An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Annual Report 2020

Department of Education

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Foreword by the Minister

I am pleased to welcome the publication of the Department of Education's Annual Report for 2020, which outlines the significant work undertaken by my Department during the year. My appointment as Minister for Education in June 2020 was a huge honour and I look forward to working collaboratively with all those within the education sector.

2020 was a difficult year for Irish society as a whole, and the work of my Department was altered significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the closures of schools and other education settings from March, the Department of Education assisted schools in their provision of remote teaching and learning. In June, we published *'Reopening Our Schools: The Roadmap for The Full Return to School'*, a comprehensive plan which provided guidance for schools, additional teachers at post-primary level and supports such as additional substitution, supervision, guidance counsellors and psychologists. The implementation of this plan was supported by a funding package of €639 million, of which €331 million was allocated for 2020 to support the operation of our schools in a COVID-19 context.

Throughout the year, we continued to work closely with all education stakeholders and public health authorities to manage the complex environment and to act accordingly to ensure learning continued and students and their families were supported in this.

In order to ensure that the Leaving Certificate Class of 2020 could transition into the world of work or further study, the Calculated Grades model was developed and delivered while the written Leaving Certificate examinations were delivered later in 2020 along with Junior Cycle examinations for adult learners and early school leavers.

Throughout the year and notwithstanding the challenges presented by Covid-19, my Department continued to progress its high level goals last year. Through the budget, the Department secured a reduction in the pupil teacher ratio to its lowest historical level. Our ambitious programme of investment in school buildings has continued.

During the National Development Plan period 2018 to 2020, 526 school building projects were completed under the Large Scale Capital Programme (LSCP) and the Additional School Accommodation Scheme (ASA). These projects delivered in excess of 48,000 school places, which included permanent accommodation for 229 special classes and additional capacity for 67 classrooms in 14 special schools throughout the country.

In 2020, schools were provided with €100 million in ICT grant funding, inclusive of a special €10 million payment to support the purchase of technology and devices for disadvantaged students during the school closures period.

I would like to acknowledge the work of my Department's officials and my colleague, Minister Madigan. I would also like to pay tribute to my predecessor in this Office, Joe McHugh T.D, for the work he did to advance the objectives of the Department.

Finally, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to all those working within the education sector for their work and support throughout last year. Although 2020 was a challenge, with implications for years to come, many lessons have been learned and I look forward to continuing to work with all our partners to advance not just these learnings but also our shared vision of an education sector that supports all children and young people to achieve their fullest potential.

Norma Foley TD

Minister for Education

Foreword by Minister of State Madigan

I welcome the publication of the Department of Education's Annual Report 2020. Last year, I was appointed as the first Minister of State for Special Education and Inclusion. I look forward to being an advocate for all students with additional needs, to ensure that their voices are heard and reflected in the policy-making process.

2020 was an incredibly challenging year for all learners, including students with special educational needs, and those at risk of educational disadvantage. It was particularly important for the Department to ensure these groups disproportionately impacted by the move to remote learning, continued to have access to additional supports.

One such support was the Summer Provision Programme 2020, an expansion of the Department's July Provision programme, as a means to support students with special needs and their families, severely impacted by school closures. Significantly, the programme was expanded to include post-primary students with Down syndrome for the first time. An estimated 39,000 students took part in the programme. Other programmes including Literacy and Numeracy camps in DEIS primary schools, the DEIS post-primary summer programme and the home-based summer programme also took place, as well as the HSE's programme of school-based support for children with complex needs.

The School Inclusion Model pilot continued into the 2020/21 school year, aiming to test a model for schools to provide a range of supports including behavioral, psychological and therapeutic.

In September, the Department announced the first dedicated national training programme for special needs assistants (SNAs). The five module programme, which is free of charge to individual SNAs, covers aspects such as communications, inclusion and information of caring for students with additional care needs.

I look forward to continuing work in 2021, in collaboration with our partners, to ensure that the key priorities for action to reform and develop special education provision in Ireland are achieved.

Josepha Madigan TD

Minister of State for Special Education and Inclusion

Statement from the Secretary General

I am pleased to introduce the Department's Annual Report 2020. This report affords our Department the opportunity to reflect on the work of the previous year and this is particularly important, given the challenges faced by us all, as we worked to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19.

Following the General Election, we welcomed a new Minister, Norma Foley TD, and a new Minister of State, Josepha Madigan TD. We have been working with both of them to progress the work of the Department.

2020 was a uniquely challenging year that called for new ways of thinking and operating.

The Department has long embedded the practice of working in partnership with the education sector. The value of this partnership was demonstrated time and again, as we collaborated, consulted and shared ideas to plan a way forward through the ever-evolving situation.

The sector demonstrated innovation and resilience in abundance, rising to unprecedented challenges, problem solving, developing and sharing solutions, supported by the work of the Department. Our shared aims of supporting the learners across our schools, and supporting each other, brought about creative solutions. All of this work was characterised by a spirit of initiative that enabled flexibility in meeting the challenges that arose.

The closures of schools and other education settings in March 2020 meant that providers were called upon to move from the traditional classroom setting, to remote teaching and learning, in line with public health advice. During this period, and on an ongoing basis since, the Department has worked to progress supports for our students, our schools and other education providers; to focus on wellbeing; to target those most at risk of being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and to work collaboratively to improve our responses.

The public health situation in the spring posed another unprecedented challenge – how to provide a fair progression route to students completing their post-primary education, so they could advance to further and higher education and the world of work. The constructive and positive engagement of all involved – students, parents, teacher unions and management bodies along with the Department and relevant State bodies – was essential to finding and implementing a solution. The newly formed State Examinations Advisory Group played a crucial role over many months in addressing these challenges, and the Leaving Certificate Calculated Grades process enabled the progression in autumn 2020 of over 60,000 students.

Planning the re-opening of schools in line with public health advice required further collaborative partnership. Following continuous engagement with education partners, *Reopening Our Schools: The Roadmap for The Full Return to School* was published by the Minister in the summer. The roadmap was accompanied by a package of

supports and additional funding, guidance, and measures, to ensure the safe re-opening and sustained operation of our schools throughout the autumn term.

The new school year brought changes to routines with a focus on keeping everyone safe and ensuring fairness for students, including new public health measures in schools and new arrangements for assessment. In support of these, the Department put in place additional funding for minor works and technology and greater flexibility and supports for schools. Further outreach to parents and students to explain and promote the measures in place continued, with new communications approaches and multilingual advice to support our diverse community of parents.

Further partnership and collaboration with colleagues in HSE Public Health proved essential to our schools and ongoing consultation ensured these supports were refined and improved to meet emerging need.

The evidence from this ongoing public health engagement was that the measures put in place supported schools to operate safely. The diligent work of school communities to apply these measures paid enormous dividends in helping the national efforts to contain the spread of the virus.

International and domestic research into the impact of COVID-19 on education indicates that there may be longer-term effects that will require ongoing mitigation. The Department is committed to continuing to use research to inform future evidence-based policy development in this area and to target supports at those most impacted by the pandemic.

While the main priority of the Department and all officials in 2020 was to ensure the safety of those within the education sector, best efforts were made to continue to make progress on the Department's high-level goals. The Department continued to advance new initiatives, for further development in 2021.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution made by staff in the Department during this year. While some aspects of the Department's work are more visible than others, each element plays an important role in achieving our aims. It was striking how, across the Department, our staff adapted to new challenges and new ways of working. Significant effort was exerted to keep our essential services operating with minimal disruption.

I wish to thank sincerely all those in the wider education sector for their sustained efforts and their continued support as we look forward to the challenges and opportunities ahead. I would also like to acknowledge the supports of colleagues in HSE public health and many other colleagues across the public sector who collaborated on a wide range of issues to ensure the best possible outcomes for our students. Go raibh maith agaibh go léir.

Seán Ó Foghlú

Secretary General

Introduction

The Department of Education's Annual Report seeks to outline the significant work undertaken during the last year. However, 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges which the Department worked to respond to, ensuring the safety of all those within the Education sector as well as continuity of services. While the work captured within this Report is measured against the goals contained in the Department's Statement of Strategy 2019-2021, the strategic direction was significantly altered by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the reconfiguration of the Government Departments. The following will seek to outline key achievements in response to these changes in environment, underpinned by our mission to facilitate individuals, through learning, to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's social, economic and cultural development.

Overview of the work of the Department in the context of COVID-19

In 2020, the Department, in line with all Government Departments, was called on to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The subsequent supports and guidance to assist school communities and the wider education sector in the continuity of both teaching and learning were developed in line with public health advice and following extensive stakeholder engagement.

One of the most prominent impacts of COVID-19 in Ireland was the widespread closure of schools, colleges and wider education settings from March 2020. Provision of teaching moved from in-person to remote learning, delivered online. The use of digital resources was central in ensuring the successful remote learning. The Department developed extensive supports including information on communication and learning platforms, digital tools and resources, video conferencing and webinars. A dedicated online course on the subject of remote learning was also developed, aimed at teachers, as well as additional guidance for parents.

The cancellation of State Examinations marked another significant step taken by the Department to protect the welfare of post-primary students. The Calculated Grades system, devised through significant engagement with the State Examinations Commission, replaced traditional written exams which could not be held safely in time to allow students a path to progress to third-level or enter the world of work. The Calculated Grades Executive Office (CGEO) was established and candidates were invited to opt for calculated grades, deferred written examinations or a combination of both. Written Junior Cycle examinations were replaced, in the majority of schools, with in-school assessments.

The summer period called for the Department to put in place measures following the disruption of the 2019/2020 school year, with a focus on wellbeing and preparation for returning to school in the new academic year. The Summer Programme was expanded, to include more children with special education needs. A number of options were provided to parents, ranging from in-school to home-based supports and guidance material for parents, teachers and SNAs was published. The focus of the programme remained on ensuring children most disrupted by the school closures could be afforded an opportunity to reintegrate into their education setting. A HSE-led programme for children with complex needs saw a summer programme developed for children with complex needs, through working with SNAs across the country.

In July, following Government approval of a €375 million support package, the Department published a roadmap to enable safe return to school. Funding for minor works, measures for

additional supervision and payments for PPE and cleaning materials were made available. Significant measures were taken to increase teacher supply, with a financial package that allowed for additional teachers at post-primary level, and replacement teaching staff, SNAs and administrative staff, where members of the school community were identified as high-risk.

Following the re-opening of schools in autumn 2020, the Department continued extensive engagement with relevant stakeholders, and worked closely with the HSE during this period. The Department's Inspectorate facilitated the transfer of over fifty of its staff to the HSE on a 50% assignment basis, to become part of Public Health teams that supported and advised principals and leaders of Early Years settings about the correct procedures to adopt if a case of COVID-19 occurred in their school or setting, and liaise with public health officials to ensure close contacts of a positive case are identified, isolated and referred for testing at the earliest opportunity. Further supports during this time included a HSE principals' helpline, risk assessments and written guidance for teachers and parents. The Department continued to centre the importance of school attendance in its work to year end 2020, while preparing to adapt to new public health measures as necessary as it faced the challenges and opportunities of 2021.

The work of the Department in 2020 was greatly supported by extensive engagement with partners in the sector and ensuring that there were appropriate platforms for various groups and representatives to work collaboratively. Existing group engagement fora were utilised in this regard – including the Primary Education Forum and the Teacher Conciliation Council – and new structures were established, such as a Tertiary Steering Group and Schools Management Bodies Working Group. The Department acknowledges also the input of its Departmental colleagues, state agencies, outreach groups, institutional representatives and advocacy and management bodies. At the core of each decision taken throughout the year was a shared focus on the wellbeing and safety of students. Further information on the actions are contained under the relevant high-level Goals within this report.

Significant Department publications in context of COVID-19 in 2020

- COVID-19 (Coronavirus): Health advice for parents and children
- Circular 0024/2020 – Coronavirus (COVID-19) Delay Phase: Arrangements for teachers and special needs assistants employed in recognised primary and post-primary schools
- How To Keep Learning and Preparing for the Leaving Certificate during the COVID-19 pandemic
- A Guide to Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate Students 2020
- Resumption of Schooling Autumn 2020: Report on analysis of data from principals (December 2020)
- Guidance on Continuity of Schooling: Supporting Learners in Youthreach Centres (May 2020)
- Guidance on Continuity of Schooling: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs For primary and special schools (April 2020)
- Guidance on Continuity of Schooling: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs For post-primary schools (April 2020)
- Guidance on Continuity of Schooling: Supporting Pupils at risk of educational disadvantage For primary schools (April 2020)
- Guidance on Continuity of Schooling: Supporting Students at risk of educational disadvantage For post-primary schools (April 2020)

- Guidance for schools providing the school-based strand of the Summer programme (SEN)
- Guidance for teachers / SNAs providing the home-based strand of the Summer programme (SEN)
- Guidance for schools providing the DEIS Post-Primary Summer Programme
- Guidance on Continuity of Schooling for Primary and Post-primary Schools (April, 2020)
- Guidance on Continuity of Schooling for Primary Schools (May 2020)
- Continuity of Schooling: Guidance for parents of primary school pupils (May 2020)

Reconfiguration of Government Departments and the formation of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

In June 2020, a new Government was formed. This saw the appointment of a new Minister and a new Minister of State to the Department, and the former Department of Education and Skills was formally split into two distinct Departments in August 2020: the Department of Education and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS). This followed a Government decision to re-distribute responsibilities across different Departments. As well as the split into two distinct Departments, the Department of Education gained responsibilities in relation to educational welfare which had been under the remit of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Following the reconfiguration, significant work took place to support the Minister and Minister of State in their new roles, and a new Statement of Strategy was drafted for the 2021-2023 period.

Our Mission

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

Goals 2020

Our Goals

GOAL 1

We will shape a responsive education and training system that meets the needs and raises the aspirations of all learners.

GOAL 2

We will advance the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special educational needs in order to support them to achieve their potential.

GOAL 3

We will equip education and training providers with the skills and support to provide a quality learning experience.

GOAL 4

We will intensify the relationships between education and the wider community, society and the economy.

GOAL 5

We will lead in the delivery of strategic direction and supportive systems in partnership with key stakeholders in education and training.

The Department's performance in 2020 is measured against the key outputs and performance indicators outlined in the *Statement of Strategy 2019-2021.* A new Statement of Strategy was published in June 2021, following the appointment of Minister Norma Foley.

General corporate data which outlines our extensive engagement with our customer base and the wider civil service can be found at Appendix A.

Progress on the five key Strategic Goals in 2020

During 2020, the Department made significant progress in achieving the goals detailed in the Strategy Statement and Action Plan for Education 2019-2021, despite the significant challenges and changing environment. The Annual Report 2020 acknowledges the significant and systematic progress that was made under each of our five goals:

Goal 1: We will shape a responsive education and training system that meets the needs and raises the aspirations of all learners.

This Goal is about building learning environments for all learners that promote health, wellbeing and personal development. Positive, agile and responsive environments provide opportunities for all learners to fully participate in, and get maximum benefit from, their education experience. This means the development and review of curriculum and assessment, enabling transitions and embracing the power of digital technologies across the continuum of education are key to better outcomes for learners, society and the economy.

1.1 Curriculum at primary level

In 2020, work continued on the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga Na Bunscoile (PLC/CTB), which supports teaching and learning in English and Irish. It is for teachers of children of all abilities in all school contexts-English-medium schools, Gaeltacht schools, Irish-medium schools and special schools. The PLC/CTB is an integrated learning outcomes based curriculum and has the same structure and strands for both languages, English and Irish.

The NCCA published the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework for consultation in February 2020. Phase one of the consultation process was extended to December 2020, phase 2 will commence in September 2021 and the focus of this phase will be on consulting with teachers, parents, school leaders and pupils.

Work also continued in 2020 on the new Primary Mathematics Curriculum (PMC) for stages 1–4 (junior infants to sixth class) continued in 2020, drawing on consultation findings carried out by the NCCA in 2018, work with schools, and research. Further development on the PMC will be informed by the outcome of the consultation on the draft Primary Curriculum Framework.

1.2 Curriculum at post-primary level

Implementation of the new Framework for Junior Cycle continued in 2020. This commenced in September 2014, with the introduction of the new specification for English. All subjects have, since September 2019, had new specifications introduced in line with the Framework for Junior Cycle, with a comprehensive CPD programme for teachers used to support the introduction of these new specifications.

Of the 21 subjects available under the Framework for Junior Cycle four – Mathematics, Gaeilge, English and History – are compulsory. There are a number of developments taking place at Senior Cycle, including both a broad review by the NCCA of Senior Cycle and reviews of the implementation of new and revised specifications.

Following extensive consultation, in 2020 the NCCA progressed the drafting of an Advisory Report on Senior Cycle Review. The draft report was also considered through the NCCA

structures. At end 2020, the NCCA were finalising the Advisory Report for submission to the Minister for Education and the Department for consideration. The Report, due for publication in 2021, will outline findings and recommendations across three main areas: pathways and flexibility; curriculum components; and assessment, reporting and transitions, including advice on the pace and scale of developments in a redeveloped senior cycle.

Leaving Certificate Physical Education (LCPE) (examinable) and Senior Cycle Physical Education (non-examinable) specifications were introduced on a phased basis to 80 schools from September 2018, with students sitting the first LCPE examinations in 64 schools in 2020.

Leaving Certificate Computer Science (LCCS) was also introduced as a new subject on a phased basis in September 2018. From September 2020, LCCS was available as an option nationally. Currently there are approximately 150 schools offering LCCS.

In 2020, the NCCA finalised details of a public consultation on draft specifications for Leaving Certificate Irish, to be carried out in 2021, which are intended to modernise the curricular experience in Irish for senior cycle students and make available curricula that are suited to their range of learning needs. Once the consultation is complete, the NCCA will commence analysis and consideration of the feedback recorded during the process. The finalised specifications will then be considered by the NCCA Council and, upon approval, submitted to the Department for consideration, approval and implementation.

Publications in 2020

- 0001/2020 - Revisions to the Leaving Certificate Arabic interim syllabus and the introduction of a revised specification for Leaving Certificate Classical Studies.
- 0002/2020 - Prescribed Material for Leaving Certificate English Examination in 2022
- 0006/2020 - Diversification Of Foreign Languages Provision In The Curriculum Additional Allocation Of Hours For Post-Primary Schools Introducing Lesser Taught And New Foreign Languages In The School Year 2020-2021 Under Languages Connect - Ireland's Strategy For Foreign Languages In Education 2017-2026
- 0016/2020 - Framework for Junior Cycle – History in Schools from September 2020 onwards
- 0017/2020 - Guidance on the Junior Cycle Subject Learning and Assessment Review Process
- 0035/2020 - Prescribed Material for the Junior Cycle Examination in 2022 and Leaving Certificate Examination in 2022
- 0067/2020 - Advice on the use of assessment instruments/tests for Guidance or for additional and special educational needs (SEN) in post-primary schools.
- 0070/2020 - Curriculum and assessment related developments at Senior Cycle with particular reference to school years 2020/21 and 2021/22 and the postponement of implementation of revised specifications
- 0076/2020 - Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle with particular reference to school year 2020/21.

1.3 Leaving Certificate 2020

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and prevailing public health advice, a system of Calculated Grades was put in place by the Department due to the inability to safely run the Leaving Certificate examinations as normal in the summer of 2020.

The Government decision of 8 May 2020 announcing the postponement of the Leaving Certificate examinations, until a later date when it was safe to do so, and the introduction of the system of Calculated Grades, followed intensive engagement with education stakeholders, through the Advisory Group on Planning for State Examinations 2020 which

was established in April 2020. The group, which was chaired by the Secretary General of the Department, included other representatives from the Department, including the National Educational Psychological Service, the State Examinations Commission, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, school management bodies, teaching unions, and representatives from parent and student bodies.

The 8 May decision was also informed by the work of a Technical Working Group, which had considered a contingency arrangement, whereby a calculated grades model would be used to facilitate resulting of the 2020 Leaving Certificate. This Technical Working Group included representatives with relevant expertise from the Department, the State Examinations Commission, the Educational Research Centre (ERC), and independent statistical and psychometric expertise.

The decision of 8 May followed earlier decisions regarding the State examinations that had been announced on foot of the developing COVID-19 situation and the public health advice received in that regard, following the closure of schools from 12 March 2020. These included the announcement of 19 March of the cancellation of oral and practical performance tests that had been scheduled for late March and early April, and the announcement of 10 April that the Leaving Certificate examinations would be postponed until late July or early August, and for the Junior Cycle State examinations to be replaced by school-based examinations.

The purpose of the Calculated Grades process was to allow as many Leaving Certificate 2020 students as possible, by opting to receive Calculated Grades, to progress to employment, further education and training, or higher education in a way that was as fair and equitable as possible to all Leaving Certificate students.

In the announcement, the Minister outlined that Calculated Grades would have the same status as Leaving Certificates awarded to students in previous years. Students would also have the opportunity to sit the 2020 Leaving Certificate examinations at a date in the future when it was considered safe to hold them.

As the State Examinations Commission did not at the time have a statutory remit to operate the system of Calculated Grades the Minister established a non-statutory executive office in the Department of Education to deliver the calculated grades system, the Calculated Grades Executive Office (CGEO). This office was the primary office in the Department responsible for the development and implementation of the model of Calculated Grades in 2020. The CGEO also engaged external statistical and psychometric expertise to assist in the development of the Calculated Grades model.

The Department engaged with the SEC to develop data sharing agreements, to enable the work of the CGEO to progress. This approach also enabled the SEC, with its remaining staff, to continue working on preparations for the postponed Leaving Certificate examinations which were ultimately held in November and December 2020.

At the time of the announcement, the Department also published *A Guide to Calculated Grades for Students*, this guide was supplemented by further Guidance over the summer with a targeted campaign using the Department's social media channels to ensure students were kept updated.

The Department co-ordinated responses to all queries, using www.gov.ie/leavingcertificate to provide responses to queries which were being received and as a central location for queries, published guides and documentation.

Students were required to register on a Candidate Self-Service Portal (CSSP) to register to receive Calculated Grades.

For the Calculated Grades system to be operated with integrity, an estimated percentage mark, based on credible, satisfactory evidence, could only be accepted from an appropriate source. This was necessary to ensure fairness to all students. For students who were attending school, these estimated percentage marks were provided by their teachers.

Following an in-school alignment process, estimated percentage marks and student class rankings for each subject were returned by schools to the CGEO where they underwent a process of national standardisation.

In the national standardisation phase, school-sourced data was combined with historical data, to ensure that the calculated grades awarded reflected standards that are properly aligned across schools and with a common national standard. The key principles of objectivity, equity and fairness underpinned the national standardisation process and the process was designed to arrive at fair representations of student performance which did not favour any type of student or school.

On 1 September, the Minister for Education announced details in relation to the Calculated Grades model following approval of proposals made to Government. The change proposed removed the use of school-by-school historical data in the standardisation model, placing a greater emphasis on the estimated marks provided by schools to individual students.

The vast majority of 2020 Leaving Certificate candidates opted to receive Calculated Grades. Calculated Grades results were issued to more than 60,000 students on 7 September 2020, ensuring deadlines for the CAO, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service and other jurisdictions' college entry systems would be met as far as possible.

The system of Calculated Grades had, at all times, concern for this group of students who completed their second level education under the most unprecedented and difficult circumstances. Through the Calculated Grades process, the Department sought to ensure that the grades students received were fair and comparable representations of their levels of achievement.

On 30 September 2020, it was announced that some coding errors had been identified in the Calculated Grades process. This meant that incorrect grades had been issued to some students when they received their results on 7 September.

Following a review of key elements of the code by a third party, two further errors were identified. As a result of these errors, 6,100 students received lower grades than they otherwise would have. These students were informed of their revised results on Saturday 3 October following a correction of the errors. In keeping with well-established practice, students who had originally received higher grades as a result of the errors in the Calculated Grades system did not have their results changed.

As part of the round 4 offers made by the CAO on 8 October 2020, 485 of these students received a CAO offer on foot of their improved grades. Each of them was given the opportunity to take up his or her offer in the current academic year.

The postponed Leaving Certificate written examinations commenced on 16 November and concluded on 11 December 2020. Junior Cycle examinations, for a small number of adult learners and early school leavers, were also held at that time.

These written examinations were based on the normal question paper format, content and structure, and duration as in previous years.

The postponed Leaving Certificate examinations were provided to students who were unhappy with the outcome of the calculated grades process, as well as to the small number of students who were not able to be awarded a Calculated Grade in the absence of credible teacher data to generate an estimated mark.

Some 2,155 candidates sat these examinations. The results of the postponed written examinations issued on 2 February 2021. Candidates who sat the examinations who also opted to receive Calculated Grades were credited with the higher subject grade achieved between the Calculated Grade and the written examination.

Publications in 2020:

- Calculated Grades – A Guide for Leaving Certificate Students 2020 (Information Leaflet)
- Calculated Grades – A Guide for Parents and Guardians of Leaving Certificate Students 2020 (Information Leaflet)
- A Guide to Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate students 2020
- Privacy Notice for Students: Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate 2020 in light of the postponement of the Leaving Certificate examinations
- Calculated Grades Student Portal – Before You Start Guide
- A Guide to Calculated Grades for Out-of-School Learners
- Getting my Calculated Grades – A Guide for Students
- A Short Guide to the Calculated Grades Data Collection, National Standardisation and Quality Assurance Processes
- Leaving Certificate 2020 Results of Calculated Grades: Student Information Guide
- Circular 0037/2020 - Implementation of Calculated Grades Model For Leaving Certificate 2020
- Further information [for schools] in relation to the Calculated Grades process
- Circular 0039/2020 - Calculated Grades Aides 2020
- Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate 2020: Report from the National Standardisation Group to the Independent Steering Committee and the Programme Board
- First Letter of Opinion regarding the Calculated Grades System from the Independent Steering Committee to the Minister for Education
- Calculated Grades 2020 External Reviewer Statement - Statement in Advance of the Issue of Results
- Discussion Paper for SEC-DES Technical Working Group on Calculated Results
- Circular 0059/2020 – Provisional Results of Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and Leaving Certificate Applied 2020
- Second Letter of Opinion regarding the Calculated Grades System from the Independent Steering Committee to the Minister for Education
- Calculated Grades 2020 External Reviewer Statement

1.4 Junior Cycle Examination

A decision was made to cancel the Junior Cycle examination for 2020, with the exception of adult learners and early school leavers who had the opportunity to sit examinations in November. The work and achievement of third year Junior Cycle students was recognised with a state certificate from the Department. This process began in 2020 and continues to be worked on in 2021.

1.5 Foreign Languages

In August 2020, the Minister for Education published four new Leaving Certificate Specifications for Mandarin Chinese, Lithuanian, Polish and Portuguese. A small number of schools is now offering these languages on the curriculum for Leaving Certificate to be examined for the first time as curricular subjects in summer 2022 (Lithuanian, Polish and Portuguese are currently available as non-curricular examinable subjects at Leaving Certificate as are all non-curricular EU languages).

In November 2020, a new Level 8 programme for Spanish for Teachers was announced. The Higher Diploma in Spanish for Teaching (post primary) programme provided by UCC is aimed at upskilling post-primary teachers to teach Spanish.

During 2020, awareness raising (www.languagesconnect.ie) about the importance of learning a foreign language continued. A reimagined #ThinkLanguages event was held by Post Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI) on-line for over 3,000 Transition Year students.

The number of Foreign Language Assistants coming to Irish schools in 2020 was further increased to 170 in 2020/21, up from 120 in 2017/18.

1.6 Literacy and Numeracy

Work continued to be progressed on the National Strategy: Literacy & Numeracy for Learning and life 2011-2020 throughout 2020, with development of a new strategy for Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy set to begin in 2021. Due to the move to remote teaching and learning brought about by COVID-19, schools were encouraged in the Return to School guidance, published by the Department, to prioritise literacy and numeracy needs of their learners.

As part of the work under the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, the TIMSS 2019 (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) results were published in December 2020. TIMSS takes place every four years and aims to measure how well fourth class pupils and second year students are performing in Mathematics and Science. The key findings of the 2019 assessments include:

- The performance of Irish students in Mathematics and Science has remained stable and strong
- Both primary and second level students in Ireland scored significantly above the average in both Mathematics and Science.
- Ireland is the top performing European country in Mathematics at both fourth class in primary and second year in post primary.
- There are no significant gender differences in performance for Mathematics or Science, at either level.

1.7 Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM)

The Department of Education's STEM Education Policy Statement 2017–2026, published in November 2017, sets out the ambitious goals and actions required to achieve and improve the STEM education experience and outcomes for all learners.

The STEM implementation plan 2017-2019 built on a range of reforms and initiatives already underway in STEM, in areas such as curriculum and assessment reform, teacher professional development, embedding digital learning and advances in initial teacher education. The areas of policy development and action in relation to STEM education span 4 pillars as follows:

- Nurture Learner engagement and participation;
- Enhance early years practitioner and teacher capacity;
- Support STEM Education Practice; and
- Use Evidence to support STEM education.

In November 2020, a Gender Balance in STEM Advisory Group was developed, and the document *A Review of Literature to Identify a Set of Effective Interventions for Addressing Gender Balance in STEM in Early Years, Primary and Post-Primary Education Settings* was published.

The next phase of the implementation plan will focus on 'Embedding' and will now run from 2021-2023. This has been delayed for one year due to COVID-19.

1.8 Decade of Centenaries

In relation to work on the Decade of Centenaries, Glasnevin Trust was supported in 2020 by the Department to extend its education programme to the online space in order to mitigate against the restrictions in place due to COVID-19 and facilitate access to the resources by all students including those at risk of disadvantage. In addition, the Junior Cycle for Teachers History Team produced a resource, commissioned by the Department, which launched on 21 October 2020. This resource focused on the use of primary source material, searching databases and teaching how to research, this was based on bloody Sunday and was launched a month before the centenary of Bloody Sunday – tying in with the Government's Decade of Centenaries Programme.

1.9 Section 29 Appeals

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, an appeal may be made to the Department of Education 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, to suspend a student from attendance at the school for a period or periods totalling not less than 20 school days in a school year or to refuse to enrol a student in the school.

In 2020, the Department received a total of 334 Section 29 appeals. 175 of these appeals proceeded to a hearing. Of those appeals that proceeded to a hearing, 76 (43%) were upheld and 99 (57%) were not upheld. 159 appeals did not proceed to a hearing due to the following reasons: the appeal being resolved by local resolution or facilitation prior to a hearing; the appeal being withdrawn by the applicant; or the appeal not being admitted due to it being outside the timeframes for appeal.

Section 7 of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act, 2018 commenced in 2020 and became effective from 12 November 2020. This section of the Act replaced the existing section 29 of the Education Act 1998 by inserting a series of new sections 29 to 29F which deal with appeals against a board of management's decision to permanently exclude a student from a school, to suspend a student for a period/s totalling not less than 20 school days in a school year or to refuse admission to a student. In accordance with the Act, associated procedures for appeals were published following consultation with key stakeholders. The updated legislation and associated procedures were designed to work alongside the wider admission framework encompassed by the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018.

The most significant change to the process is the provision under the Act which allows for appeals against decisions to refuse enrolment due to a school being oversubscribed to be dealt with by way of a paper based examination by the appeals committee and without an

oral hearing. The intention of this provision is to make the appeals process less cumbersome for parents and schools.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, since March 2020 section 29 appeals have been held via conference call. This has allowed services to continue and all committee members and parties to attend hearings safely as required.

Published in 2020

- 0069/2020: New arrangements and procedures for appeals under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 effective from 12 November 2020 onwards

Also published with this Circular were:

- Procedures for hearing and determining appeals under section 29(1)(c)(i) of the Education Act, 1998.
- Procedures for hearing and determining appeals under section 29(1)(c)(ii) of the Education Act, 1998.
- Procedures for hearing and determining appeals under sections 29(1)(a)and29(1) (b) of the Education Act, 1998.
- Commencement of Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 (Commencement) Order 2020, (section 7; section 10 (b) sections 12 (c) and 12 (d)) effective 12 November 2020.

1.10 Child Protection

In 2020 the Parents and Learners Unit updated the Department's procedures for responding to child protection concerns that come to the attention of staff employed by the Department of Education. The updated procedures provide greater clarity on reporting obligations, including the statutory obligations on NEPS psychologists as mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015; provide a step by step guide to dealing with child protection concerns; outline the roles and responsibilities of Principal Officers and other managers and provide detailed information on oversight measures across the Department.

1.11 Gaeltacht Education Policy 2017-2022

The overarching goal of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 is to support and promote the use of Irish as the main language of Gaeltacht communities through the provision of high quality Irish-medium education in schools and early learning and care settings located in Gaeltacht language-planning areas. Since the commencement of the implementation of the policy in early 2017, almost €14m has been allocated for the provision of a range of additional supports to strengthen educational provision through the medium of Irish, particularly in Gaeltacht schools. This includes a budget allocation of €5.8m in 2020.

1.12 Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme

The Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme, which was launched in 2017, provides primary and post-primary schools located in Gaeltacht language-planning areas with the opportunity to achieve recognition as Gaeltacht schools on the basis of implementing specific language-based criteria and on condition that they participate in the language-planning process, provided for under the Gaeltacht Act, 2012. A range of additional supports continued to be provided to 105 primary schools and 29 post-primary schools participating in the Scheme in 2020 to support them in implementing the language-based criteria. These additional resources included additional Irish-language support teaching hours, an annual grant for the purchase of Irish-medium resources and additional continuing professional development provided by An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaiochta (COGG), which was predominantly delivered online. Inspectorate support was provided insofar as was

possible within the limitations arising from the impact of the global pandemic. This support targeted the safe-return to schooling due to school closures.

Publications in 2020:

- Circular 0010/2020 – for primary schools and special schools in the Scheme
- Circular 0011/2020 – for post-primary schools in the Scheme
- Circular 0012/2020 – for primary schools not in the Scheme
- Inspectorate Advisory Visits 2020/21 Guidelines for Primary and Post-primary schools in the Scheme
- Guide for Gaeltacht Primary Schools – Indicators of Good Practice for Immersion Education (updated 2020)
- Guide for Gaeltacht Post-Primary Schools- Indicators of Good Practice for Immersion Education (updated 2020)

1.13 E-hub Pilot Project

The e-hub pilot project, which commenced in schools in 2019, utilises online delivery and blended learning to extend the subject range available through the medium of Irish to students in Gaeltacht post-primary schools, starting with higher-level Leaving Certificate Physics. The successful implementation of the project continued in schools in 2020 despite the challenges presented by the pandemic. Three e-teachers based in two e-hub schools delivered the Irish-medium online Leaving Certificate Physics course to 24 students in 8 Gaeltacht post-primary receiver schools under the supervision of e-mentors. Two students from the first cohort of participating students were awarded calculated grades as an alternative to the normal Leaving Certificate examinations in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional resources, including funding for the purchase of ICT equipment and allocation of additional teaching support hours, continued to be provided to participating schools to support project implementation during the year.

A comprehensive independent evaluation of the impact of the e-hub pilot project was carried out by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) Northern Ireland in 2020. This evaluation found the pilot project to be highly effective and efficient in enabling students to study Leaving Certificate Physics through the medium of Irish using online blended learning.

1.14 Forás Pilot Project

Implementation of the Forás Language Development Pilot Programme, which aims to assist selected Junior Cycle students to access the curriculum through the medium of Irish, continued during the year. Each of the two schools selected to participate in this pilot received an additional allocation of one whole-time equivalent teacher to support project implementation in 2020.

1.15 Evaluation of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme

The Inspectorate/ERC Research and Evaluation Study to assess the impact of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme, continued during 2020. Reports of 19 case-studies, which were completed in 12 primary and 7 post-primary schools in 2019/20, issued to each participating school in 2020. Work on a joint Inspectorate/ERC composite report on the findings of the case-studies was progressed to facilitate publication in 2021. Case-study reports were issued to each of the 19 participating schools. Due to restrictions arising from the global COVID-19 pandemic, there was a need to postpone some elements of the research conducted by ERC, including student attainment tests, until 2021.

1.16 Support for Island Schools

A package of additional supports, which has been provided for each of the five island post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht since September 2018, was made available in 2020. These

resources, which include increased teacher allocation and an additional annual ring-fenced budget for each island post-primary school, have been provided as part of the overall implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education and are in addition to the supports the schools already receive as part of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme.

1.17 Irish-medium Teacher Education Programmes

A key aim of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 is to increase the supply of teachers who can deliver high quality Irish-medium education in primary and post-primary schools. To achieve this objective, funding for an intake of up to 60 new students across two Irish-medium teacher education programmes continues to be provided annually.

Demand remains high for a four-year Irish-medium B.Ed. for primary teachers (Baitsiléir san Oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge) with additional Irish-language entry and exit criteria, which commenced in Marino Institute of Education in 2019. 36 students registered for the programme as first year students in the 2020/21 academic year.

All 30 funded places were filled in 2020 on the two-year blended-learning Irish-medium M.Ed. in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht Education (M.Ed.), with additional Irish-language entry and exit criteria, for primary and post-primary teachers and principals, which is being delivered in Mary Immaculate College since 2018.

Approval for the secondment of two teaching posts to the *Máistir Gairmiúil san Oideachas (Irish-medium Professional Masters in Education for post-primary teachers)* in NUI, Galway was granted again in 2020. The aim of the provision of these additional resources is to work towards increasing the number of post-primary teachers with sufficient Irish-language proficiency to teach through the medium of Irish.

1.18 Advisory Committee for the Policy on Gaeltacht Education

Two online meetings of the Advisory Committee for the Policy on Gaeltacht Education took place in July and December 2020.

1.19 An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)

Additional supports and resources continued to be provided to COGG to support their central role in the implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education and the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme. This included ongoing funding for the allocation of two Education Officer posts to COGG to facilitate the delivery of the programme of CPD to 134 schools in the Gaeltacht Schools Recognition Scheme.

1.20 Teacher Allocations

In 2020, 71,522 teaching posts were allocated at primary and post-primary level. The redeployment process in 2020 involved the redeployment of 257 permanent teachers at primary level and 34 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 2020, there were just under 1,470 teachers on the supplementary redeployment panel.

1.21 New Allocation Model for SEN Teaching Resources

At primary level, 9,340 special education teaching posts were allocated to primary schools. Almost 1,400 of these posts are shared among schools, with over 2,750 schools involved in a sharing arrangement. 4,310 whole time equivalent posts were allocated under the SEN model to post-primary schools for the 2020/21 school year.

1.22 National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

In 2020, with the unprecedented school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NEPS developed a range of resources for schools, pupils and parents to support the wellbeing of children and young people in line with the Department's *Wellbeing Policy and Framework for Practice*. NEPS developed Wellbeing Webinars and Wellbeing Toolkits for School Staff available to support the reopening of schools after the COVID-19 period of prolonged school closure, in September 2020. These contained information, guidance, tips and advice for schools on how best to support the wellbeing of all children and young people, including those with SEN, following this period. NEPS has also produced a targeted wellbeing resource, "*Supporting the Wellbeing of Students with Special Educational Needs Returning to School*."

Other resources for schools include guidance and advice for teachers to support students in the areas of behavioural regulation, managing stress and anxiety, as well as supporting teacher wellbeing and self-care.

Following the reopening phase, NEPS commenced a return to an in-school casework service, as part of the blended model of service delivery put in place over the COVID-19 period

1.23 Wellbeing promotion

In 2020, work continued on the implementation of *The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018-2023).* This policy sets out the ambition and vision of the Department of Education that, by 2025, the promotion of wellbeing will be at the core of the ethos of every school and centre for education in Ireland, that all schools will provide evidence-informed approaches and support, appropriate to need, to promote the wellbeing of their students and that Ireland will be recognised as a leader in this area. The policy describes how schools can best promote wellbeing. The Wellbeing Policy Statement indicates that schools should adopt a whole-school, multi-component, preventative approach to wellbeing promotion that includes both universal and targeted interventions.

1.24 Digital Strategy

The vision of the Digital Strategy for Schools is to realise the potential of digital technologies to transform the learning experiences of students by helping them become engaged thinkers, active learning, knowledge constructors and global citizens able to participate fully in society and the economy.

The Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 expires at the end of the 2020/2021 school year and work on the development of a new Digital Strategy commenced early in 2021. Development of the new strategy will involve a wide-ranging consultative process including an open call for written submissions and direct consultation with principals and teachers, parents and learners as well as a Consultative Group with the key stakeholders. Teacher Professional Learning continued support for schools will be important pillars of the new Strategy.

The learnings from COVID-19 will also help inform the development of the Strategy as will relevant national and EU strategies and reports including the EU Digital Education Action Plan and best international practice. The implementation of new Digital Strategy will be supported by a €200 million ICT investment programme committed under the NDP and Project 2040. Allocation of funding for the continued embedding of digital technology in education across the school system will form part of the deliberations of the new Strategy in order to best meet priority needs of schools in this key area.

The consultative process is underway and it is expected that the new strategy will be in place by the end of 2021.

1.25 Digital Learning Framework

The Digital Learning Framework is a key support for schools to plan for the embedding of digital technology in teaching, learning and assessment. A longitudinal study of its implementation in schools is underway. The first baseline report of findings from year 1 of the longitudinal study was published in January 2020 by the Educational Research Centre, and the roll out of the Digital Learning Framework continued with the wave 1 surveys undertaken in participating schools. The longitudinal study itself is being extended from Q1 2022 to Q3 2022 to account for the impact of the pandemic, which also impacted on the ability to implement the relevant findings of year 1 of the study. This will progress in the coming school year 2021-2022.

Year 2 of the School Excellence Fund Digital & STEM was also impacted by pandemic. An interim report has been produced however it is not intended to publish the report as the time period for the programme is being extended from the end of 2020-2021 school year to the end of the 2021-2022 school year. On that basis, the findings of the interim evaluation cannot be considered to accurately reflect anticipated progress.

Under the Schools Broadband Programme some 78 primary schools were connected to the National Broadband Ireland (NBI) provision for high speed broadband as part of the early rollout of services under the Schools Broadband Connection Points (BCP) Programme in 2020. 679 primary schools are targeted under the NBI over the coming two years.

1.26 ICT infrastructure

€100m in ICT infrastructure grant funding issued to schools to address their ICT needs during 2020. Schools were advised that they could use this funding to support the continuity of teaching and learning should a period of partial or full school closure occur arising from Public Health advice owing to COVID-19 restrictions. This ICT Grant funding issued to schools, as schools were best placed to identify the requirements of their student cohort and to meet those requirements. This funding was intended to address ICT needs including the procurement of an essential learning platform, devices, software and other ICT solutions and may be prioritised to support the provision of remote learning. In the knowledge that some learners encountered difficulties in engaging with online learning because they did not have access to a suitable digital device, schools were advised that the funding may be used for the purchase of digital devices including laptops, etc., that may be shared with students and teachers who did not have access to devices.

Goal 2: We will advance the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special educational needs in order to support them to achieve their potential.

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 services.

2.1 DEIS Identification

Work continued during 2020 on refining the DEIS identification model, based on school enrolment data and the latest data available from Census 2016 under the HP Deprivation Index.

The Department has commenced a consultation process with education stakeholder representatives on the refinement of the model, and work is ongoing on further elements of the model. Consultations took place in March and October 2020 and work remains ongoing on further elements of the model.

It is envisaged that this model will then provide the basis for development of a DEIS resource allocation system to match resources to identified need.

2.2 DEIS Plan Implementation

In the 2020/21 academic year there are 887 schools in the DEIS Programme serving over 185,000 pupils – 689 Primary and 198 Post Primary.

The Department spent in the region of €125 million on the DEIS Programme in 2020. This includes the provision of 415 HSCL coordinators in urban primary and post-primary DEIS schools, additional teaching resources in DEIS Urban Band 1 schools, DEIS grants, enhanced Guidance provision in DEIS post-primary schools and enhanced school book grant paid to DEIS schools.

At the end of 2020, the majority of the 108 Actions in DEIS Plan were either complete or ongoing.

2.3 National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy – Education Pilot

Responding to specific actions in the National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017- 2021 and in DEIS Plan, a 2 Year Pilot Programme in 4 areas to target attendance, participation and retention/school completion was established in 2019 in specific Traveller and Roma Communities.

Each of the four Pilot areas will have the additional resource of 1 Educational Welfare Officer, 1 HSCL Coordinator and 2 Traveller/Roma Education Workers. The teams will work together with parents, children and young people, schools, Traveller and Roma communities and service providers to address the barriers impacting on Traveller and Roma children's attendance, participation and retention in education. Three of the areas, Dublin North, Tuam, Enniscorthy and Bunclody commenced work in September 2019 while the fourth pilot

area Cork City commenced in 2020. A second round of information workshops were held with the Pilot schools in February 2020.

2.4 PISA 2018

Reading, mathematics and science achievement in DEIS schools: Evidence from PISA was published by the ERC in December 2020, based on PISA 2018 results. It found that the average reading achievement of students in DEIS schools was at the level of the OECD average. The reading achievement gap between students in DEIS schools and students in non-DEIS schools is lower in Ireland (75 points) than on average across OECD countries (89 points). While students in DEIS schools had a significantly lower average score in mathematics than students in non-DEIS schools and the OECD average score, an encouraging finding that when compared to PISA 2012 there was a significantly lower percentage of students in DEIS schools at the lowest levels of proficiency in mathematics. In science achievement there were no significant changes in average performance between the 2015 and 2018 PISA cycles in either DEIS or non-DEIS schools.

2.5 Retention to Leaving Certificate in DEIS Post-primary Schools

Schools participating in DEIS have seen retention to Leaving Certificate improve since the introduction of DEIS from 80.1% for the 2006 entry cohort to 83.8% for the 2013 entry cohort. The gap in retention rates between DEIS and non-DEIS schools has narrowed from a gap of 16.8% for the 2001 entry cohort to approx. 9.3% for the 2013 cohort**.**

2.6 Summer Education Provision for children with Special Education Needs and those at risk of educational disadvantage

Summer Provision 2020 was a discrete response to COVID-19 and represented a significant expansion on the July Provision programme of previous years, with the eligibility criteria widened to include approximately 9,000 additional children with complex needs. In addition for the first time a new summer education programme was offered to all DEIS post primary schools and the DEIS literacy and numeracy programme was offered to all DEIS primary schools.

The programme aims were to ensure, in so far as possible, that these children could reintegrate/transition into their planned education setting for the next school year with their peers.

Over 22,800 pupils participated in Summer Provision 2020 across both the home and school strands.

2.7 Special Education Needs

2.7.1 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.

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

2.7.2 Allocation of Special Teachers to Mainstream Schools

At 2020 end, over 13,600 special education teacher posts (SETs) were allocated to mainstream primary and post primary schools, an increase of 40% since 2011. Budget 2021 provided an additional 145 special education teacher posts which means that 13,765 SET posts will be available for allocation to mainstream primary and post primary schools by the end of 2021.

SETs support the mainstream class teacher by providing additional teaching support for pupils with special educational needs in schools.

A new model for allocating SETs was introduced for mainstream schools from September 2017 which was designed to distribute special education teaching resources fairly to schools, taking into account their profiled needs.

Based on policy advice received from the NCSE, the new allocation model was developed to create a profile for each school which is needs-based and gives schools autonomy to decide how to deploy the resources they have, based on the needs of pupils.

The SET allocation provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on that school's educational profile.

2.7.3 Special Schools

There are 124 special schools providing specialist education for approximately 8,000 pupils with special educational needs, including hospital and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) units annually with over 1,500 teachers. Children attending special schools benefit from a reduced pupil teacher ratio ranging from 6:1 to 11:1 depending on disability categorisation.

2.7.4 Special Classes

Since 2011, the number of special classes in mainstream schools has increased by almost 235% from 548 to 1838 for the 2020/2021 school year.

This included very significant additional provision for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) special classes. Since 2011, the NCSE increased the number of ASD special classes from 330 in 2011 to 1,569 across the country in the 2020/2021 school year. This includes 196 new ASD classes comprising of 11 Early Intervention, 119 primary ASD classes and 66 post-primary ASD classes.

2.7.5 Special Needs Assistant Scheme

Just over 17,000 whole time equivalent Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) posts were provided to schools, as at December 2020, to provide for the care needs of children with special educational needs attending primary, post-primary, and special schools.

Since 2011, the number of SNAs available for allocation to schools has increased from 10,575 to over 17,000 at present. This is an increase of 70% in the total allocation.

2.7.6 Assistive Technology Scheme

In 2020, 1,537 payments were made to primary schools, and 588 to post-primary schools, towards the cost of assistive technology, amounting to over almost €2,013M

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 computer equipment for children with physical or severe communication disabilities, where it has been outlined that the equipment is essential to access the curriculum.

2.7.7 Irish Sign Language Scheme

The Irish Sign Language (ISL) 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 both 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 233 children and their families were supported with ISL tuition during the 2018/19 school year, while in the region of 69 tutors were employed to teach ISL, amounting to expenditure in the region of €327,000 annually.

2.7.8 Special Education Home Tuition Scheme

The purpose of the Home Tuition Grant Scheme is to provide a compensatory educational service for students, enrolled in schools, with a significant medical condition, which has caused, and is likely to continue to cause, major disruption to their attendance at 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.

In 2020, €15.04m in grant funding issued to parents towards the provision of home tuition. 1,473 home tuition grants were sanctioned during the 2019/20 school year.

2.7.9 Middletown Centre for Autism

The Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA) project is a jointly funded initiative between the Department of Education in Northern Ireland (DE) and the Department of Education (DE) 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.

The Centre provides a comprehensive nationwide training service for parents and educational professionals. Parents can view the range of courses which the Centre has available through the website www.middletownautism.com. The Centre also has a research division.

At the request of this Department and as approved by the North South Ministerial Council, the Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA) commenced provision, on a limited pilot basis in the south, of an intensive educational assessment and learning support service to children on an outreach basis (MCA Pilot). Alongside increasing the number of users that have benefited from the Centre's services, an important aim of the expansion of services was to further embed the Centre as an essential delivery body of the range of services available to support children with autism on an all-island basis.

The expansion of the Centre's services in the South have enabled the Centre to pilot the provision of direct support to children, the completion of targeted research projects in order

to inform future policy development and an increase in the number of training places offered to both parents and professionals, particularly highlighting key life stages for a child with autism.

2.7.10 In-School Speech and Language Therapy

In 2018, a demonstration project for in-school Therapy services commenced. The demonstration project was designed to 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.

Although initially designed as a one year pilot, a Government decision of 12 February 2019, in relation to the Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme, agreed to the establishment of a pilot of a new School Inclusion Model (SIM) for children with special educational and additional care needs involving up to 75 participating schools in the CHO 7 region over the course of the 2019/20 school year.

The demonstration project to provide in-school and pre-school therapy services continued, as part of the School Inclusion Model, over the course of the 2019/20 school year.

As all schools closed from 12 March, 2020, due to the COVID-19 crisis, it was not possible to fully complete the pilot of the School Inclusion Model over the course of the 2019/20 school year. In order to support the work of the HSE in responding to COVID-19, the Speech and Language and Occupational Therapists who had been assigned to the School Inclusion Model were recalled to the HSE from 12 March 2020, and continue to remain employed by the HSE.

Approval was granted to the NCSE to directly recruit therapists in Summer 2020 to continue the Pilot of the School Inclusion Model, over the course of the 2020/21 school year.

The School Inclusion Model includes the following elements:

- A change in the way SNAs are allocated for mainstream classes
- Development of an in-school therapy support service
- Expansion of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) to support pilot schools, and continuation of the pre-school and in-school demonstration project in the pilot area to ensure a wrap-around service for the pilot schools;
- The establishment, on a pilot basis, of an NCSE Regional Support Team in the Community Healthcare Organisation area (CHO 7) where the pilot is taking place, to include specialists in relevant disciplines (Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Behaviour Practitioners), in order to inform teacher Continuing Professional Development and best practice in schools in that area;
- Provision of training for Special Needs Assistants

2.7.11 Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Scheme.

Front Loading model

The NCSE Comprehensive Review of the SNA Scheme, published in May 2018, found that the SNA Scheme, as currently configured, works well in meeting the needs of younger children and students for whom it was originally designed, and is greatly valued by parents, students and schools, however, it was found to be less effective for older primary and post-primary students.

In February 2019, Government approved the implementation of a new frontloaded allocation model of SNAs allocated in line with profiled need having regard to the approach taken by

the New Allocation Model for Special Education Teachers which was introduced in September 2017.

Under the frontloading model, the SNA allocation for mainstream classes is based on the Special Education Teacher (SET) allocation which in turn is based on an education profile of each school. This model would eliminate the need for a diagnosis in order to qualify for support. It also means that supports are available in the school when the child enrols. The Department is committed to its introduction as part of the development of that Model.

In light of the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the introduction of the new Frontloaded Allocation Model for SNAs for students in mainstream classes in primary and post -primary schools is deferred to the beginning of the 2022/23 school year.

Due to the COVID-19 disruption, it was not possible to run the training and workshops designed to help school leaders and teachers in their in-school planning for the new model and their engagement with parents. These sessions are rescheduled to take place during the 2021/22 school year.

2.7.12 The development of a National Training Programme for SNAs

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) play a huge role in helping to ensure the inclusion of pupils with significant care needs in education and in school life. This was acknowledged in the Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme (SNAs) published by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in 2018.

The Review made a number of recommendations regarding SNAs and it was decided that priority should be given to the development of a training programme for SNAs who may not have had a recent opportunity to access a training programme tailored to their role.

A public procurement competition was held for the development and delivery of a new national training programme for SNAs. A detailed specification of need and learning outcomes was developed and published for the competition. Following evaluation of the tenders received, the contract was awarded to University College Dublin (UCD) School of Education, in conjunction with UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems.

This new programme aims to enhance the knowledge, skills and expertise of SNAs whose work is central to the inclusion of students with additional care and complex needs in school life.

The programme consists of five modules, delivered online over a 10-month period. Flexibility is a key part of the approach to the delivery of the programme and participation is voluntary.

The programme is fully funded by the Department and delivered at no cost to the SNA.

Each participant who completes the programme successfully will receive a certificate from UCD School of Education which may be of assistance in pursuing further education.

€2.45m will be allocated to this programme over the next 4 year period based on a full uptake of 3,500 SNAs.

This is the first national training programme for SNAs employed in our schools and is tailored to their needs. The programme will be evaluated and the outcome will inform the approach

to the training of SNAs in the future. There is no cost to serving SNAs working in schools. This course is fully funded by the Department of Education.

2.8 Home Tuition Schemes for students without a school place, children in care without a school place and students on maternity related absences

A total of 141 children availed of home tuition in the school year 2020/2021 under these non-special educational needs schemes administered by Parents and Learners Unit.

Published in 2020

- 0057/2020 - Home Tuition Grant Scheme for children without a school place for reasons other than special educational needs and medical grounds
- 0058/2020 - Home Tuition Grant Scheme 2020/2021 - Maternity Related Absences Component

2.9 Access and Inclusion in Early Years Settings

2.9.1 Early Start

The Department funds and administers the Early Start pre-school classes established in 1994/95 in 40 primary schools in designated areas of urban disadvantage throughout the country. Early Start is a one-year pre-school scheme which has an educational programme aimed to enhance overall development, help prevent school failure and offset the effects of social disadvantage. The educational programme can cater for 1,620 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 or equipment, as well as an annual grant to foster parental involvement.

In 2020, non-pay funding amounting to €209,347.73 was paid out to Early Start Units.

2.9.2 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. The Rutland Street Pre-school Project's budget for non-teaching pay and non-pay elements is administered by the Department. The staffing for the school is an administrative principal, eight teachers and five childcare workers for 99 children.

2.9.3 Supporting Inclusion and Diversity

The Department plays a support role in the ongoing development of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) which was launched in June 2016 by the Department of Children, Equality, Diversity, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). AIM is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. In 2020, the Early Years Education Policy Unit (EYEPU), which sits on the cross-sectoral implementation group steering the AIM initiative, continued to provide supports to the AIM model through participation in its working groups. A review of AIM was due to take place in 2020 but was postponed until 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing public health restrictions.

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 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 by DCEDIY to services which employ an Inclusion Coordinator. Following a competitive

tender process run by DCEDIY, the programme was renewed in 2020 for a further three years with a possible extension of one further year.

Goal 3: We will equip education and training providers with the skills and support to provide a quality learning experience

Quality of provision is the cornerstone to the success of the education and training system. The Department recognises the fundamental roles that leaders, teachers and support staff play and we seek to strengthen the system's capacity as a whole to continuously improve and to deliver the highest quality education and training services for learners. The quality of Ireland's education system is recognised internationally, but to be the best we need to continuously improve.

3.1 Teacher Supply

The Teacher Supply Action Plan was reviewed and a revised plan drafted in consultation with key stakeholders, with a view to publication in 2021.

Following a call by the HEA, on behalf of the Department, to all providers of initial teacher education, three programmes to upskill registered teachers in targeted post-primary subjects (Spanish, mathematics and physics) were announced by the Minister in November 2020.

Progress was made to update the technical report *Developing a Teacher Demand and Supply Model for Ireland 2020-2036* to take account of policy developments and revised student demographic projections, with a view to publication in 2021.

Substantial progress was made towards the development of a model of post-primary teacher demand and supply at a subject level.

Due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, a national stakeholder forum was not held in 2020.

Sub Seeker, the substitute teacher recruitment portal developed by Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD), was launched in December 2019 and had its first full year of operation in 2020 .

Significant progress was made by the IPPN in developing a recruitment portal for long term vacancies for all schools, primary and post-primary, with a view to launching in 2021.

3.2 Teacher Education

The Department views teacher education as 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 initial teacher education programmes, Continuing Professional Development and supports for Principals and Teachers in their work. This is done through the initial Teacher Education Programmes, Education Centres and Support Services for teachers at Primary and Post-Primary Level.

CPD for primary and post-primary teachers was provided in a wide range of subject areas throughout 2020. These included support for the introduction and implementation of the Primary Languages Curriculum, new subject specifications under the Framework for Junior Cycle and new senior cycle examinable subjects and revised senior cycle subject specifications. Furthermore over 600 places were provided on college-based post-graduate programmes in Leadership and Special Educational Needs.

Professional development support for the implementation of the relevant actions in the areas of The Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM), Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools (DEIS), Digital Strategy for Schools, Languages Connect, Health & Wellbeing and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) continued to be prioritised in 2020.

3.2.1 Standards in Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

Under Section 38 of the Teaching Council Act, ITE programmes are subject to review and accreditation by the Teaching Council, for registration purposes

The first cycle of the review and accreditation of programmes was completed in 2015. In preparation for the next cycle of the review and accreditation process, the Council reviewed its policy on standards for programmes of ITE. Following completion of this review, Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education was published in November 2020.

Céim sets out the requirements for which all programmes of qualification for teaching in Ireland must meet in order to gain accreditation from the Teaching Council. It is also a benchmark for anybody seeking to register as a teacher in Ireland.

The Core Elements for all programmes of ITE have been updated. The previous (16) mandatory elements have been changed, with some being amalgamated into seven standards which include: Inclusive Education, Global Citizenship Education and Digital Skills

All new Primary and Post-primary programmes submitted to the Council for accreditation must now be in alignment with *Céim.* Existing programmes of ITE shall be realigned in accordance with *Céim* for commencement in September 2022 for first year student teachers.

3.2.2 Initial Teacher Education graduates

In 2019, there were 1199 graduates from State-funded primary concurrent and consecutive initial teacher education (ITE) programmes and 1403 graduates from State-funded post-primary concurrent and consecutive ITE programmes. In addition, there were 598 primary and 132 post-primary graduates on consecutive programmes from Hibernia College in 2019. Estimated figures only are available for 2020, it is expected that there will be some 1200 primary graduates and over 1638 post-primary graduates from State-funded programmes, with some 683 primary and 157 post-primary expected to graduate from Hibernia College.

3.2.3 Post Primary Subject Curricular Requirements

For registration as a post-primary teacher, an individual must meet the curricular subject requirements for at least one post-primary subject. These curricular subject requirements are set out by the Teaching Council, which has responsibility for the promotion and regulation of the teaching profession in Ireland.

The Council carried out a review on the curricular subject requirements, which included an extensive consultation process with stakeholders which was completed in 2019. The Council's revised requirements were then published in November 2020.

Some of the most notable changes and effective dates of the new criteria include:

- A requirement of a minimum of 60 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits has been set for all subjects to ensure consistency and parity of esteem across all subjects. This means that four curricular subjects – Art, Physical Education, Home

Economics and Music, have had their required number of ECTS credits reduced (from 80-90 ECTS to 60).
- New Leaving Certificate curricular subjects of *Politics and Society* and *Computer Science* have been developed and included for the first time. Registration for those subjects with the Teaching Council opened from 1 January 2021.
- For all other subjects, there is a commencement date which is with effect from 1 January 2023.

3.2.4 School Placement

School Placement is a critical part of ITE as it enables the student teacher to experience teaching and learning in a variety of contexts, and to participate in school life in a way that is structured and supported.

Under Section 38 of the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015 the Council is responsible for the review and accreditation of programmes of Initial Teacher Education, having regard to the national policy framework established by the Minister for Education. In this context, and as part of the Teacher Supply Action Plan, the Department of Education, in 2018, requested the Council to review the implementation of the existing school placement guidelines, with a particular focus on school/HEI partnerships, and to make recommendations.

The Council convened a School Placement Working Group to carry out the review. The membership of this group included, representatives of the Council and the Department, Higher Education Institutions, unions and management bodies, and the HEA. The Council also engaged with principals and student teachers, through sub-groups and focus groups.

Plans were in place to publish the Report in 2020. However, due to the extenuating circumstances as a result of COVID-19, a delay in publication occurred and the Report was published in March 2021.

Follow up to this Report is being taken forward by a Project Team from the Teaching Council and Department, in 2021.

3.2.5 Policy Statement on Initial Teacher Education

The Department commenced development of a Policy Statement for ITE in 2019. Extensive consultations has taken place with all stakeholders connected with ITE, including all ITE providers and Departmental policy areas connected to ITE. This Policy Statement will attempt to document policy and provision of ITE and provide some clarity around the vision for ITE.

Work continued on the Policy Statement in 2020, with an expected date of publication of end of 2021.

3.2.6 Development of a research-based framework for the evaluation of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

In 2020, the Department, in conjunction with the Educational Research Centre (ERC), continued this project-of developing an evaluation framework for CPD, which will help ensure that CPD provision meets the needs of teachers, schools, students and the Department efficiently and effectively and ensure the best use of available resources. Due to COVID-19, the timeline for completion of this research project has been extended to 2022.

3.2.7 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

CPD support is provided for teachers and school leaders by four national teacher education support services funded by the Department. Information on the work of each of these services during 2020 is provided below.

3.2.8 Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)

In 2020, the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), a national teacher education support service funded by the Department of Education, continued to provide a comprehensive professional development programme to support teachers and school leaders. The year commenced with the full programme of CPD seminars, workshops, Professional Learning Communities and school support along with a full suite of webinars and online courses.

The context of the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 impacted on modes of provision, with the necessity to move all CPD to the online/remote setting. In March 2020, the PDST Digital Technology team created a Distance Learning page for teachers and school leaders as a fully functioning and populated platform www.pdst.ie/distancelearning. This developed considerably thereafter serving as a "one stop shop" for supports catering for all levels of teacher Digital Technologies proficiency. It included advice on Digital platforms, Digital tools for teaching, learning and assessment, over 70 online narrated tutorials, online conferencing guidance and rich video content illustrating good practice.

PDST Leadership, Health and Wellbeing, Literacy and STEM teams designed specific on-line portals on the distance learning page with a wealth of resources and scaffolds for supporting the continuity of learning at home.

The PDST developed a Contingency Programme of Work transferring all planned face to face CPD to online formats as well as the provision of individual school support through remote models (online meetings, phone, e-mail).

As schools reopened in September to December 2020, all CPD and school support continued to be delivered remotely with the PDST supporting teachers and school leaders in areas of national priority as well as responding to needs arising as classroom teaching resumed. In anticipation of schools reopening, PDST's new interactive blended learning toolkits were developed over the summer of 2020 with a view to supporting schools re considerations for blended learning, planning for instruction and the meaningful fusion of pedagogy and technology.

National seminars to support the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum were completed in January 2020, followed by a programmes of sustained school support which continued until schools closed in March. Schools continued to be supported through a host of webinars, live literacy and languages workshops, online resources and regular e-bulletins.

Primary STEM support spanned all areas of the Maths and Science curricula with a key focus on play based learning, inquiry based learning and rich learning tasks. The STEM sa Bhaile series of webinars proved especially popular with teachers during the closures along with the online Smaointe bulletin to which 2000 registered.

The Primary and Post Primary Health and Wellbeing teams' support provision continued across all of the following areas: SPHE, RSE, Stay Safe, Child Protection, JC and SC Personal Safety, Anti Bullying, Mental Health and Substance Misuse.

Senior Cycle CPD for the subject specifications of Economics, Politics and Society also continued with provision also in place for existing syllabi: Music, Geography, History, RE,

and Home Economics. Post-Primary programme support continued in JCSP, LCA, LCVP and TY.

The PDST's unique model of school-based support continued to be the most popular mode of CPD provision with sustained school support featuring where schools identified key priorities for progression mainly relating to their school improvement plans.

Support for school leaders was provided through PDST's national programmes: Misneach, Tánaiste, Comhar, Forbairt, Lionraí and Meitheal, as well as a series of supports for School Self Evaluation. Contextualised support was provided for school leaders through one to one coaching and group coaching to account for the unique challenges presented by the school closures in Spring 2020. This included one to one support for 52 newly appointed principals, appointed during the closures.

3.2.9 Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT)

Despite COVID-19, a comprehensive professional development programme, delivered by Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) to support teachers of Junior Cycle continued to be rolled out in 2020. JCT's entire programme of work moved into the online space in a relatively short space of time, which included online seminars for school leaders, whole-staff and smaller group online workshops for teachers, subject specific online workshops that attracted over 22,000 teachers via school clustering, coupled with an array of online events held in collaboration with regional education centres. Some 35 online school cluster events involving 600+ schools across a 30 day period were arranged by JCT.

The increased use of interactive webinars by the support services during COVID-19 as a mode of CPD delivery has had a positive impact on service delivery by making CPD more accessible.

JCT online learning events are interactive events that teachers can ask questions and have them answered live. All such online events are recorded and are subsequently uploaded to the website at www.jct.ie. JCT broadcast individual online learning events all year round, but have two concentrated events each October and April time which are called OLE – our Online Learning Events.

2020 saw the continued roll-out of Phase 2 of the JCT Coding in Action project involving 62 schools, which includes 19 DEIS schools.

JCT also operates two highly successful elective CPD initiatives for teachers – STE(A)M, which has a focus on cross-curricular STEM disciplines across Junior Cycle subjects, and Arts in Junior Cycle which presents a series of professional development workshops for teachers to support engagement with the arts and learning in Junior Cycle.

3.2.10 National Induction programme for Teachers (NIPT)

The National Induction programme for Teachers (NIPT) is a dedicated support service funded by the Department of Education. NIPT supports the induction of Primary and Post-Primary Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) into the teaching profession in Ireland in line with the requirements of the Department of Education and the policies of the Teaching Council including *Droichead*, the Integrated Professional Induction Framework for NQTs.

In the 2019/2020 school year, the number of primary and post-primary NQTs supported through Droichead were 1,869 and 1,301 respectively.

NIPT prioritised and facilitated Professional Support Team (PST) training (729 at Primary and 191 at Post Primary) which aimed to provide participants with the initial knowledge and skills required to be effective PST members to support and guide newly NQTs through the

induction process. PST training was re-configured and facilitated online from September 2020.

3.2.11 Centre for School Leadership (CSL)

The CSL is a partnership between the Department of Education, the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN), and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD), and was established in September 2015 with a role in leading, supporting, enhancing and advising on high-quality programmes (Mentoring, Coaching & Aspiring Leaders') to develop and support school leadership, particularly principals across the primary and post-primary school network.

The Post Graduate Diploma in School Leadership (PDSL) has been offered across a large number of education centres since September 2018. The NQF Level 9 programme had an intake of 283 participants for the third cohort in September 2020.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 (NUIG).

Every newly appointed principal in a primary or post-primary school has access to a trained CSL mentor since September 2017. Over 500 experienced principals are trained as mentors. Principals in their second year of appointment have access to a group mentoring programme which is operated through IPPN and NAPD.

CSL continued to endorse professional learning in the area of school leadership and a total of 14 programmes have been endorsed since the process commenced in 2019 from a variety of stakeholders including management bodies, teacher unions, professional associations, education centres and third level colleges

3.2.12 Education Support Centres

Currently, the network of Education Support Centres consists of 21 full time and 9 part time centres spread across 6 regions. Three of the full-time Centres provide the administrative headquarters for Department funded professional development support services for teachers (JCT, NIPT, PDST & CSL). A range of other smaller professional development support programmes and initiatives are administered across other Centres – this would include Active School Flag, Summer Camps, and Teacher Professional Networks etc.

The principal activity of Education Support Centres is to organise the local delivery of national programmes of teacher professional development on behalf of the Department of Education. Each Education Support Centre has a defined geographical area of responsibility. Education Support Centres also provide services for schools, teachers, parents, boards and other relevant persons supporting them in carrying out their functions in respect of the provision of education. In response to COVID-19 pandemic the Education Centre network continued to provide services in an online format.

3.3 Quality Inspections

3.3.1 Standards of provisions in schools

In 2020, the Inspectorate published three research reports which provided an overview of the effectiveness of provision for STEM education, for Digital Learning and for Modern Foreign Languages in early-years settings, primary and post-primary schools. These three reports provide a benchmark for the education system and policy makers more broadly in relation to how national initiatives in these three areas are being implemented and to inform actions that may need to be taken to ensure that the national objectives can be achieved. In addition, the reports serve as a resource for education practitioners at early-years, primary

and post-primary levels through providing illustrations of effective practice as observed in the course of the research projects.

3.3.2 Supporting the continuation of education during the period of school closure and the re-commencement of the formal education system following the re-opening of the system.

During the period March – June 2020, when school buildings were closed due to public health restrictions, the Inspectorate worked to support school leaders, teachers, boards of management and school communities to provide effectively for the learning and progression of all children and young people. During the initial period of school closures, inspectors provided advisory sessions to 2902 schools designed to support them in providing continuity of teaching and learning for all students in remote learning environments.

When school buildings reopened in September, the Inspectorate offered a responsive programme of advisory sessions in early years settings, schools and centres for education. These sessions were designed to advise and support schools and settings as they met the challenges of returning to on-site education. They focused on three key themes of establishing a healthy working and learning environment, delivering the curriculum in 2020/21 school year and promoting learner and staff well-being. Overall in 2020, the Inspectorate conducted 3224 advisory sessions.

In cooperation with the education partners the Inspectorate developed the *Supporting the Safe Provision of Schooling* inspection visits for schools and centres for education. This model is designed to provide an assurance to the public that schools are implementing the Department's COVID-19 Response Plan for the Safe and Sustainable Reopening of Schools and to provide advice and support to schools in the implementation of this plan. Overall, the Inspectorate conducted 740 such visits in 2020.

In line with our strategic commitment to learner voice and the principles of the Lundy Model of Child Participation, the Inspectorate also conducted, during the September-December 2020 period, two phases of focus groups and surveys with primary pupils and post-primary students. These engagements were specifically designed to listen to and understand children and young people's experiences with a view to informing policy decisions and the provision of further guidance and supports for schools, teachers and learners. They also enabled the Inspectorate to recognise good practice in schools through the lens of pupils' and students' experience of being back at school.

During this period, the Inspectorate also undertook a research programme designed to identify and disseminate examples of effective practice where schools had been successful in addressing the needs of learners whose schooling has been disrupted and the other challenges posed by the return to schooling. This research work involved two phases of surveys of learners, parents, principals and teachers in a sample of primary, post-primary and special schools across the country. The lines of enquiry were informed by information gathered during the Inspectorate's advisory sessions with school principals and by emerging issues raised by stakeholders with the Department. The analysis of the survey data and the information gathered from discussions with principals and pupil/student focus groups provided an overview of the successes and challenges experienced by schools and identified specific issues relevant to primary, post-primary or the special schools' sectors. A suite of reports on the research carried during the September-December 2020 period have been prepared and will be published early in 2021.

3.3.3 Development and review of our inspection models

During 2020, the Inspectorate continued to review and develop its inspection models to ensure they enable the Inspectorate to perform its improvement and accountability functions to the highest standards.

A formal review of the Child Protection and Safeguarding model commenced in June 2020 and resulted in the publication of an updated Guide to Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections (October 2020). The revised Guide provides greater clarity on certain aspects of the inspection process and removes a very small number of ambiguities from the original inspection framework. The internal phase of the review of the Evaluation of Provision for Students with Additional and Special Educational Needs in Post Primary Schools was also concluded in 2020. The external phase of this review will conclude in 2021. Work also commenced on the review of the Whole-School Evaluation Management, Leadership and Learning Post Primary (WSE-MLL) model. The main focus of this review is to increase the emphasis on the quality of teaching and learning in the inspection activities and to enhance the involvement of students in the inspection process. This review will also conclude in 2021.

The initial phase of development on the extension of the Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) Model to include provision for children aged 0-3 years was completed in 2020 and a field trial and consultation with stakeholders will take place over the course of Q2 2021. The model is on track for formal implementation in Q4 2021.

The initial phase of research for an Early Years Special Education Needs Model commenced in 2020. This phase involved a systematic review of international best practice in provision for children with additional needs in early years settings. A 'listening phase' with ELC providers and practitioners is planned for 2021.

Work also commenced on developing a model to evaluate the quality of leadership and management in schools on reviewing the evaluation model currently used to evaluate provision in Centres for Education (Youthreach) and on strengthening our monitoring of anti-bullying measures across all our inspection models.

During this developmental work, the Inspectorate continued to refine and develop its means of consultation with the education partners to ensure more effective engagement by partners in the research and design phases of inspection models.

3.3.4 Enhancing the impact of our inspections

Throughout 2020, the Inspectorate worked to enhance the impact of our inspections. A systematic review of the language and style of inspection reports was undertaken to ensure that they are written in a manner that is clear and accessible to a wide-range of readers including learners, parents and the public. Projects aimed at enhancing the involvement of pupils/students and of parents in inspection processes were also progressed during 2020. Among the activities progressed during 2020 were:

- The review and updating of questionnaires administered to learners and parents during inspections
- The preparation of brochures and videos for parents and learners about inspection processes and how they can become involved in inspections

Publications in 2020

- Guide to Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections (October 2020)
- STEM Education 2020: Reporting on Practice in Early Learning and Care, Primary and Post-Primary Contexts (July 2020)
- Digital Learning 2020: Reporting on practice in Early Learning and Care, Primary and Post-Primary Contexts (June 2020)
- Modern Foreign Languages: A Report on the Quality of Practice in Post-Primary Schools (April 2020)
- Review of education provision in schools attached to CAMHS units (July 2020)
- Educational provision for learners with autistic spectrum disorder in special classes attached to mainstream schools in Ireland (November 2020)
- Evaluation of the Support Teacher Project (December 2020)

- 0040/2020 Arrangements for the Inspection and School Self-Evaluation for the 2020/2021 School Year
- 0041/2020 Arrangements for Inspection and School Self-evaluation for the 2020/2021 School Year
- 0042/2020 Arrangements for Inspection of Early Learning and Care (ELC) Settings for the 2020/2021 Academic Year

3.4 Quality in Early Education

The Department plays a key role in ensuring that early years education which is 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 and development through the implementation of *Síolta*, the national quality framework, and the *Aistear* curriculum framework. In 2020, the Department continued to work with the DCEDIY, Better Start National Early Years Quality Development, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and other stakeholders in order to achieve this objective.

By the end of 2020 the total number of Early Years Education Inspections carried out in Early Learning and Care settings delivering the free pre-school in the ECCE Programme was 2,647. Allowing for fluctuations in the number of ELC settings on contract each year to deliver the ECCE Programme, this represents approximately 65% of the total population. The 2020/21 inspection programme was suspended in March 2020 due to public health advice to limit the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To support continued engagement with ELC settings and quality improvement in provision and practice, a series of webinars was developed to share findings from EYEI and research with Early Years practitioners, parents and infant teachers in primary schools. These are published online at https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c71c0-insights/

The focus of the Early Years Education Inspectorate (EYEI) quality framework on process quality, early learning, and professional pedagogy and practice is widely welcomed as recognising and validating the work of early years professionals and their contribution to supporting children's learning, well-being and development at this critical stage of life. Whilst the findings of EYEI continue to identify many strengths in the provision and practice of early education in ELC settings, challenges continue to be identified. These challenges are primarily centred on the development and implementation of curricula informed by *Aistear*, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. There are also capacity issues in relation to promoting partnership with parents and supporting transitions from pre-school to primary school.

A key trend since 2017 is the notable increase in the inclusion of children with disabilities in ELC settings. These children are being supported with a range of measures provided as a result of the introduction of AIM including the deployment of trained inclusion coordinators in many settings.

In 2019, the DE Inspectorate was asked to extend the scope of EYEI to allow for evaluation of provision for children aged 0-6 years. Work to develop an extended quality framework and inspection processes to facilitate this work commenced in 2019 and was due be completed through consultation and field trials in 2020. Field trials have been deferred until 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing public health restrictions.

3.4.1 Síolta/Aistear

The National Síolta/Aistear initiative (NSAI), which commenced in 2016, is supporting the coordinated wider implementation and rollout of both frameworks, including the development

of materials, resources and Continued Professional Development (CPD) for early years practitioners. The Department is working in partnership with DCEDIY, Better Start and the NCCA on this initiative with two national Development Officers in post to support the work of the initiative. The Department leads the work of the NSAI Steering Group and agrees an annual work plan for the initiative.

The Department is leading on an evaluation of the CPD Programme "Aistear and Play" which began in 2019 and was due to conclude in 2020. The collection of data, onsite observations and return of questionnaires was disrupted due to public health restrictions and the closure of Early Learning and Care (ELC) services. From the limited sample size available the overall key findings of the evaluation were as follows:

- Following CPD quality levels observed in each of the 12 ELC settings had improved.
- Following CPD practitioners self-reported improved knowledge, practice and values in relation to providing for and supporting young children's play.

The NSA implementation office also coordinates a range of CPD opportunities for mentors delivering supports as part of the initiative.

3.4.2 Professional Qualifications and Standards

To support the further enhancement of professional qualifications and standards within the ELC Sector, and following on from extensive work by the Department in 2018, the Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines (PACG) for Initial Professional Education (Level 7 & 8) Degree programmes for the ELC sector were published in 2019 following approval by both the Minister for Education and the Minister for Children, Equality, Diversity, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). All new programmes must be consistent with the approved PACG in order to qualify for enhanced funding from the DCEDIY and to this end the two Ministers have established a Qualifications Advisory Board (QAB), and course providers have been invited to submit proposals for new programmes for review by that Board. In 2020, ten HEI programmes were deemed to have met the requirements of the PACG. Providers continue to engage with the QAB and programmes continue to be submitted for approval.

3.4.3 Workforce Development Plan for the ELC sector

The Workforce Development Plan for the ELC sector is crucial to the goal of giving early years practitioners the skills and support they need to provide a quality learning experience for young children. It is also an objective of First 5, the whole-of-Government strategy for babies, young children and their families. Implementation of the Workforce Development Plan is being led by the Department of Education and the DCEDIY.

In 2019, the Steering Group for the development of the Plan was established, as well as a Consultation Group representing a wide range of stakeholders in early learning and care and the Consultation Group (or Steering Group) met consistently throughout 2020. Extensive preparations were made for a nationwide series of consultations with practitioners and providers. These meetings largely took place virtually in 2020. The Workforce Development Plan is scheduled to be completed in 2021.

Goal 4: We will intensify the relationships between education and the wider community, society and the economy

This goal is about building strong linkages, creating clusters and sharing good practice to achieve better outcomes and benefits for everyone involved. Our education service must be able to respond to the changing needs, choices and expectations of our changing global context. Successful enterprise engagement is key to driving the growth of traineeships and apprenticeships, ensuring the relevance of work placements and work-based projects and increasing the diversity of opportunity in learning beyond school.

4.1 Education (Admissions to School) Act 2018

The overall objective of the Act is to provide a new framework for school enrolment that is designed to ensure that every child is treated fairly and that the way in which schools decide on applications for admission is structures, fair and transparent.

On 14 January 2020 a number of sections of the Admission to Schools Act were commenced, introducing new laws around admission to schools which became operational on 1 February 2020.

All schools have drafted new policies, which have been approved by the school patron, and are now be published on the schools website. These policies are effective for the school year 2021/22 and onwards.

4.2 Education for Sustainable Development

The climate crisis and recent experiences as a result of the global pandemic associated with COVID-19, have placed sharper focus on the concept of sustainability and sustainable living for our societies and economies. Supporting early learning and care settings, schools and centres of education through our evaluation and advisory roles to help learners to develop their knowledge, skills, competences and values around sustainability was an important aspect of the Inspectorate's work and commitments in 2020.

In 2020, the Inspectorate established an internal working group to consider how best to value, promote, advise and report on ESD as part of external evaluation and how we can effectively support and encourage settings and schools to reflect on their own practices around ESD as part of the SSE process.

To date, the working group has engaged in research and examined key policy documents and examined and highlighted where opportunities for the promotion of ESD exist within our quality frameworks. It has also commenced the development of short sector-specific documents to support inspectors to understand ESD across the curriculum in the early years and in primary and post-primary sectors. See also **Appendix A** – Corporate Data; Sustainable Development Goals; National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development.

4.3 Creative Youth

In December 2017, "A plan to enable the Creative Potential of Every Child and Young Person" was launched. The aim is to deliver the Government's commitment to ensure that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, arts and coding by 2022. The Creative Youth plan set out a range of initiatives for pilot and implementation. The Department of Education, the Department of Children,

Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the Arts Council are key partners in delivering Creative Youth.

4.3.1 Creative Schools

The Creative Schools initiative was launched in early 2018, with 150 schools beginning participation in September 2018 in year 1 of a two-year initiative, with another 150 schools joining in September 2019. In 2020 a new cohort of 164 schools entered year 1 of the initiative, bringing the total number of schools in the initiative to 464

Each Creative School is allocated a grant of €2,000 per year to implement their individual plans. Total funding of €2.36m was provided in 2020 to support the initiative (between DTCAGSM, DoE and the Arts Council). Each school in the programme also received an additional €1,100 in 2020 as part of the July Stimulus package, meaning the grant awarded for the 2020/21 school year was €3,100 per school.

Each participating school has access to a "Creative Associate", who is essential in embedding inspirational and sustainable creative practices in teaching and learning. "Creative Associates" are a mixture of practising artists and teachers, with an understanding of creativity and its potential to transform the lives of children and young people.

Participating schools, working with their "Creative Associate", complete the development of a school development plan for arts and creativity and implementing these plans. The "Creative Associates" explore new links for schools with artists and with arts, cultural and creative organisations, both locally and nationally, to help develop their plan.

4.3.2 Creative Clusters

In September 2018, 68 schools were selected to participate in a network of 23 Creative Clusters as part of the Schools Excellence Fund and the Creative Ireland Programme. In 2019 an additional 76 schools across 21 Creative Clusters joined the initiative. In 2020 an additional 72 schools joined the initiative from September 2020, making a further 21 clusters.

Each cluster receives a grant of €1,500 per participating school, up to a maximum of €7,500, each year over the two years and is exclusively funded by the Department of Education. As part of the July Stimulus package, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media provided an additional €1,000 to each participating school for the 2020/21 school year on a once off basis.

Creative Clusters encourages and recognises excellence and innovation in our schools, while giving the schools the freedom to determine their own goals to be achieved. Schools are supported by a Creative Cluster Facilitator, and work together to collaborate, share ideas and develop plans on achieving their goal.

4.3.3 Local Creative Youth Partnerships

Three Local Creative Youth Partnerships were established in 2019 to promote creativity for young people as part of the Creative Ireland Programme and they were piloted in three Education and Training Boards.

These Partnerships are networks which enable information sharing, collaboration between local creative youth service providers to bring about better use of existing resources, practices and initiatives in an ETB area, while providing new opportunities for young people to access creative initiatives.

The three ETBs involved are:

- Kerry Education and Training Board

- Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board
- Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board

Each ETB received €100,000 in 2020 to help develop their Partnership and deliver their operating activities. The development to date included engagement with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and Hub na nÓg.

4.3.4 Teacher-Artist Partnership & Residency Programme

The Teacher/Artist Partnership (TAP) CPD and residency initiative was developed in 2014 in response to the objectives outlined in the Arts in Education Charter 2012 to support and enhance Arts Education. It is a unique arts-in-education initiative in which artists work in partnership with primary school teachers. Teachers participate in week long DoE approved and accredited summer workshops where they work in partnership with artists. A number of teachers then benefit from a 20-hour residency in the following school year, where the teacher and artist can continue to work together in a classroom setting. The programme was researched and evaluated and the Research Report was published in March 2016.

The programme is administered by Tralee Education Centre and typically delivered across the network of 21 full-time education centres. In 2020, as a result of COVID-19, an Online TAP programme was developed and the summer course was moved to an online format, with subsequent residencies being delivered digitally and face to face in schools in line with local school policies. The initiative receives an allocation of €490k each year from Creative Youth.

To date 1,304 Teachers and 245 Artists have trained in TAP CPD across 535 primary schools. To date almost 29,000 children have experienced and participated in TAP in-school residencies. The TAP programme now exists in a face-to-face and Online TAP format. In addition, given international interest in TAP, an international online I-TAP-PD programme is now being designed under the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Programme which is being led and managed by Tralee Education Centre with four European partners based in Serbia, Greece, Austria and the Netherlands.

4.3.5 Arts in Junior Cycle

Arts in Junior Cycle is DoE led and operated by Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) and presents a series of professional development experiences for teachers to support engagement with the arts and learning in Junior Cycle. The workshops, run in conjunction with arts organisations, embody the principles and key skills which underpin the Framework for Junior Cycle and provide teachers with practical and creative methodologies to engage with learning outcomes in their classroom. Since 2017, 3,217 post primary teachers have accessed professional CPD experiences under this initiative delivered by 216 artists.

As a result of COVID-19, these workshops were moved to an online format in 2020.

Goal 5: We will lead in the delivery of strategic direction and supportive systems in partnership with key stakeholders in education and training.

The Department and its agencies have an important role in providing strategic leadership, developing policy and delivering services. This involves co-ordination with sectoral stakeholders, the broader public sector, the political system and other Governmental bodies and cross sectoral work programmes. The remit of the Department encompasses early years education, primary and second level education. Historically, this remit also encompassed further education and training and higher education, including supports for research and international education.

5.1 Action Plan for Education 2020

Due to the then upcoming general election, the Department did not publish its usual annual Action Plan for Education. Instead, a high-level internal Work Programme was developed to guide activity for the year. With the subsequent outbreak of COVID-19 in Ireland, however, the Department's activity focus shifted to responding to the pandemic and the implications it had for schools. The Government decision to close schools with immediate effect on 12 March saw service provision move from mostly in-person to remote learning delivered largely through online means. This required a systemic overhaul so that learning and assessment could continue for the remainder of the 2019/20 academic year and so that alternative arrangements could be put in place for the State exams.

The emphasis was on responding quickly, to ensure continuity of learning for 2019/20, addressing the specific needs of learners with special educational needs and those at risk of educational disadvantage, and providing wellbeing supports tailored to the circumstances at the time.

As the Department's primary focus in 2020 was on responding to the impact of the pandemic on the school sector, planned activity was re-prioritised.

5.2 Public Sector Reform Programme

Throughout 2020, the Department worked closely with the Reform Delivery Office and the Reform Evaluation Unit in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to support the implementation of *Our Public Service 2020,* launched in December 2017. This framework supports development and innovation across the public service.

The Public Service Reform Programme Office is leading on Action 14 of *Our Public Service 2020*, "Continuous and responsive professional development", which has three key areas:

- the process for the recognition of core skills
- leadership development, and
- a model of experiential learning opportunities.

2020 saw research conducted regarding the process for the recognition of core skills, including engagement with HR and L&D professionals across the public sector. Two pioneering leadership programmes within the public service, the *Centre for School Leadership* in the Education sector and the *Health Service Leadership Development Academy* in the Health sector were reviewed to capture their learnings. The resulting report, "*Establishing and Implementing Effective Leadership Development Models in the Irish Public Sector*", was jointly published by the Department of Education and the Department of Public

Expenditure and Reform in September 2020 to help apply their lessons to the wider public service.
The Public Service Reform Programme Office organised the Department's Innovation Week, 19–23 October 2020. The Week allowed reflection on COVID-19 impacts on the public service. A series of interactive webinars saw Department officials, teachers, pupils, parents and support services discuss innovative responses within the education sector. These included the delivery of remote teaching during school closures, the significantly expanded Summer Programme 2020 for learners with special educational needs and those most at risk of educational disadvantage, and the arrangements put in place to allow approximately one million children and young people to safely return to school in the context of the pandemic.

In 2020, the Department also continued to promote the use of appropriate structures and processes to ensure Management Board oversight and governance of the development and implementation of commitments under the Public Service Reform agenda, and to promote Project and Programme Management structures and methodologies throughout the organisation.

5.3 Data Protection

In 2019 the Department established the Data Compliance and Support Unit bringing together the related areas of data protection, data governance, freedom of information and records management under the management of a data protection officer (DPO).

A key focus in 2020 was on ensuring GDPR compliance. The Unit assisted the Department in the best use of data throughout each stage of the data lifecycle through publishing a suite of data guidelines, ensuring privacy by design and default, raising awareness among and training all staff on good data protection. This included the development of guidelines for staff on handling information securely in a remote working environment.

In 2020, the unit processed 162 Subject Access Requests under data protection legislation and 558 Freedom of Information requests.

5.4 Data Governance

Optimising the use of data is a key action under "Our Public Service 2020". Sharing data across Government will facilitate better service delivery, support better decision making, increase the ease of access to services and drive efficiencies. The Department continues to participate in central initiatives and collaborate with partners both within the education sector and the wider public service as required to ensure the most effective flow of data.

A key element of Action 24 of Civil Service Renewal, the National Data Infrastructure (NDI), has been progressed by the NDI champions group, chaired by the Central Statistics Office with representatives from all key Departments and Offices throughout the wider public sector. The NDI summarises the coverage of record-level PPSNs and Eircodes for key data holdings of Government Departments and agencies under their aegis. The Department continues to encourage collection of PPSNs and Eircodes in support of this work. The NDI Annual Report for 2020 noted that initiatives such as the application of a new Eircode Application Programming Interface for datasets like POD are proving successful for Eircode coverage, with a 10% increase in coverage for new records.

5.5 Departmental Communications

The situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic required significant enhanced communication with schools and stakeholders.

The Department strove to provide clear, accurate and timely guidance to school communities and worked closely with the Department of Health and HSE Public Health to

provide useful targeted communications materials for schools, students and parents to support both the periods of remote teaching and learning and the safe return and sustained operation of schools.

Outputs included large-scale public advertising campaigns on traditional and social media, accessible digital communications, dedicated webpages, provision of age-appropriate posters and videos to schools and multi-lingual provision in over 20 languages of key public health messaging.

Significant work was undertaken to support clear and effective communication to stakeholders including students and parents in respect of the State Examinations and Calculated Grades processes, necessitating both targeted and large scale public communications campaigns.

In 2020, there were over 7.3 million visits to the Department's webpages.

A staff newsletter was also developed and published in 2020 to support effective internal communications with Department staff who were remote working and for whom it was important to have information on the work of the Department in addressing the pandemic.

Publications in 2020:

- Return to School – advice for parents
- Return to School – advice for post-primary students
- Return to School – advice for students in third-sixth classes
- Return to School – advice for students in junior infants to second class

*published in Irish and English and in range of other languages to meet the needs of a diverse group of parents. Published in poser and video format.

5.6 School Transport

In 2020 over 114,100 children, including over 14,700 children with special educational needs were transported in over 6,300 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country at a cost of over €224.7 million. Children with special educational needs were transported to schools on over 3,400 routes at a cost of over €117.6 million in 2020.

5.7 ETB Financial

In line with Strategic Action No. 5 of Goal 5 of the *Department's Strategy Statement 2019-2021*, and in accordance with the *Code of Practice for the Governance of Education and Training Boards*, in Q2 2020 the Department, following consultation with ETBs and Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) put in place Oversight Agreements and Performance Delivery Agreements for each of the 16 ETBs.

Both the Oversight Agreements and the Performance Delivery Agreements provide for at least one formal meeting per annum between senior Department officials, representatives of the Board and Top Management of the ETB, to review the Oversight Agreement and the Performance Delivery Agreement and to consider the ETB's Service Plan for the relevant year. Meetings in respect of the 2020 year have been held with each of the ETBs.

5.8 Dealing with Past Abuse

During 2020, the Department continued to progress the completion of contributions from religious congregations towards the costs incurred by the State in responding to residential institutional child abuse.

Contributions are being made by the religious congregations under two rounds:

- the legally binding 2002 Indemnity Agreement and
- the 2009 voluntary offers.

In 2020, additional cash contributions amounting to approximately €0.550m were received on a voluntary basis from congregations. While further progress was made regarding the full transfer to the State of five properties (two under the 2002 indemnity agreement, and three under the 2009 voluntary offers), none of those transfers were completed in 2020.

The total offers made by the congregations under the two rounds amount to €480.6m while to end December 2020, total contributions amounting to €238 million had been received, see 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	124.94	3.06	98%/2%
2009 Voluntary offers (*)	352.61	115.74	236.87	33%/67%
	480.61	**240.68**	**239.93**	**50%/50%**

* The values of two properties fully transferred to the State are not yet available.
# It is unlikely that the full value of the amounts offered in 2009 will be achieved due to lower valuations on completed property transfers or disposals, offers not accepted, etc.

The Department continued to furnish the Council of Europe with bi-annual Action Plans detailing the individual and general measures that are being taken to implement the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgement in the Louise O'Keeffe case. An Action Plan was submitted to the Council of Europe on 8 December 2020. The review of the ex gratia scheme (a scheme which was instituted in July 2015 in the wake of the ECtHR judgment and as a response to those who discontinued legal proceedings against the State in relation to day school child sexual abuse) continued during 2020.

5.9 Department Expenditure

The Department's provisional expenditure outturn in 2020 amounted to €8.6 billion. This comprised €7.7 billion in gross voted current expenditure and capital expenditure of €923 million.

The final 2020 budget allocation for the Department of Education reflected the transfer of certain further and higher education functions to the newly established Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science. The budget allocations in 2020 provided for, among other things, 1,600 additional posts in schools, including additional teachers and special needs assistants (SNA), 2.5% increase in school capitation, extra teaching and leadership supports for smaller schools along with catering for increased demographics and additional special classes requirements.

There was significant COVID-19 financial support made available during 2020 to sustain school reopening that was also included in the overall 2020 budget allocation. This included funding for the replacement of teachers and non-teaching staff unable to attend for work due to COVID-19, additional release days for principals and deputy principals, enhanced cleaning regimes and PPE equipment, continuation of additional educational psychological services to provide for wellbeing supports for students, measures to allow transport of pupils on the school transport scheme in line with public health advice and capital funding to allow for social distancing reconfiguration of school places.

5.10 Payroll and Pensions

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

In 2020, the Department processed superannuation benefits for over 1,300 teachers and non-teaching staff. As part of the superannuation process, the Department also provided for over 730 transfers of pensionable service to/from other public service bodies, administered over 900 notional service requests, processed over 1,150 family law queries, and processed over 110 applications for professional added years for employees in the education sector. In 2019 there were further improvements to the pension modeller on the Department's website, where pension scheme members can obtain an estimate of pension benefits. The Pension Unit continues to issue pension benefit statements to scheme members and is actively working on improvements to increase the number of statements that can be issued. These improvements are part of a wider project that is underway to improve the capacity and performance of the Pension Unit through streamlining and modernising processes and procedures.

5.11 Internal and EU audit

Internal Audit Section is responsible for delivering internal audit services to both the Departments of Education and of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The unit provides assurances to the Accounting Officers on the adequacy, efficiency and effectiveness of risk management, internal control systems and governance processes.

The European Social Fund (ESF) Audit Authority, within the Department of Education, 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. As a result of COVID-19, all audits and Audit Committee meetings were conducted remotely as far as possible and in compliance with the latest Public Health guidelines. Six audit reports were presented to the Audit Committee in 2020. The unit tracks, on a quarterly basis, progress on the implementation of recommendations arising from internal audit reports.

No internal protected disclosures were brought to the attention of the Head of Internal and EU Audit Unit or the Audit Committee in 2020.

5.12 Shared Services Implementation

Following the creation of the Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in 2020, the Shared Services Implementation Unit's (SSIU) projects supported the ongoing development of the shared services programme across two departments. Significant progress has been made in advancing the shared services agenda in 2020.

The Education and Training Board (ETB) payroll operations completed their first full year of payroll processing, successfully implementing a business continuity plan in response to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, a further four ETBs migrated to the Education Shared Business Services (ESBS) payroll shared services, bringing the total

number of ETBs on the shared service to seven by year end. Work continued on an Expenses module for ETBs and a recruitment solution. Phased migration of learners to an apprentice payroll and learner payment service began with Wave 1 in 2020, and work was progressed for Wave 2.

ESBS supported six ETBs to upgrade Finance systems in advance of the implementation of a Finance shared service, and planning was progressed for further stabilisation and consolidation of finance systems across the ETB sector. Work continued on the planning of procurement of a long-term Finance shared service solution for ETBs.

Throughout 2020 the ETB/SOLAS Programme Board continued its work of actively supporting and facilitating the overall reform programme for the ETB/SOLAS sector. The Board's primary areas of focus in 2020 was the development of key shared services payroll projects for the ETB sector. By December 2020, seven ETBs were receiving payroll services from ESBS. A successful go-live was achieved in 2020 for apprentice payroll and Wave 1 learner payments and a permanent operations team was established.

Considerable progress was made in the development of a Payroll shared service for the Higher Education sector in 2020. A Proof of Concept (POC) programme was launched in 2020, which aimed to test a payroll shared service for three third-level institutions. Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) and Marino Institute of Education (MIE) were successfully on-boarded in 2020.

In January 2020, SSIU assumed responsibility for funding and management of HEAnet and EduCampus. HEAnet is a research and education network which provides internet connectivity and shared ICT services to approximately one million students, researchers, and staff across the primary, post-primary, further and higher level education. EduCampus, formerly known as An Chéim, is a subsidiary company of HEAnet, and currently acts as a shared services ICT applications provider to the Institute of Technology/ Technological University sectors. It also supports projects in the ESBS.

Work continued in 2020 on the upgrade of the Department's schools employees payroll function for some 120,000 payees to shared service standards. In addition, detailed scoping and analysis commenced on the work necessary to also upgrade the pension solution.

Throughout 2020 the SSIU continued to support procurement reform across the education sector, supporting the work of the Education Procurement Service (EPS), Schools Procurement Unit (SPU) and funding a dedicated resource within Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) to provide leadership and co-ordination of procurement reform within that sector. SSIU also works with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) to provide the education sector with a sector-wide procurement shared service, whilst remaining aligned to OGP regulations. Use of centralised procurement in the ETB sector increased significantly in 2020, and work continued on the alignment and integration of procurement functions across the education sector as a whole.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, SSIU worked with EPS and OGP to support central procurement in sourcing and delivering equipment such as laptops for remote-learning for disadvantaged students, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required for the safe reopening of schools.

5.13 School Building Programme 2020

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.

The current NDP, as part of Project Ireland 2040 framework, provides for €8.4bn investment in the School Building Programme during the period 2018 to 2027. Under the School Building Programme, there has capital expenditure in excess of €1.9bn during the 2018 to 2020 period. A further €665m has been allocated for 2021.

The Department continues to make progress to increase the infrastructural capacity in the schools sector, in order to meet demographic and other demands.

During the NDP period 2018 to 2020, 526 school building projects were completed under the Large Scale Capital Programme (LSCP) and the Additional School Accommodation Scheme (ASA). These projects delivered in excess of 48,000 school places, which included permanent accommodation for 229 special classes and additional capacity for 67 classrooms in 14 special schools throughout the country.

In addition, schools approved for additional accommodation under the Department's Additional Accommodation Scheme, which had prefabs in use on their school site, had those prefabs replaced as part of their overall additional accommodation project. Over 481 prefab units were approved for replacement with permanent buildings during this time.

Under Project Ireland 2040, Minor Works Grant funding of €29m issued to all primary schools in August 2020. Due to the exceptional circumstances arising from COVID-19, additional funding of €130m was provided to schools under the Minor Works Grant to facilitate the re-opening of schools in September 2020 which enabled the necessary reconfiguration of school space to manage physical distancing requirements. This minor works grant funding provided good flexibility at local level to assist schools to manage in the COVID-19 environment and to put more sustainable arrangements in place

Under the Summer Works Scheme, 405 projects in respect of Life Safety Systems and external works were approved for delivery in 2020. In 2020, there was €30m expenditure under this Scheme. Furthermore, in December 2020 there was 275 projects to the value of circa €31m approved for delivery in 2021 in respect of successful applications by primary schools under Category 2 Roofs and Category 6 Toilet Facilities (both primary and post primary schools).

Work continued to progress on the sites acquisition programme in 2020. In this regard, 15 sites/property acquisitions were completed in 2020.

5.13.1 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 49 research strands at various stages.

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.

The Department and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland are currently involved in an energy efficient retrofit pilot scheme for schools which commenced in 2017. This is taking

place in advance of the major programme of retrofits scheduled to commence in 2023, as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

The pilot programme is testing and evaluating different design approaches, solutions and delivery mechanisms. During the period 2018-2020, 32 projects were completed under a jointly funded pathfinder programme with the SEAI, testing and demonstrating energy efficiency and decarbonisation retrofit approaches. The pathfinder is paving the way for, and informing, a much larger national schools programme for the energy retrofit of schools from 2023 onwards as included in the NDP. It is facilitating research on a range of typical retrofit options, which will have been tried and tested ensuring the deployment of new design approaches and technologies are introduced to the educational environment on an evidence based approach.

This collaboration and research is helping to shape the future direction of energy efficiency in schools, and will continue with a view to delivering a programme of retrofits commencing in 2023 as NDP funding permits.

5.13.2 Website Information

The current status of large scale projects being delivered under the school building programme is published on the Department's website on a regular basis. 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.

5.14 Brexit and the Education Sector

During 2020, the Department continued with its preparedness strategy in the context of the conclusion of the EU-UK negotiations on 31 December 2020. The EU-UK Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) has been reviewed, and it is the Department's assessment that there is little impact on the delivery of education. Notwithstanding this assessment, the International Cooperation Unit will continue to monitor the impact of the TCA in areas such as qualifications recognition etc.

Further work continued on the finalisation of the draft Memorandum of Understanding on the Education Principles for the Common Travel Area. It is anticipated that this document will be signed in 2021.

5.15 Periodic Critical Reviews

The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 includes a requirement that Periodic Critical Reviews (PCRs) of Government Agencies should be carried out every five years. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform published the Guide to Periodic Critical Review of Non-Commercial State Bodies in September 2020. Due to the exceptional nature of 2020, and the Department's work being altered significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic where we sought to prioritise, above all else, the safety of our students, the progression of development of a timetable for the delivery of PCRs for Agencies of this Department is still under consideration and is being progressed.

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Appendix A – Corporate Data

Supporting the Parliamentary Process	2020
Parliamentary Questions responded to	4561
Memoranda for Government Received for Observations	107
Representations received by Minister and Minister of State Offices	12907
Responses to Topical Issues	18
Responses to Adjournment (Commencement) Debates	18

Information Services	2020
Emails received through info@education.gov.ie	10,129
Visitors to our website www.education.ie and gov.ie/education	8.8 million
Freedom of Information Requests Received Closed	 558 556
Subject Access Requests Received Closed	162 162
Press Releases Issued	109
Twitter followers	66,226

Annual Programme of Inspection in Schools and Centres for Education 2020

The Inspectorate completed a total of **7952** inspections/advisory sessions or calls to schools and settings in 2020 as outlined below:

Table 1: Summary of Inspectorate activities, 2020

Summary of inspections	
Inspections of early years settings participating in the ECCE Programme*	133
Inspections of primary schools (including inspection of the work of teachers on probation)	816
Inspections of post-primary schools and centres for education	473
School self-evaluation advisory visits	100
Data-gathering/Model Research and Development Work (early years)	51
Other inspections, advisory visits and evaluation activities	6379
Total inspections/advisory visits to early years settings, schools, centres for education and other educational settings	**7952**

*Early Childhood Care and Education Programme

Table 2: Inspections of Early Years settings participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme, 2020

Early Years Education Inspections	
Early Years Education Inspection	119
Early Years Education Inspection: Follow-through	12
Whole Setting Evaluation	2
Data-gathering/Model Research and Development Work	51
Total Early Years Education-focused Inspections	**184**

Table 3: Inspections of primary schools, 2020

Primary Inspection Activity	
Whole-School Evaluation	5
Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning	30
Evaluation of Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS* Schools	1
Incidental Inspection	89
Follow-through Inspection	42
Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Education Needs	16
Curriculum Evaluation	60
Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections: Primary Initial	19
Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections: Primary Final	5
Supporting the Safe Provision of Schooling Inspection Visits	431
Total of school inspections	**698**
Inspection of the work of teachers on probation	118
Overall total	**816**

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

Table 4: Inspections of post-primary schools and centres for education, 2020

Post-primary Inspection/Evaluation Activity	
Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning	24
Subject Inspection	59
Programme Evaluation	7
Evaluation of Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS* Schools	2
Incidental Inspection	31
Follow-through Inspection	13
Evaluation of Centres for Education	1
Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections: Post Primary Initial	15
Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections: Post Primary Final	7
Evaluation of Provision for Students with Special Educational Needs	5
Supporting the Safe Provision of Schooling Inspection Visits	309
Total of school inspections	**473**

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

Table 5: School Self-Evaluation Advisory Visits 2020

School Self-Evaluation Visits	
School self-evaluation advisory visits to primary schools	83
School self-evaluation advisory visits to post-primary schools	17
Total Self-Evaluation Advisory Visit	**100**

Table 6: Advisory Sessions to support Continuity of Learning 2020

Advisory Session to Support Continuity of Learning 2020	
Advisory sessions with primary schools	2159
Advisory sessions with post-primary schools	741
Advisory sessions in other settings	2
Total Self-Evaluation Advisory Visit	**2902**

Table 7: Advisory Sessions to Support the Resumption of Schooling 2020

Advisory Sessions to Support the Resumption of Schooling	
Advisory sessions with primary schools	2503
Advisory sessions with post-primary schools	721
Total Advisory Sessions to Support the Resumption of Schooling	**3224**

Table 8: Other inspections and advisory visits, 2020

Other inspections/evaluations of provision for students and young people	
Inspection of Special Care Units	5
Inspections in the European Schools	33
QA of summer literacy/numeracy camps for children	24
QA campaí samhraidh for children (Irish-medium summer camps)	8
Evaluation of summer Continuing Professional Development courses for primary teachers	54
Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme: advisory visits to schools	8
Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme: Case Study Visits	1
School Excellence Fund DEIS: advisory visits to schools	119
School Excellence Fund Step-Up: advisory visits to schools	1
Total other inspections/evaluations of provision for students and young people 2019	**253**

Table 9: Publication of school inspection reports, 2020

Publication of inspection reports	
Early Years Education Inspections (early years)	332
Early Years – Follow Through (early years)	49
Whole Setting Evaluation (Early Years)	3
Curriculum Evaluation Model (primary)	109
DEIS (primary and post-primary)	13
CPSI Initial (primary and post-primary)	15
CPSI Final (primary and post-primary)	15
Programme Evaluation (post-primary)	10
Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (primary)	21
Evaluation of Provision for Students with Special Educational Needs (post-primary)	14
Subject Inspections (post-primary)	123
WSE-MLL (primary)	56
WSE-MLL (post-primary)	39
Follow-Through (primary and post-primary)	118
WSE modified (primary)	7
Centres for Education	3
Evaluation of Schools at Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres	6
Total number of reports published **(Note:** the number of reports published in 2020 differs from the number of inspections conducted in 2020 as not all reports are publishable and not all relate to inspections conducted in 2020)	**933**

Energy Consumption & Expenditure in 2020

The Department of Education has an energy management and reduction programme in place to reduce energy consumption by 33% by 2020. A reduction of 28.3% has been achieved to end 2019 and provisional figures for 2020 indicate that the Department has met and exceeded the target of 33%.

A programme of equipment and facility upgrades together with behavioural changes has helped drive this energy efficiency. Ongoing upgrades of our lifts in the Dublin campus, major building works in Tullamore, the upgrade of the heating system and conversion from oil to natural gas in the same office will help drive energy efficiency further. The records for 2020 include the figures for the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, which was officially formed on 2 August 2020, and is currently co-located with this Department. The total expenditure for energy for the Department in 2020 was €536,740.

Department of Education Energy Consumption (TPER)*							
Category	**2009 (kWh)**	**2015 (kWh)**	**2016 (kWh)**	**2017 (kWh)**	**2018 (kWh)**	**2019 (kWh)**	**2020 (kWh)**
Electricity	8,267,804	6,024,167	5,779,930	5,289,263	5,621,223	5,380,170	4,628,557
Thermal	2,567,208	2,697,045	2,539,568	2,589,394	2,938,402	3,138,052	2,647,680
Total	**10,835,012**	**8,721,212**	**8,319,498**	**7,878,657**	**8,559,625**	**8,518,222**	**7,276,236**

* Total Primary Energy Requirement (TPER) is a measure of energy consumption that accounts for the energy that is consumed and/or lost beyond the boundary of the organisation, notably in generating and distributing the electricity that is used. It is the standard measure used in monitoring energy consumption.

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. Goals two and five address the Department's legal obligations in this regard.

Sustainable Development Goals

Under the Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan, a number of Education strategies and plans have been identified as key to implementing SDG 4 – Quality Education which spans ensuring

- students/adults enjoy free/affordable, equitable and quality education, (4.1 and 4.3)
- increasing youth and adults who have skills for employment and entrepreneurship (4.4)
- gender disparities are eliminated and equal access to all levels of education (4.5)
- all youth and substantial proportion of adults achieve literacy and numeracy (4.6)
- all learners acquire skills, knowledge and values to promote sustainable development (4.7)

National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (4.7)

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is an SDG target in itself (4.7) and a key enabler for achievement of all 17 SDGs.

Under the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) 2014 - 2020 sustainable themes and principles have been integrated across the curriculum, into the assessment and inspection processes and into Initial Teacher Education and CPD. Work is underway to develop a new strategy for ESD to 2030 aligned to UNESCOs framework for ESD for 2030.

Literacy and Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy (SDG 4.6)

The National Strategy: Literacy & Numeracy for Learning and life 2011-2020 and Interim Review 2017 identified actions across six Pillars of the education system:

Pillar 1: Enabling parents and communities to support children's literacy and numeracy development
Pillar 2: Improving teachers' and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) practitioners' professional practice
Pillar 3: Building the capacity of school leadership

Pillar 4: Improving the curriculum and the learning experience
Pillar 5: Helping students with additional learning needs to achieve their potential
Pillar 6: Improving assessment and evaluation to support better learning in literacy and numeracy.

The Strategy and Interim report sets a central policy context for connecting children, young people and adults in literacy and numeracy discussions. They address the need to target, coordinate and strengthen links between home and education settings, and to develop and promote models of good practice to support literacy and numeracy acquisition. They recognise the need for a cohesive and coordinated national approach.

Development of a new Literacy and Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy, as set out in the Programme for Government, is underway. The strategy will be informed by robust research to include consideration of national and international practice, by stakeholder engagement and public consultation.

STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026 (SDG 4.5)

The STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026 acknowledges that there is a need to increase the uptake of STEM subjects and to enhance STEM learning for learners of all backgrounds, abilities and gender, with a particular focus on uptake by females.

The Gender Balance in STEM Advisory group commissioned a Literature Review on Gender Balance in STEM, which was published in November 2020, entitled *A Review of Literature to Identify a Set of Effective Interventions for Addressing Gender Balance in STEM in Early Years, Primary and Post-Primary Education Settings.* The evidence set out in this literature review will inform actions under the second phase of the STEM Education Implementation Plan, 2021-2023

National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 (SDG 4.5)

The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) provides the framework and strategic direction for interventions across Government Departments to support the additional needs of the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland. DoE work includes the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment following on from their audit of traveller culture and history in the curriculum, research on the effectiveness of the Department's anti-bullying strategy for Traveller pupils, and a NTRIS pilot project in 4 areas aimed at improving Traveller and ROMA attendance, participation and engagement in schools.

Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) (SDG 4.1, 4.3, 4.5)

DEIS – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools is the main policy initiative of the Department of Education to address educational disadvantage at school level. In the 2020/21 academic year there are 887 schools in the DEIS Programme serving over 185,000 pupils – 689 Primary and 198 Post Primary. In 2020 the total Department spend on DEIS was in the region of €125 million.

Green public procurement

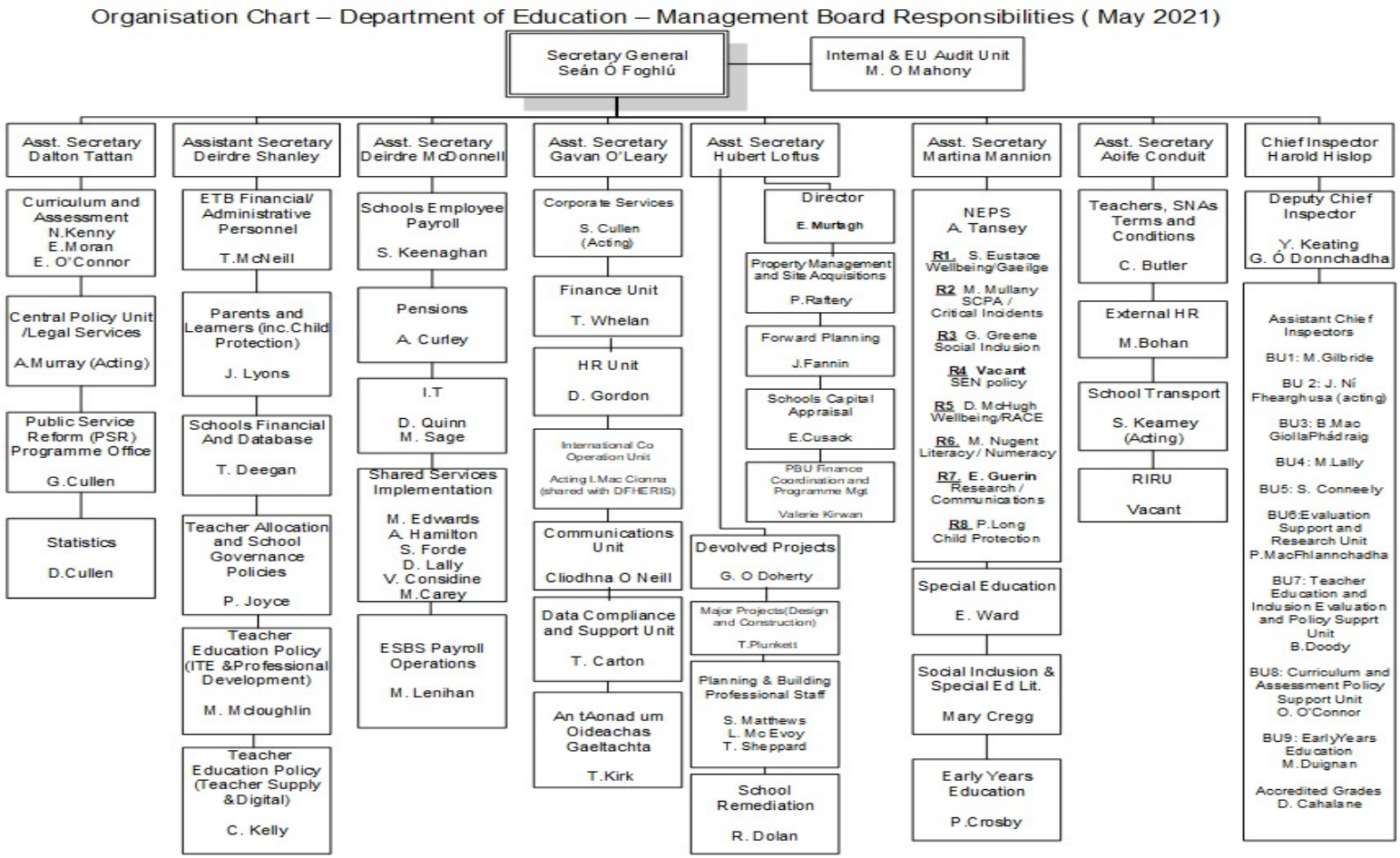
The Department considers the use of environment considerations in its public procurement. An example of this consideration has been improved re-use and recycling of redundant mobile phone devices as part of its mobile phone contract.

Gender Balance on State Boards

Name of Board	Total Places on Board	Men	Women	Total	Women as % of Total
An Comhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaiochta (COGG)	12	5	7	12	58.3
Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board	9	5	4	9	44.4
Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse	6	2	4	6	66.7
National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)	14	5	9	14	64.3
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	25	10	15	25	60.0
National Council For Special Education (NCSE)	13	6	6	13	50.0
Residential Institutions Redress Board	10	3	7	10	70.0
Residential Institutions Review Committee	5	4	1	5	20.0
State Examinations Commission (SEC)	5	3	2	5	40.0
The Teaching Council[1]	37	17	18	35	51.4
Educational Research Centre[1]	5	3	1	4	25.0

Note 1 - At 31 December 2020 there were unfilled board posts, in the Teaching Council and the ERC.

Appendix B – Organisation Chart



Appendix C – Bodies under the Aegis of the Department

Non-Commercial Bodies Under Aegis
1. An Chomhairle um Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) 2. Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA) 3. Educational Research Centre (ERC) 4. National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) 5. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) 6. National Council for Special Education (NCSE) 7. Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB) 8. Residential Institutions Review Committee (RIRC) 9. Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board: CARANUA 10. State Examinations Commission (SEC)

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	Education Statistics
Inspectorate Reports	Inspection Reports
Education Legislation	Education Legislation
All Publications	Department of Education publications
Department Circulars	Department Circulars
Special Education	Special Education
School Design	School Building and Design
Press Releases	Department Press Releases
Department Services	Department Services
National Educational Psychological Service	National Educational Psychological Service

Appendix E – Acronyms

Acronym	
AIM	Access and Inclusion Model
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPOG	Child Protection Oversight Group
CPSI	Child Protection & Safeguarding Inspection Model
CSL	Centre for School Leadership
CTB	Curaclam Teanga Bunscoile
DENI	Department of Education – Northern Ireland
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ELC	Early Learning and Care
ESCI	Education Support Centres Ireland Network
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ESRU	Evaluation Support and Research Unit
EYEI	Early Years Education Inspection
EYEPU	Early Years Education Policy Unit
FET	Further Education and Training
FLAG	Foreign Languages Advisory Group
FSD	Fund for Students with Disabilities
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IPPN	Irish Primary Principals Network
ISL	Irish Sign Language
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
JCSP	Junior Certificate School Programme
JCT	Junior Cycle for Teachers
LCPE	Leaving Certificate Physical Education
LINC	Leadership for Inclusion
MCA	Middletown Centre for Autism
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages
NAPD	National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
NBSS	National Behaviour Support Service
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NIPT	National Induction Programme for Teachers

Acronym	
NQT	Newly Qualified Teachers
NSAI	National Síolta/Aistear Initiative
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
PMO	Project Management Office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEF	School Excellence Fund
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEN-PP	Special Educational Needs in Post Primary Schools
SESS	Special Education Support Service
SET's	Special Education Teachers
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
TGD	Technical Guidance Documents
TUSLA	Child and Family Agency
UN	United Nations
WSE-LL	Whole School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning