An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

Annual Report 2017

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Foreword by the Minister

Last year, 2017, was the first full year of implementation of our Action Plan for Education which is our plan to make Ireland's education and training system the best in Europe by 2026.

This Annual Report highlights the significant progress made in 2017 towards achieving this ambition.

Our ten year olds are now the best among the European Union countries for reading skills and maths. We are lucky in Ireland to have fantastic teachers and school leaders and this is a credit to their commitment and hard work.

We have seen real momentum on policy for Wellbeing, Foreign Languages and STEM. The rollout of our Wellbeing Junior Cycle Programme began in September 2017 for all junior cycle students. We need to equip our students with resilience and coping skills and this programme will support our young people in developing such skills.

Brexit and the increasing engagement between non-English speaking countries globally, mean that English-speaking countries such as our own, will need to put a new focus on foreign languages in order to excel in the modern world. In that context, we launched a new Foreign Languages in Education Strategy, which aims to not only increase the numbers of children taking up a foreign language, but also to expand the range and depth of language study in Education.

We are undergoing a technological revolution globally. If Ireland is to be at the forefront of this transformation, we must be a leader in nurturing, developing and deploying STEM talent. We launched a STEM Education Strategy, to respond and adapt to this rapidly changing world and to make Ireland the best at STEM education in Europe. The plan includes targeted measures to increase women in STEM and upskilling for teachers.

Our Higher and Further Education sectors have done much to reskill our economy after the crash and 2017 saw work on Technological Universities, new funding sources (both Exchequer and the National Training Fund) and better funding mechanisms.

Providing opportunities for those who come to education at a disadvantage is, in my view, critical to becoming the best in Europe. We are seeing real results from our policies which target disadvantaged groups. Leaving Certificate retention rates are now the highest in history and crucially, the gap between DEIS and non-DEIS schools has nearly halved. We have seen an up to 36% increase in the numbers progressing to third level from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We introduced a new model for allocating teaching resources to children with special educational needs in 2017. This new model, which was developed following advice from the National Council for Special Education, has ensured that children can now access additional teaching supports without having to wait for a diagnosis and has facilitated earlier intervention for children in need of extra support.

Innovation is being fostered through our School Excellence Fund initiative. There are now 1,000 schools in total participating in clusters (Creative, Digital, STEM, DEIS, Gaeltacht, Speech and Language) and other pioneering initiatives (P.E and Computer Science at Leaving Certificate,

Schools Digital Framework and Student Support Teams). The School Excellence Fund allows schools to work together to trial creative interventions in identified areas, the intention being that the learning from successful approaches will be shared across the school sector.

Nothing is more important to the success of a school than its leadership. School leaders are pivotal to taking us further along our journey to becoming the best in Europe and this government is committed to investing to support and empower them to do so. Leadership support reached over 1,000 principals through our Centre for School Leadership in 2017. Furthermore 257 aspiring school leaders enrolled in a newly available Post Graduate Diploma in School Leadership from September 2017.

Following the agreement of a new model for distributed and flexible leadership, our investment in 3,000 middle management posts will support better School Self-Evaluation and implementation of reforms.

The ground has been laid for improvements in our schools' capacity to consult parents and students on important decisions in their local school. The Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill 2016 and Education (Admissions to School) Bill 2016, both of which will provide for important reforms in how a child accesses their local school and how the voices of parents and students are heard in school decision making, made significant advances.

Closer links with employers have been forged with the development of our new skills audit tool for business, the Regional Skills Fora and of course, our new opportunities in apprenticeship and traineeship. I am keen during my time as Minister to rebuild these pathways in traditional trades and to significantly expand apprenticeships and traineeships into new industries. We launched 26 new apprenticeships, including some in really exciting new areas such as Recruitment and Animation, at the end of 2017. This is a pathway which has been neglected in Ireland and has had only tiny participation by women. That is now being changed.

Our capital allocations for future years were expanded significantly in 2017. Additional capital funding of €663 million was allocated to the education sector following the Capital Review, for the period 2018-2021. Half of the additional capital funding (€332m) will be provided to the schools sector and €331 million will be used to significantly boost capital investment in higher and further education, including research. This investment will take place alongside the roll-out of a major Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Programme for the higher education sector.

Much has been achieved and I am determined to maintain the momentum and progress our ambition to build a strong, successful education and training system that is the best in Europe.

I would like to thank my colleagues, Ministers of State Mitchell O'Connor and Halligan, the staff of the Department and all those working throughout the education and training sector for their work and commitment throughout 2017.

Richard Bruton, T.D.
Minister for Education and Skills

Statement from the Secretary General

I am pleased to introduce the 2017 Annual Report, which documents the progress made in the second year of our three year Strategy Statement and Action Plan for Education 2016-2019. This 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 2017, significant progress was made on the transformation of our education system including, reform of primary and post-primary curriculum, the development of a new model for the allocation of special needs teachers and the launch of new policies on STEM Education and Foreign Languages in Education which will diversify the range of languages available to schools and enable students to deepen their breadth of knowledge in modern languages.

The Interim Review of the National Strategy: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020 was published in March 2017. The Interim Review showed that considerable progress has been made at the mid-way point in the Strategy and sets out new and updated ambitious targets for numeracy and literacy in our schools.

The new Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme was also launched as part of our Gaeltacht Education Strategy, with a view to strengthening the quality of education through Irish and to increase the use of Irish in Gaeltacht school communities.

The launch of the new leaving certificate grading system and the points system for entry to higher education, also came into effect in 2017. This 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 2017, work continued in support of the major reform of the further and higher education sectors. The Department continued its engagement with the Oireachtas Joint Committee for Education and Skills on its considerations of the Cassells report on future funding in the higher education sector. In addition, the increase in funding from the National Training Fund which was secured in 2017, is a key strategic element of the overall funding increase for higher and further education and filling of skills gaps.

Finally, 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 throughout the year.

Seán Ó Foghlú,
Secretary General

Overview of the year

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

The Action Plan sets out our commitment to strengthen the spectrum of education, to avail of new technologies and methodologies and to ensure that every learner is given the opportunity to achieve their potential.

The Annual Report 2017 acknowledges the significant and systematic progress being made under each of our five Goals in meeting our ambition.

Overview of key actions delivered during 2017.

Leaving Certificate Grading

The new Leaving Certificate Grading System and Common Points scale came into effect in 2017 with over 58,000 students marked under a new 8 band grading scale – a reduction from the previous 14 bands. Partly as a result of the new grading system, which now awards CAO points to students who achieve between 30 and 39 per cent in higher level papers (the new H7 grade), there was an increase in participation rates at higher level across almost all subjects.

Foreign Languages in Education Strategy

Languages Connect - Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017 - 2026 and Implementation Plan 2017 - 2022 was published in December 2017. A key part of this strategy is not only increasing the numbers of students taking up a foreign language, but also diversifying the range of languages available to schools and increasing students' depth of knowledge in a language

STEM Education Policy and Implementation Plan

A new STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026 and STEM Implementation Plan 2017-2019 were published in November 2017. In line with the overall objective to be the best in Europe, the plan sets out the intention to make Ireland a European leader in STEM education by 2026. The plan includes an increased focus on encouraging traditionally under-represented groups to participate in STEM activities and it looks at increasing links between the education system and industry.

International Assessments

The Programme in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and ePIRLS results for the 2016 assessments show that Ireland's primary school children are the best in Europe and OECD countries for reading skills.

Special Education Teacher Allocations Model

A new model for allocating special education teachers to schools was introduced to all mainstream primary and post primary schools. An additional 900 teaching posts (805 posts already allocated) have been provided to support the introduction of this new allocation model, an increase of 13% in the last two years, with 13,400 posts available for allocation in the 2017/18 school year, compared to just over 11,800 posts allocated in the 2015/16 school year.

Special Needs Assistants Scheme

13,990 whole time equivalent Special Needs Assistants posts were provided for at the end of 2017 to provide for the care needs of 34,000 children with special educational needs attending primary, post-primary and special schools. Budget 2018 made provision for an additional 130 SNA posts up to June 2018, which will bring the total number of SNA posts available for allocation to 14,120, which amounts to €460m.

DEIS Plan 2017

Publication of DEIS Review Report and DEIS Plan 2017 and introduction of new data based identification process, which resulted in extension of DEIS Programme to 79 schools as well as a further 30 schools DEIS status being upgraded from Band 2 to Band 1.

Early Years Education Inspections

A total of 708 Early Years Education Inspections were carried out nationally in a diverse range of Early Years services. By end of 2017 over 560 EYEI inspection reports were published on the DES website.

Further Education and Training Professional Development

Within the Further Education and Training (FET) sector, a steering group, including representation from ETBs, ETBI and SOLAS, chaired by the Department was established to lead on implementation of the first FET Professional Development Strategy (2017-2019).

Building Bridges with the Community

Guidelines for the use of school buildings out of hours were published in November 2017 to provide guidance to schools in relation to their current arrangements for the use of school buildings outside of school hours or for those schools who are considering putting such arrangements in place.

National Skills Strategy

The National Skills Council and a network of nine Regional Skills Fora were established to help foster stronger links between employers and the education and training sector. The Department has established and appointed nine Regional Skills Fora Managers.

Building Programme

A total of €530.8m was spent on schools' infrastructure. In addition, capital expenditure on higher education infrastructure was €22m.

National Training Fund

An increase in the National Training Fund (NTF) levy of 0.1% was implemented as part of Budget 2018 measures, with a further 0.1% proposed in 2019 and 2020 subject to the delivery of agreed reform of the NTF. The increase in funding from the NTF is a key strategic element of the overall funding increase for higher and further education and the provision to address skills gaps.

General Corporate Information and Data

This section of the Report provides general corporate data and compares activities of the Department in previous years noting a significant increase in many activities and additional achievements during 2017. Key education statistics can be found on the statistics page of the Department's website via the following link: http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/

Our Vision

Our vision is to provide the best education and training system in Europe by 2026

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 2011-2017

Supporting the Parliamentary Process	2011	2015	2016	2017
Parliamentary Questions responded to	3103	3657	3434	4209
Memoranda for Government Received for Observations	147	160	108	144
Representations received by Minister and Minister of State Offices	13000	7330	6130	6557
Responses to Topical Issues	60	36	18	38
Responses to Adjournment (Commencement) Debates	32	41	11	43

Information Services 2011-2017

Information Services	2011	2015	2016	2017
Email enquiries received through info@education.gov.ie	7000+	6168	9733	10,733
Visitors to our website www.education.ie (millions)	1.6m	2.18m	2.25m	2.85m
Freedom of Information Requests Received Decisions Made	 1,170 1,000+	 420 400+	 496 450+	 548 556
Press Releases Issued	112	126	90	155
Twitter followers	n/a	20,000	24,469	30,546

Annual Programme of Inspection in Schools and Centres for Education 2017

The Inspectorate completed a total of **6134** inspections/advisory visits to schools in 2017, as outlined in Tables 1 to 5 below. In addition, a total of **1015** inspection reports were published in 2017, as outlined in table 6 below. Comparisons to 2011 and 2016 are also provided for reference purposes and 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, 2011-2017			
Summary of Inspections	**2011**	**2016**	**2017**
Inspections in early years settings participating in ECCE* (including pilot)	n/a	491	708
Inspections in primary schools (including inspection of the work of teachers on probation)	2972	4001	4171
Inspections in post-primary schools and centres for education	769	752	659
Other inspection and evaluation activities	73	144	286
School self-evaluation advisory visits	n/a	274	310
Total inspections in early years settings, schools and centres for education	**3814**	**5388**	**6134**

*Early Childhood Care and Education Programme

Table 2: Inspections of Early Years settings participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme	
Early Years Education-focused inspections	**2017**
Early Years Education-focused inspections	684
Early Years Education-focused inspections: follow through	24
Total of setting inspection visits	**708**

Table 3: Inspections and evaluations in primary schools, 2011-2017				
Primary Inspection/Evaluation Activity	**2011**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**
Whole-School Evaluation	291	220	38	38
Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning	n/a	n/a	149	102
Evaluation of Action Planning for improvement in DEIS* schools	16	10	10	10
Incidental Inspection	404	345	361	284
Follow-through Inspection	n/a	85	141	164
Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Education Needs	n/a	28	8	9
Pilot Curriculum Evaluation	n/a	24	12	n/a
Curriculum Evaluation	n/a	n/a	60	153
Total of school inspection visits	**711**	**712**	**779**	**760**
School self-evaluation advisory visits to schools	n/a	653	197	11
Inspection of newly qualified primary teachers in school year	**2261**	**2091**	**3222**	**3411**

*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**	**2017**
Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning	100	65	83	80
Subject Inspection	528	231	291	274
Programme Evaluation	23	31	29	25
Evaluation of Action Planning for improvement in DEIS* schools	16	8	10	8
Incidental Inspection	92	184	246	164
Follow-through Inspection	n/a	65	77	97
Evaluation of Centres for Education	10	5	16	11
Total school inspection visits	**769**	**589**	**752**	**659**
School self-evaluation advisory visits to schools	n/a	134	77	299

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

Table 5: Other inspection activities, 2017	
Other inspections/evaluations of provision for students and young people 2017	
Evaluation reports on Coláistí Gaeilge (Irish Colleges in the Gaeltacht)	27
Inspection of Schools in High Support Units, Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres	8
Inspection conducted for the purpose of school recognition	1
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	42
Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme: advisory visits to schools	132
School Excellence Fund – DEIS: advisory visits to schools	40
Inspections in European Schools	21
Inspection visits conducted in Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres	2
Inspections of summer provision in schools attached to Special Care Units	3
Total other evaluation activity	**286**

Table 6: Publication of reports 2017	
Publication of inspection reports	**2017**
Curriculum Evaluation Model (primary)	150
DEIS (primary)	20
DEIS post-primary)	16
Programme Evaluation (post-primary)	18
Special Educational Needs (primary)	16
Subject Inspections (post-primary)	291
WSE-MLL (primary)	100
WSE-MLL (post-primary)	76
Follow-Through (primary)	186
Follow-Through (post-primary)	91
Follow-Through (youthreach)	8
WSE modified (primary)	38
Youthreach	5
Total number of reports published **(Note:** the number of reports published in 2017 differs from the number of inspections conducted in 2017 as not all reports are publishable and not all relate to inspections conducted in 2017)	**1015**

Table of Prompt Payments 2017

Prompt Payments Summary – Department of Education and Skills		
Year	**2017**	
Details	**Number**	**Value (€)**
Payments made within 15 days	7,964	316,176,755
Payments made between 16-30 days	2,143	29,293,440
Payments made in excess of 30 days that were subject to LPI and compensation costs	76	92,253
Payments made in excess of 30 days that were not subject to LPI and compensation costs	964	4,685,067
Total Payments	**11,145**	**350,247,514**
Amount of late payment interest (LPI) paid in 2017		353.96
Amount of compensation costs paid in 2017		3,700.00
Total Invoices with LPI & Compensation	**76**	**4,053.96**

Energy Consumption & Expenditure in 2017

The Department of Education and Skills has an energy management and reduction programme in place which commenced in 2009 to reduce energy consumption by 33% by 2020. With a reduction of 24.3% being achieved to date, the Department is exceeding the projected reductions required. A detailed energy audit was undertaken on our campuses in Dublin, Athlone and Tullamore, and recommended actions for improvement have been implemented. The Department made significant investment in 2017, approximately €400,000 in upgrading the lighting systems in our Dublin and Tullamore offices. The impact of these more energy efficient systems will take effect in 2018 and later years.

Department Expenditure on Energy Costs (incl. VAT)				
Category	**2009 (€)**	**2015 (€)**	**2016 (€)**	**2017 (€)**
Electricity	586,569.83	425,039	385,304.46	335,011.72
Gas	83,336.94	131,518	107,696.62	112,118.43
LPG and Oil	43,114.87	21,936	12,716.52	16,391.72
Total	**713,021.64**	**578,493**	**505,717.60**	**463,521.87**

Public Sector Duty

Under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014, all public bodies are statutorily obliged to have regard to human rights and equality issues in the performance of their functions. In this regard, the following goals have been included in the Department of Education and Skills Statement of Strategy Action Plan for Education 2016-2019:

- **Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs:** this goal is concerned with working to ensure that the profile of learners progressing through the education system becomes more representative of the population in general.
- **Improve national planning and support services:** this goal is concerned with the Department and its agencies working in partnership and in consultation to create the right structures, gather the right evidence, develop the right policies, use the right funding instruments, provide the right service supports and deliver services effectively and efficiently.

Progress on High Level Goals in 2017

Goal 1 - Improve the learning experience and success of learners

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 of 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

- The reading/writing strand of the new Primary Language Curriculum (Irish and English) commenced. The new curriculum will see the same structure applied to both English and Irish for the first time. It will focus on the development of oral language, reading and writing skills. The new curriculum is specifically designed for young children in junior infants through to 2nd class.
- New Junior Cycle specifications for Irish, Modern Languages and Visual Arts commenced. This marks the introduction of Phase 3 of the Junior Cycle and will be followed in September 2018 with the introduction of new specifications in Mathematics, Home Economics, History, Music and Geography.
- This is the first year that the cohort of c. 60,000 students were awarded a Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) and the first year that examinations of the new Junior Cycle English curriculum took place.
- Trialling of the practical assessment component of new specifications for Leaving Certificate Biology, Physics and Chemistry took place in 2017, with a final report due in early 2018.
- By the end of 2017, a total of 400 of the 600 guidance posts which were withdrawn in 2012 had been restored with a further 100 guidance posts to be restored by September 2018.
- The Interim review of the National Strategy: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020 was published in March.
- A new Wellbeing Programme was introduced in all schools to promote measures to support the mental resilience and personal wellbeing of Junior Cycle students.
- A new Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme aimed at ensuring that schools in Gaeltacht areas are properly supported to flourish as centres of excellence for education through the Irish language, commenced.
- An additional 10 educational psychologists were appointed to support students in DEIS schools.
- The Incredible Years Teacher Programme and FRIENDS Programme were extended to all DEIS schools.
- A total of €30 million was distributed to schools under the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020. In addition, the Digital Action Plan 2017 aimed at maximising the use of digital technologies in classrooms, was launched.
- A new Digital Framework was developed and published. A trial of the Framework, involving 50 schools, which will include an independent evaluation process, commenced.
- Broadband upgrades were completed in 1,100 schools under the Schools Broadband Access Scheme.
- In 2017, 68,620 teaching posts were allocated at primary and post primary level.

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

1.1 Primary Curriculum and Developments

During 2017, the Department continued its work with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in relation to curricular development and reform at primary level. This included the continued implementation of the new Primary Language Curriculum (Irish and English) for junior infants to second class, with the rollout of the reading and writing strands from September 2017, and

the continued rollout of the oral strand across all primary schools. Development of the Primary Language Curriculum for third class to sixth class continued in 2017.

Consultation on the new primary mathematics curriculum, to include computational thinking, creative thinking skills and coding commenced in November 2017.

A public consultation on the structure and time allocation within the primary curriculum was completed in 2017. The findings from this consultation will inform and support the next phase of work in the redevelopment of the Irish primary curriculum.

In December 2017, the 2016 PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) report was published. The Study showed that Ireland's primary school children (4th class) are best in Europe and OECD countries for reading skills. The report is available for download from www.erc.ie.

1.2 Curriculum at Post Primary Level

The implementation of the Junior Cycle Framework 2015 continued throughout 2017 with the first examination of Junior Cycle English. New Junior Cycle specifications for Irish, for Modern Languages (French, German, Spanish and Italian) and for Visual Art commenced in September 2017. The first Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement was awarded to the first cohort of learners, approximately 60,000 students, marking a major change in national policy on assessment. A new Wellbeing Programme was also introduced at Junior Cycle to actively support and develop wellbeing initiatives to promote the development of mental resilience and personal wellbeing in schools.

At Senior Cycle, calls were issued to schools to participate in the rollout of two new Leaving Certificate Subjects, Computer Science and Physical Education, and in the Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework. These new subjects will be implemented from September 2018 in phase 1 schools, and will be available to all schools from September 2020.

Revised specifications for a number of Leaving Certificate subjects including Economics and Agricultural Science, were completed in 2017.

A new grading system and common points scheme for the Leaving Certificate came into effect in 2017 as part of the reform programme to improve the transitions process to support students in the transition from second-level into higher education. Over 58,000 students sat the Leaving Certificate Examinations in 2017 and were marked under the new 8 band grading scale. Further measures to address broadening undergraduate entry are included in the new Systems Performance Framework for Higher Education and arrangements are in place to monitor and report on the progress of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in reducing the number of entry routes into Higher Education while maintaining the number of student places, to the minimum number necessary for academically appropriate and efficient allocation of places to applicants.

1.3 Strategies and Programmes to support curricular reform

A number of strategies were published in 2017, driving significant change to improve the learning experience and the success of learners and to build stronger bridges between education and the wider community.

1.3.1 STEM

The STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026 and STEM Implementation Plan 2017-2019 published in November 2017, set out the intention to make Ireland a European leader in STEM education by 2026. Key ambitions include:

- Increase by 20% the total number of students taking Chemistry, Physics, Technology and Engineering at Leaving Certificate level.
- Increase by 40% the number of females taking STEM subjects at Leaving Certificate.
- Increase participation in out-of-school STEM learning opportunities and STEM career activities.
- Introduce a new primary maths curriculum, which will include creative and computational thinking and coding.
- Accelerate the introduction of Computer Science at Leaving Certificate, with implementation brought forward to September 2018.
- Introduction of new Junior Cycle Mathematics and Technology curricula.
- Teachers will use a cross-disciplinary approach to incorporate STEM across all subjects.
- Enhance STEM teaching, learning and assessment practices in early years settings.
- Close the gap in achievement in STEM disciplines between students in DEIS schools and students in all schools significantly.
- Ensure that all schools, learners and parents have access to high quality information on the diversity of STEM careers.
- Build robust and sustainable partnerships between schools, business and industry, public sector bodies, research organisations, further and higher-level institutions and the Arts.

Published in 2017:

- https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/STEM-Education-Policy/ (2017-2026)
- https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/STEM-Education-Policy/stem-education-implementation-plan-2017-2019-.pdf (2017-2019)

1.3.2 Foreign Languages

Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026 and Implementation Plan 2017-2022 sets out an ambitious roadmap and targets to put Ireland in the top ten countries in Europe for the teaching and learning of foreign languages, through a number of measures targeted at improving proficiency, diversity and immersion. Delivery of the Strategy is crucial to ensuring Ireland is prepared for a changed European dynamic following Brexit and the increasing importance of non-English speaking countries globally. A key part of this Strategy is not only increasing the numbers of children taking up a foreign language, but also diversifying the range of languages available to schools and increasing students' depth of knowledge in a language.

Published in 2017: https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Foreign-Languages-Strategy/fls_languages_connect_strategy.pdf

1.3.3 National Strategy: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020

The Interim Review of the National Strategy: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020 was published in March 2017. The Interim Review involved consideration of research findings, both national and international, and a consultation process with a wide range of stakeholders. It concluded in late 2016, following the publication of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015 and Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) 2015 reports.

The Report of the Interim Review does not replace the (2011-2020) Strategy. The Strategy is, and will continue to be, the focal point within our education system, for improving literacy and numeracy outcomes to 2020. The Report does identify the priority areas of numeracy, literacy, DEIS and specific actions, as well as new targets, which will complement those in the Strategy and help the Department to achieve its ambition to have the best education and training system in Europe.

Published in 2017:

- https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/pub_ed_interim_review_literacy_numeracy_2011_2020.PDF

1.3.4 Lifeskills Survey

The 2015 Lifeskills survey was published, providing information on how primary and post primary schools cater for the well-being of their students. The survey provided data on a number of important 'lifeskills' related issues within primary and post-primary schools, Youthreach Centres and Community Training Centres. It included data on physical activity and healthy eating, aspects of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), as well as anti-bullying, substance use, and road safety.

Published in 2017:
https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Lifeskills%20Survey%202015.pdf

1.3.5 Arts in Education Charter

The implementation of additional elements of the Arts in Education Charter including support for the Arts in Education Portal, Digital Mapping, National Arts in Education Research Repository and other Charter initiatives is ongoing. The National Arts in Education Portal Day took place in May, 2017. Continued work on the Arts in Education Portal, National Digital Mapping, Development of Ireland's National Arts Education Research Repository and other Arts in Education Charter initiatives will be progressing over 2018 and further years.

1.3.6 Irish

The Department is currently conducting a review of arrangements for the granting of exemptions from the study of Irish. A research report has been finalised and preparations for a consultation phase are underway which will inform further policy actions in this area.

1.4 Guidance Services

In 2016, the Department announced that the equivalent of 100 additional guidance posts would be in place by September 2017. This means that 400 of the 600 guidance posts that were withdrawn in Budget 2012 have been restored to schools from September 2017. All of these posts are allocated separately and transparently to the normal staffing schedule of posts for schools. In 2017 it was announced that an additional 100 guidance posts will be restored to schools from September 2018.

1.5 International Cooperation

A number of international surveys relating to Eurydice and the OECD were completed in 2017. The Department also took part in a number of international conferences, hosted a number of visiting delegations, continued to work on fulfilling Ireland's obligations regarding the European Schools and continued to work closely with its counterparts in the Department of Education in Northern Ireland which included hosting two exchange visits.

1.6 Wellbeing, Bullying and Mental Health in Schools

Significant progress was made in 2017 to promote the role that schools can play to help students develop resilience and coping skills, to better equip them to manage the social and emotional challenges of modern living. This included a review of DES policy and practice relating to the promotion of wellbeing in schools and the development of wellbeing indicators.

The theme of Wellbeing is evident in the curriculum at all levels - early years, primary and post-primary. Wellbeing as an area of learning has been introduced from September 2017 to schools commencing with all students in their first year of Junior Cycle. This area of learning is supported by a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme for teachers. Work also continued to embed anti-bullying policies across the system.

1.6.1 Wellbeing Review

During 2017 a review was undertaken of current supports and programmes offered by the Department to schools in the area of wellbeing with a view to rationalising and improving provision. Work commenced during the year on the development of a Departmental Policy statement and Framework for practice with regard to the promotion of wellbeing in schools and centres for education, including indicators of wellbeing promotion success.

In addition, the module in Wellbeing in the Early Years inspection framework was reviewed and education focussed inspections continued to report on Wellbeing provision in all early years settings inspected.

1.6.2 Guidelines

Schools were supported in the implementation of Wellbeing Guidelines at primary and post-primary level and in the implementation of Critical Incident Guidelines updated and circulated in 2016/17. Training was provided to some 50 post-primary schools in 2017 in the application of these revised Guidelines as an initial step in targeting all post-primary schools in this regard.

1.6.3 Professional Development

Specific training programmes were provided to teaching staff in DEIS schools commencing in the 2016/17 academic year. In particular National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provided training for:

- 463 teachers in modules 1-3 of the six-module (six-day) training programme in the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programme (TCM) a classroom-based prevention and early-intervention programme designed to reduce conduct problems and promote children's pro-social behaviour.
- 360 teachers in the FRIENDS programme, a 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

A pilot project on the development of Student Support Teams to underpin school wellbeing policy is being expanded to encompass a block of DEIS schools. Initial selection of an additional 20 DEIS schools was commenced in 2017

Publications in 2017:

- https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/parent_student_perceptions_positive_school_culture.pdf (July 2017)
- https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Balanced-Approach-to-Literacy-Development-in-the-Early-Years-.pdf

1.7 Digital Strategy for Schools

In 2017, a Digital Strategy Action Plan was published, under which 120 actions/sub-actions were identified for delivery in 2017. Of these 113 were delivered, representing a 94% completion rate. Some

of these actions will be further built on in 2018. The remaining 7 sub-actions are carried forward in to the 2018 Digital Strategy Action Plan. Some of the key achievements include the following:

- Clear statements and objectives on the use of digital technologies were included in all curricular specifications which were under development in 2017.
- ICT is an integral part of all CPD programmes developed in 2017.
- A comprehensive range of supports specifically targeting digital technologies in teaching and learning including ICT courses, workshops, on-line resources and courses, good practice videos and a range of other supports and resources were provided to schools/teachers in 2017.
- Over 31,000 teacher interactions with targeted CPD programmes and courses were recorded in 2017.
- Through Webwise, curriculum and other appropriate channels, awareness raising actions and programmes, which promote responsible and ethical use of the internet in schools were developed and made available to schools. The "**Be in Ctrl"** resource was developed by the Webwise Team in partnership with An Garda Siochána and addresses the issue of online sexual coercion and extortion and supports the Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. Webwise support forges the link between home and school through the development of an online parenting hub (launched in 2017). This provides parents with easy access to practical advice and information to help address their concerns about the various issues facing their children in the online environment. The new hub features expert advice from professionals and offers useful conversation starters and tips on managing internet safety in the home. To support the new online hub, Webwise also launched *Parents' Guide to a Better Internet*. This booklet enables parents to talk with confidence to their children about the benefits and risks online such as cyberbullying, screen time, sexting, social media and online pornography.

1.8 Digital Learning Framework

A new Digital Learning Framework for teachers and school leaders was developed in 2017 and is currently being trialled in a cohort of 50 schools (30 primary and 20 post primary). An evaluation of the Framework is running parallel to the trial. The Framework, which is evidence-based and draws from local and international research, will guide schools in embedding digital technologies in teaching, learning, leadership and management. The Framework is accompanied by Digital Learning Planning Guidelines which were also developed in 2017. These Guidelines can be used to support whole school, subject department and individual teacher planning for embedding digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment and in the day-to-day life of schools.

1.9 ICT Infrastructure in Schools

A total of €30 million in grant funding issued to some 3,800 primary, special and post-primary schools in 2017, the first tranche released from the €210m commitment under the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020.

All post-primary schools and some special schools are included in the Department's 100Mb/s High Speed broadband programme. In relation to primary schools, significant improvement has been made in recent years, with the number of primary schools with access to broadband speeds of greater than 30Mbps having increased from less than 100 in 2012 to over 1100 in 2017. An additional 400 schools are targeted for upgrade during 2018 with 40 of these upgraded in Quarter 1 of 2018.

1.10 Teacher Allocations

In 2017, 68,620 teaching posts were allocated at primary and post primary level. The redeployment process in 2017 involved the redeployment of 152 permanent teachers at primary level and 11

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 2017 there were over 2,140 teachers on the supplementary redeployment panel.

1.11 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,
- 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 2017, the Department received a total of 373 Section 29 appeal applications. A total of 199 of these appeals went to a full hearing. Of those appeals that went to a full hearing 78 (39%) were upheld and 121 (61%) were not upheld.

1.12 20 Year Strategy for Irish

Implementation of actions set out in the Government's 20 Year Strategy for Irish continued in 2017 and was supported by ongoing collaboration with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG). A new dimension to the strategy, which was agreed with DCHG, has been the identification of the main components of a 5-year action plan, which will seek to consolidate key measures in specific areas of the strategy.

1.13 Gaeltacht Education Policy 2017-2022

Implementation of the Department's Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 commenced in early 2017 with the establishment of the Gaeltacht Education Unit in the Department. A dedicated team of primary and post-primary school inspectors is supporting the Gaeltacht Education Unit in carrying out its work to strengthen the quality of education through Irish and increase the use of Irish in Gaeltacht school communities. In addition a team of inspectors is supporting primary and post-primary schools who have opted to participate in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme in achieving recognition as a Gaeltacht school through the provision of advice, support and feedback.

Inspectorate advisory visits commenced in September 2017 and were carried out alongside professional development seminars provided by COGG and other national support services. In the region of 132 advisory visits were carried out by the Inspectorate team in 2017.

1.14 National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

During 2017 NEPs sanctioned psychologist staffing numbers were increased from 173 w.t.e to 184 w.t.e. specifically to improve NEPS service to DEIS schools. Following a recruitment drive to fill both existing vacancies and the new posts NEPS staffing numbers rose in that year from 162 to 180 w.t.e, the remaining 4 posts to be filled in 2018. This represents the highest number of psychologists employed in this capacity since the inception of NEPS in 1999. A commitment was given in Budget 2018 to increase NEPS numbers by a further 10 posts from the commencement of the 2018/19 academic year.

1.15 Evaluation of Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) programme

To ensure relevance to the labour market and effective progression for learners, the Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2014-19 commits SOLAS to organise and conduct a schedule of evaluations of FET programmes. Work was completed on the first of these, the evaluation of the Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) programme, by the ESRI. Work also commenced on the independent evaluation of the Youthreach programme scheduled for completion in 2018. Preparation also began on a combined evaluation of the Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme (VTOS) and Specific Skills Training (SST).

1.16 Technology Enhanced Further Education and Training Strategy

The Department continued to work with SOLAS on the implementation of the first Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy 2016-2019 to build on existing capacity and good practice in technology-enhanced learning, to expand access and improve and innovate FET provision. Progress in 2017 included the development of technology enhanced learning action plans in each ETB to support infrastructure, pedagogy and CPD. Work also commenced on the development of a content sharing and management infrastructure to facilitate sharing and development of learning resources among all teachers.

1.17 ICT in Higher Education

In 2017, Higher Education Institutions provided 3,800 ICT summer camp places for second level students as well as 1,000 places for entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation. In February 2018, 41 projects received €4.4m in funding through SFI Discover Programme to improve public understanding of STEM and support education initiatives for under-represented groups.

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 is central to our approach to enhancing our education and training systems to ensure that children and young people from different backgrounds are adequately supported and can avail of the opportunities to maximise their potential through learning. The Department has a range of strategies in place to assist, support and encourage those with special educational needs or those 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 fund of €16.2 million was designated to support lone parents and other disadvantaged groups to access higher education.
- A call for proposals under Strand 2 of the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) was made.
- €10.4 million funding was awarded to support 11,800 students with disabilities to access higher education in 2016/17.
- A total of 16,019 students benefited from funding of €8 million funding under the Student Assistance Fund in 2016/2017.
- Approximately 82,000 students received higher education grants totalling €371 million under SUSI in 2016/2017.
- There were 30 beneficiaries of Scholarships and 345 beneficiaries of Bursaries comprising a total expenditure of €1.2m in 2017.
- The report on Barriers to Further Education and Training with Particular Reference to Long Term Unemployed Persons and Other Vulnerable Individuals was published by SOLAS.
- A new Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Plan was launched which resulted in an additional 79 schools being brought into the programme and a further 30 schools upgraded from Band 2 to Band 1. DEIS now supports 902 schools, 704 primary and 198 post primary with an overall investment of €125m by the Department.
- An additional 900 posts were provided to implement the new model of teacher allocations in mainstream schools. 805 of these posts have been allocated to date, bringing the total current allocation to 13,306.
- Over 1,450 teachers provided education to 7,739 children attending special schools with reduced pupil teacher ratios ranging from 6:1 to 11:1 depending on disability categorisation.
- A total of 1,710 pupils availed of home tuition during the 2016/17 school year, amounting to €14.6m in funding.
- A total of 6114 pupils availed of the home-based July Programme provision in 2017, amounting to €13.8m in funding.
- Almost 12,000 children with special educational needs were transported to schools on over 2,600 routes at a cost of over €82.5 million.
- The School Excellence Fund – DEIS was launched, with funding of €1.8 million allocated to support innovative programmes in DEIS schools.
- The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) commenced support initiatives including guidance, CPD, and training to support implementation of the new Special Educational Needs Allocation model.

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

2.1 Access and Inclusion in Early Years Settings

The Department plays a key role in supporting the quality of educational provision in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) centres. The Department works with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) to advise on qualifications of the workforce and with the higher and further education sector to ensure that early years practitioners receive high quality initial education and training to support their professional practice.

The Department is leading on the implementation of the national practice frameworks, Síolta (quality assurance framework) and Aistear (the curriculum framework) through implementation of the National Síolta Aistear Initiative, which in partnership with the NCCA, Better Start (Early Years Specialist Service) and DCYA is developing and supporting CPD and mentoring programmes for practitioners.

2.1.1 Early Start

The Department directly funds and administers the Early Start pre-school classes established in 1994/95 in 40 primary schools and the Rutland Street pre-school in designated areas of urban disadvantage throughout the country. The project involves an educational programme to enhance overall development, 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 2017, non-pay funding amounting to €0.244m was paid out to Early Start Units from this sub-head.

2.1.2 Rutland Street Pre-school Project

The Rutland Street Pre-school Project, established in 1969, is a two-year pre-school programme in a Dublin inner city community catering for 3-5 year olds. Although not part of Early Start, it was used to pilot many of the approaches later incorporated in the Early Start project. In 2017, the Rutland Street Pre-school Project received €60k funding for non-teaching pay - and €62,580 for non-pay running costs from the Department. The staffing for the school is an administrative Principal, 6 teachers and 5 child care workers for 95 children.

2.2 Supporting Inclusion and Diversity

The Department plays a support role in the ongoing development of the Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) which was launched in June 2016 by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. This is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. The model was developed and agreed by DCYA, DES and the Department of Health. Figures to the end of 2017 reveal that a total of 3,344 children participating in the ECCE programme have benefited from AIM; all activity under AIM is now funded by DCYA.

In 2017, the Department continued to provide supports to the AIM model through participation in both the project team on developments such as AIM Inclusive Play (AIP) Resources (6000 packs to be delivered to ECCE services nationally in 2018) and the Training working group convened in 2017 to develop further training programmes in 2018.

A consortium led by Mary Immaculate College in partnership with Early Childhood Ireland and Froebel, Maynooth University is delivering the award winning Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) programme http://lincprogramme.ie/ nationwide to 900 students per annum over four years to train an Inclusion

Coordinator - a key role that has been identified to help support children with a disability in pre-school - to work in every early years setting. An additional capitation is paid to services by DCYA who employ an Inclusion Coordinator. The second cohort of students graduated in September 2017.

2.3 Equity of Access to Higher Education

2.3.1 Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH)

The Department established the *Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Fund* to support the implementation of the National Access Plan. The Fund comprises of dedicated funding to support access to higher education, allocated on a competitive basis to higher education institutions to support particular priority areas. A total of €16.2 million, secured through the budgetary process for PATH, has enabled three strands of the fund to be rolled out.

PATH 1, announced in 2016, supports the objective to increase access to initial teacher education for students from the target groups identified in the National Access Plan, such as Lone Parents and Travellers. The Department, through the HEA, invited the six centres of teaching excellence, in partnership with relevant local stakeholders, to compete for PATH 1 funding by submitting proposals in accordance with prescribed criteria. Each of the six centres for Teaching Excellence secured funding for initiatives.

PATH 2, €6 million will be invested in bursaries through "The 1916 Bursaries Fund", these bursaries will be awarded to 600 students in the three academic years who have been identified by their HEI as being the most socio-economically disadvantaged students in the target groups.

PATH 3 is intended to support regional clusters of higher education institutions to attract 2,000 additional students from groups currently under-represented in higher education, including Lone Parents and Travellers. Funding of €2.5 million per annum is available for PATH Strand 3 for the next three years.

2.3.2 Fund for Students with Disabilities

The Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD), which is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020 aims to ensure that students with a disability can participate fully in education or on an equal basis with their peers. The FSD was reviewed in 2017 and the implementation of the recommendations is being considered. Grant-aid under FSD for the academic year 2016/17 was in the amount of €10.4 million which benefited 11,800 students.

2.3.3 Student Assistance Fund

An extra €1m has been added to the Student Assistance Fund (SAF) and lone parents in 2017 to enable participation in higher education on a part-time basis for lone parents and other target groups. The SAF, which is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020 provides financial assistance to full-time under-graduate or post-graduate students in need of such support. SAF is intended to support students whose participation in higher education would otherwise be at risk as a direct result of financial difficulties. €8m was spent and a total of 16,019 students received funding in the 2016/17 academic year.

2.3.4 Lone Parents

The report on *'An Independent Review to Identify the Supports and Barriers for Lone Parents in Accessing Higher Education and to Examine Measures to Increase Participation'* was published in August 2017.

A cross Departmental group, chaired by the Department, was established to respond to the recommendations of the report. Two measures were announced in Budget 2017 that affect lone parents:

- Making available €1m to support the recommendations from the review of lone parents.
- Making available €1m for bursaries to be targeted at specific groups, including lone parents.

A Data Plan for Equity of Access, commissioned by the HEA, is currently being finalised.

2.4 Student Grants

Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) received 103,300 applications for the 2017/18 academic year, of which circa 82,000 were deemed eligible for grant support. Expenditure on student grant supports in 2017 amounted to approximately €371m.

Publications in 2017:

- *The Student Grant Scheme 2017 - (S.I. No. 125 of 2017) (http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2017/si/125/made/en/print)*
- *The Student Support Regulations 2017 - (S.I. No. 126 of 2017) (http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2017/si/126/made/en/print)*
- *The Student Support Act 2011 (Prescribed Persons) Regulations 2017 - (S.I. No. 410 of 2017) (http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2017/si/410/made/en/print)*

2.5 Student Grants Appeal Board

In 2017, the Student Grants Appeals Board sat on 28 occasions and heard circa 727 appeals from students aggrieved by determinations made by appeals' officers.

2.6 Scholarship and Bursary Scheme

There were 30 beneficiaries of Scholarships and 345 beneficiaries of Bursaries in the 2016/17 academic year and a total expenditure of €1.2m in the 2017 financial year.

2.7 Access to Further Education and Training by Disadvantaged Groups

Active inclusion is one of four strategic goals underpinning the Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 and aims to support the participation of all in further education and training (FET) to enable every citizen to fully participate in society.

An independent research project identifying barriers to participation in FET was completed and published on the SOLAS website. The research examined the extrinsic and intrinsic barriers to participation. It included the identification of barriers to the participation of specific groups who are experiencing socio-economic exclusion and distance from education and the labour market. As part of the annual FET service planning process, Education and Training Boards (ETBs) will be required to provide SOLAS with details on existing and new initiatives to address barriers to FET.

2.8 DEIS 2017

DEIS Plan 2017 sets out as a series of Actions, the details of an updated DEIS School Support Programme which represents the overall suite of supports available to schools participating in DEIS in order to improve educational outcomes for pupils at greatest risk of not reaching their full potential by virtue of their socio-economic circumstances. For the first time specific targets have been set in key areas such as Literacy and Numeracy, School Completion and progression to Further and Higher Education. The Plan has also put in place a new data-based model to assess levels of disadvantage in

schools to identify schools needing additional supports. A more effective system of resource allocation is being developed to ensure that resources are matched to identified educational need in schools and that those in greatest need receive additional supports to address the needs identified.

Overall good progress has been made under DEIS. The latest Retention Report issued by the Department's Statistics Unit shows an increase in Leaving Certificate retention rate for DEIS schools from 82.7% for the 2009 student cohort up to 84.41% for the 2010 cohort. Since 2005, non-DEIS schools Leaving Cert retention rate has been between 91.7% and 92.9% while the retention rate has increased from 78.4% to 84.4% for DEIS schools for the same period. In relation to early school leaving, it may be noted that the EU2020 headline target for early school leaving is <10%. The national target set by Ireland is 8% and the EU average is currently 10.6% (2017). Ireland's current share of early school leavers (i.e. 18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training) fell from 10.8% in 2011 to 6.1% in 2017 representing very positive progress in excess of Ireland's target. Retention rates for DEIS schools have improved significantly since the introduction of DEIS. Evaluations of primary DEIS schools have indicated an increase in literacy and numeracy scores over time. It is also worth noting that absenteeism rates in Urban Band 1 schools have declined over time.

The report by the ERC "Evaluation of DEIS: Monitoring achievement and attitudes among urban primary school pupils from 2007 to 2016[1]" reports that, in both reading and mathematics, modest increases in average scores were observed from 2013 to 2016. From 2007 to 2016, greater gains were observed in mathematics than in reading at all grade levels. In several cases, achievement in Band 2 schools in 2016 is at or above the national norms for the tests for the first time. At post primary level there has been a slight narrowing of the gap in overall Junior Certificate grades between DEIS and non-DEIS schools and there is a significant upward trend from 2009 onwards in overall attainment levels in both English and Mathematics at Junior Cert level.

2.9 Special Education Needs

2.9.1 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, through its network of Special Educational Needs Organisers, for processing applications from schools for supports for children with special educational needs.

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

By end 2017, there were 13,300 whole time equivalent special educational needs teachers in mainstream primary and post-primary schools providing additional teaching support to pupils with

[1] http://www.erc.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/DEIS-report-2017.pdf

special educational needs with an additional 900 teaching posts provided to support the introduction of the new allocation model, an increase of 13% in the last two years.

In addition, over 1,450 teachers provided education to children attending 124 special schools with reduced pupil teacher ratios ranging from 6:1 to 11:1 depending on disability categorisation of the pupils attending.

Children with special care needs are also supported by Special Needs Assistants. 13,990 whole time equivalent Special Needs Assistants posts were provided for at the end of 2017 to provide for the care needs of children with special educational needs attending primary, post-primary and special schools. Budget 2018 made provision for an additional 130 SNA posts up to June 2018, which will bring the total number of SNA posts available for allocation to 14,120.

A total of 2,436 grants issued to schools (1,966 to Primary and special schools and 470 grants to post primary schools) in 2017 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.

2.9.3 New model for allocating special education teachers to schools

A new model for allocating Special Education Teaching Resources to mainstream primary and post-primary schools was introduced from September 2017. This new model is designed to be a fairer and better way to allocate resources to support children with Special Educational Needs and provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on that school's educational profile. This single allocation will allow schools to provide additional teaching support for all pupils who require such support in their schools. Schools will deploy resources based on each pupil's individual learning needs. The new model also reduces the administrative burden on schools as it replaces the existing annual application process. The new allocation model ensures that schools will have greater certainty as to the resources that will be available to them to provide additional teaching to support the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs, on an ongoing basis. This will allow schools to better plan and timetable for this provision. The earlier allocation process will also allow schools to plan in advance of the school year. The new model will provide a greater level of autonomy for schools in how to manage and deploy additional teaching support within their school, based on the individual learning needs of pupils, as opposed to being based primarily on a diagnosis of disability.

An additional 900 teaching posts have been provided to support the introduction of this new allocation model, increased 13% in the last two years, with 13,400 posts available for allocation in the 2017/18 school year. This is in comparison to just over 11,800 posts allocated in the 2015/16 school year. Of the additional 900 posts provided to implement the new model, 805 of these posts have been allocated to date, giving a total current allocation of 13,306.

This total additional allocation includes 25 special education teaching posts which have been seconded to the NCSE to develop the NCSE Support services in order to provide training support and guidance for schools on the implementation of the new model.

The remaining posts will be allocated to schools for appeals, demographic growth, or where exceptional circumstances arise in schools.

2.9.4 Special Schools

Over 1,450 teachers provided education to 7,739 children attending special schools with reduced pupil teacher ratios ranging from 6:1 to 11:1, depending on disability categorisation.

2.9.5 Special Classes

There are 1,304 special classes in mainstream schools available in the 2017/18 school year, an increase of over 137% in the number of special classes which were available in 2011, (548 classes). This includes 131 early intervention special classes, 826 primary special classes and 347 post-primary special classes.

2.9.6 Special Needs Assistant Scheme

Children with special educational needs who have additional care needs are also supported by Special Needs Assistants. 13,990 whole-time equivalent Special Needs Assistants posts were provided for at the end of 2017 to provide for the care needs of 34,000 children with special educational needs attending primary, post-primary and special schools. Budget 2018 made provision for an additional 130 SNA posts up to June 2018, which will bring the total number of SNA posts available for allocation to 14,120, a spend of over €460m.

Since 2011, the number of SNAs has increased from 10,575 to 14,120. This is an increase of 3,545 SNAs or 33.5%, which includes an additional 2,080 posts or 17.3% in the last two years alone.

2.9.7 Assistive Technology Scheme

In 2017, 1,966 payments were made to primary schools, and 470 to post-primary schools, towards the cost of assistive technology, a spend of over €1.4 million. The type of equipment provided under the assistive technology scheme is varied and includes Audiology Supports for children with hearing impairment; equipment to assist children with visual impairment and for children with physical or severe communication disabilities, where it has been outlined that the equipment is essential to access the curriculum.

2.9.8 Irish Sign Language Scheme

The Irish Sign Language Scheme assists deaf/hard of hearing children and their families to acquire competency in a language at the earliest possible opportunity.

In order to ensure that the child can communicate with their family members and to assist them to acquire fluent language skills while engaged in meaningful activity with capable users of the language and significant others, the child's family members, parents and siblings may also be included in the ISL tuition, which is provided, in the main, at the child's home, under this scheme. A grant is paid to parents to employ an ISL tutor. In the majority of cases, ISL tuition is for 1 hour per week up until the end of June, rising to 7.5 hours per week for July and August.

Approximately 230 children and their families are supported with ISL tuition annually and in the region of 72 tutors are employed to teach ISL, amounting to in the region of €310,000 annually.

2.9.9 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 1,710 pupils availed of home tuition during the 2016/17 school year, amounting to €14.6m. A further 315 children availed of home tuition under non special educational needs schemes administered by the Departments Parents Learners & Database Section (PLDS).

2.9.10 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 a 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, 219 schools participated in the programme in 2017. A total of 6114 pupils availed of the home-based July Programme provision in 2017, amounting to €13.8 m.

2.9.11 Middletown Centre for Autism

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 has 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.

2.9.12 Consultation on the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act

The Programme for a Partnership Government is committed to consulting with stakeholders on the best means to progress sections of the EPSEN Act that were introduced on a non-statutory basis.

Consultation on the new model conducted throughout 2016 and 2017 included consultation on progress towards the implementation on EPSEN.

As the new Resource Teacher allocation model has only recently been introduced, it is expected that, before further implementation of EPSEN is considered, a comprehensive review of the new model will be undertaken after it has had the opportunity to bed in. The review would examine the extent to which it is meeting the needs of children with Special Educational needs and that the results of this review and the review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme, recently completed, would inform any decision on the future potential of EPSEN.

2.9.13 In-School Speech and Language Therapy

The Programme for a Partnership Government commits that a new model of In-School Speech and Language Therapy will be established. Budget 2018 provided an additional €2m to introduce a demonstration project for in-school Therapy services in 2018.

The demonstration project will develop and test a model for the delivery of in-school speech and language and occupational therapy support, in a defined regional area, across a range of schools, in conjunction with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and supplementing existing HSE therapy services. The demonstration model will focus on developing greater linkages between educational and therapy supports.

It will provide for in-school therapy services and also for professional support, training and guidance for school staff and parents. It will seek to assist schools to develop their capacity to support children

with speech and language needs in schools, while also focusing on early identification and intervention.

An Interdepartmental Working Group, including representatives from this Department, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the Department of Health, the Health Service Executive (HSE), and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, was established to develop the pilot/demonstration model for In-school Therapy Services.

2.9.14 NCSE Support Services

The NCSE's new Support Service brought under its control the Special Education Support Service (SESS), the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) and the Visiting Teacher Service for children who are deaf/hard of hearing and for children who are blind/visually impaired (VTSVHI) from 20th March 2017.

The development of this new Support Service within the NCSE means that schools will receive better and more integrated support in the future. It will build on the existing good work and supports which the National Behaviour Support Service, the Special Education Support Service and Visiting Teacher Service currently provide to children and their families, as well as to teachers and schools.

The NCSE Support Service provides advice and support to schools on the education and inclusion of students with special educational needs, providing in-school support, continuing professional development for teachers, and support to schools on the management of challenging behaviour. It will also enhance the multi-disciplinary capacity of the education system through providing access to expert knowledge in areas such as autism, speech and language and challenging behaviour.

2.9.15 Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Scheme

Following the interim report on the SNA comprehensive review, the NCSE established an NCSE-led working group, comprising relevant stakeholders, to assist in developing a proposal for an improved model for providing care supports to provide better outcomes for students, with special educational needs, who have additional care needs.

The report of the cross Departmental Working Group, established to develop proposals in relation to the need for nursing supports in schools for children with complex medical needs, is currently being finalised.

The full report of the SNA Comprehensive Review, which will be informed by the Report from the Working Group to consider an alternative model of SNA allocation and the working group on Nursing Supports for students with complex medical needs will be submitted to the Minister for consideration in early 2018.

2.9.16 High Support, Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres

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 published by the Department's Inspectorate in 2017. 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 impediments 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

Department inputted into the draft Education Strategy for Oberstown. It is envisaged that this strategy will be finalised in early 2018.

Publications in 2017: Education of Children in Detention and Care (November 2017)

2.10 Psychological Supports

In the academic year 2016/17 the Department's psychologists were involved in casework, which includes assessment and intervention, in relation to 8,249 students. Additionally, under the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments process, private psychologists provided assessment to schools for 2,388 pupils. It is estimated (extrapolated on survey) that NEPS psychologists have provided input into an additional 25,000 pupils per annum.

During this period, NEPS psychologists attended and assisted in 105 Critical Incidents.

Additionally, it is estimated that training (support & development) was provided to some 21,600 teachers in processes assisting in problem solving, continuum of support, literacy programming and whole school responses.

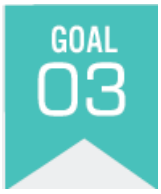
The appointment of an additional 11 psychologist staff commenced in Autumn 2017, specifically targeted at improving service to DEIS schools – by year's end some 8 of these staff were placed.

2.11 Transport Services for Students with SEN

The Department aims to provide safe, efficient and cost-effective school transport services for eligible children with special educational needs. During the 2016/17 school year almost 12,000 children with special educational needs were transported to schools on over 2,600 routes at a cost of over €82.5 million in 2017.

2.12 School Excellence Fund

The School Excellence Fund - DEIS was launched in November with €1.8m in funding for over 35 DEIS schools to explore new, innovative solutions to tackle educational disadvantage and improve learning outcomes over a 3 year period. The School Excellence Fund – Digital initiative announced in the latter part of 2017, will support clusters of schools in working together in really exciting ways on projects related to teaching and learning using digital technologies. This will be implemented in 2018.



Goal 3 - Help those delivering education services to continuously improve

Quality of provision is the cornerstone to the success of the education and training system. We recognise the fundamental roles that leaders, teachers and support staff play and we seek to strengthen the system's capacity as a whole to continuously improve and to deliver the highest quality education and training services for learners.

Review of the year under this Goal

- The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs commenced work on the development of a workforce plan for workers in the area of Early Years provision.
- Piloting of Aistear Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and coaching of 400 Early Years practitioners in 162 settings took place.
- A total of 708 Early Years Education Inspections were carried out nationally in a diverse range of Early Years services with over 560 EYEI inspection reports published on the DES website.
- The final report of the Technical Working Group on teacher supply, "Striking the Balance", was published during 2017.
- A new Post-Graduate Diploma in School Leadership commenced, with 257 aspiring school leaders initially enrolled in the programme.
- A total of 347 Principals engaged with the professional coaching service.
- An increase of 23% on the 2016 figure of CPD units provided for primary and post primary teachers was provided.
- A circular entitled "Leadership and Management in Primary Schools" was published in 2017. It sets out the framework for a more flexible, distributed and accountable model of leadership in primary schools.
- New Child Protection Procedures for schools were published in line with the commencement of the Children First Act.
- A new steering group involving DES, ETBs, ETBI and SOLAS was established to lead on implementation of the first FET Professional Development Strategy (2017-2019).
- A training model for the delivery of the Safe Talk anti-suicide programme was developed and rolled-out through the Education Centre network.
- An evaluation of the Youthreach and VTOS/Specific Skills Training programmes commenced with a view to improving the impact of these schemes. The evaluation is scheduled for completion in 2018.

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 2017, the Department continued to work with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in order to achieve this objective.

3.1.1 Síolta/Aistear

The National Síolta/Aistear Initiative (NSAI), which commenced in 2016, continues to support the wider implementation and rollout of both frameworks, including the development of material, resources and CPD for Early Years practitioners. The Department is working in partnership with the

DCYA and the NCCA on this initiative with two national Coordinators in post overseeing the work of Síolta Aistear mentors, who are drawn from a range of organisations. Capacity building of the Síolta Aistear Mentors, through informal and formal supports such as training and CPD, continued through the piloting of Aistear CPD and coaching of 400 practitioners in 162 settings in 2017. The coordinators also supported mentors to provide training, mentoring and coaching supports to early years' settings to support the implementation of Síolta and Aistear. The number and capacity of Síolta Validators to conduct validations of settings which have completed the Síolta Quality Assurance Programme was increased during the year.

Revision and development of resources, including a revised Síolta user manual, Quality Assurance Programme materials, Síolta awareness raising workshops, validation materials, as well as updating and ongoing development of the Aistear Síolta practice guide website, was completed in 2017. In addition, a central information management system and reporting procedure for organisations involved in the initiative was established

In the context of a review of education and training programmes which is underway, extensive consultation surveys of practitioners and employers were carried out and a review of occupational role profiles was published in 2016. Thereafter, a Working Group to develop Draft Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Education in Early Childhood Education and Care was established and it produced a set of draft criteria and guidelines for professional undergraduate awards in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). These guidelines were considered by the Early Years Advisory Group and a survey of sector practitioners was undertaken. The results of this wider survey are currently being evaluated. The Department is also liaising with QQI to scope a review of further education and training programmes.

A Skills Forecast for a Workforce Plan for the Childcare Sector was initiated by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs at the request of Department of Education and Skills and Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The Skills forecast, to be developed in 2018, will feed into a wider workforce plan for the Early Years and School Age Childcare (SAC) sector that will examine the existing early years and SAC workforce, the entry and career pathways, training needs, current capacity, predicted future demand and available supply.

Publications in 2017: Review of Occupational role profiles in Early Years Education and Care in Ireland - April 2017

Draft Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Education (Level 7 and Level 8) Degree Programmes in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Ireland – published for consultation in December 2017

3.2 Early Years Education Inspections

In 2017, the Department continued with the programme of implementation of Early Years Education-focused Inspection (EYEI). The EYEI Model is based on a quality framework 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. EYEIs are designed to support development of the education dimension of provision in early years' services on contract to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) to deliver the Free Preschool in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. EYEIs are also intended to provide information to parents and the general public about the quality of the education dimension of provision in an early-years setting.

Over the course of 2017, a total of 708 Early Years Education-focused Inspection (EYEI) were carried out nationally in a diverse range of Early Years services. By end of 2017, over 560 EYEI inspection reports were published on the Department's website. In May 2017, a consultation seminar shared the initial experiences and findings from the first year of implementation of EYEI with stakeholder groups from the Early Years sector. A consultation survey, launched at the seminar, was designed to seek feedback from Early Years' service providers and practitioners and other interested groups, on the relevance and impact of EYEI.

The findings from this consultation process provided strong endorsement of the EYEI Model and concluded that the model should now be the basis for the future development of inspection activity across the diverse range of Early Years services in Ireland. A composite report of the findings from inspection was shared with stakeholder groups from the Early Years sector at end 2017. The report provided insight into the nature of early education practice across the four key dimensions of the EYEI Framework and identified the strengths and challenges under each. The report was published in the first quarter of 2018.

Progress was also made in quarter four of 2017 in relation to the application of the EYEI Model in a diverse range of Early Years services. A trial of Whole Service Evaluations (WSE) was conducted in large Early Years services offering multiple ECCE Programme sessions. This trial will continue in early 2018 and will facilitate consultation on the development of a new Guide to EYEI which it is anticipated will be published in 2018.

A number of follow-through Inspections were completed in late 2017. These inspections provided valuable additional insight into the impact of EYEI on the quality of early education practice in Early Years services. It is anticipated that the first reports of these follow-through inspections will be published in early 2018 and will contribute to the development of capacity for quality improvement in the Early Years sector.

3.3 Teacher Supply

The final report of the Technical Working Group on teacher supply, 'Striking the Balance', was published during 2017. The report focussed on the development of a model of primary teacher supply, and outlined the work required to establish a sustainable, long-term model of post-primary teacher supply.

In 2017, schools and management bodies reported difficulties in recruiting substitute teachers, particularly at primary level and teachers of certain subjects at post-primary level. A number of measures were put in place to address some of the supply pressures and to increase the pool of teachers available to schools, particularly to fill short term vacancies.

Publications in 2017: "Striking the Balance" an analysis of the number of teachers required

3.3.1 Fitness to Teach

Following the introduction of The Teaching Council's Fitness to Teach powers in 2016, the first Fitness To Teach hearing under the revised legislation was held in November 2017.

3.4 Teacher Education

Teacher education is a continuum from initial teacher education to induction and continuing professional development (CPD). The Department promotes the quality of teaching and learning through the provision of quality Teacher Training programmes, Continuing Professional Development and supports for Principals and Teachers in their work. This work is progressed through the Teacher

Education Programmes, Education Centres and Support Services for teachers at Primary and Post-Primary Level.

In 2017, 267,729 units of Continuing Professional Development were provided for primary and post-primary teachers. This is an increase of 23% on the 2016 figures. These included support for the introduction of the Primary Language Curriculum, new subject specifications under the Framework for Junior Cycle and at Leaving Certificate, as well as ongoing support for teachers of children with special educational needs and across all subject areas and programmes. In addition, over 700 places were provided on college based post-graduate programmes in Leadership, Special Educational Needs and Mathematics.

3.4.1 Entry to Initial Teacher Education

In October 2017, changes were made to the minimum entry requirements for primary initial teacher education. These changes seek to ensure that primary teachers have the capacity to lead in significant and fundamental areas of student learning: English, Irish and Maths.

Changes to minimum entry requirements for primary teacher training programmes have been announced to ensure that primary teachers have the capacity to lead learning in the vital areas of Maths, English and Irish to equip teachers with the right skills for 21st century teaching and learning, and the overall vision of making the Irish education and training system the best in Europe over the next decade

The revision of entry criteria for primary initial teacher education is part of a wider range of actions being implemented or developed to achieve the objective of developing the continuum of teacher education to equip teachers with the right skills for 21st century teaching and learning, and the overall vision of making the Irish education and training system the best in Europe over the next decade.

The changes took account of advice received from the Teaching Council which itself was informed by research from the ESRI. The changes also had regard to the Department's policy "Supporting a Better Transition from Second Level to Higher Education – Implementation and Next Steps" (2015).

3.4.2 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

In 2017, the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) provided a comprehensive professional development support teachers in a wide variety of subjects. A total of 145,135 CPD Units were provided by the PDST in 2017. This included CPD to support the Primary Languages curriculum which consisted of whole staff seminars together with customised school supports, which is in its final year of a 3 year implementation process (for infants to 2nd class). New CPD provided for Primary Schools included Fundamental Movement Skills FMS – Physical Literacy Phase 1, which commenced in Spring 2017, and Team Teaching for the inclusive classroom in primary schools for maths and literacy.

PDST also continued to implement the Continuing Professional Development Framework of support for the revised Stay Safe Programme and the implementation of Children First in schools.

Politics and Society was introduced as a new Leaving Certificate subject, with the first phase students commencing in 2016 and a second phase commenced in 2017.

PDST continued to provide leadership programmes for teachers in 2017, including Misneach for newly appointed principals, Forbairt for experienced principals and deputy principals, and Tánaiste for newly appointed deputy principals.

3.4.3 Continuing Professional Development – Junior Cycle Reform

A comprehensive professional development programme to support teachers of Junior Cycle continued to be rolled out in 2017. A total of 37,468 units of CPD were delivered by the Junior Cycle for Teachers Support Service (JCTSS). This included seminars for school leaders, whole school CPD, subject specific seminars, school visits and the introduction of cluster based whole school CPD days.

Some 101 school cluster days were arranged by the JCTSS. With the cluster model of CPD delivery, several schools in a geographical region were closed to students on the same day to ensure that all teachers in each of these schools could come together for the purpose of attending Junior Cycle related CPD.

3.5 School Leadership

3.5.1 Centre for School Leadership

Following completion of a procurement process in 2016, a new post-graduate Diploma in School Leadership for Aspiring Leaders was established from September 2017. A total of 257 teachers enrolled in the PDSL in 2017. The course is provided by a University of Limerick (UL) led consortium in conjunction with University College Dublin (UCD) and the National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG).

The Centre for School Leadership (CSL) mentoring programme has recruited and trained 400 experienced school leaders to mentor newly appointed principals. All newly appointed primary principals in a primary or post-primary school have access to a CSL trained mentor since September 2017.

In January 2017, a new one-to-one coaching service for school principals was launched. Principals can now avail of up to 11.5 hours of confidential and anonymous coaching support from professional qualified coaches. Six professional coaching companies and consortia were appointed to the panel, with approximately 40 individual coaches made available to principals. A total of 347 principals have availed of the CSL coaching service in 2017.

3.5.2 Posts of Responsibility

During 2017, the Department progressed discussions with the ETBI to develop a project which will encourage ETBs to adopt a more flexible and targeted approach to the deployment of Principals and Deputy Principals.

Publications in 2017: Circular 0063/2017 "Leadership and Management in Primary Schools" was published on 14 September 2017. This sets out the framework for a more flexible, distributed and accountable model of leadership in primary schools.

This initiative is aimed at improving the flexibility of the post-holders structure, transforming the current schedule of duties towards a more flexible, distributed and accountable model, where roles and responsibilities are shared and adapted to particular situations and contexts.

3.6 Suicide Prevention

A training model for the delivery of the SafeTalk suicide programme was developed by the Department, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Children and the National Office for Suicide Prevention. This training was rolled out in six Education Centres in October/November 2017, with more to follow in 2018.

3.7 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.

3.8 Quality Inspections

In 2017, all models of inspection were aligned to the quality framework published in *Looking at Our School 2016.* Report templates were revised to reflect the domains and standards outlined in the quality framework.

3.8.1 New Models of Inspection

In 2017, a review of the pilot phase of two new models of inspection was completed– Curriculum Evaluation (Primary) and Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Education Needs (Primary). Procedures for monitoring schools' compliance with Child Protection requirements were revised, following commencement of the final sections of the Children First 2015 legislation and the publication of new Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.

3.8.2 Inspection of Irish-language courses in Coláistí Gaeilge

As per the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG), the quality of provision in an agreed sample of Irish-language courses provided by various Coláistí Gaeilge during 2017 was evaluated by the Department's Inspectorate. There was ongoing communication and collaboration with DCHG in giving recognition to these courses and in planning for the programme of evaluation and this included the delivery of CPD for all inspectors. 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. A report, which was published in both languages on the Department's website, emanated from each inspection visit and in the very few instances where inspectors noted practices of significant concern, matters were promptly brought to the attention of DCHG.

Publications in 2017: Inspections of Courses in Irish-language Colleges

3.8.3 School Self-Evaluation

Schools continued to be supported to embed effective school self-evaluation (SSE) practices during 2017. Inspectors continued to engage in advisory visits in post-primary schools and produced and published a range of additional SSE support materials in 2017. The Department provided input to a range of conferences, seminars and workshops in 2017 to assist in embedding School Self-Evaluation based on the teaching and learning dimension of the quality framework in schools.

3.9 Further Education and Training Professional Development

Chaired by the Department and including representation from ETBs, ETBI and SOLAS, a steering group was established to lead on implementation of the first FET Professional Development Strategy (2017-2019). Research and development work has been carried out in the areas of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), Leadership and Management, Quality Assurance, ICT and Enterprise Engagement to inform development of initiatives in these areas, to commence in 2018.

3.10 VTOS/SST and Youthreach

Work commenced in 2017 on the independent evaluations of the Youthreach Programme and the combined evaluation of the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) and Specific Skills

Training (SST) Programmes. The Youthreach evaluation, which is being carried out by the ESRI, is scheduled for completion in 2018.

3.11 Child Protection

The Department published the 2017 Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools in December 2017 following consultation with the education partners. The purpose of the new procedures is to give clear direction and guidance to school authorities and to school personnel in relation to meeting the new statutory obligations under the Children First Act, 2015 and in the continued implementation within the school setting of the best practice guidance set out in the updated Children First National Guidance 2017, published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA).

Publications in 2017: Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools

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

- Guidelines for the use of school buildings outside of school opening hours was published, with €6.8 million funding allocated to support childcare services from 2018.
- The Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill was published.
- A new Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process was published in 2017.
- The National Skills Council was formally launched in April 2017 and has commenced implementation of its work plan.
- A total of 6,471 free higher education places on 198 courses were provided under Springboard+ 2017 to take place during the 2017/18 academic year.
- A total of 5,877 participants were supported under Springboard+ and Springboard+ 2017. The total spend in respect of Springboard in 2017 was €22 million.
- 7 new apprenticeship programmes commenced in a range of occupations including Polymer Processing, Accounting Technician, Commis Chef and International Financial Services.
- A total of 4,843 new apprentices registered by the end of 2017, representing an increase of almost 27% on 2016.
- 9 new Music Education Partnerships, as part of Phase 2 of the Music Generation programme, were announced in 2017.
- The Creative Youth programme was launched in 2017, with the aim of ensuring that every child has access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, art and coding by 2022.
- The 3rd national forum on Education for Sustainable Development was held to assist the Department in preparing its mid-term review of the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland.
- The General Scheme of the Qualifications Quality and Assurance (Amendment) Bill was approved by Government.

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

4.1 Use of School Buildings

Guidelines for the use of school buildings out of school hours was published to provide guidance to schools in relation to their current arrangements for the use of school buildings outside of school hours or for those schools who are considering putting such arrangements in place.

The Action Plan on School Age Childcare (SAC) committed both DCYA and the Department to *inter alia* use of schools and existing community facilities which have suitable environments available for SAC to be maximised where demand exists and where it can be facilitated by the school patron/trustees. The Department engaged with the relevant education stakeholders and school property owners and issued appropriate guidelines in 2017 for schools to facilitate the use of school buildings out-of-hours.

Publications in 2017: Guidelines on the use of School Buildings outside of School Hours

4.2 Parents and Student Charter

In December 2016, the Minister published the General Scheme of an Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill. The Bill went to the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills for pre-legislative scrutiny. In November 2017, the Committee published a report on their pre-legislative scrutiny. In January 2018, the Government approved the formal drafting of the Bill in conjunction with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel (OPC). The Department continues to engage with the OPC on the drafting of the Bill. The Department has also had further engagement with the Office of the Ombudsman for Children and the Ombudsman, along with their respective line Departments, on the Bill.

Publications in 2017: General Scheme of an Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill

4.3 School Patronage

Arrangements were introduced in 2011 whereby when it is decided that a new school is required to meet demographic needs in an area, the Department of Education and Skills runs a separate patronage process to decide who will operate the school. It is open to all patrons and prospective patrons to apply for patronage of the new school under this process and the level of parental preference for each patron, along with parental preference for either Irish-medium or English-medium provision, are key to decisions in relation to the outcome of the process.

In 2017, 3 new primary schools (all with a multi-denominational ethos and one of which is a Gaelscoil) and 4 new post-primary schools (one with a denominational ethos and 3 with a multi-denominational ethos [one of which has an Irish-medium Aonad]), were established under the patronage process. These outcomes are reflective of parental preferences in the areas where the schools were established to serve.

New plans aimed at providing more multi-denominational and non-denominational schools across the country, in line with the choices of families and school communities and the Programme for Government commitment in this area, were announced by the Minister in January 2017. This Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process supports transfers of existing schools to multi-/non-denominational patrons where parental demand for this exists. Two-Mile School in Killarney, Co. Kerry opened in September 2017 under the "early-movers" provision of the Schools Reconfiguration process as a multi-denominational Community National School following a successful transfer of Patronage from the Bishop of Kerry to Kerry Education and Training Board.

4.4 School Admissions

The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 passed the third stage (Committee Stage) of the legislative process in June 2017. The Bill reflects the Programme for Government commitment to publish new school admissions legislation and it addresses 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 following are some of the key features of the Bill: It

- obliges all schools to admit pupils where there are available places (80% of schools);
- places a ban on waiting lists, thus ending the discrimination against parents who move in to a new area;
- requires all schools to publish their admissions policies, which will include details of the arrangements for students where parents have requested that they attend the school without attending religious instruction;

- contains a provision prohibiting the charging of fees or seeking payment or contributions for an application for admission to a school or for the enrolment or continued enrolment of a student in a school; and
- addresses a situation where a child, with special needs or otherwise, cannot find a school place, by providing for the National Council for Special Education or Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, as appropriate to designate a school place for the child.

4.5 Skills Development

4.5.1 National Skills Strategy

The purpose of the National Skills Strategy is to provide a framework for skills development that will help drive Ireland's growth both economically and societally over the next decade. Through the vision, objectives, actions and indicators outlined, the Strategy will support the development of a well-educated, well-skilled and adaptable labour force, creating and sustaining a strong pool of talented people of all ages throughout Ireland. 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.

4.5.2 National Skills Council

The National Skills Council (NSC) was launched in 2017. Chaired by the Minister for Education and Skills, the Council is made up of high level officials from both public and private organisations. The NSC provides a mechanism to mediate demands across the full range of needs identified through the research and analysis conducted under its direction. The Council oversees research, advises on prioritisation of identified skills needs and on how to secure delivery of identified needs. The Council plays a key role in promoting and reporting on the delivery of responses by education and training providers to those priorities. It is an advisory, non-statutory body under the remit of the Department.

4.5.3 Regional Skills Fora

To help foster stronger links between employers and the education and training sector, the Department has established a network of nine Regional Skills Fora and appointed nine Regional Skills Fora Managers. Each forum provides robust labour market information to inform programme development, while encouraging greater collaboration between education and training providers and industry. In 2017, the Regional Skills Fora Managers engaged with over 700 companies, representing almost 100,000 employees. A key priority emerging for industry both nationally and regionally, is the upskilling of the existing workforce at all levels.

4.5.4 Skills for growth Audit Tool

Launched in 2017, the *Skills for Growth* Initiative is designed to increase the quality and quantity of data available on skills needs in individual enterprises, allowing for enhanced engagement between enterprise, education and training providers and other relevant members of Regional Skills Fora. Data is collected at individual company level by the Regional Skills Fora Managers using a tool created by DES in conjunction with the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit in SOLAS and Regional Skills Fora managers. This tool enables granular data on skills needs to be collected and processed. The initiative is an example of the potential of collaborative working between agencies and key partners in the project include Department of Education and Skills, SOLAS, HEA, Individual Universities and Institutes of Technology and Enterprise Ireland. As part of the *Skills for Growth* project, Enterprise Ireland is providing tailored workshops to client companies. To end March 2018, 57 companies, with a total of almost 10,000 employees, have participated in the Enterprise Ireland workshops.

4.5.5 Springboard+

Springboard+, which incorporates the ICT skills conversion programme, complements the core State-funded education and training system. Co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020, it provides free upskilling and reskilling higher education opportunities in areas of identified skills need. In June 2017, 6,471 places on 198 courses were launched under Springboard+ 2017 to take place over the academic year 2017/18. 90% of Springboard+ courses (with the exception of entrepreneurship-based courses) have a work placement. Under Springboard+ 2017, the eligibility criteria were expanded to include homemakers and those in employment or self-employment who wish to upskill, reskill or cross skill in the Biopharma/Med Tech sector and those in employment, or self-employment, in the ICT sector who wish to upskill from a level 7 to a level 8 qualification. There was a positive response to the expansion, with almost 50% of applicants coming from those who are in employment, and 7% of applicants from the "returners" cohort.

Under Springboard+ 2017, 54% of all courses approved for funding were 'flexible provision'; i.e. a mix of blended, distance and e-learning. This outcome is a response to the 2017 Call for Proposals document which specified that the proposals to be submitted by higher education providers should "be flexible and innovative in the provision proposed".

During 2017, 5,877 participants were supported on Springboard courses under both Springboard+ 2016 and Springboard+ 2017. The total spend in respect of Springboard in 2017 was €22m.

4.5.6 Apprenticeships

Work continued on the Government's initiative to expand the apprenticeship model into a range of new areas in 2017. As well as a second intake on the two new apprenticeships to get underway in 2016, 2017 saw a further seven new apprenticeship programmes get underway during the year in occupations ranging from Polymer Processing, Accounting Technician, Commis Chef and International Financial Services. Two additional programmes in ICT (Network Engineer and Software Developer) were developed in 2017 and will have their first intake of apprentices in early 2018.

During 2017, a second call for apprenticeship proposals invited consortia of enterprise, professional bodies and education and training providers to submit proposals for apprenticeship programmes to be developed to meet identified skill needs in their sector. Resulting from our second call, a further 26 new programmes have been approved for further development into national apprenticeships. These programmes span a wide range of skills and sectors including construction, engineering, horticulture and agriculture.

Registrations continued to rise across both existing craft and new apprenticeships with 4,843 new apprentices registered by the end of 2017, representing an increase of almost 27% on the 2016 figure of 3,821.

4.5.7 Further Education and Training National Learner Forum

The National Further Education and Training (FET) Learner Forum took place in April, with learners participating from across the country and from a wide range of FET programmes including Traineeships, community education, Youthreach and the Back to Education Initiative.

The Forum provides an opportunity for learners to share their views at national level as well as help influence policy. Their feedback, which is collated into a qualitative based policy report, helps to inform future decisions on the delivery of FET programmes. The report of the Forum will be published in 2018 on the AONTAS website.

4.6 Creative Youth

Creative Youth – A Plan to Enable the Creative Potential of Every Child and Young Person - was launched in December 2017. It sets out a number of measures to deliver on one of the key goals of the Creative Ireland Programme, namely: 'to ensure that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, art and coding by 2022'.

As part of the plan, Music Generation will be extended to provide nationwide coverage by 2022. Music Generation currently reaches 41,000 children and young people, a number that will increase substantially as a result of nine new Music Education Partnerships announced in 2017.

4.7 Education for Sustainable Development

The third national forum on Education for Sustainable Development was held in November 2017 to assist the Department in preparing its mid-term review of the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland, 2014-2020.

4.8 International Education Strategy

The High-level Group on International Education, chaired by the Department, continued its work to oversee the implementation of the strategic actions in the International Education Strategy 2016-2020. The group and its subgroups met on 18 occasions throughout 2017, to drive individual actions and to ensure comprehensive sector engagement.

A new 24 month stayback for international students at Masters level and above was introduced in early 2017. This is of significant assistance to our higher education institutions in their promotion and marketing efforts in international recruitment, particularly in the context of Brexit.

The engagement with Governments in international markets, to build the best environment for collaboration and partnerships for the sector, was progressed during 2017. This included visits to at least four new markets in support of greater cooperation.

The Education in Ireland brand has continuously strengthened, with enhancements to social media platforms, alumni engagement, branding strategies and professional development for staff working in the area of marketing and promotion.

While final figures are not yet available on international student numbers for 2017, it is understood that there has been progress towards the 2018 and 2020 targets. With regard to English Language Training student numbers, the 2017 outcome already exceeds the 2018 target and substantial progress towards the 2020 target has been recorded.

4.9 Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the EU Programme for Education, Training and Sport for 2014-2020. Under the Programme in 2017, the European Commission provided funding totalling €24,771,546 to Irish beneficiaries, project promoters and partners. This is an increase of approximately 11% on the 2016 figure. Funding is provided for mobility, organisational partnerships and policy work.

Funding from the European Commission for Erasmus+ (2014-2020)				
Category	**2014 (€)**	**2015 (€)**	**2016 (€)**	**2017 (€)**
Erasmus+ schools	1,307,671	2,863,261	2,600,299	3,496,583
Erasmus+ VET	4,278,442	3,904,761	4,012,928	4,229,305
Erasmus+ adult education	1,644,297	931,820	922,225	910,517

Erasmus+ youth	2,898,321	3,036,979	3,117,912	4,949,204
Erasmus+ HE	7,705,791	9,430,206	9,341,690	11,185,937
Total	**17,834,522**	**20,167,027**	**19,994,964**	**24,771,546**

4.10 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

In late 2016, the Department met with various stakeholders from the higher and further education and training sectors, learner representatives, QQI and the NCGE to consider the most effective way of steering national progress in the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

The Department will establish a Working Group to develop a national strategy on RPL and to address sectoral specific issues.

4.11 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, providers are subject to unannounced inspections, spot checks and other forms of monitoring of compliance. 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 May 2017, Government approval for the General Scheme of the Bill was received and the Scheme has been published. Drafting work on this Bill is underway.

4.12 Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill

Government Approval was granted to the General Scheme (Heads of Bill) for the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill 2017.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills has exempted the Bill from pre-legislative scrutiny and the Bill is currently with the Office of Parliamentary Council for drafting.

Publications in 2017:

- General Scheme for the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill
- 15 May, 2017 - Minister Bruton Announces New Powers for the Higher and Further Education Regulator.

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 on 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 objectives.

Review of the year under this Goal

- Shared Service projects continued to be progressed.
- A new Legal Shared Services Centre of Excellence to support the ETB sector was established.
- A new Department Data Strategy was published.
- A strategic pilot initiative was carried out to increase strategic planning capacity, arising from which, the components of a new funding model for the FET sector were agreed.
- An independent review of the current allocation model for funding higher education was undertaken.
- A number of reforms to the National Training Fund were announced in response to the consultation process on the Employer-Exchequer Investment Mechanism.
- A total of €530.8m was spent on schools' infrastructure.
- In the primary school sector, 29 new schools and 6 large scale extension/refurbishment projects were completed.
- In the post-primary school sector, 4 new schools and 7 large scale extension or refurbishment projects were completed.
- Capital expenditure on higher education infrastructure in 2017 was €22m.
- A pre-enrolment facility for the Primary Online Database (POD) was successfully implemented in 2017, and will be used by schools to enter their pupil data for the 2018/2019 academic year.
- Development work on P-POD completed enabling schools to record pupil assessments in English, other short courses and Priority Learning Units (PLUs) and to download the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) Awards.
- The Department commenced implementation of eSubmissions and migration of its website to Cloud as part of its ICT Strategy 2015-2019.
- During the school year 2016/17 over 115,000 students (including almost 12,000 children with special educational needs) availed of school transport to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country at a total cost of almost €190 million.
- A review of the School Transport Appeals Board was completed in line with Programme for Government commitments.
- An additional ESF allocation of €2m was approved for the ESF Operational Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020.
- An increase of 5.8% in the budget allocation for education and training was secured in Budget 2018 bringing the Budget for 2018 to €10.085 billion with a capital allocation of €745 million.

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

5.1 Action Plan for Education (2016-2019)

In 2017, the Department continued to support the management and implementation of the reform agenda across the Education and Training Sector. Under the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 framework an updated annual plan was produced. The Action Plan for Education 2017 set out the high-level priority actions for the sector for the year, with progress measured against targets through published quarterly progress reports and an end of year review (which was published in early February 2018 along with the Quarter 4 Progress Report). This ensured that progress against stated goals and objectives was regularly monitored throughout the year. Overall for 2017, 86% of actions targeted for delivery were achieved or substantially achieved. These publications are available on the Department's website www.education.ie.

Publications in 2017:

- Action Plan for Education- End of Year Review for 2016
- Action Plan for Education- 2017 Annual Plan
- Action Plan for Education- Quarter 1 Progress Report
- Action Plan for Education- Quarter 2 Progress Report
- Action Plan for Education- Quarter 3 Progress Report

5.2 Public Sector Reform Programme

In 2017, the Department continued to promote the use of appropriate structures and processes to ensure Management Board oversight and governance of the development and implementation of DES commitments under the Public Service Reform agenda, and to promote Project and Programme Management structures and methodologies throughout the organisation.

The Department also worked closely with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to support the development of Our Public Service (OPS) 2020. Launched in December 2017, this framework supports continuous development and innovation across the sector, in order to build a stronger public service and deliver better quality services.

Also in 2017, as part of the Centre for Effective Services' GOAL Programme, the Department continued its work on the "Building Collaborative Working Practices" project. This project's purpose is to strengthen the operation, management, and governance of collaborative working practices in the Department. A suite of documents was developed to: strengthen collaboration in the context of policy development, policy review, and policy implementation processes; develop good practice guidance for collaboration; develop protocols for a consistent approach to oversight and governance of collaborative work. The Department is coordinating this project, with the support of the Centre for Effective Services.

5.2.1 Shared Services Implementation

In 2017, the Department continued to manage and implement the reform agenda across the Education and Training Sector, through the development and implementation of the Education & Training Sector Shared Services Plan 2017-2020. The Department continued to support the implementation of new ways of working, through driving the Shared Services projects under the Plan. Shared Services projects: ETB payroll & finance, Higher Education Payroll and Upgrading continued to be progressed in 2017.

The first phase of the Higher Education Payroll Shared Service project, in the form of the EduCampus MIS Refresh project, progressed in 2017 with Stage One of that project being completed.

Project Managers and Project teams were also appointed for the Higher Education Shared Services Payroll and Schools Employees Data Records and Payroll Shared Services Project.

The ETB Payroll Shared Service Project published an RFT for a payroll system delivered as a managed service and has brought that process to contract award status in 2017. In 2017, ETB Financial Shared Services Project developed the detailed design, functional requirements and technical specifications for an integrated financial solution.

The Alternative Models of Service Delivery Pilot Schools Payments project was also progressed in 2017, with the procurement process for a framework agreement for suppliers to provide services to schools being completed. Services from these suppliers will be available for schools to avail of in 2018.

The Department also worked to further the funding, integration and governance of the Department's sectoral procurement supports as part of its Shared Services offering in 2017, and this work will continue in 2018. The development of governance structures between the Department and the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) during 2017 was also progressed.

Underpinning these initiatives, while framing the strategic direction for the Department into the future, the Department continued to progress the Department's Shared Services Plan for 2017-2020 and the development of Shared Services governance in 2017.

5.2.2 ETB/SOLAS Programme Board

In 2017, the Department's ETB/SOLAS Programme Board continued to actively support and enable the implementation of the overall reform programme for the ETB/SOLAS sector. This Programme Board is chaired by the Department's Secretary General and its membership includes members of the Department's senior management team along with the General Secretary of Education and Training Boards Ireland, the CEO of SOLAS and the Chief Executives of two ETBs. The Programme Board is assisted by a Project Management Office (PMO) which supports the implementation of long-term strategic objectives as well as immediate, operational matters arising from the change agenda for both ETBs and SOLAS.

During 2017, the Programme Board oversaw the completion of a number of sector wide reform initiatives to complete the stabilisation of the ETB infrastructure in preparation for the implementation of Shared Services including establishing a Legal Services Centre of Excellence in ETBI to support the ETB sector, the establishment of governance and structures to enable the implementation of the agreed ETB ICT strategy, the connection of all ETB Training Centres to Government Networks and the continuation of the review of quality assurance across the ETB FET sector.

The new organisational structure for the ETB sector Phase I was also completed with the appointment of the outstanding senior managers. 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 are now in place across the ETBs to support the new structure.

Phase II of the ETB organisation design was also initiated with the gathering of data on the current ETB organisation and structures below the Director level throughout 2017.

The ETB Payroll Shared Service Project published an RFT for a payroll system delivered as a managed service and has brought that process to contract award status in 2017. In 2017, ETB Financial Shared Services Project developed the detailed design, functional requirements and technical specifications for an integrated financial solution.

Publications in 2017: Education & Training Sector Shared Services Plan 2017-2020

5.3 Data Strategy

A new Department Data Strategy was published in early 2017 with four main objectives. These focus on building internal data capacity and capability, strengthening data governance and management, improving data collaboration and maximising the use and value of data. The implementation of the strategy's Action Plan is being led by the Data Governance and Support Unit. The Unit also provides direction, guidance and support on all corporate data activity as well as coordinating the Department's participation across all major central government data initiatives.

5.4 Further Education and Training Framework

Significant progress was made during the year in putting in place a framework for the improved planning and funding of Further Education and Training (FET) based on a strategic 'inputs – outputs' model. A strategic pilot initiative was carried out to increase strategic planning capacity, arising from which, the components of a new funding model were agreed. These will, from 2018 onwards, inform the annual planning process, incorporating a strategic dialogue resulting in performance agreements between SOLAS and each ETB.

5.5 Higher Education Funding

The Report of the Expert Group on Future Funding (Cassells Report) was published in 2016. The report clearly outlines the funding challenges in the higher education sector and offers a number of potential policy approaches for consideration. As committed to in the Programme for Government, the Cassells report was referred to the Oireachtas Joint Committee for Education and Skills for consideration. Departmental engagement with the committee continues with a view to establishing an agreed approach and political consensus.

Pending a decision on the Cassells' Report from the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education further reform to higher education funding have been undertaken.

The report on the review of the funding model proposes greater connection between higher education and national skills needs. It is also proposed to increase the transparency around the level of investment in meeting skills needs. The report will also facilitate greater progress in terms of research, innovation and performance across the higher education sector.

Following a consultation process with employers groups, an increase in the National Training Fund (NTF) levy of 0.1% was implemented as part of Budget 2018 measures, with a further 0.1% proposed in 2019 and 2020 subject to reforms of the NTF. The increase in funding from the NTF is a key strategic element of the overall funding increase for higher and further education and provision of skills gaps.

An independent review of the current allocation model for funding higher education was undertaken in 2017. This review provides a roadmap for transitioning towards a reformed funding model that is more transparent, consistent across higher education institutions, incentivises actions in key strategic areas such as research and STEM provision, and supports improved accountability while also respecting institutional autonomy. From 2018 - 2021 an implementation group will inform the phased rollout of the recommendations of this report.

5.6 National Training Fund

In response to issues raised by employers as part of the consultation process on the Employer-Exchequer Investment Mechanism, a number of reforms of the National Training Fund were announced in 2017 as part of Budget 2018. The first of these reforms, an independent and comprehensive review of the National Training Fund commenced in 2017. This review has wide

ranging terms of reference designed to make the Fund more transparent, as well as to better align the Fund with employer needs. The review will be completed in 2018.

5.7 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 110,000 people on a fortnightly basis.

In 2017, the Department processed retirement applications for over 1,000 teachers and non-teaching staff. With the development of the pension modeller on the Department's website, pension scheme members are now in a position to access the modeller and obtain an estimate of pension benefits, while the Pension Unit continues to issue statements as part of the retirement process. It also provided for over 1,100 pension transfers, provided for over 500 notional service quotes, processed over 900 family law queries and processed in the region of 100 applications for professional added years for employees in the third level sector.

The Department completed Phase I of a Digitisation Project to scan online all payroll and pension files during 2017 and commenced with Phase II which is scheduled for completion during 2018. Approximately 20,000 files were completed at end of 2017.

5.8 Building Programme 2017

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 2017, a total of €530.8m was spent on schools' infrastructure. Outputs from this investment include 46 large-scale projects that were completed; 35 in the primary school sector and 11 in the post-primary school sector. A total of 13,254 permanent school places, of which 9,204 were additional permanent places, were provided in 29 new primary schools and 864 permanent places of which 672 were additional permanent places were provided in 6 existing primary schools. In the post-primary school sector, 4 new schools and 7 large scale extension or refurbishment projects were completed in 2017. These projects delivered a total of 4,675 permanent school places, of which 3,325 were additional permanent places. During 2017, the Department commenced reviews of 120 projects in schools that had received devolved funding and completed their projects by the end of 2016 to see if works were carried out in accordance with Department guidelines. A range of Frameworks for consultancy appointments are in operation for larger, complex and urgent projects.

5.8.1 Additional Accommodation Scheme

In 2017, 163 projects were completed under the Additional Accommodation Scheme and Prefab Replacement Initiative and provided 4,658 permanent school places.

5.8.2 Summer Works and Emergency Works Schemes

During 2017 a total of 438 projects were announced under the Summer Works Scheme and 328 projects were deemed eligible for inclusion under the Emergency Works Scheme.

5.8.3 Property Acquisitions

A total of 10 property transactions were completed in 2017. These were required to facilitate permanent accommodation for schools and also to facilitate access arrangements or additions to existing sites.

5.8.4 Diverse Methodologies for the Construction of Major Projects

The Department's five 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 2017. Construction continued on a further PPP schools bundle, which will deliver 5 schools and 1 Further Education College. Agencies including 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 in the delivery of 48 major school projects.

5.8.5 Memorandum of Understanding with Local Authorities

Department officials continued to work with officials across the local authority sector to progress the acquisition of sites in relevant areas during 2017 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 of Education and Skills with greater certainty in relation to planning outcomes associated with sites. The Department also avails of professional expertise to assist in the identification and assessment of potential site options.

5.8.6 Website Information

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.

5.8.7 Higher Education Capital Projects

Capital expenditure on higher education infrastructure in 2017 was €22m. Funding was used to progress a number of key projects, including the construction of the Glucksman Library at UL, the consolidation of Dublin Institute of Technology at Grangegorman and infrastructural improvements in a number of Institutes of Technology. A devolved grant of €5.9 million 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 progressed in 2017; this will inform the parameters of the forthcoming higher education PPP Programme.

5.8.8 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) set 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 nine 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. 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 671 schools engaging at various levels with the programme. Schools that engage with the Energy in Education Programme can access, robust, practical advice and are realising savings through low and no cost measures.

This year the Department and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland commenced an energy efficient retrofit pilot scheme for schools. The pilot programme will focus for three years on medium

to deep retrofit measures to improve the energy efficiency of existing schools which represent a variety of challenges including different building ages, archetypes, and retrofit requirements. The energy efficiency upgrade measures undertaken in the pilot are considered medium to deep, and include architectural, electrical and mechanical upgrades. The immediate result for the ten schools in the pilot this year was an increase in comfort within the school, and an average decrease of 36% in energy bills. The longer-term outcome of the pilot will be to create a programme where further schools can undertake energy efficiency upgrades based on a range of typical retrofit options, which have been tried and tested during the pilot and to help create an accurate and scalable model for energy efficient retrofits of schools across Ireland.

Publications in 2017: Guidelines on the use of school buildings out of hours were published in October 2017

5.9 ICT Developments in DES

5.9.1 POD (Primary Online Database)

An enhancement to POD, to facilitate pre-enrolments was implemented in June 2017.

5.9.2 PPOD (Post-Primary Online Database)

PPOD was enhanced in two phases in 2017, the first to facilitate the recording of short courses undertaken by Junior Cycle pupils and the second to facilitate the recording of local assessments for English, Short Courses and Priority Learning Units (PLUs).

5.9.3 Generation of Junior Cycle Profiles of Achievement (JCPAs)

The following applications went live in December 2017, to enable schools generate JCPAs for students, under the new Junior Cycle Programme:

- JCAD (Junior Cycle Awards Database) for pupils attending Special Schools, Youthreach Centres etc., to facilitate the recording of local assessments for English, Short Courses and Priority Learning Units (PLUs).
- JCAG (Junior Cycle Awards Generator) to collate details for each pupil of Short Courses/PLUs undertaken and assessments for same, examination results from the State Examinations Commission (SEC), school logo etc. to populate the award.
- Software for schools to download populated awards for all pupils, with an editable field to input Other Areas of Learning.

5.9.4 eSubmissions

eSubmissions developed by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), under the Build-to-Share strand of the Public Service ICT Strategy was implemented by the Department in October 2017.

5.10 School Transport

During the school year 2016/17 over 115,000 children including almost 12,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 4,700 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 115 million kilometres annually at a total cost of almost €190 million in 2017.

A Review of the School Transport Appeals Board was published in July. In line with the report's recommendations, a new simpler and user friendly online appeals process is being developed to manage appeals and allow for better communication.

Publications in 2017: Review of the School Transport Appeals Board

5.11 Brexit

The Department has actively input to Government planning for Brexit and has participated in all relevant cross-Departmental working groups and committees. Further stakeholder consultations were held covering the schools area and on skills needs of the economy. Support was also provided in relation to the Civic Dialogue on Brexit. The Department continues to engage with other EU partners and with the UK in order to ensure the best outcome for the education sector.

5.12 European Globalisation Fund (EGF)

The final reports on the Lufthansa Technik Airmotive Ireland (LTAI) and PWA International (PWAI) EGF Programmes were submitted to the European Commission in March 2017 and December 2017, respectively. These reports are available at www.egf.ie. Some 339 former workers of the companies, as well as some 268 young people not in employment, education, or training were supported under these Programmes through an innovative mix of mainstream and tailored supports in the areas of guidance, training, second and third level education and enterprise supports.

The final EGF-eligible expenditure on the LTAI Programme was €2.983m, representing 72% of the approved allocation for the Programme while the full allocation of €0.737m was expended on the PWAI Programme. The EGF meets 60% of the approved Programme expenditure.

5.13 European Social Fund (ESF) Operational Programme

Following the mid-term review of the Multi-Annual Financial Framework, an additional ESF allocation of €2m was approved for the ESF Operational Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020, bringing the overall Programme allocation to €1.157 billion for the period. The European Commission approved the revised PEIL submitted by the Department. The Programme allocation comprises €545m from the ESF, a matching contribution from the Exchequer, and €68m under the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).

The PEIL Programme Monitoring Committee approved the inclusion of a number of additional activities under the YEI axis of PEIL in 2017, including Community Training Centres (CTCs), the Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection's new Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS), which will commence later in 2018. These activities replaced a number of activities which were withdrawn from PEIL in 2017, including JobBridge and TÚS.

During 2017, development work on a new eCohesion IT system to meet the EU regulatory requirements was progressed. Finalisation of the system, together with the related designation of the relevant authorities, will allow Ireland to commence the submission of interim payment applications to the European Commission in 2018.

A conference was held in November 2017 in Dublin Castle to mark the 60th anniversary of the ESF in Europe which brought together ESF stakeholders, policy makers and social partners while also giving individual participants an opportunity to share their experiences of ESF co-funded activities.

The Final Report for the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCIOP) 2007-2013 was submitted to the European Commission in March 2017. The final payment of €18.8m was received in December 2017, realising the full ESF contribution of €375.4m or 50% of the overall Programme allocation of €750m.

Publications in 2017: A Citizen's Summary of the 2016 Annual Report on PEIL www.esf.ie.

5.14 Department Expenditure

An increase of 5.8% in the budget allocation for education and training was secured in Budget 2018. This will bring the Budget for the Department to €10.085 billion, which is the highest ever level, with a capital allocation of €745 million.

The Budget will provide for over 2,300 additional posts in schools by the end of 2018. Funding was secured as part of the budget to provide for demographic growth in the population, to improve the staffing schedule in primary schools, to further strengthen guidance counselling provision, to provide for additional posts in the National Educational Psychological Service, to increase the number of release days available to teaching principals and to allow for further implementation of DEIS Plan 2017, where educational disadvantage needs are identified, to deliver equality of opportunity in schools.

Funding was made available to support a range of policy initiatives of strategic economic importance, including foreign languages, STEM policy and digital learning. Funding was allocated from the Exchequer and also from within the Department's existing resources to advance Junior Cycle reform and curricular reform in the areas of primary languages and at Senior Cycle, Politics & Society, Agricultural Science, Applied Maths, Physical Education, Computer Science and Science.

The Budget provides for a Higher and Further Education Training package worth €64.5 million, building on last year's Exchequer investment of €36.5 million.

Following the Capital Review, additional capital funding of €663 million has also been allocated to the education and training sector over the period 2018-2021. Half of this additional funding (€332m) will be provided to the schools sector. It is planned that in the period 2018 to 2021, over 350 announced large scale projects will advance to tender and construction under the Department's 6 Year Construction Programme. These projects consist of new schools, large scale extensions and major refurbishment works. €331 million over the period 2018-2021 will be used to significantly boost capital investment in higher and further education, including research. In addition, as set out at 5.8.7 above, a Public Private Partnership (PPP) programme will facilitate investment in 11 new buildings in the Institute of Technology sector, with a strong focus on STEM, including ICT, engineering and life sciences.

5.15 Internal Audit / ESF Financial Control

During 2017, the Internal Audit Section and the European Social Fund (ESF) Audit Authority were amalgamated into the Internal and EU Audit Unit. The Internal Audit Section 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 ESF Audit Authority 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 Section and the ESF Audit Authority report to the Committee on the conduct of these programmes and the finalisation of audit reports. A total of ten reports were finalised in 2017 and both areas track, on a quarterly basis, progress on the implementation of recommendations arising from audit reports. At year end, all ESF audit report recommendations had been fully implemented.

No internal Protected Disclosures were brought to the attention of the Head of Internal and EU Audit Unit or the Audit Committee in 2017.

5.16 Dealing with Past Abuse

In December 2016, the Comptroller and Auditor General published special report (No 96) on the Cost of Child Abuse Inquiry and Redress. The decision that the State would establish a statutory redress scheme was made regardless of whether or not there would be contributions from other sources. Contributions have been sought from the religious congregations under a) the legally binding 2002 Indemnity Agreement and b) the 2009 voluntary offers.

The total offers made by the congregations under the two rounds amount to €480.6m while to end December 2017 total contributions amounting to €224 million had been received. A summary of these contributions is outlined in the table below.

Summary of original offers made plus amounts realised

	Offered (€m)	**Realised (€m)**	**To be realised (€m)**	**Percentage of offer realised / yet to be realised**
2002 Indemnity Agreement	128	123.14	4.86	96%/4%
2009 Voluntary offers (*)	352.61	101.22	251.39	29%/71%
	480.61	**224.36**	**256.25**	**47%/53%**

* The values of a number of properties fully transferred to the State are not yet available.

The Department continued to furnish the Council of Europe with bi-annual plans 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 bi-annual plans show the progressive improvement in child protection measures undertaken by the State.

The drafting of the Retention of Records Bill is nearing completion. The key feature is that, on the dissolution of the Residential Institutions Redress Board, the Residential Institutions Redress Review Committee and the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, their records would be deposited with the National Archives where they would be preserved and sealed for a period of 75 years.

Appendix A – Key indicators of progress and success of Action Plan for Education 2017

Key indicators of progress and success for Goal 1 in 2017 as published in Action Plan for Education 2017 - End of Year Review

Literacy	
The 2016 PIRLS report published in 2017 shows that Ireland's 4th class primary school children are among the best in Europe and OECD countries for reading skills. Irish pupils' overall reading achievement score has improved by 15 points since the last cycle of the PIRLS study which was in 2011. The percentage of Irish pupils who have advanced reading skills rose from 16% in 2011 to 21% in 2016, which is much higher than the international average in PIRLS. Irish pupils also performed exceptionally well on the new online reading assessment in ePIRLS. Only one other country (Singapore) outperformed Ireland on this test. These findings are consistent with a number of other recent, major reports including the National Assessments of English, Reading and Mathematics 2014 and PISA 2015.	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase the proportion of students performing at level 5 or above for reading in PISA to 12% by 2020 from a base of 11.4% in 2012.	Measure for PISA 2015 is 10.7%
Consolidate the proportion of students performing below level 2 for reading at 8.5% by 2020 from a base of 9.6% in 2012.	Measure for PISA 2015 is 10.2%
Numeracy	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase the percentage of students taking higher level maths at the end of Junior cycle to 60% by 2020.	Measure at end 2016 was 55% and 57% at end 2017.
Increase the percentage of students taking higher level maths at the end of Senior Cycle to 30% by 2020 from a base of 22% in 2012.	Measure in 2016 shows 28% and 30% for 2017.
Increase the proportion of students performing at Level 5 or above for maths in PISA to 13% by 2020. Measure in 2012 was 10.7%	Measure for PISA 2015 is 9.8%
Decrease the proportion of students preforming below level 2 for maths in PISA to 10.5% by 2020. Measure in 2012 was 16.9%	Measure for PISA 2015 is 15%

Science	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase the proportion of students performing at level 5 or above for science in PISA to 10% by 2020 from a base of 10.8% in 2012. Decrease the proportion of students performing at level 2 or below for science in PISA, to below 10% by 2020 from a base of 11.1% in 2012.	Measure for PISA 2015 is 7.1% Measure for PISA 2015 is 15.3%
Retention	
Ireland is currently 2nd in EU28 for percentage of people aged 20-24 with at least upper-secondary education at 94%. School retention rates in Ireland show that Ireland's Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate school completion rates are among the highest in Europe. Early leavers from education and training overall is at 6.3%, this is down by over 40% from 10.8% in 2011, improving Ireland's ranking in this measure by 7 places to 7th in Europe. (EU-28).	
Attainment	
The percentage of 20-24 year olds in Ireland whose highest level of education is at least upper secondary level education is the 2nd best in Europe at 94%.	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase tertiary attainment among 30-34 years olds to 60% by 2020	Measure in 2016: 52.9% (Systems Performance Framework).
Strengthening transitions	
A new grading system and new common points scheme for the Leaving Certificate was introduced There were 964 CAO offerings at level 8 in 2017 (Universities offering 529, Institutes of Technology 412 and Colleges 23 entry routes). This is down from 1,036 in 2014. One of the targets for the transitions programme is to reduce the number of entry routes. 80,345 applicants to the CAO in 2017 were scored using the new Common Points Scale	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase progression to Higher Education and Training by holders of Further Education qualifications (percentage of new entrants to HE shows basis for admission is a FE qualification) to 10% by 2019. Measure in 2012 was 6.6%	Measure in 2015: 6.4%.
Wellbeing	
The number of NEPS Psychologists was increased and time allocation to DEIS schools was increased to ensure learners with emerging and a complex learning and emotional needs have access to supports of an educational psychologist. Provision of Wellbeing programme to all students in the first year of Junior Cycle commenced in September 2017.	

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Extension of incredible years teacher programme in DEIS primary school. Increase reach from c20,000 leaners in 130 school to 104,000 learners in 646 (2019) Extension of Friends programme in DEIS schools. Increase reach from c25,000 learners in 275 schools to 172,000 learners in 831 DEIS schools, with 8,600 teachers involved (2019)	December 2017: 1100 teachers have completed the training, with 463 teacher having completed the first 3 modules of this 6-module programme. (Potential impact on 31,260 children) December 2017: 1193 teachers have completed the programme (with a potential impact on 23,860 students)

Key indicators of progress and success for Goal 2 in 2017 as published in Action Plan for Education 2017 - End of Year Review

Retention (DEIS)	
Analysis show particularly significant improvements in retention rates in schools in the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) scheme. The gap in retention rates to Leaving Certificate between DEIS and non-DEIS schools continues to narrow, halving from 16.8% for the 2001 cohort to 8.5% for the 2010 cohort.	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Achieve 90% retention rates in second-level DEIS schools by 2025.	Last measure of 2014/15 cohort (year of entry 2009) was 83%.
Literacy (DEIS)	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Reduce the percentage of 6th class students in DEIS band 1 primary schools scoring at level 1 or below in National Assessments for English, Reading and Mathematics to 40% by 2020.	Measure was 66.4% in 2009 and 47% in 2014
Increase the percentage of 15 year olds in DEIS post-primary schools scoring at level 5 or above for reading literacy in PISA to 10% by 2020.	Measure in 2012 was 4.8% and 7% in 2015
Decrease the percentage of 15 year olds in DEIS post-primary schools scoring at level 1 or below for reading literacy in PISA to 12% by 2020.	Measure in 2012 was 25.4% and in 16% in 2015.
Increase the percentage of 6th class students in DEIS Band 1 primary schools scoring at level 3 or above for reading literacy in National Assessments for English, Reading and Mathematics to 27% by 2020	Measure in 2009 was 11.9% and in 2014 was 21.3%
Numeracy (DEIS)	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase the percentage of 6th class students in DEIS Band 1 primary schools scoring at level 3 or above for mathematics in National Assessments for English, Reading and Mathematics to 27% by 2020.	Measure in 2009 was 12.9% and 18.7% in 2014
Reduce the percentage of 6th class students in DEIS band 1 primary schools scoring at level 1 or below for mathematics in National Assessments to 42% by 2020.	Measure was 66.4% in 2009 and 49.9% in 2014

Increase the percentage of 15 year olds in DEIS post-primary schools scoring at level 5 or above for mathematics in PISA to 10% by 2020.	Measure in 2012 was 5.2% and 6% in 2015
Decrease the percentage of 15 year olds in DEIS post-primary schools scoring at level 1 or below for mathematics in PISA to 16% by 2020.	Measure in 2012 was 37.3% and 22% in 2015
Attendance rates (DEIS)	
The mean percentage of student days lost in DEIS schools has improved slightly or remained the same between 2012/13 and 2014/2015 (change of 1 percentage point). In comparison with non-DEIS schools the variance is between 1 and 3%.	
Access to Higher Education	
The latest data available from the HEA shows that access to third level by disadvantaged groups is improving. In particular, the number and share of students from disadvantaged backgrounds rose from 22% to 26%, and of students with a disability rose from 7% to 11% between 2012/13 and 2014/15. (From 9,147 to 11,189 and 2,561 to 3,343 respectively).	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase participation in higher education by those from the non-manual worker group (18 to 20 age cohort) to 30% by 2019.	Most recent measure in 2012 shows this rate to be 23%.
Increase participation in higher education by those from the semi/unskilled manual worker group (including the agricultural worker group, 18-20 age cohort) to 35% by 2019.	Most recent measure in 2012 shows this rate to be 26%.
Increase participation in higher education of mature students (number of full and part-time/flexible mature entrants as a percentage of all new entrants) to 24% by 2019.	Measure in 2012 was 19% , 15% in 2015, 16% 2016.
Increase participation in higher education by people with disabilities (percentage of all new entrants to higher education) to 8% by 2019.	Measure in 2012 was 6.4% and in 2015 was 7.8% and in 2016 was 10.3%.
Increase number of Irish Travellers in higher education (full and part-time undergraduate new entrants) to 80 by 2019.	Measure in 2012 was 35 students and in 2015 was 36 students.

Key indicators of progress and success for Goal 3 in 2017 as published in Action Plan for Education 2017 - End of Year Review

Inspections	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase the number of Early Years Inspections to 600 in 2017 from an initial 22 in 2015. 491 were conducted by end 2016.	1191 inspections have been conducted to the end of 2017 – 491 in 2016 and 700 in 2017.
Publish 1,000 Early Years inspection reports in 2017 from an initial base of 200 in 2016.	1003 inspection reports published on the Department's website.
Conduct c1500 primary and post-primary school inspections.	4519 inspections carried out in recognised schools, centres for education and other settings to end 2017.
Support schools in implementing the School Self-Evaluation process.	A range of support materials provided to schools and 202 visits carried out in 10 primary and 192 post-primary schools: visits to primary schools did not progress because of the INTO Directive against participation.
Leadership	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Provide professional coaching for 400 Principals in 2017. Offer 183,000 CPD units in 2017. Measure was 129,702 in 2012 and 206,217 in 2016. Roll-out of a mentoring programme for all newly appointed school Principals.	347 Principals engaged with the service in 2017. 225,000 (estimated) CPD units provided during 2017. 257 teachers enrolled on new post graduate diploma in school leadership (level 9) September 2017 All newly appointed school Principals have access to a mentor since September, 2017.
Clustering for innovation and excellence	
School Clusters for Schools Excellence Fund, HEI Clusters under higher education strategy, ETB Clusters for Apprenticeship development	

Key indicators of progress and success for Goal 4 in 2017 as published in Action Plan for Education 2017 - End of Year Review

School Choice	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase the number of multi-/non-denominational schools to 400 by 2030.	Number of multi-/non-denominational schools at end 2017 is 151.
Strengthen innovation, entrepreneurship and research	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Expand research through a new competitive Frontiers Research programme. Target to make 24 awards in 2017. Increase postgraduate research enrolments to 475 awards by 2020 from 282 in 2012. Measure shows 275 awards in 2016. Increase the number of funded post-doctoral places (enterprise partnership programmes) to 32 by 2020. Measure shows 12 employer partnership awards in 2016.	Assessment process for this programme was not completed in 2017. Awards will be made in 2018. Estimated 271 awards in 2017. Measure shows 13 employer partnership awards in 2017.
Address skills needs	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase number of available Springboard+ places by 30% by 2021 in both universities and Institutes of Technology. From a base of 4836 in 2011/12. Target to provide 4,476 Springboard+ places in 2017/2018. Increase ICT skills through the provision of places on ICT skills conversion courses, as part of Springbaord+. Offer 1,995 places in the 2017/18 year. Measure for 2015/2016 was 1,133 and 1,650 in 2016/17. Increase the number of FET opportunities offered to over 320,000 in 2017 from a base of 263,276 in 2012. Increase the number of in-employment upskilling, through Skillnets+ to over 43,000 in 2017 from a base of 37,293 in 2012. Measure in 2016 was 44,413.	Springboard+ 2017 provides for 6,471 places on 208 courses over the academic year 2017/18 1040 ICT conversion courses offered in 2017/2018 There were 338,427 beneficiaries in FET in 2016. The number of beneficiaries in 2017 will be available in April 2018. Measure in 2017 was 48,900.

Apprenticeships	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Develop 13 new Apprenticeships in 2017. Attract 800 new registrations on new apprenticeship programmes in 2017. Increase the number of new registrations on craft apprenticeships to 4,147 in 2017 from base of 1430 in 2012. Double 9,000 annual new apprenticeship registrations by 2020) with 78 separate apprenticeships in place.	3 new apprenticeships commenced in 2017 Measure in 2016 was 82 new registrations and 32 in 2017. 3,742 new registrations were recorded in 2016 and 2200 in 2017. Over 4,500 in 2017
Traineeships	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Offer more choice through the development of 2 new traineeships in 2017 bringing the total to 28 traineeships. Attract 200 enrolment on new/relaunched traineeships Attract 2,400 enrolments on existing traineeship programmes.	4 new traineeships were developed in 2017 bringing the total to 30. Midpoint 2017 showed 234 enrolments. In 2017 there were 2,718 total enrolments on new/relaunched (234) and existing (2484) traineeships.
Lifelong learning	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase the number of HE entrants (overall) studying on a flexible basis to 22% by 2019 and 25% by 2021. Systems performance framework in HE. Measure shows 19% for 2015/2016 Increase the numbers of HE entrants studying on a flexible basis by 25% by 2021	Measure shows 20% for 2016/2017 2016/17 20% or 45,018 of total enrolments are flexible learners.
International	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Grow the number of international student numbers to 44,000 students by 2020. Grow the English-language teaching sector to 132,500 students by 2020.	Measure in 2014/15 showed 33,018 students. Measure in 2014/15 showed 106,000 students.

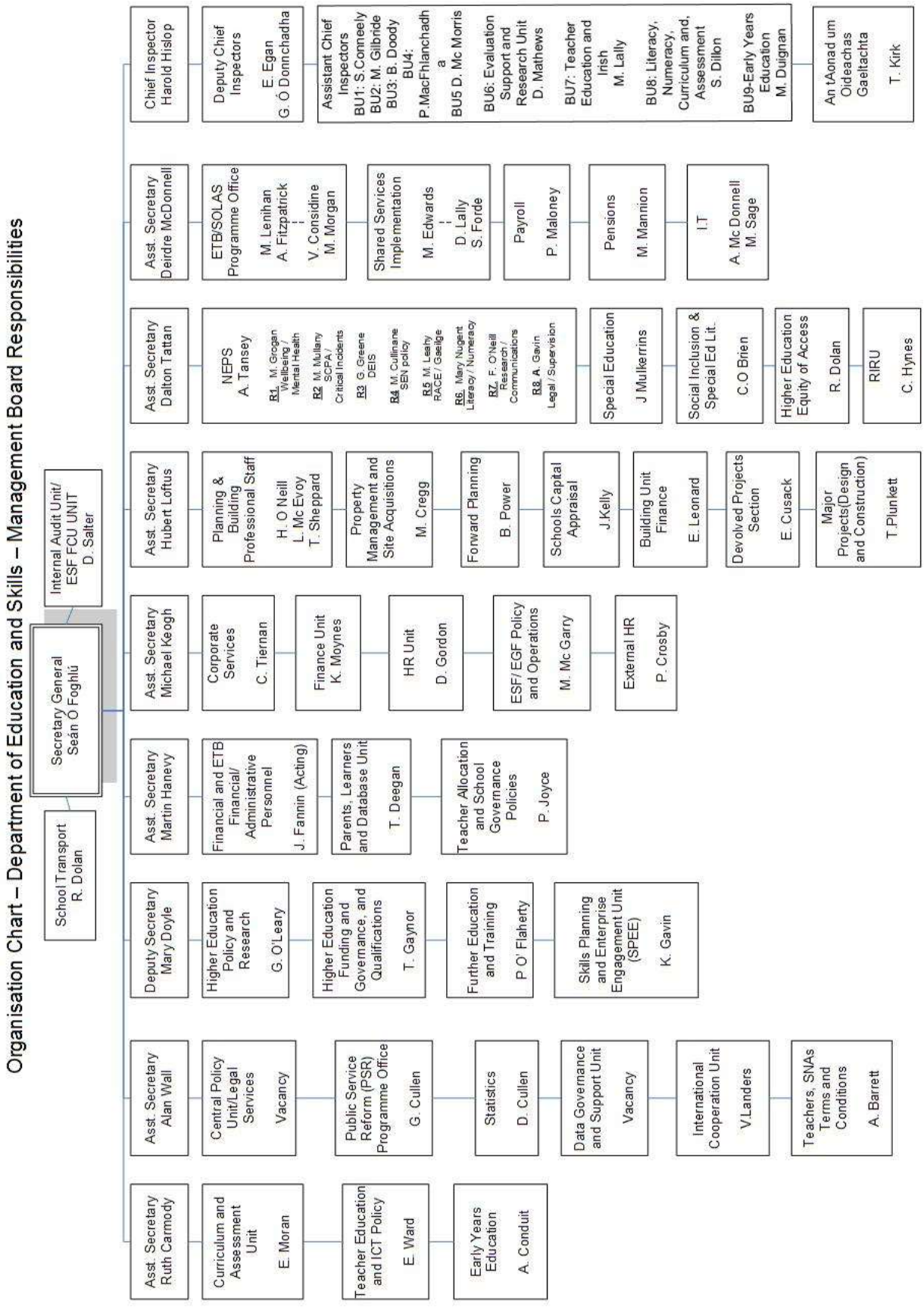
Increase the output value of internationalisation to €1.15bn per annum by 2020 International students to represent 15% of full-time students by 2020.	International Education Strategy baseline €819m in 2014/15 In 2016/17, 11.6% of all full-time students in HEA-funded higher education institutions were international students
Strengthen relationship with employers	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Improve Employer satisfaction rates with HEI collaboration with enterprise by 25% as tracked in National Employer Survey Participation in Erasmus+ in Higher Education and other Study and Work Placements Abroad to reach 4,400 by 2022 in accordance with international strategy.	Companies <50 employees: 55% rated collaboration as good/very good Companies with 51 – 250 employees: 60% rated collaboration as good/very good Companies >251+ employees: 75% rated collaboration as good/very good 3,135 in 2016
Research	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase of 500 new postgraduate research enrolments in disciplines aligned to enterprise and other national needs by 2020.	Measure shows 2,235 in 2014/15

Key indicators of progress and success for Goal 5 in 2017 as published in Action Plan for Education 2017 - End of Year Review

School Transport	
Working with Bus Éireann, approximately 114,000 children were transported on a daily basis in 2017 including over 10,000 children with special educational needs, providing safe, efficient and cost effective school transport services for eligible children.	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Provide safe, efficient and cost-effective school transport for on over 6000 routes in 2017	School transport operated 6,400 routes in 2017.
School Building Programme	
A total of 46 large scale projects were completed in 2017. These projects comprised 35 new school buildings and 11 large scale extensions. These projects delivered over 13,200 additional school places as well as almost 5,600 replacement school places. The additional school places provided in 2017 will assist in meeting the requirement outlined in the Capital Plan - Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021.	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Meet demographic demand though the provision of 14,000 additional permanent primary school places and 4,000 replacement primary school places in 2017.	13,834 additional permanent school places (9,876 large scale projects, 3,958 additional accommodation places) were provided in primary schools in 2017.
Meet demographic demand though the provision of 4,500 additional permanent post-primary school places and 1,000 replacement post primary school places in 2017.	4,468 additional permanent post-primary school places (3,325 large scale projects, 1,143 additional accommodation scheme and 1,350 replacement places) were provided in post primary schools in 2017.
Complete 130 extension/refurbishment projects for primary schools.	134 extension/refurbishment projects for primary schools (6 large scale extensions, 128 additional accommodation projects) completed in 2017
Complete 35 extension/refurbishment projects for post-primary schools.	36 extension/refurbishment projects for post-primary schools (5 large scale extension, 31 additional accommodation projects) completed in 2017
Build 29 new/replacement primary schools.	29 new/replacement primary schools completed in 2017.
Build 6 new/replacement post-primary schools.	6 new/replacement post-primary schools completed in 2017.
Payroll and pension services provided to teachers and school staff in all schools (except the ETB sector), issuing payments to 109,000 people on a fortnightly basis throughout 2017.	

Patronage
7 new schools established in 2017, 3 new primary schools which were all multi-denominational and four new post-primary schools. One primary school voluntarily announced its transfer to re-open under the ETB's Patronage as a community national school from September 2017.

Appendix B – Organisation Chart end 2017



Appendix C - 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 D – 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/