Investment Fund (ITIF) continues to support HEI ICT programme retention, and provides annual block funding to HEIs, (€80,000 for Universities and €54,000 for IOTs). HEIs allocate this funding across their specific retention activities. Activities are focused on integration of incoming students, supports and facilities for all students, and targeted activities for students experiencing difficulties.

Reports covering activity in 2016, detail over 100 specific retention supports delivered to ICT students. These include learning support centres; additional tutorials over the summer and weekends; peer mentoring; staff retention seminars; group building initiatives; maths learning supports; and improved infrastructure. The Fund also supports the provision on Computer Science Summer Camps for second level students. In 2016 29 camps were funded nationally facilitating over 1,245 students. Each HEI was awarded €5,000 to support camps programmes. Camps typically target transition year students and run for a week.

4.8.6 Apprenticeships

The launch of the first of new apprenticeships arising from the Government's initiative to expand apprenticeship into a range of new areas took place in 2016. New apprenticeships began in Insurance Practice and Industrial Electrical Engineering. These new programmes were brought about through close collaboration between employers and education and training providers throughout the detailed development process. A new plan to expand apprenticeship and traineeship is also now in place with ambitious targets for each year from 2016-2020. Registrations in the craft trades were also positive in 2016, with a 19% increase on 2015. At over 3,700, registrations in 2016 some are almost triple those in 2011 and 2012.

4.8.7 Skillnets

The Skillnets Statement of Strategy 2016 -2019 was approved by the Board of Skillnets in September 2016, following an extensive 3-month Consultation Process, with all key stakeholders. A series of strategic enabling plans have been identified arising from the Statement of Strategy. Skillnets are currently developing these enabling plans - defining parameters such as: programme scope, workstreams, critical success factors, workstream phasing, resourcing and budgets. Initial organisation redesign and job redesign work has been completed to align Skillnets operating model with 2016-2019 strategy.

4.8.8 FET Workforce Development

Work was completed in 2016 on a policy framework for employee development within further education and training, with reference to the actions and targets as set out in the National Skills Strategy to 2025.

4.9 Research

Irish HEIs, are central to Ireland's talent development and are a significant contributor to Ireland's international offering through their research capability. This capability is delivering increasing economic impact through the commercialisation of Ireland's research investments. In a review carried out by Knowledge Transfer Ireland, the average number of LOAs (licences/ options/ agreements) was up seven-fold to 85 between 2005 and 2012. During the same period, the number of research spin-out companies created annually averaged 22: an increase of nearly 450%.

Higher Education also leveraged significant international research funding for Ireland. In the period from commencement of Horizon 2020, January 2014 to September 2016 Ireland won €336m. For

comparison, Ireland's total drawdown under the predecessor programme, FP7 (2007 – 2013) was €625m. The Higher Education institutions remain the primary beneficiary in Horizon 2020, accounting for 59% of all funding won to date.

4.10 International Education Strategy

A new International Education Strategy 2016-2020, Irish Educated Globally Connected, was published in 2016. This Strategy aims to support the development of global citizens through Ireland's high quality international education system, by attracting talent from around the world to our education institutions, equipping Irish learners with the skills and experience they need to compete internationally, engaging in world-class research and international collaborations, and addressing global challenges. The High Level Implementation Group and four subgroups will meet regularly throughout the period of the Strategy and will report back on their progress in implementing the actions of the new Strategy at least twice a year.

Publications in 2016: *Irish Educated Globally Connected: An International Education Strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020*

4.11 Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the EU Programme for Education, Training and Sport for 2014-2020. Under the Programme in 2016, the European Commission provided funding of almost €20m to Irish beneficiaries, project promoters and partners. This is broadly in line with the previous year and is an increase of 12% on 2014. Funding is provided for mobilities, organisational partnerships and policy work.

Funding from the European Commission for Erasmus+ (2014-2020)			
Category	**2014 (€)**	**2015 (€)**	**2016 (€)**
Erasmus+ schools	1,307,671	2,863,261	2,600,299
Erasmus+ VET	4,278,442	3,904,761	4,012,928
Erasmus+adult education	1,644,297	931,820	922,225
Erasmus+ youth	2,898,321	3,036,979	3,117,912
Erasmus+ HE	7,705,791	9,430,206	9,341,690
Total	**17,834,522**	**20,167,027**	**19,994,964**

4.12 Entrepreneurship Education Policy in Higher Education

During 2016, the Department commenced drafting of guidelines for schools in relation to strengthening and promoting entrepreneurship in schools to support greater engagement and skills development of students when accessing third level education. It is envisaged that the guidelines will be completed and issued to schools in mid-2017.

4.13 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Consultations took place with various stakeholders from the higher and further education and training sectors, learner representatives, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) to consider the most effective way of steering national progress in RPL commenced in 2016. As a result, a Working Group will be established in 2017 to develop a national policy on RPL.

4.14 Interim List of Eligible Providers (ILEP)

The ILEP - a restricted list of education programmes considered to justify the granting of permission to students to live and work in Ireland - is a key reform to the student immigration system for international education announced by Government in May 2015. The first full iteration of the ILEP was published in 2016 and continues to be updated at regular intervals. As part of the ILEP process a total of 2016 English language providers were inspected in 2015/2016. Providers continue to be subject to unannounced inspections, spot checks and other monitoring of compliance as part of this process. The ILEP is an interim measure pending the introduction of the International Education Mark (IEM) for the provision of education to international learners, which will provide a full quality framework in the future. The legislative amendments necessary to facilitate the introduction of the IEM will be contained in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill. In 2016, the Government gave approval to proceed with the preparation of the General Scheme of the Bill. The IEM is scheduled for implementation in 2018.

Goal 5 - Improve national planning and support services

The Department adopts a whole-of-system approach in leading and directing improvements across the education system to deliver better outcomes for learners. A key strategy for delivering upon our ambitious objectives is to ensure that targets are continuously monitored and reported on and to ensure that the right structures and processes are in place in the areas of strategic policy development and analysis, oversight and governance, project management and accountability. Taking advantage of opportunities to create and avail of a diverse range of service delivery mechanisms such as technological innovations, shared service delivery methods and high quality information and communication strategies will be key in successfully supporting the delivery of our shared objectives.

Review of the year under this Goal

- The first Action Plan for Education was published. The plan outlines hundreds of actions and sub-actions to be implemented across 2016-2019, with timelines and lead responsibility assigned. New implementation structures will include quarterly progress reports and updated plan published at the start of each year.
- A new Data Strategy for the Department was developed for publishing in early 2017. The strategy contains 50+ actions that will ensure that reliable, quality data is available and used to feed into the Department's policy development, decision making, operational activities and evaluation of outcomes.
- A total of €800m was invested through the Further Education and Training Services Plan to support over 340,000 beneficiaries across a range of FET programmes at levels 1-6 on the NFQ.
- A Report on the Future of Funding for Higher Education was published to support the development of the economy, an agreed approach on the implementation of the report's recommendations will continue in 2017.
- A total of €529.7m was spent on delivering upon our Building Programme commitments. This represents an increase of over €20m on the 2015 spend.
- Phase 1 of the Primary and Post-Primary Online Databases to facilitate the entry of short courses under the Junior Cycle Reform (JCR) programme was rolled out.
- The development of shared services for HR, Pensions, Payroll and Financial Management was advanced.
- A new cloud based online appeals system for the Student Grants Appeal Board was developed was developed as a customer service initiative to replace the previous paper based appeals system.

Further detail on these and other work undertaken under this Goal is set out below.

5.1 Action Plan for Education (2016-2019)

In 2016, the Department launched the first ever Action Plan for Education, covering the period 2016-2019. The central vision of the Plan is that the Irish Education and Training System should become the best in Europe over the next decade. This will be achieved through focusing on five high level goals:

- Improve the learning experience and the success of learners
- Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs
- Help those delivering education services to continuously improve
- Build stronger bridges between education and wider community
- Improve national planning and support services

The high level goals serve as the basis for the Department's work programme for the next three years, the aim of which is to provide an education and training system that equips learners with the knowledge and skills that they need to achieve their potential and to participate fully in society and the economy through the delivery of high quality education and training experiences, which will make the best use of resources and to work towards improving accountability for educational outcomes across the system.

In order to ensure that progress is made in all five of these areas, updated annual Action Plans will be published each year, covering the actions that will be implemented during the subsequent 12 months. The Department will also publish progress reports each quarter.

5.2 Integrated Reform Delivery Programme (IRDP)

The Department's Integrated Reform Delivery Plan (IRDP) was revised in 2016 to incorporate the DES Action Plan on Education and was submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in 2016. The Department continued to liaise with the Programme for Government Office in the Department of the Taoiseach regarding PFG Reporting throughout 2016.

5.3 Data Strategy

A new Data Strategy for the Department was developed in 2016 for publishing in early 2017. The strategy identifies four key objectives - to build data capacity and capability, strengthen data governance and management, strengthen data collaboration and maximise the use and value of data. The implementation of the strategy will be led by a Data Governance and Support Unit which will support staff in their management and use of data and will facilitate collaboration on data related activity across the education sector and with Government bodies.

5.4 Further Education Funding

Significant changes have taken place in how FET programmes are planned and funded since the FET Strategy was published in 2014. SOLAS and the ETBs work together to produce annual service plans, informed by national policies and strategies that are grounded in an analysis of local skills demand and labour supply.

The 2016 FET Services plan marked a significant step forward in implementing the new planning and funding model. With an investment of over €800m, the 2016 plan set out how a range of FET programmes at levels 1-6 on the NFQ would support over 340,000 beneficiaries engaging with the sector during the year.

5.5 Higher Education Funding

The Cassells report on Future Funding for Higher Education was published during 2016 and referred to the Oireachtas Committee for consideration. It is anticipated that further engagement will continue in the early part of 2017 with a view to establishing an agreed approach to implementation of the report's recommendations in advance of Budget 2018.

5.6 Higher Education Performance Framework

The second Systems Performance Report which was prepared by the HEA was published by the Department in 2016. The Department will set out a multi-year vision for the future of Higher Education which will see the development of a new Systems Performance Framework for Higher Education for the period to 2021. The new Systems Performance Framework will state the national priorities and objectives for the higher education system over the next number of years.

5.7 Higher Education Reform Bill

Implementation of Institutes of technology governing body reform is provided for in the Technological Universities Bill. Implementation of the Higher Education Strategy provides for a number of other governance, funding and structural reforms which need to be enabled through legislation. A number of reforms are being provided for in the General Scheme for the Higher Education Reform Bill. This includes university governing body reform and reform of the Higher Education Authority. Drafting in relation to the HE Reform Bill, continued in 2016, with a view to publishing the Bill in early 2017.

5.8 Payroll and Pensions

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

In 2016, the Department processed retirement applications for over 1,000 teachers and non-teaching staff, issued over 400 statements to teachers and non-teaching staff seeking details of their pension benefits, provided for over 900 pension transfers, provided for over 500 notional service quotes, processed over 800 family law queries and over 100 third level added years' applications.

The Department rolled out a second phase of the Pension Modeller for teachers and non-teaching staff. This included cost neutral benefit statements. The Department also commenced Phase 1 of a Digitisation Project to scan online all payroll and pension files with Phase 1 scheduled for completion in the 1st quarter 2017.

5.9 Building Programme 2016

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

In 2016, a total of €529.7m was spent on schools' infrastructure. Outputs from this investment include 50 large-scale projects that were completed; 32 in the primary school sector and 18 in the post-primary school sector. A total of 8,568 permanent school places, of which 7,392 were additional permanent places, were provided in 20 new primary schools and 2,158 additional permanent places were provided in 12 existing primary schools.

In the post-primary school sector, 10 new schools and 8 large scale extension or refurbishment projects were completed in 2016. These projects delivered a total of 9,310 permanent school places, of which 5,740 were additional permanent places, as well as providing enhanced facilities for 3,190 pupils.

In 2016, 22 sites were acquired which will facilitate the provision of school accommodation for 19 primary schools and 3 post-primary schools.

5.9.1 Additional Accommodation Scheme

182 projects were completed under the Additional Accommodation Scheme and Prefab Replacement Initiative and provided 6,998 permanent school places.

5.9.2 Summer Works Scheme

During 2016 a total of 197 projects were approved under the Summer Works Scheme and 453 projects were deemed eligible for inclusion under the Emergency Works Scheme.

5.9.3 Diverse Methodologies for the Construction of Major Projects

The Department's six year plan includes alternative methods of delivering projects including through the Public Private Partnership (PPP) process. The number of operational schools delivered through PPP arrangements reached 27 by 2016. Construction commenced on a further PPP schools bundle, which will deliver 5 schools.

Agencies such as the Office of Public Works, Education and Training Boards, National Development Finance Agency, a number of Local Authorities as well as the Grangegorman Development Agency, continue to assist the delivery of 69 major school projects.

5.9.4 Financial Management, Audit, Appraisal and Asset Management Systems

A range of Frameworks for consultancy appointments are in operation for larger, complex and urgent projects. At the end of 2016 the Department commenced inspections on 120 schools that had received devolved funding and completed their projects by the end of 2015 to see if works were carried out in accordance with Department guidelines.

5.9.5 Memorandum of Understanding with Local Authorities

The Department continued to work with the local authority sector to progress the acquisition of sites in relevant areas during 2016 under the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department and the County and City Managers' Association. The interactions that develop from the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding provide the Department with greater certainty in relation to planning outcomes associated with sites.

5.9.6 Website

Lists of projects approved for delivery are published on the Department's website on a monthly basis. In the case of major projects, updates are provided on the progress through the various stages of delivery. In the case of smaller devolved projects information is published on a weekly basis listing the name of the school, the type of project and dates of approval.

5.9.7 Higher Education Capital Projects

Capital expenditure on higher education infrastructure in 2016 was €31.5m. Funding was used to progress a number of key projects, including the construction of the Glucksman Library at UL, development of the DCU St Patrick's Campus, the consolidation of Dublin Institute of Technology at Grangegorman and infrastructural improvements in a number of Institutes of Technology. A devolved grant of €10m was also paid to the 14 Institutes of Technology for minor works and equipment, including ICT, upgrades. A review of capital requirements in higher education institutions was initiated in late 2016 which will inform the parameters of the forthcoming higher education PPP programme.

5.9.8 Energy Efficiency in Schools

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

These projects include research and monitoring with regard to the next generation of low energy school designs including the Near Zero Energy Building Projects, the Colaiste Choilm project and the Passive schools project.

All schools built in accordance with the TGDs are capable of achieving as a minimum an A3 Building Energy Rating (BER).

The Energy in Education programme, a partnership with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, offers Energy Management training workshops and an Advice, Mentoring and Assessment Service to schools. As part of this programme the on-line portal www.energyineducation.ie offers best practice advice and case studies, to date there are nearly 600 schools engaging at various levels with the programme. A network of stakeholders in the education sector including National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education, the Church of Ireland General Synod Board of Education (RI), Catholic Primary School Management Association, Educate Together, the Joint Managerial Body and the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools are consulted on programme development and delivery and also assist with communication to member schools. Schools that engage with the Energy in Education Programme can access robust, practical advice and are realising savings through low and no cost measures.

Publications in 2016: *Guidance Document for the Provision of Wireless Network Installations in Post Primary Schools published May 2016*

This document has been created to provide advice and guidance regarding Wi-Fi networks in post-primary schools in Ireland. The target audience includes school authorities, school principals, teachers who are involved in the planning, provision and support of Wi-Fi in schools and Design Teams on post primary school building projects.

5.10 Public Sector Reform

In 2016, the Department continued to actively support and enable the implementation of the overall reform programme in the Education and Training Sector in line with DPERs Public Service Reform Plan 2014 – 2016. Through the development and implementation of the Integrated Reform Delivery Plan and the Shared Service and External Service Delivery (ESD) Plans 2014 – 2016 the Department continued to promote the development of strong governance structures and to support the implementation of new ways of working, through Shared Services, External Service Delivery and Procurement. Work continued in 2016 on the implementation of the reform programme.

During 2016, the Department oversaw the completion of a number of sector wide reform initiatives to stabilise the ETB infrastructure in preparation for the implementation of shared services including establishing Training Centre Functions within five ETBs, agreement on an ETB ICT strategy, the connection of all ETB Head Offices to Government Networks and the initiation of a major review of quality assurance across the ETB FET sector.

The new organisational structure for the ETB sector phase I was also implemented. Each ETB is now structured around three pillars – Schools, Further Education & Training (FET) and Organisation Support & Development (OSD) reporting to the Chief Executive. An additional 52 senior managers will be in place across the ETBs to support the new structure, 80% of the new senior managers were appointed in 2016.

The development, design and implementation of the projects to deliver a new Payroll Shared Services and Finance Shared Services system for the ETB Sector commenced in 2016. It is envisaged that this will improve and standardise processes for on-going service improvements.

5.10.1 Financial Management Shared Services

The Department is participating in the Civil Service, Financial Shared Services Project and it has undertaken a number of actions in order to achieve readiness. In 2016, the readiness projects have seen the roll out of the Oracle Procurement Module to the Planning and Building, IT and Corporate Services units of the Department. Extensive engagement has occurred with the project teams on their inputs into the development of the shared services chart of accounts.

5.10.2 Schools HR/Pension Payroll Shared Service

The School Employees HR/ Payroll and Pensions project commenced in 2016 with the initial meeting of the Steering Group and the publication of the Project Manager role on www.PublicJobs.ie for the drafting of a Business case for the upgrade to full shared services standards.

5.10.3 ETB Payroll and Finance Shared Service

The shared services programme was progressed during 2016. ETB payroll shared services is now progressing through the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) peer review process and a draft Request for Tenders was issued to the Chief State Solicitor's Office (CSSO) in 2016 for review prior to publication. ETB Finance is under review with OGCIO and the Department is mapping its processes in order to develop the detailed requirements for an RFT.

5.10.4 Higher Education HR/Payroll Shared Service

The Higher Education HR/ Payroll project has progressed to the next stage with the upgrading of the Institutes of Technology software through Educampus and the publication of the Project Manager role.

5.10.5 Schools Procurement Guidelines

Work commenced on the development of a strategy for the schools procurement unit for 2017 -2019. A Draft Procurement Guidelines Handbook for schools have been compiled and will be circulated to schools on completion.

5.11 ICT Developments

5.11.1 IMIS

Inspections Management Information System (IMIS) went live in September 2016. Inspectors are currently using IMIS for inspection planning and recording details of school inspection visits. The final reporting elements of the reporting process will be rolled out in the course of 2017.

5.11.2 Primary Online Database

Software to automate the annual primary school census from the Primary Online Database (POD) was implemented in September 2016.

5.11.3 Post-Primary Online Database

Phase 1 of the enhancement to facilitate the entry of short courses under the Junior Cycle Reform (JCR) programme, on the Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD) was implemented in September 2016.

5.11.4 ePQ System

ePQs developed by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, under the Build-to-Share strand of the Public Service ICT Strategy was implemented by the Department in 2016.

5.11.5 Student Grants Appeal System

During 2016, a new cloud based online appeals system for the Student Grants Appeal Board was developed as a customer service initiative to replace the previous paper based appeals system. This new online appeals process went live in December 2016 and will be further enhanced during the course of 2017. Further improvements were made by SUSI in 2016 in relation to the timely processing of grant applications.

5.12 School Transport

During the 2016/17 school year in the region of 114,000 children, including some 10,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 4,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100m kilometres annually.

Publications in 2016: *Review of the Concessionary Charges and Rules Element of the School Transport Scheme*

5.13 European Globalisation Fund (EGF)

The final report on the Andersen Ireland EGF Programme was submitted to the European Commission in November 2016. EGF supports were taken up by 138 redundant workers (100% of those targeted) and 136 young people not in employment, education or training (NEETS) (99% of the target of 138). The final expenditure on the programme was €1.816m, which equates 73% of the approved allocation for the Programme. This rate exceeds the average EU allocation utilisation figure of c. 55% and the average Irish utilisation rate of 60% across the 7 earlier EGF programmes. Guidance, training, education and enterprise supports were also delivered to beneficiaries under the Lufthansa Technik Airmotive Ireland and PWA International EGF Programmes during 2016.

5.14 European Social Fund (ESF) Operational Programme

The Department oversaw the management of the ESF Operational Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020 which sets out a framework for the allocation of a total of € 1.153 billion over the period, comprising €542.4m from the European Social Fund (ESF), and equal amount from the Exchequer and just over €68m from the EU Youth Employment Initiative. The Programme supports a wide range of activities across a number of Government Departments and agencies. Specifically within the education sphere, the ESF co-finances ETB Training for the unemployed; Springboard+ (including the ICT Conversion Courses); Momentum; Youthreach; Third Level Access; the Back to Education Initiative and Adult Literacy. The Department concluded new Service Level Agreements/Administrative Agreements setting out the relative roles of the various bodies in the PEIL 2014-2020 to ensure appropriate management and control systems are in place.

5.15 Landsdowne Road Agreement

The Department continued to provide and operate an industrial relations framework and service at national level to manage the processing of industrial relations issues relating to the education sector outside of the Department. The work of the Department includes the promotion of compliance with Government pay policy throughout the wider education sector, the negotiation and full implementation of the Public Service Agreement 2013-2018 (Lansdowne Road Agreement) with regard to the education sector and provision of advice to line sections within the Department (and the educational institutions) on the application of employment law.

5.16 Department Expenditure

The Department's gross financial allocation in 2016 was €8.71 billion of which €8.11 billion (93%) is current and €0.60 billion (7%) is capital. The 2016 gross allocation represents an increase of €125m on the 2015 original allocation. This additional allocation made provision for some 2,260 additional teaching posts, additional funding to support ongoing policy initiatives including the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (€3m), Junior Cycle Reform (€8m), Schools ICT (€2.5m), the Music Generation Project (€1m) and other curriculum change projects (€2m). A further €5m was made available in capital funding as part of a 3 year (2014-2016) €15m investment to extend book rental schemes to cover all primary schools.

A supplementary estimate of €136m was agreed for the Department in 2016, providing for increased capital expenditure and additional pension costs.

5.17 Internal Audit / ESF Financial Control

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

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

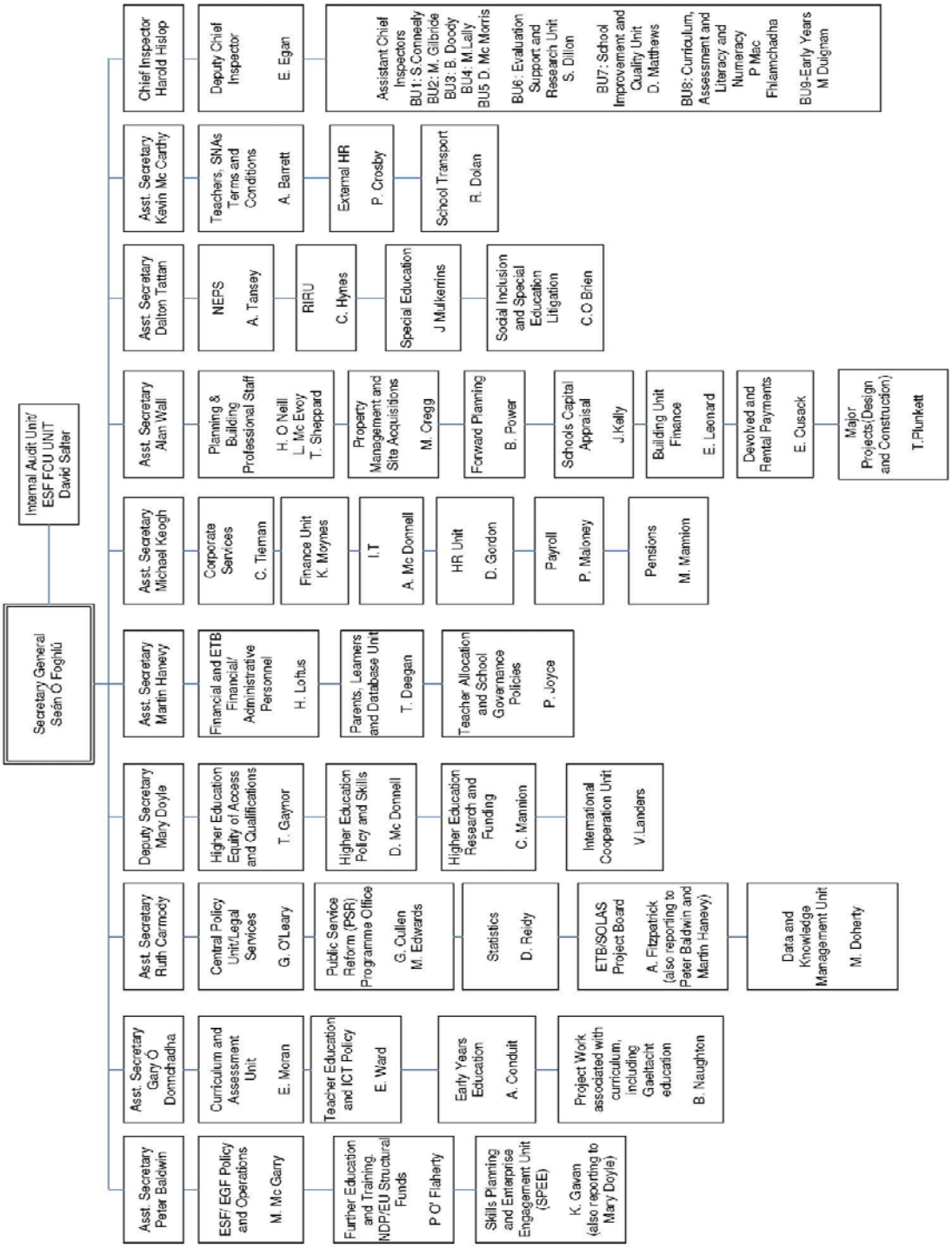
Annual audit programmes are prepared under the auspices of the Audit Committee and both the Internal Audit Unit and the ESF Audit Authority report to the Committee on the conduct of these programmes and the finalisation of audit reports. A total of twelve reports were finalised in 2016 and both areas track, on a quarterly basis, progress on the implementation of recommendations arising from audit reports.

5.18 Dealing with Past Abuse

Ireland submits biannual action plans to the Council of Europe detailing the individual and general measures that are being taken to implement the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) Judgements in the Louise O'Keeffe case. The 2016 action plans submitted to the Council of Europe note the further legislative developments in relation to the National Vetting legislation, the Teaching Council (Amendment) Bill, 2015 and the Children First Bill, 2014.

In March 2015, the Department published a draft General Scheme for a Retention of Records Bill which provides that, on the dissolution of the Residential Institutions Redress Board, the Residential Institutions Redress Review Committee and the Commission to Enquire into Child Abuse, their records will be deposited with the National Archives where they will be preserved and sealed for a period of 75 years. The drafting of the bill was at an advanced stage at the end of 2016.

Appendix A – Organisation Chart – December 2016



Appendix B - Bodies under the Aegis of the Department

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

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

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

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