An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Annual Report 2022

Department of Education

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Foreword by the Minister

This 2022 Annual Report captures the work of the department over a period of unique challenges and is an important record of collaboration, support and achievement. I am pleased to note there has been continued progress against the three high level goals of our strategic plan.

The most immediate challenge facing our department this year was the disruption brought about by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the need to accommodate many new arrivals into our schools. I am proud to say that 13,323 children arriving from Ukraine were successfully integrated into Irish primary and post-primary schools, alongside the establishment of 16 regional education and language teams to address the inevitable language and cultural barriers involved.

2022 also saw the department launch a new consultation process to inform the development of Irish-language education both inside and outside Gaeltacht areas. This policy on Irish-medium education outside of the Gaeltacht will be part of the overall framework of the 20-year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 and will build on the achievements of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 and will be an important step towards achieving the Programme for Government commitments on Irish-language education.

My department continues to make progress to increase the infrastructural capacity in the schools sector, in order to meet demographic and other demands. There were in excess of 180 school building projects delivered during 2022, which included accelerated delivery of modular accommodation to support provision for 900 pupils with special educational needs. The department also invested in over 1,000 small-scale repair/improvement projects in schools throughout the country under the Summer Works Scheme and Emergency Works Scheme and 16 schools through the Energy Pathfinder Programme, in partnership with SEAI, for deep energy retrofit projects as part of the climate action agenda.

The expansion of the DEIS programme continued in 2022, as part of a planned series of expansions of this essential programme. Budget 2022 saw a major increase in allocation of €18 million in 2022, which is set to rise to an additional €32 million in 2023. This means that from 2023 the Department of Education will target over €180 million at addressing educational disadvantage through the DEIS programme.

I was also delighted to announce the commencement of arrangements in a number of pilot areas aimed at increasing the number of multi-denominational primary schools in a number of towns and areas of cities that have no multi-denominational primary schools. This was announced with the intention of identifying potential schools and engaging with school authorities, school staff and the school communities with a view to agreeing on a transfer of patronage and change of ethos in areas where there is sufficient demand for this.

I would like to acknowledge the work of my colleague, Minister of State Josepha Madigan and of the department's officials, as well as the officials of aegis bodies of the department. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to all of those working across the education sector; your tireless work and commitment contributed greatly to the achievements of the department and I look forward to working with you as we advance our future objectives.

Norma Foley TD
Minister for Education

Foreword by Minister of State Madigan

The 2022 Annual Report highlights the significant work undertaken in the areas of special education and inclusion, and I welcome its publication by the Department of Education.

As the Minister of State with responsibility for special education, last year I committed to working in collaboration with our partners, to ensure that the key priorities for action to reform and develop special education provision in Ireland were achieved. This report notes a number of those important achievements.

Children with special educational needs were particularly impacted by the requirements to close schools for in-school learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In recognition of this, the department has committed to the provision of summer education programmes for pupils with complex special educational needs and those at greatest risk of educational disadvantage. The 2022 summer programme for pupils with complex special educational needs and those at greatest risk of educational disadvantage built upon the successes of the 2021 programme to ensure that all primary and post-primary schools can offer a summer programme.

The provision of education for children with special educational needs is an ongoing priority for me and for Government. We continue to make strides in ensuring that there is appropriate provision for every child. The numbers of special classes, special education teachers and special needs assistants are at unprecedented levels. In 2022, we made further progress in opening more special classes, and in addressing the needs of the children in our school communities. There is still some way to go until children have access to their required school place. I am hopeful that as we continue to improve our forward planning and engagement with schools, more schools will welcome the opportunity to open a special class, so that we can continue our goals of educating children with additional educational needs in their own communities, alongside their siblings, neighbours and peers.

Making additional provision for children with special educational needs accounts for 27% of the annual education and training budget (€2.3 billion in 2022). This funding provided for a range of additional supports in 2022, including an additional 1,165 special needs assistants and an additional 980 special education teachers. In 2022, 3,119 payments were made to primary schools, and 1,085 to post-primary schools, towards the cost of assistive technology, amounting to over almost €3.7 million. Funding of €17.08 million was issued for home tuition, 1,466 home tuition grants were sanctioned for Special Educational Needs Home Tuition during the 2021/22 school year, 582 of these are the Medical/Mental Health Strand of the Scheme, 779 are the early intervention supports available to students before they commence in primary school, and the remaining 104 were children of school going age and were at some point in the 2022/23 school year seeking an educational placement.

2022 also saw major changes to Irish sign language (ISL) service provision. A new enhanced scheme of ISL provision was announced on 14 November 2022 with the creation of the ISL Tuition Scheme. This new scheme is in addition to the existing provision that is in place and will provide intensive support to individual students whose primary language is ISL alongside a focus on upskilling whole communities and the students' peers to greater promote inclusion within the school system for deaf pupils.

I would like to thank my colleague Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD, officials in the department and of course, the education stakeholders for the work undertaken and progress made in 2022. I look forward to continuing our collaboration in order to further progress our

shared goals of meeting the needs of children and young people with additional educational needs and supporting them to be fully included and to achieve their potential.

Josepha Madigan TD
Minister of State for Special Education and Inclusion

Statement from the Secretary General

I am pleased to introduce the 2022 Annual Report of the Department of Education. The annual report provides an opportunity to reflect on the progress made in the previous 12 months, while also informing plans for the department.

The work of the department in 2022 reflected the challenges faced by the department as we entered into a very different landscape following the disruption presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the aim to ensure that all children and young people access the highest quality education and that our education workforce were supported to deliver this important outcome remained at the forefront of all of our efforts.

The close collaboration and engagement with our stakeholders continued in 2022, working together to find solutions on challenging issues.

March 2022 saw the publication of the chief inspector's report, which covers the period from September 2016 to December 2020. This report summarises the key findings from inspection, advisory and research work carried out in a range of education contexts, including schools, settings in the early learning and care (ELC) sector providing the early childhood care and education (ECCE) programme, centres for education and other types of education provision over this period, and will provide a guide to our policy development over the coming years.

2022 also saw the publication of Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying by the department's Parents and Learners Unit. The implementation of the 61 actions in the Action Plan will greatly enhance and compliment the work that schools already do to ensure that all the children and young people are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of children and young people is at the forefront of everything we do.

Work continued to make progress on the department's high-level goals as set out in the Statement of Strategy 2021 - 2023. Throughout 2022 the department continued to advance new initiatives and maintained our essential services operating with minimal disruption despite the challenges presented by the arrival of refugees from Ukraine. I am proud to say that 13,323 children arriving from Ukraine were successfully integrated into Irish primary and post-primary schools, alongside the establishment of 16 regional education and language Teams.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution made by staff in the department for their work this year, as well as to all those working in the education sector. I look forward to continuing to work with the staff of the department and all our education partners and stakeholders on the implementation of our shared ambitions.

Bernie McNally
Secretary General

Introduction

This is the 2022 Annual Report of the Department of Education. This report provides details on the progress made in respect of the three high level goals outlined in the department's Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2023.

Goal 1:

Support the provision of high-quality education and improve the learning experience to meet the needs of all students, in schools and early years settings

The aim of this goal is to provide every child and young person with a learning experience that supports them to reach their potential and to develop the knowledge and skills they need to navigate today's complex world. Key actions taken in 2022 to progress this goal include:

- A new consultation process to inform the development of Irish-language education both inside and outside Gaeltacht areas.
- Publication of Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying.
- Publishing the Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030.
- Publishing the Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027.

Goal 2:

Ensure equity of opportunity in education and that all students are supported to fulfil their potential

This goal is to ensure equity of opportunity and inclusivity. These are fundamental principles in our education system. This goal aims to develop a system that welcomes and meaningfully engages all students, including those with special educational needs and students at risk of educational disadvantage. Key actions taken in 2022 to progress this goal include:

- Major expansion of DEIS programme, extending it to over 1,200 schools and 240,000 students.
- Publishing a report on review of out-of-school education provision.
- Sections 67-70 of the Education (admission to Schools) Act commenced in July 2022, alongside the Education (Provision with Special Needs) Act. The overall objective of the Act is to provide a framework for school enrolment, which is designed to ensure that every child is treated fairly and that the way in which schools decide on applications for admission is structured, fair and transparent.

Goal 3:

Together with our partners, provide strategic leadership and support for the delivery of the right systems and infrastructure for the sector

This goal is about the important role that the department and its agencies have in providing strategic leadership within the sector and across government. This goal will strengthen these partnerships and allow us to work together as we deliver a first class education experience for all students. Key actions taken in 2022 to progress this goal include:

- 13,323 children arriving from Ukraine were successfully integrated into Irish primary and post-primary schools, alongside the establishment of 16 Regional Education and Language Teams.
- The Chief Inspector's report was published in March 2022 and covers the period from September 2016 to December 2020. It summarises the key findings from inspection, advisory and research work carried out in a range of education contexts, including schools, settings in the early learning and care (ELC) sector providing the early childhood care and education (ECCE) programme, centres for education and other types of education provision over this period.
- Work continued on the development of the education workforce to strengthen their teaching, leadership and student support capability, through continuing professional development and by building on the experience gained during COVID-19 to deliver a deliberate and considered increase in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) in teaching, learning and assessment.
- A €64 million summer works programme for the year was announced.

Our Mission

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

Our goals

In pursuing our mission, in a challenging and dynamic environment, the Department of Education is working for the period 2021 to 2023 to achieve the following strategic goals:

Goal 1:

Support the provision of high-quality education and improve the learning experience to meet the needs of all students, in schools and early years settings

Goal 2:

Ensure equity of opportunity in education and that all students are supported to fulfil their potential

Goal 3:

Together with our partners, provide strategic leadership and support for the delivery of the right systems and infrastructure for the sector

Progress on the three key Strategic Goals in 2022

The Department of Education made significant progress in 2022 towards achieving the goals detailed in the Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2023. This Annual Report 2022 acknowledges the progress that was made under each of our three goals.

Goal 1: Support the provision of high-quality education and improve the learning experience to meet the needs of all students, in schools and early years settings

This goal is about providing every child and young person with a learning experience that supports them to reach their potential and to develop the knowledge and skills they need to navigate today's complex world. The department will develop and improve learning and assessment through the continuation of the programme of curricular reform and an exploration of new approaches to teaching and learning. We will focus on the development of the whole person mindful of the challenges children and young people face in the modern world, not least those posed by the use of technology.

1.1 Curriculum at primary level

The existing primary school curriculum was introduced in 1999. However, national and international developments in education alongside changes in society have created the need to review and redevelop the curriculum. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) engaged in the review and redevelopment on behalf of the Department of Education.

The Primary Curriculum Framework was developed over a six-year period and includes:

- drawing on an extensive body of national and international research;
- working with the Schools Forum, which is a network consisting of 60 primary schools, post-primary schools and preschools from across the country;
- working closely with education partners through the representative structures of the NCCA, and with wider stakeholders through events such as curriculum seminars, and the Leading Out seminar series;
- extensive consultation with feedback from the school community, including teachers, parents, school leaders and pupils, as well as wider stakeholder groups, which concluded in March 2022.

The finalised Primary Curriculum Framework is due to be published in early 2023. The development of curriculum specifications will take place in the following years. It will be the 2025/26 school year when the individual subject specifications are introduced to schools with the exception of the Primary Mathematics Curriculum, which will be introduced in 2023. A new National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) was formally appointed on 6 April 2022.

1.2 Curriculum at post-primary level – Junior Cycle

Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) is ongoing. This commenced with a new specification for English in September 2014. All subjects had new specifications introduced in line with the Framework for Junior Cycle since September 2019. Students entering third year in 2022 were the first cohort to sit the entirety of their Junior Cycle examinations under the new framework.

Of the 21 subjects available under the framework for Junior Cycle, four – Irish, English, mathematics and history – are compulsory. The requirement to study history at Junior Cycle

was decided by the Minister for Education and Skills in October 2019. It awards history special core status within the Framework for Junior Cycle.

A research study examining schools' experiences of working with the framework is underway. A research team from the School of Education at the University of Limerick was commissioned by NCCA to carry out these mixed methods, multi-dimensional longitudinal research study on the implementation and impact of the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle in schools. The first interim report in this series of research reports was published in October 2022.

1.2.1 Junior Certificate examinations

The Junior Cycle examinations were held in the summer of 2022, for the first time since 2019. A number of adjustments to the assessment arrangements for Junior Cycle were published to take account of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, by providing for more teaching time in schools.

The adjusted arrangements included reducing the requirements for Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs), removing the Assessment task, and modifying the requirements for coursework in subjects such as music, home economics, visual art and technologies.

Circulars relating to Junior Cycle:

- 0014/2022 - Prescribed material for Junior Cycle English

1.3 Curriculum at post-primary level – Senior Cycle

There are several developments taking place at Senior Cycle, including a broad review and implementation of new and revised specifications.

1.3.1. Leaving Certificate 2022

Specific measures were announced on 1 February 2022 to provide reassurance to the Leaving Certificate class of 2022 to mitigate the disruptive impact of COVID-19 on their educational experience to the greatest possible degree. These also reassured students that they would not be disadvantaged compared to the classes of 2020 and 2021. These measures were as follows:

- A further series of extensive changes to the examinations which, when combined with adjustments already made, provided far greater levels of choice in papers. There was a reduced requirement in numbers of questions to be answered, compared to a non COVID-19 year. This measure reduced the demand on candidates in their preparations for, and on the day of, their examinations.
- Examinations modifications including adjustments to oral and coursework components as well as the written examinations significantly reduced the demand on students.
- A deferred sitting of the Leaving Certificate examinations for students unable to sit one or more papers in the main sitting due to serious accident, Illness or injury; close family bereavement; or on public health grounds due to COVID-19.
- A commitment that the overall grade profile of Leaving Certificate results to be issued in 2022 will be no lower in the aggregate than those issued in 2021. This measure alleviated student concerns that they would be disadvantaged in comparison to the

class of 2021 considering the higher grades attained by that cohort from the combination of examinations and Accredited Grades.

- 61,107 candidates sat Leaving Certificate examination programmes in 2022 compared to 61,125 in 2021. The State Examinations Commission (SEC) issued the results of the Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied to candidates on 2 September 2022.

Circulars relating to Leaving Certificate

- 0013/2022 - Prescribed Material for Leaving Certificate English Examination in 2024
- 0018/2022 - Information in relation to Standardised Testing and Other Matters – Academic Year 2021/2 and Subsequent Years
- 0032/2022 - Prescribed Material for the Junior Cycle Examinations in 2024 and the Leaving Certificate Examinations in 2024

1.3.2. Review of accredited grades

The Department of Education asked the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to undertake a review of the calculated grades and accredited grades processes put in place for Leaving Certificate 2020 and 2021 in late 2021. The OECD progressed the review in 2022.

1.3.3. Physical education

There were two recent developments in relation to physical education at Senior Cycle: a new specification for examinable Leaving Certificate Physical Education (LCPE) subject and a new non-examinable Framework for Senior Cycle Physical Education (SCPE). Both were introduced on a phased basis from September 2018.

LCPE was introduced to 64 schools as part of the phase 1 introduction from September 2018. National rollout of LCPE began in September 2020 with 194 more schools offering LCPE for the first time.

Madjescae Services were contracted by the department to develop guidelines that will enable national governing bodies (NGBs) affiliated with Sport Ireland to develop resources and classroom materials to support teaching, learning and assessment in LCPE in 2022.

1.3.4. Leaving Certificate Oral and Music Practical

The Leaving Certificate oral examinations and music practical performance examinations are traditionally conducted by SEC appointed examiners over a two-week period, coinciding with school Easter holidays. These examinations took place outside of school time over the first week of the school Easter holidays, with the examinations running in schools during the six-day period Saturday 9 April to Thursday 14 April 2022.

1.3.5. Leaving Certificate Computer Science

There are now approximately 145 schools across the country offering Leaving Certificate Computer Science. To support this, a buddy system was launched during the inaugural Computer Science Week in October 2022. This is a practical Department of Education initiative designed so that schools and teachers will be supported to learn more about

computer science. They will collaborate with business and industry, higher education institutions and further education and training providers.

1.3.6. Leaving Certificate Irish

Consultation by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) on new draft specifications for Leaving Certificate Irish (T1 and T2) commenced in February 2021 and, in response to stakeholder concerns and requests, the closing date was extended to the end of November 2021. A copy of the consultation report was submitted to the department for consideration in December 2022.

1.3.7. Senior Cycle

In March 2022, the Minister for Education announced an ambitious programme for a reimagined Senior Cycle of education where the student is at the centre of their Senior Cycle experience. This programme will:

- Empower students to meet the challenges of the 21st century;
- Enrich the student experience and build on the achievements of our current system;
- Embed wellbeing and reduce student stress levels.

Building on the NCCA's Senior Cycle Review: Advisory Report, the Minister announced her commitment to a need to understand and to build on:

- The experience of Leaving Certificate students over the period of the pandemic;
- growing consensus (for change to the Senior Cycle) – reflecting a more active student voice in the debate;
- international experience and perspectives.

The NCCA achieved the following in 2022:

- Revising the curricula for all subjects, updating subject content and changing assessment procedures to further reduce reliance on final examinations, spread assessment load and broaden the skills assessed;
- Introducing a State Examinations Commission (SEC) externally moderated, teacher based assessment component, which will have a weighting of 40% of the total marks in all Leaving Certificate subjects;
- Subject background papers and briefs for two new subjects, Drama, Film and Theatre Studies and, Climate Action and Sustainable Development and for a revised Business specification were prepared and there were public consultations on these papers. Subject Development Groups for the initial tranche of new and revised subjects were convened within NCCA structures;
- The NCCA and the SEC commissioned research in relation to the weighting, composition and moderation of teacher-based assessment components;
- In September 2022, access to the LCA and LCVP was broadened through the removal of subject specific requirements. These are the first steps, which will ultimately lead to a more integrated Leaving Certificate available to all students;

1.4 Literacy and numeracy

The department published the Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011–2020 in 2011. The Interim review of the strategy was published in 2017 with updated and new revised targets for literacy and numeracy, identifying the priority areas such as numeracy and DEIS.

Work has commenced on the development of a new Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy. The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) support the development of the strategy.

A research report commissioned by the department was completed in 2022. This report includes;

- Review of the existing Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and the Interim Review.
- Review of relevant national and international research.
- Review of national and international best practice.
- Identification of recommendations/actions.

The research will take cognisance of English, Irish, Irish sign language and the diversity of languages used within the Irish context and multiple languages in the international context.

The report forms the basis of all other stages of consultation to include public consultation, focus group consultations with education partners and stakeholders and bilateral meetings. The public consultation process commenced in December 2022.

1.5 National and international testing

The National Assessments of Maths and English Reading (NAMER) was administered to schools in 2021. The analysis was completed in 2022.

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2021 was carried out in 148 schools, 32 of which are in the DEIS programme, between 27 September and 21 October 2021..

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 was undertaken in schools in late 2022 .

1.6 Grant to schools to purchase books, audio books and other media

Funding of €20 million was administered to schools in May 2022 to enable all recognised primary and post-primary schools in the Free Education Scheme to purchase books, audio books and other media for the purposes of improving their existing literacy resource banks. This funding is additional to that already given for the schoolbooks rental scheme and book grants.

Supports were also made available to ensure that schools made the best use of their grant funding. The Department of Education is working with the public library service in this regard.

1.7 STEM education policy statement and implementation plan

The department's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (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 that are underway in STEM. These include curriculum and assessment reform, teacher professional development, embedding digital learning and advances in initial teacher education while providing a roadmap to address the areas for development.

The implementation plan will also be informed by;

- Gender balance in STEM advisory group recommendations for the promotion of gender balance in STEM education. These recommendations are informed by a literature review of both Irish and international studies, and an assessment of current interventions on addressing gender-based barriers to STEM education. The recommendations were published in March 2022.

- The STEM and the arts advisory group recommendations in relation to the promotion of STEM and the Arts learning. The recommendations will be informed by a literature review, which focuses on studies in both the national and international educational context and sets out key barriers and enablers to the implementation of effective STEM and the Arts education. This literature review was published in June 2022 and the recommendations will be published in early 2023.

Minister Norma Foley, alongside Minister Simon Harris of DFHERIS, announced investment in 47 projects to help public understanding of STEM on 1 June 2022. The department also launched the inaugural Computer Science Week from the 8 to 15 October 2022.

1.8 Foreign languages

Languages Connect, Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026 aims to increase and diversify the range of languages taught and learned across the education system.

Approximately 430 primary schools participated in the "Say Yes to Languages" sampler module for foreign languages at primary in 2021/22.

The module was expanded to include 730 schools using 15 languages selected by the schools including Irish Sign Language in 2022/23. The module was also extended from six to eight weeks and the maximum grant increased from €1,200 to €1,600.

1,451 students sat a Leaving Certificate examination in one of the four new curricular languages in summer 2022: Lithuanian (191), Mandarin Chinese (291), Polish (824) and Portuguese (145) for the first time since the new curricula were introduced in September 2020.

Circulars relating to Foreign Languages

- 0028/2022 - "Say Yes to Languages" – Language Sampler Module 2022/3

1.9 Irish

New circulars on exemptions from the study of Irish were introduced for recognised English-medium primary and post-primary schools in September 2022 following an initial review of the implementation of the 2019 circulars. The key changes in the 2022 circulars were:

- New criteria to allow for exemptions from the study of Irish for students who experience a high level of multiple and persistent needs that are a significant barrier to the pupil's participation and engagement in their learning and school life.
- Provision for students who have a recommendation for and have been approved for a place in a special class or special school.
- An extension of the appeals process.

Circulars related to exemptions from the study of Irish

- 0054/2022 - Exemptions from the study of Irish – primary
- 0055/2022 - Exemptions from the study of Irish – post-primary

Content and language integrated learning

The Department of Education is piloting a content and language integrated learning (CLIL) approach to support Irish in English-medium schools and early years settings. This project will improve learner competence, confidence and disposition towards Irish. It is intended to extend participation of more schools over time. Participating schools are focusing on teaching aspects of certain subjects including physical education through Irish. Class groups involved in this project are from Infant classes, sixth class primary and first year post-primary schools.

High-quality teaching and learning resources were developed and training was provided to teachers and early years practitioners. The department initiated a three-year pilot project in 2019 but this was subsequently extended by two-years owing to COVID-19 and school closures. Implementation took place in term three in the 2021/22 school year in six early learning and care settings, seven primary schools and two post-primary schools. Participation was projected to increase to 20 early learning and care settings, 21 primary schools and 12 post primary schools in the 2022/23 school year.

1.10 Creative youth

A plan to enable the "Creative Potential of Every Child and Young Person" was launched in December 2017. The aim of this plan 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.

1.10.1 Creative Clusters

Creative Clusters is a pilot initiative of the Department of Education, led by and in partnership with the Teacher Education Centres (ESCI) and funded through the Schools Excellence Fund. Creative Clusters is one of the key in-school initiatives of Creative Youth and is open to both primary and post-primary schools.

A creative cluster consists of up to five schools collaborating on the design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of an innovative arts and creative learning project, which supports them to address a common issue or challenge, identified by that cluster. Creative clusters include schools at different stages of their journey in using creativity in the classroom. Clusters consist exclusively of primary schools, exclusively of post-primary schools or of a combination of primary and post-primary schools.

The Creative Clusters initiative commenced in the 2018-19 academic year. 23 clusters were established in 71 schools countrywide. A further 21 clusters comprising of 77 schools were established and joined the initiative for the 2019/20 academic year. A new group of clusters, comprising 154 schools, joined the programme in 2022. Engagement with the programme is based on a two-year cycle.

1.10.2 Teacher-Artist partnership and 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.

The TAP programme now exists in a face-to-face and Online TAP format. An international online TAP CPD 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. The Department of Education allocated €250,000 in funding to the TAP programme in 2022.

1.10.3 Arts in Junior Cycle

Arts in Junior Cycle consists of a series of professional development experiences for teachers to support engagement with the arts and learning in Junior Cycle. The workshops embody the principles and key skills, which underpin the Framework for Junior Cycle and the Arts in Education Charter and provide teachers with practical and creative methodologies to engage with learning outcomes in their classroom. The initiative is based on partnership and collaboration with key elective partners across the arts and education sectors. The initiative is administered through Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) and Monaghan Education Centre. The Departments of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media and Education provide funding towards primary and post primary CPD under the Creative Ireland Programme. The department allocated €244,000 to the Arts in Junior Cycle programme in 2022.

1.10.4 BLAST

The BLAST (Bringing Live Arts to Students and Teachers) Artists in Residency Initiative for schools was developed by the Department of Education in 2021. 489 BLAST residencies were awarded to schools in 2022. This initiative enables schools to apply for a trained artist in education (AiE) to work in an arts and creative residency in the 2021-2022 school year. The department allocated €500,000 to this new programme in 2022.

The second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030 was published alongside an implementation plan in June 2022. ESD aims to ensure that by 2030, all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. ESD is both a UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target (SDG 4.7) and widely acknowledged as a key contributor to the achievement of all 17 SDGs.

1.10.5 Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

ESD to 2030 is co-sponsored by the Department of Education (DoE), Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)

ESD to 2030 contributes to the SDG National Implementation Plan 2022 and to the Climate Action Plan 2022. It is based on the UN Framework for ESD for 2030 and has five priority areas for action:

- **Policy alignment**: ESD is embedded in education and other relevant policies and frameworks as part of a lifelong learning approach.
- **Transforming learning environments**: Learners have opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions needed to promote sustainable development and to experience sustainable development in action through a whole of institution approach to ESD.
- **Capacity building of educators**: Educators have the opportunities to develop capacities to foster societal transformation for a sustainable future, with ESD integrated into the offerings of education and training providers.
- **Empowering and mobilising young people**: Young people are supported to be agents of change for sustainable development.
- **Local level engagement**: Enhanced collaboration exists between education providers, local authorities, local communities, civil society organisations and enterprise in ESD as part of lifelong learning, towards achieving sustainability at a local level.

Work is progressing in implementing actions in the ESD Implementation Plan under a steering group and advisory groups as appropriate. An ESD Forum was held in December 2022 in Dublin Castle.

Publications related to Education for Sustainable Development

- Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030

1.10.6 Sustainable development goals – national implementation plan

The Department of Education contributed to the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as set out in the cross government National Implementation Plan 2022, particularly in relation to SDG 4 – Quality Education. Updates regarding the SDGs were entered in the later SDG obligation section of the report.

1.11 Section 29

Where a board of management of a school makes the decision to refuse a school place to a child, suspends a child for more than 20 days, or expels a child, the parent of that child can appeal that decision to an independent appeals committee under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. Parents and learners unit received 320 of these appeals in 2022. Independent appeals committee appointed by the Minister determined all the appeals and from the 320 appeals received, a total of 188 were disallowed, 48 appeals were withdrawn, 66 appeals did not comply with the terms of the appeals process and 19 appeals were upheld.

1.12 Child protection

Parents and learners unit received 409 alleged child protection concerns in 2022. These were transmitted to the appropriate authorities as provided for in accordance with the department's Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Concerns. All staff members in the department must complete a mandatory webinar training on the implementation of these procedures.

The department commenced implementation of the recommendations arising from a high level independent review of the department's current child protection policies and processes in 2022. A key element of this work was the development of Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures for Boarding Facilities associated with Recognised Schools and a Guide to Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections in Boarding Facilities associated with Recognised Schools, which were developed following an extensive and detailed consultation process.

1.13 Measures to prevent and address bullying

A review of the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying was carried out in 2022. This resulted in the publication of Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying on 1 December 2022. The review involved significant consultation and collaboration across the department, with other government departments and bodies including the Ombudsman for Children and involved consultation with a broad range of education stakeholders, including parents and students, school management bodies and teacher and school staff unions. The review took account of the significant developments and relevant research since the action plan was published in 2013 and specifically considered online (cyber) bullying, identity based bullying and sexual harassment, among other areas.

Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying is the department's sector wide approach to preventing and addressing bullying in schools. The implementation of the 61 actions in the action plan will greatly enhance and compliment the work that schools already do to ensure that all the children and young people are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of children and young people is at the forefront of everything we do.

1.14 Gaeltacht Education Policy 2017-2022

Since the commencement of the implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education in early 2017, over €27m was allocated for the provision of a range of additional supports to strengthen educational provision through the medium of Irish in Gaeltacht schools. This includes a budget allocation of €6.8m in 2022.

1.15 Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme

A range of additional supports continued to be provided to schools participating in the scheme in 2022. This supported them in implementing the language-based criteria set out for the scheme. These additional resources included additional Irish-language support teaching hours; an annual grant for the purchase of Irish-medium resources, additional continuing professional development provided by An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta

agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) and support from the Inspectorate.

1.15.1 Validation process for Gaeltacht school recognition

A validation process for Gaeltacht School recognition commenced in October 2022. The purpose of the validation process is to confirm that schools participating in the Scheme are fulfilling the language-based criteria set out for the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme.

1.16 Gaeltacht e-hub project

The successful implementation of the blended learning e-Hub project continued in Gaeltacht post-primary schools in 2022. Based on the recommendations of an independent review carried out by the Education and Training Inspectorate of Northern Ireland in 2021, a second subject, Chemistry, was added to the project in September 2022. 13 students from the third cohort of participating students successfully completed the Leaving Certificate Physics examinations in 2022. 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.

1.17 Support for island schools

The department sits on the steering committee for the development of a national islands policy chaired by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

A package of additional supports continues to be available to each of the five island post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht. 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.

1.18 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. Funding was provided under the policy for two programmes – a four-year B.Ed. (Primary) degree and a two-year blended-learning M.Ed. in Irish-Medium and Gaeltacht Education for primary and post-primary teachers and principals. Both courses were delivered through the medium of Irish, and additional Irish-language entry and exit criteria were in place for participants. 143 students are participating in the Irish-medium B.Ed. programme in Marino Institute of Education in the 2022/23 academic year.

16 students registered for the M.Ed. in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht Education (*M.Oid. san Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta*) in Mary Immaculate College in 2022. 68 students have graduated from this Masters programme to date.

The secondment of two teaching posts to the Máistir Gairmiúil san Oideachas (Irish-medium Professional Masters in Education for post-primary teachers) in the University of Galway continued in 2022. The aim 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.

1.19 Advisory Committee for the Policy on Gaeltacht Education

Two online meetings of the Advisory Committee for the Policy on Gaeltacht Education took place in June and December 2022. At the meeting in June, the Educational Research Centre presented the findings of their research on the experience of students, parents and teachers in schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme. At the meeting in December, committee members discussed the future direction of the scheme and the experience of Gaeltacht schools welcoming Ukrainian pupils and students.

1.20 An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)

A new board of An Comhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta was appointed on 10 May 2022. Additional supports and resources continued to be provided to COGG to support their role in the implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education and the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme.

1.21 New policy for Irish-medium education

Work on the development of a new policy for Irish-medium education outside of the Gaeltacht progressed during 2022. The policy on Irish-medium education outside of the Gaeltacht will be part of the overall framework of the 20-year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 and will be an important step towards achieving the Programme for Government commitments on Irish-language education.

A public consultation process was launched in October 2022 to gather the views of stakeholders, including young people, parents, education professionals, education stakeholders and Irish-language organisations. To inform the consultation, the department published a comprehensive report on the current supply and future provision of Irish-medium education.

The development of the policy will also be informed by a review of national and international literature, which was commissioned through a public procurement process in 2022. A Steering Committee was established with representatives from relevant government departments and agencies to oversee the development of the policy.

Publications in relation to the Gaeltacht education unit in 2022

- An Overview of Provision for Irish-Medium Education outside of Gaeltacht Areas: Current Provision and Future Projections / *Léargas ar Sholáthar don Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht: Soláthar Reatha agus Réamh-mheastacháin don Todhchaí*
- Guidance note: *Validation Process to Gain Recognition as a Gaeltacht School* / Nóta treorach: An Próiseas Deimhnithe um Aitheantas a ghnóthú mar Scoil Ghaeltachta
- Research Report: Links between Gaeltacht Primary Schools and Naíonraí / Tuarascáil Taighde: Naisc idir Bunscoileanna agus Naíonraí na Gaeltachta

Circulars relating to the implementation of the Gaeltacht Schools Recognition Scheme in 2022/23

- Circular 0010-2022 – Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022: Primary schools and special schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas participating in the Gaeltacht school recognition scheme: Ongoing Implementation of the Scheme (2022-2024).
- Circular 0011-2022 – Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022: Post-primary schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas participating in the Gaeltacht school recognition scheme: Ongoing implementation of the Scheme (2022 - 2024).
- Circular 0012-2022 – Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022: Invitation to Primary schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas to consider joining the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme (March 2022 - August 2023)

1.22 Teacher allocations

Almost 72,500 teaching posts were allocated at primary and post-primary level in 2021/2022.

The redeployment process in 2021/22 involved the redeployment of 187 permanent teachers at primary level and 52 permanent teachers at post-primary level. A supplementary redeployment panel fills any remaining permanent posts on completion of the process to redeploy permanent surplus teachers at primary level. There were 1,468 teachers on the supplementary redeployment panel in 2021/22. 1,270 primary graduates and 1,607 post-primary graduated from state funded programmes, with 707 primary and 223 post-primary graduates from Hibernia College.

1.23 National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS)

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) of the department provides a school-based psychological service to all recognised primary and post-primary schools through the application of psychological theory and practice to support the wellbeing, and the academic, social and emotional development of all learners.

NEPS provides access for all schools for the following:

- Psychological support in the event of a critical incident.
- A casework service for individual children where there is a need for intensive consultation and assessment.
- A school staff Support and Development Service, to build school capability to provide a comprehensive continuum of support in schools and
- Ongoing access to advice and support for schools.

There are currently over 200 NEPS educational psychologists employed across the eight NEPS regions, delivering a psychological service to schools.

The NEPS casework service extends to over 8,000 students each year. The NEPS Support and Development service reaches an estimated 25,000 teachers annually and is an applied psychological service for school staff to help build their capability to respond to the wellbeing, academic, social and emotional needs of all students, and particularly those who are experiencing barriers to their wellbeing, learning, inclusion and participation.

NEPS led on the overall approach to supporting the wellbeing of children and young people from Ukraine enrolling in schools in Ireland in 2022, taking a psychosocial approach, in line with international research and best practice. NEPS, in collaboration with Education Support

Centres Ireland (ESCI), delivered primary and post-primary webinars on welcoming children to our schools and supporting children who have experienced trauma.

Following the publication of guidelines for post primary schools to establishing a student support team or reviewing an existing team, NEPS psychologists continue to facilitate post-primary schools to improve the student support team process. Student support teams are the structure through which key wellbeing and wellbeing-related policies are implanted in post-primary schools.

NEPS resumed the provision of online training for school staff on the Friends for Life programmes to help reduce anxiety in children and in person training for the Incredible Years Classroom Management System with priority given to schools new to DEIS.

NEPS launched an eLearning course - Responding to Critical Incidents in Schools in 2022. This course is aimed specifically at the school's critical incident management team, but open to all interested staff and crucially this allows school staff to access the programme at a time that suits them and at their own pace.

NEPS, in collaboration with COGG, have developed materials and have also developed a webinar on *Cur Chuige Cothromaithe i leith na Litearthachta i mBunranganna na Bunscoile* / The Balanced Approach to Literacy in Primary Schools.

NEPS have finalised the second edition of the Literacy Interventions for Struggling Readers *(Idirghabhálacha Éifeachtacha do Léitheoirí a bhfuil Deacrachtaí acu)*. This is available on gov.ie.

NEPS in collaboration with COGG and the ERC have commenced the development of an Irish language version of the Post-Primary Assessment and Diagnosis- English test (PPAD-E)/Measúnú agus Diagnóis Iar-Bhunscoile-Gaeilge MDIB-G. This will be developed over a three-year period.

Competency levels in Irish of psychologists

NEPS has identified the competency levels in Irish of psychologists via a national survey. Following this, where possible, NEPS has been making efforts to assign psychologists with a high level of competency in the Irish language to Irish medium schools and in particular Gaeltacht schools. NEPS have provided Irish-language CPD for psychologists working in Irish medium schools that support these schools. NEPS continues to develop its bank of resources for psychologists to use in Irish medium schools. NEPS, in consultation with COGG, have put together a document outlining the resources Gaeltacht primary schools and Gaelscoileanna use in the teaching of Irish literacy skills.

1.24 Small schools project

Work on the two-year action research project aimed at supporting the sustainability of small schools continued to progress throughout 2022. The project aims are to encourage small schools to cluster together in local groups, enabling them to collaborate and identify common challenges and trial innovative solutions.

This project was developed by a working group of school management bodies and teachers' unions with the Department of Education, as part of the programme of work of the Primary Education Forum (PEF). The PEF comprises all primary education partners, including parent representatives, working collaboratively with the Department of Education.

Six project clusters of small schools will be formed, two in Galway, and one in each of Donegal, Kerry, Wicklow and Waterford, consisting of between three and five schools per cluster. The clusters will be supported by part-time local coordinators sponsored by the education partners, working with a national coordinator under the guidance of a steering group. As an integral part of the project, an evaluation will take place and a final report, including an analysis of scalability of actions undertaken.

1.25 Quality in early education

The Early Years Inspectorate has supported quality in the early years through the inspection of early learning and care (ELC) settings providing the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme since 2016. Inspectors use the quality framework to focus on process quality, early learning, and professional pedagogy and practice.

Following a period of research and consultation with the sector, a revised inspection model was launched in September 2022. This included children from birth to six years old. Because of this extended remit, the Inspectorate will have an inspection role in relation to the quality of educational provision in centre-based settings and schools providing for children and young people from 0-18 years of age.

1.25.1 Implementation of Síolta and Aistear

The department leads on the National Síolta Aistear Initiative (NSAI), working in partnership with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), Better Start Quality Development Services and the NCCA. The initiative increases Early Years Educators' knowledge and understanding in the implementation of the two national practice frameworks: *Síolta*, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, and *Aistear,* the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.

The NSAI continued to support the coordinated national implementation of both frameworks in 2022. This included:

- the development, quality assurance and publication of NSAI materials and resources;
- the recommencement of NSAI CPD for Early Years Educators which was paused during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- the review and quality assurance of NSAI materials moving to an online format, in line with commitments set out in First 5 A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028 and in the Workforce Plan, Nurturing Skills*,* The Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare, 2022-2028, for an accelerated roll-out of NSAI training and supports to achieve full national coverage.

1.25.2 Professional qualifications and standards – early years

The Minister for Education and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs instituted a qualifications advisory board (QAB) to review Level seven and eight Initial Professional Education programmes for the ELC sector in 2020. The board examines higher education programmes for alignment with professional awards criteria and guidelines (PACG) developed for the sector in 2019.

A total of 39 programmes provided by 18 higher education institutions (HEI) across 29 campuses were approved by the QAB as adhering to the standards set out in PACG at the end of December 2022.

1.25.3 Workforce development plan for the ELC sector

The three-year implementation plan (2022-2024) for Nurturing Skills is being led by DCEDIY. The Department of Education continues to work closely with DCEDIY via the *Nurturing Skills* monitoring committee and the NSAI throughout 2022. The implementation plan focuses on raising the quality of the workforce, thereby improving the quality of the education and care experience of young children. The plan contains a number of actions, which will be led, or co-led, by the Department of Education in the areas of CPD and initial professional education.

1.25.4 Contribution to Early Years Policy Development

The department has continued to engage constructively with DCEDIY on the implementation of these reports, the review of programmes and the development of policy in the areas of: governance, workforce development and access and inclusion following on from the contributions of the Early Years Inspectorate and early years education policy unit (EYEPU) to a number of significant reports in 2021 and 2022.

1.26 Digital Strategy

The Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 was published in April 2022. The overarching objectives under the strategy are being rolled out with various programmes, initiatives and pilots underway as well as continued professional development supports for school leaders and teachers. Work is nearing completion on the implementation plan. This plan will contain more detail in relation to particular actions and associated timelines to further support schools in embedding digital technology across the curriculum and in all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment in primary and second level schools.

A steering group is being established to oversee and provide guidance on the overall implementation of the strategy as well as ensuring that a focus is maintained on the key objectives throughout the various areas of the department. Its membership consists of representatives from key internal policy areas within the department as well as from PDST (Technology in Education team), the Inspectorate and the NCCA.

In addition, given the valuable input obtained throughout the consultation process and in order to facilitate this continued input and engagement from the wider sector, a consultative group and an industry group will be established.

The 2018 Digital Strategy Action Plan saw the establishment of the School Excellence Fund (Digital & STEM), to encourage collaboration between schools operating in clusters on innovative projects demonstrating the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning. This programme concluded in 2022. An evaluation report will be completed in 2023, which will inform how best to support innovative and collaborative practice among schools and how effective practice and the learning from this initiative can be disseminated to all schools.

Publications relating to digital strategy

- Digital strategy for schools to 2027

Circulars relating to digital strategy

- 0027/2022 - Grant Scheme for ICT Infrastructure – 2021/22 School Year

1.27 Digital Learning Framework

The digital learning framework (DLF) is a key support of the Digital Strategy for Schools to assist in the embedding of digital technologies into teaching, learning and assessment. A longitudinal study by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) to evaluate the implementation of the DLF from the multiple perspectives of school principals, Digital Learning Team leaders, teachers and learners commenced in 2019. A nationally representative sample of primary, post-primary and special schools was invited to participate in the study.

The Wave 1 evaluation report, which was published in 2021, showed that school leaders and teachers are highly engaged in professional development in digital technologies and that the majority of schools had policies and guidelines in place across a range of digital technology areas. The results also provided useful information for the development of the new Digital Strategy.

The second longitudinal data collection was completed in 2022.

1.28 Guidance counselling

Significant changes to the delivery of guidance were made in 2022. A centralised and strengthened guidance counselling service to support schools and guidance counsellors was established within the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). As well as this, a new guidance unit was established within the department to co-ordinate guidance policy.

A national policy group for lifelong guidance was established. It was chaired by the Department of Education with representatives from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Department of Social Protection and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The role of the National Policy Group is to develop a long-term coherent strategic framework for lifelong guidance.

1.29 The Department of Education's response to the situation in Ukraine

Over 13,300 Ukrainian pupils were enrolled in schools across Ireland at the end of December 2022. Supporting the education needs of such a large influx of new arrivals has necessitated responsive action from business units across the department on an ongoing basis. Central policy unit (CPU) is responsible for cross-departmental coordination of information flows in relation to the Ukraine response, preparing briefing and ensuring timely responses to correspondence and requests for information. The section produced 24 fortnightly cabinet notes and provided briefing for two Joint Committee meetings and responded to 56 parliamentary questions and 178 items of correspondence from members of the public in 2022.

1.30 National broadband plan

The Department of Education funds broadband connectivity to all recognised primary, special and post-primary schools through the Schools Broadband Programme at an annual cost of some €13m. All post-primary schools are now provided with minimum speeds of 200

Megabit per second (Mbps), with some on speeds of up to one Gigabit per second. Many primary schools are on 100 Mbps or greater connectivity currently, with an early priority of the strategy being to provide all primary schools with high-speed connectivity by 2023. This will be achieved through the ongoing implementation of the National Broadband Plan Intervention Area, commercial provision, and for those schools not in either of those categories, a project underway as part of Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan funded by the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility. The Recovery and Resilience Facility is the largest component of NextGenerationEU, the European Union's response to the global pandemic. The aim is to help repair the immediate economic and social damage brought about by the pandemic and to prepare for a post COVID-19 Europe that is greener, more digital, more resilient and fit to face the future.

1.31 Primary School Healthy Eating Programme

The Department of Education undertook to explore the establishment of a new Primary School Healthy Eating education programme in 2022. The initial discussions have taken place between the department and NCCA to progress this action. The next steps include the identification of relevant partners and the development of an appropriate design process for the establishment of a new Primary School Healthy Eating education programme.

1.32 Parent Voice

The Department of Education has undertaken to promote effective engagement with parents at all stages in the evaluation process through implementation of the Parent Voice project. Videos have been produced for parents, in a variety of languages, to outline the purpose of inspections. Parent surveys for use in inspections have been translated into a range of languages. Parent surveys are now administered online. The Department of Education and Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth have agreed an action plan to facilitate collaborative work with parents at early years level.

1.33 Career guidance

The Department of Education has undertaken to support the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Indecon Report on Career Guidance Tools and Information, including reform of governance and delivery arrangements. Work is ongoing particularly on developing the strategic framework for lifelong guidance under a National Policy Group, setting up a guidance service for European schools, strengthening guidance provision for schools, establishment of a guidance unit within the Department of Education, integrating CPD for Guidance Counsellors within the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST).

Goal 2: Ensure equity of opportunity in education and that all students are supported to fulfil their potential

This goal is about ensuring equity of opportunity and inclusivity are fundamental principles in our education system. This goal aims to develop a system that welcomes and meaningfully engages all students, including those with special educational needs and students at risk of educational disadvantage.

2.1 DEIS identification

The DEIS programme was significantly expanded benefitting 347 schools in March 2022. The programme now includes over 1,200 schools and supports approximately 240,000 students. One in four of all students are now supported in the programme.

This Department of Education spent approximately €170 million in 2022 on providing supports to schools with the highest levels of educational disadvantage. Budget 2022 allocated the largest-ever increase in funding for the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme, providing for an additional allocation of €18 million in 2022 and rising to an additional €32 million in 2023. The Department of Education will target over €180 million at addressing educational disadvantage through the DEIS programme from 2023.

The department's investment in DEIS in the 2022/23 school year included providing for;

- HSCL supports to all DEIS urban primary and DEIS post-primary schools;
- Additional posts for DEIS Band 1 primary schools to allow for a reduced pupil teacher ratio;
- Curriculum supports;
- Priority access to continuing professional development;
- DEIS grants and enhanced book grants;
- This included Expansion of the School Completion Programme to include the new to DEIS schools.

Schools were identified for inclusion in the DEIS programme through the refined DEIS identification model, which is an objective, statistics-based model. The DEIS identification process is based on the principle of concentrated disadvantage. It considered the proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds within a school and the relative disadvantage within a given school.

Schools identified for inclusion in the programme began receiving additional resources to address educational disadvantage from September 2022. These resources include additional financial supports, additional teaching staff, home school community liaison (HSCL) coordinator support and access to the school completion and school meals programmes. Schools were also provided with information sessions and training on the planning and utilisation of these supports with input by the department's Inspectorate and Tusla Education Support Service.

Schools that were not satisfied with the outcome following the application of the DEIS identification model to their school enrolment data were provided with the opportunity to

have that outcome reviewed. The DEIS appeals process was applied fairly across all appellants. The closing date for appeals was 29 April 2022. The outcome of the appeals process was communicated to schools on 29 June 2022.

2.2 Reduced school days

The Department of Education published guidelines for schools on the use of reduced school days in September 2021. An information note for parents was also published. The guidelines came into effect from 01 January 2022. From that date, schools must inform Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) when reduced school days are used.

The department is working closely with Tusla Education Support Service and the NCSE to ensure that all students are supported to the greatest extent possible to attend for the full school day.

2.3 Dormant Accounts Fund

The Department of Education received €400,000 from the Dormant Accounts Fund to tackle education disadvantage for Traveller and Roma communities in 2022. This is being used to fund 10 new HSCL coordinators in 14 non-DEIS post-primary schools with high numbers of Traveller and Roma students. These HSCL coordinators will also have access to funding to implement and run initiatives to encourage improvements in school attendance, retention and progression for Traveller and Roma students. Funding is also being used to provide targeted supports to ensure the effectiveness of the HSCL role in working with Traveller and Roma families.

2.4 North East Inner City: Pilot Education Initiatives

Implementation continued on two educational pilots currently underway in North East Inner City Dublin. City Connects, a school-based support system which looks at each child's individual strengths and needs across different aspects of their life – academics, social/emotional/behavioural, family and health - and then matches pupils with a support or services in the school or community, is being piloted in ten primary schools. P-TECH, a three-way partnership between school, higher/further education institution and industry partners which combines post-primary school with elements of further education and workplace experience, expanded from three to five post-primary schools in the 2022/2023 school year.

2.5 Out-of-School education provision

Action 88 of the DEIS Plan provided for a review of current out of school education provision to inform future policy in this area. This review has been completed and the Report on the Review of Out-of-School Education Provision was published in May 2022.

The report sets out an implementation plan to progress the recommendations of the review. A working group consisting of a representative cross section of expertise from relevant government departments and agencies was established to oversee the implementation of the recommendations.

2.6 Traveller education strategy

The STAR (Supporting Traveller and Roma) pilot project has now been extended for a further two years to June 2024. To maximise progress, a review of the project has been undertaken, including structures, roles, project documents and terms of reference, and an updated operational handbook, refresher information leaflets for schools and teams/local steering groups, and updated reporting template have been produced. These will be circulated to all involved in the project at the start of the 2022/2023 academic year.

The Minister announced the opening of a tender process for the independent evaluation of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy Support Traveller and Roma (NTRIS STAR) pilot project in line with the Programme for Government commitment to: “Undertake an independent assessment of the pilot projects aimed at retaining Traveller and Roma children in education” in September 2022. A research advisory board is being established to support the evaluation.

2.7 Special education provision

The Department of Education 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 state currently spends in excess of 27% of its annual education and training budget on making additional provision for children with special educational needs. €2.3 billion was provided for supporting special education in the department, for the benefit of all those with special educational needs in 2022. 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.

The main supports this funding provides for are as follows:

Special needs assistants

Budget 2022 provided funding for an additional 1,165 special needs assistants. This resulted in 19,219 SNAs having been allocated to schools by 31 December 2022.

Special education teachers

Budget 2022 provided for the creation of 980 new teaching posts in special education.

The number of special education teachers (SETs) in mainstream classes was 14,418 at the end of 2022.

Special classes

There are 2,537 special classes in mainstream schools providing specialist education for 15,222 pupils the 2022/2023 school year. There were 383 new classes opened for the 2022/23 school year with 253 at primary and 130 at post-primary level in September 2022. Children attending special classes benefit from a reduced pupil teacher ratio, which is normally 6:1.

The Department of Education and the NCSE engaged intensively in relation to the forecasting of the need for new special classes at primary and post-primary level from September 2022 onwards. The Department of Education issued a letter to all post-primary schools in October 2022 requesting that they begin to plan to provide special classes over the next three to five years.

Special schools

There are 126 special schools providing specialist education for 8,686 pupils with special educational needs, including Hospital Schools and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) units with over 1,500 teachers. Children attending special schools benefit from a reduced pupil teacher ratio ranging from 6:1 to 11:1. Three new special schools opened over the last three years. It was announced that two further new special schools would be opened for the 2022/2023 school year, one each in Cork and Dublin in 2022.

The department intends to progress recommendations arising from the Inspectorate review of education provision attached to CAMHS units and Hospital Schools Preliminary discussions have taken place on a range of matters related to special schools, including Hospital and CAMHS schools. Work is required in the short to medium term to support these school communities from the NCSE policy advice and the Inspectorate Report on Hospital Schools.

Assistive Technology Scheme

3,119 payments were made to primary schools, and 1,085 to post-primary schools, towards the cost of assistive technology, amounting to over almost €3.7m in 2022.

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. Under the Department of Education Assistive Technology scheme, over 600 children benefitted from specialised equipment for the visually and hearing-impaired last year.

Irish Sign Language Scheme

There is longstanding existing Irish Sign Language provision in place, which provides a dedicated special needs assistant with Irish sign language (ICL) competency to support students in mainstream settings access to the curriculum and engage in school activities. On 14 November 2022, a new enhanced scheme of Irish Sign Language (ISL) provision was announced. This new scheme is in addition to the existing provision that is in place and creates two new roles in the education system.

The ISL specialist classroom support (SCS) role will provide intensive support to individual students whose primary language is ISL to access the curriculum and the ISL Advisor role will focus on upskilling whole school communities and a student's peers to enhance an inclusive environment for pupils whose sole means of communication is ISL in schools. A national advertising campaign is to commence in January 2023, by the NCSE, to recruit for the role of ISL-SCS on a nationwide basis.

The ISL Tuition Scheme provides funding for a weekly tuition service. Tutors visit the home of a deaf or hard of hearing pre-school child or school-going pupil to provide training in ISL

for the child, their siblings, their grandparent(s) and parents or guardian.104 hours tuition are provided throughout the school year broken down as 1 hour per week for the 44 weeks from September to June, increasing to 7.5 hours per week for the eight weeks of July and August. Alternatively, at the request of the visiting teacher, the 104 hours tuition can be given at the rate of two hours per week for the 52 weeks from September to August.

Many students who are deaf/hard of hearing learn ISL to support their communication needs but ISL is not their primary language. These students and their families can also avail of the ISL Tuition Scheme. Approximately 150 children and their families supported under the scheme by approximately 52 tutors.

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 (SEN) seeking an educational placement. Provision is also made for early educational intervention for children with autism.

€17.08m in grant funding issued to parents towards the provision of home tuition in 2022. 1,466 home tuition grants were sanctioned for SEN home tuition during the 2021/22 school year, 582 of these are the Medical/Mental Health Strand of the scheme, 779 are the early intervention supports available to students before they commence in primary school, and the remaining 104 were children of school going age and were at some point in the 2022/23 school year seeking an educational placement.

Summer Education Programme 2022

The 2022 summer programme for pupils with complex special educational needs and those at greatest risk of educational disadvantage, built upon the 2021 programme. All primary and post-primary schools can offer a summer programme and in line with 2021 funding, there was up to €40 million available to provide the programme. The programme's aims are to support pupils' ongoing engagement with education, to build their confidence and increase their motivation, promote wellbeing and for some who are key transition stages, help to ensure they can progress to their planned educational placement next September along with their peers.

A school-based programme provides a more holistic experience for pupils and helps keep the connection with school and peers. Enhanced measures were put in place to encourage schools to offer the programme, including measures to reduce the administrative burden, provision of funding to schools towards preparation and overseeing of the programmes and provision to recruit newly qualified teachers graduating this summer.

A home-based summer programme continued to be available for children with complex needs where their schools are not providing a school-based programme.

Circulars published in relation to special education

- 0020/2022 - Special Education Teaching Allocation 2022/23 (primary)
- 0021/2022 - Special Education Teaching Allocation 2022/23 (post-primary)
- 0035/2022 - Special Needs Assistant Allocation 2022/23
- 0046/2022 - Home Tuition Grant Scheme 2022/2023 Special Education Component

- 0069/2022 - Enhancement to Irish Sign Language (ISL) Scheme provision
- 0070/2022 - Enhancement to Irish Sign Language (ISL) Scheme provision – Post-Primary
- 0075/2022 - Commencement of the Education (Provision in respect of Children with Special Educational Needs) Act 2022 and Commencement of remaining sections of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018

2.8 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 (DoE) 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.

At the request of this department and as approved by the North South Ministerial Council, the 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 has enabled the centre to pilot the provision of direct support to children, the completion of targeted research projects in order to inform future policy development and an increase in the number of training places offered to both parents and professionals, particularly highlighting key life stages for a child with autism.

The research division supports the maintenance and introduction of best practice for autistic pupils throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland through research bulletins and podcasts, reviewing and updating policy advice for schools and the provision of a two-day international conference every two years., The centre worked with the Department of Education and the NCSE in 2022, to develop and support the implementation of guidance on "Supporting Students with Autism: Good Practice Guidance for Schools" throughout Ireland.

Mr JG Cooper OBE, the first CEO of the centre retired on 31 August 2022. The board appointed Mr Jim Lennon Head of Corporate Services as interim CEO in the centre.

The board of the centre held their annual board conference on the 24 and 25 November 2022 with a focus on reviewing the centre's longer-term strategy, to develop a multiyear corporate plan to ensure that the centre continues to support and meet departmental policy objectives and to complement the emerging DENI Corporate Plan 2023 – 2028. Officials from the Department of Education and the Department of Education Northern Ireland joined the board for this event.

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

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. All schools were advised of their SNA allocations for the 2022/23 school year on the 15 May 2022.

2.10 In-School Speech and Language Therapy and School Inclusion Model (SIM)

In February 2019, Government approved the trialing of a new school inclusion model (SIM) The school inclusion model (SIM) is based on policy advice from the National Council for Special Education based on the principle of providing the right support at the right time delivered by a range of personnel with relevant qualifications and skill-sets. Its purpose is to help students achieve better outcomes. Independent evaluation is a central part of the project and the outcome will inform future policy on extending the SIM. The project includes a number of elements:

- Provision of in-school therapies (speech and language, occupational)
- Allocation of SNAs on a frontloaded basis
- Additional professional supports for the school including psychology, behavioural and professional development
- Training of SNAs

The Government approved the trialing of the Model for the 2019/20 school year in February 2019. Initially designed as a one-year pilot involving up to 75 participating schools in the CHO seven region, it was interrupted by COVID-19 with the closure of schools and the diversion of HSE therapists from the project to COVID-19 related work. It was then extended to the 2020/21 school year, which has also been interrupted by COVID-19.

Progress was made on aspects of the model in 2022 but much remains to be done in terms of in-school implementation and evaluation. The pilot has now recommenced in CHO7 and planning for an expansion is underway at present.

There are a number of challenges and barriers to continuing the rollout of SIM in CH07 and expanding SIM to other areas at this time. The single biggest challenge is the availability of therapists and psychologists. While the department's initial intention was to expand SIM to other areas, pressures relating to workforce supply (therapists and psychologists) have resulted in SIM being limited to one CHO area.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) are engaging with CORU (regulatory body over therapists) to determine how the current registration process can be expedited. The HSE are engaging with the Department of Health, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and Dept. of Higher Education to explore how the higher education institutes can increase third level capacity, with a focus on an initiative to commence in September 2023.

2.11 Training of SNAs

The 2018 Review of the SNA Scheme published by the NCSE includes a recommendation for the provision of a national online training programme. Arising from the recommendation the Department of Education and the NCSE awarded a 4-year contract to UCD School of Education to design and deliver a new national online training programme for SNAs employed in Irish schools. The training programme commenced in 2021. This is a major educational initiative, intended to enhance the knowledge, skills and expertise of SNAs. Approximately 1,300 SNAs have completed the course to date and it is intended that the programme will be delivered to up to 3,500 SNAs over the life of the scheme.

Following discussions between the department and UCD, on 8 December 2022 Ministers Foley and Madigan announced the accreditation of the programme as a Level six Special Purpose Award on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The department is committed to reviewing this programme after the four-year period has concluded.

A dedicated SNA workforce development unit was established within the department's Special Education Division in December 2022 in order to ensure that sufficient time and attention is given to examination of the SNA role and any reform or development required, including in the area of learning and development. This action is the first step in the department's plan to develop a 'vision' for the future of SNAs to be informed by the SNAs themselves, teachers and the wider sector.

The SNA workforce development unit will adopt a strategic approach to SNA policy development with the objective of developing an enhanced SNA service, which delivers the best outcome for children with additional care needs in our schools.

Matters, which will be addressed by this new unit, include:

- Role and duties of the SNA
- SNA minimum entry requirements
- Co-operation with the School Inclusion Model (SIM)
- Quality Assurance for the SNA service
- Collaborative practices including the Looking at Our Schools (LAOS) quality framework which does not specifically reference the work of SNAs

A priority task for the unit is the review of the SNA Contract of Employment in line with a commitment under the Building Momentum National Pay Agreement. The assigned deadline of 31 December 2022 was extended in light of the establishment of the SNA workforce development unit. An extensive review of the SNA contract is in progress in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

2.12 Home tuition schemes

Home tuition schemes are available for students without a school place, children in care without a school place and students on maternity related absences**.** During 2022, a total of 176 home tuition applications were processed under the above schemes of which 144 were as a result of no school placement, 23 related to children in care with no school placement and a total of nine applications were made under the scheme for maternity related absences.

Circulars published in 2022 in relation to the Home Tuition Grant

- 0048/2022 - Home Tuition Grant Scheme for Children without a school place (NSP) and Children in Care without a school place

2.13 Wellbeing promotion

Minister Foley launched Active Schools Week 2022 on 03 May 2022. This took place from 03 May to 06 May 2022, and saw schools being encouraged to build their links with local clubs and physical activity providers to raise awareness about the breath of physical activity opportunities that exist in local communities, and to promote physical activity within the context of the school day.

2.14 Early Start

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.

Capitation funding of €95.23 per annum is provided for each child enrolled in the Early Start programme. In addition, each full and half Early Start 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.

Non-pay funding amounting to €202,872 was paid out to Early Start units in 2022.

2.15 Rutland Street Pre-school Project

The Rutland Street Pre-school Project, established in 1969, is a two-year pre-school programme delivered in a Dublin inner city community, catering for children aged 3-5 years old. Although not part of Early Start, it was used to pilot many of the approaches later incorporated in the Early Start programme. The department administers the Rutland Street Pre-school Project's budget for non-teaching pay and non-pay elements relating to the pre-school. The staffing for the pre-school (excluding the EI ASD class) is an administrative principal, six teachers and five childcare workers for 97 children. The Rutland Street Pre-school Project received an annual grant from EYEPU of €122,580 in 2022.

2.16 Supporting inclusion and diversity

The department plays a support role in the ongoing development of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), which is led by the Department of Children, Equality, Diversity, Integration and Youth. AIM is a model of universal and targeted supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the ECCE programme.

Early years education policy unit (EYEPU) is a member of the Cross-Sectoral Implementation Group steering the AIM initiative, and in 2022 continued to provide supports to the AIM model through participation in its various working groups, including the AIM Evaluation Oversight Committee, which oversaw the end-of-three-year evaluation of AIM.

2.17 School admissions

Sections 67 –70 of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 commenced in July 2022. Section 67 provides for the NCSE or TESS to designate a school place for a child, where

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

The Education (Provision in Respect of Children with Special Needs) Act was enacted and commenced in July 2022. Section eight of this new legislation amended section 67 of the Education Act 1998 by shortening the number of steps for a designation to take place.

The new legislation also requires the admission statement of a school to include a statement that the school shall co-operate with the NCSE relating to the provision of education to children with special educational needs, in particular by the provision and operation of a special class or classes when requested to do so by the council and a separate statement that the school shall comply with any direction under section 37A or under section 67.

2.18 Data protection and Data Governance

A key focus in 2022 was on ensuring GDPR compliance. We published a guide to processing subject access requests for staff and carried out a significant body of work on data sharing arrangements.160 data sharing arrangements across the department were reviewed for compliance purposes and three new agreements were put in place, with two more nearing completion.

The unit processed 74 subject access requests under data protection legislation and 359 freedom of information requests in 2022.
The Department of Education continued to participate in central initiatives and collaborate with partners within both the education sector and the wider public service to ensure the most effective flow of data, including through the public service data catalogue and participation in the National Data Infrastructure Champions group and Data Officers Network in 2022.

2.19 Multi-denominational primary schools

Minister Norma Foley announced the commencement of arrangements in a number of pilot areas aimed at increasing the number of multi-denominational primary schools in several towns and areas of cities that have no multi-denominational primary schools. This was announced with the intention of identifying potential schools and engaging with school authorities, school staff and the school communities with a view to agreeing on a transfer of patronage and change of ethos in areas where there is sufficient demand for this on 10 March 2022.

Goal 3: Together with our partners, provide strategic leadership and support for the delivery of the right systems and infrastructure for the sector

This goal is about the important role that the department and its agencies have in providing strategic leadership within the sector and across government. It involves coordination with sectoral stakeholders, the broader public sector, the political system and other governmental bodies and cross-sectoral work programmes. The aim of this goal is to strengthen these partnerships and to work together as we deliver a first-class education experience for all students.

3.1 Teacher supply action plan

A report entitled 'Developing a post-primary subject teacher demand and supply model for Ireland 2022-2040' was finalised in 2022. The findings of the report were considered at the National Consultative Forum on Teacher Supply in November 2022.

Further phases of the Teaching Transforms campaign were implemented in 2022 in the periods preceding application closing dates for Professional Master of Education (PME) and undergraduate initial teacher education programmes. Applications through the Central Applications Office (CAO) for undergraduate post-primary initial teacher education programmes increased by 10% in comparison to 2021 (February 2021 versus February 2022).

Circulars relating to teacher supply:

- 0001/2022 - Teacher Fee Refund Scheme 2021
- 0016/2022 - Employment of third and fourth Year Undergraduate Student Teachers and application of the '5 Day Rule'
- 0022/2022 - Staffing arrangements in Voluntary Secondary Schools for the 2022/23 school year
- 0023/2022 - Staffing arrangements in Community and Comprehensive Schools for the 2022/23 school year
- 0024/2022 - Staffing arrangements in Education and Training Boards for the 2022/23 School Year
- 0025/2022 - Staffing arrangements in Primary Schools for the 2022/23 school year
- 0026/2022 - Release Time for Principals in Primary Schools for the 2022/23 School Year
- 0043/2022 - Allocation of Assistant Principal Posts 2022/23
- 0074/2022 - Panel access for fixed-term/temporary (this includes substitute) and part-time teachers to the Supplementary Redeployment Panel for the 2023/4 school year

3.2 Teacher education policy, ITE & professional development

The department promotes the continuum of learning and quality of teaching and learning, through the provision of initial teacher education, induction, continuing professional development (CPD) and supports for teachers and principals.

Circulars relating to teacher education policy

- 0002/2022 - Graduate Certificate in the Education of Pupils on the Autism Spectrum (AS) for teachers working with Pupils on the AS in Special Schools, Special Classes or as Special Education Teachers in mainstream Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2022/2023
- 0003/2022 - Post-Graduate Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Special Education Teachers, 2022/2023
- 0004/2022 - Post-Graduate Certificate/Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Teachers working with Students with Special Educational Needs (Autism)
- 0073/2022 - NQF Level nine Graduate Diploma in Social Personal and Health Education/ Relationships and Sexuality Education (SPHE/RSE) Programme 2023

3.2.1 Professional accreditation of ITE programmes (2022)

The Teaching Council published Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in October 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. All existing programmes of ITE are aligned with Céim for first year intakes since 1 September 2022.

The Teaching Council commenced cycle two accreditation of existing programmes, which involves a scheduled review of 68 programmes of ITE in 14 HEIs in accordance with Céim, between 2021 and 2023 in November 2021. The first programmes were submitted for review as part of this process during 2022 and the process continues throughout 2023.

3.2.2 Gaeltacht placement

Primary ITE students returned to in-person placements in the Gaeltacht in 2022, after a period of online placements because of the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 3,587 students completed their placement in the Gaeltacht over the course of the year.

3.2.3 School placement

The teaching council convened a school placement working group (SPWG) in November 2018 to review the implementation of school placement guidelines and the recommendations of teaching council commissioned research on school placement. The SPWG recommended the establishment of a school placement implementation group to oversee a placement system working group (PSWG) and a Treoraithe professional learning group, which would progress its recommendations. The placement system working group produced a report in June 2022, which will be considered by the school placement implementation group. The Treoraithe professional learning group met a number of times in 2022.

3.2.4 Adapted school placement

The department and the teaching council engaged closely with the HEIs providing ITE to introduce increased flexibilities to their programmes to assist schools in meeting challenges around teacher supply during 2021 and early 2022. These measures created greater capacity for student teachers to provide substitute cover and played an important part in the effort to keep schools open during the second term of the 2021/2022 school year.

3.2.5 Initial teacher education graduates

There were 1,245 graduates from state-funded primary concurrent, consecutive initial teacher education (ITE) programmes, and 1,648 graduates from state-funded post-primary concurrent and consecutive ITE programmes in 2021. In addition, there were 721 primary and 188 post-primary graduates on consecutive programmes from Hibernia College in 2021.

Whilst estimated figures only are available for 2022, it is expected that there will be some 1,230 primary graduates and over 2,000 post-primary graduates from state-funded programmes, with some 700 primary and 188 post-primary expected to graduate from Hibernia College.

3.3 Professional development service for teachers (PDST)

The department promoted the quality of teaching and learning through the provision of continuing professional development (CPD) and supports for teachers and principals. The professional development needs of teachers are met through the provision of an induction programme for newly qualified teachers, dedicated support for school leaders, national CPD for curricular and policy reform, and ongoing support for teachers. These supports were as follows:

Professional development service for teachers (PDST)

The PDST continued to provide a comprehensive professional development programme to support teachers and school leaders in 2022. The commencement of the calendar year 2022 saw ongoing interruption to CPD provision with many events and school support cancelled due to the continued arrangement of substitute cover being provided by PDST advisors up until February mid-term. Some CPD such as reading recovery at primary and Senior Cycle CPD continued uninterrupted through this period.

Primary language curriculum

In-school sustained support for the primary language curriculum (PLC) resumed provision for Cohort one and two schools, and applications opened for Cohort three. There were 20,663 teacher CPD interactions during 2,282 school visits to support implementation of the PLC. There were a further 764 interactions with teachers during single support visits for literacy and Irish.

Webinars four, five and six to support the implementation of the PLC in schools were also provided as well as summer courses titled ‘Bringing the Primary Language Curriculum to Life in my Classroom’, which were run in 12 education centres with a total of 860 teacher CPD interactions. The Gaeilge team ran Gaeilge Bheo online workshops to support teachers’ confidence in spoken Irish as well as live webinars Gaeilge Neamhfhoirmiúil and a webinar for teachers during Seachtain na Gaeilge.

English as an additional language (EAL) (primary and post-primary)

Online workshops titled ‘Leading the Inclusion of EAL Learners in Primary Schools’ were facilitated in 2022 as a response to the number of children from Ukraine entering the Irish education system. There was a total of 301 teacher CPD interactions at primary level and 538 teacher CPD interactions at post-primary over a total of 22 workshops.

Primary STEM

CPD was facilitated in a number of key areas including Lets’ Talk Assessment workshops, connecting classrooms collaboratives, formative assessment using digital portfolios, lesson study and equality and the Diversity and Inclusion in STEM project. In-school support continued to be in high demand for mathematics, science, STEM and inclusion through team teaching.

Health and wellbeing (primary)

CPD was offered across all priority areas including stay safe, wellbeing in education seminars, RSE seminars and summer courses, restorative practice, in-school support, physical literacy seminars and PE workshops and webinars as well as e-learning for child protection. School support across health and wellbeing was in very high demand from schools. Of note, was the development of a new RSE summer course in July 2022 with 230 Teacher CPD interactions. In addition, Phase one and two Primary Wellbeing in Education Seminars commenced rollout in 2022. There were 142 seminars with 2,545 teacher CPD interactions which were well received by those who attended. Applications for the first phase of in-school sustained support for wellbeing in education opened.

Health and wellbeing (post-primary)

CPD seminars, workshops and webinars across all priority areas including SPHE, JCRSE, SCRSE, wellbeing in education, mental health, mental health in SPHE and substance use were offered. There also continued a broad programme of CPD to support the implementation of the LCPE specification. SCPE was also supported with CPD including the provision of evening workshops. School support across all priority areas of health and wellbeing continued to be in high demand, as well as sustained in-school support for restorative practice.

The rollout of Post-Primary Wellbeing in Education Seminars commenced in spring 2022, and these were well received by those who attended. Twenty six seminars were facilitated with 337 teacher CPD interactions. Applications for the first phase of in-school sustained support for wellbeing in education opened.

Senior Cycle CPD

Senior Cycle CPD was provided for the revised subject specifications of Economics, Politics and Society, Art, Classical Studies, Agricultural Science, Computer Science, Applied Maths, LCPE and for the revised module descriptors for LCA throughout 2022. CPD for all other Senior Cycle subjects was also provided through seminars, evening workshops and webinars.

School leadership

Support for school leaders was provided through PDST's national programmes: Misneach, Tánaiste, Comhar Forbairt, Líonraí and Meitheal as well as a series of supports for school self-evaluation.

For CPD events, excluding school support, there were 4,659 CPD Interactions at primary leadership events, 1,822 CPD interactions at post-primary leadership events and 1,707 CPD interactions at cross-sectoral leadership events during 2022.

DEIS

Support for schools was prioritised in all areas including school leadership. Targeted provision for DEIS schools continued through contextualised school support, reading recovery, maths recovery, JCSP and DEIS excellence cluster projects. There were also seminars on DEIS action planning and workshops on promoting school attendance as well as CPD for JCSP co-ordinators.

At primary level, specific provision within the Primary Misneach programme on DEIS planning was provided for newly appointed principals to DEIS schools. This comprised of one online workshop followed by a face-to-face seminar on DEIS action planning. This CPD was very well received by participants. In addition, newly appointed deputy principals to DEIS schools were provided with two events supporting DEIS action planning.

The primary Leadership team worked with the Inspectorate in designing a series of seminars on DEIS action planning, with a view to supporting newly designated DEIS schools and newly appointed school leaders to DEIS schools. These seminars were facilitated in autumn 2022.

DEIS Summer Camps/DEIS Campaí Samhraidh

The PDST Language team worked in collaboration with the department and personnel from Dublin West and Navan Education centres to prepare two online training webinars for teachers running DE-funded DEIS summer camps in English and in Irish. Summer camps aim to support children's development in language and mathematics in a fun environment. There were 597 participants at the English webinar and 71 participants at the Ceardlann Ghréasáin Gaeilge.

PDST in-school support

PDST bespoke school support continued to be in high demand across leadership, digital technology and health and wellbeing areas. There were 38,385 teacher primary in-school support CPD interactions and 10,814 post-primary teacher in-school support CPD interactions in 2022.

National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT)

The National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) supported 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 (2017). Droichead consists of school-based induction and additional professional learning activities. A professional support team supports the school-based aspects of Droichead. That team consists of experienced colleagues, who have completed a programme of professional learning, including mentor skills development, with NIPT. Many of NIPT's provisions and events were impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in 2022. 4,193 primary NQTs and 3,296 post-primary NQTs completed the Droichead programme in 2022.

PST training

NIPT facilitated PST training for 1,033 participants at primary and 331 participants at post-primary in 2022.

In addition, Droichead Refresher events were held at primary and post-primary levels.

Cluster meetings

NQTs undertaking Droichead as a route of induction must attend one different 2-hour cluster meeting per term for the duration of their *Droichead* process. In addition, the Droichead transitionary arrangements, published by the teaching council, facilitated the accommodation of NQTs who had not fully completed their cluster meeting requirements in 2020/2021, due to the impact of COVID-19. Participation figures for 2022 were 4,917 for primary and 3,058 for post-primary.

NQT voice events

NIPT organised sector specific NQT Voice Shared Learning Events to engage NQTs in professional conversations about their experience of the Droichead process. These events provide an opportunity to review induction from the NQT perspective, to explore possibilities and make recommendations to inform the development of different aspects of Droichead provisions going forward. Although numbers were impacted by COVID-19, one event was held for the primary sector with 13 schools represented. 13 post-primary schools were represented in two other events.

Droichead school support

NIPT provided for Zoom, phone and email support (with approximately 1,484 hours of school support provided during 2022) school surveys, termly updates and agreed communications/clarity relating to Droichead transitionary arrangements. NIPT provided school support, updates and emails in the Irish language to Gaelscoileanna and Gaelcholáistí. An online Gaeilge sa Bhunscoil workshop is available to NQTs throughout the year and was completed by 73 NQTs in 2022.

NIPT, in collaboration with the teaching council, offered a live cross-sectoral webinar for all ITE final year students in March 2022 with 1,542 participants. One face-to-face event in the Irish language was also facilitated.

Online induction workshops

NIPT currently provides a range of bespoke support via our online induction workshops, which are available on-demand to NQTs. Many NQTs engage in the workshops as their additional professional learning activity (which is also a requirement of the Droichead process). This suite of workshops allows NQTs to choose which supports are most beneficial to their individual requirements. This suite of 15 induction workshops are accessible on https://onlinelearning.teacherinduction.ie/.

2,590 CPD units were delivered in online induction workshops in 2022.

3.4 Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) – supporting Junior Cycle reform

29,079 teachers attended online subject specific cluster CPD in the period from January to March 2022. Teachers from various schools came together to collaborate and share practice at schools that are geographically close to each other to facilitate the delivery of CPD. Workshops were provided for all 18 Junior Cycle subjects. All PowerPoints, booklets and supplementary support materials (classroom ready resources, adaptable classroom resources, and digital learning resources) are available online. A further 3,075 teachers attended subject and curricular wellbeing CPD that was facilitated outside of the cluster model.

The Junior Cycle Implementation Support team (JCIS) offered workshops to all schools, including special schools, resulting in engagement with a further 6,927 teachers in the period January to May. Delivered in-person in a whole school context, schools were supported in the exploration of topics and issues unique to the school's context.

The Level two Learning Programmes (L2LP) team, a dedicated support team for the implementation and enactment of level two learning programmes engaged with both mainstream and special schools. In the period from January to June 184 schools and 2,121 teachers have attended L2LP specific CPD. The L2LP team have supported a further 752 teachers in 118 schools the period September to December.

Between mid-September and October, subject teams facilitated online Second Subject CPD for 4,100 teachers across all Junior Cycle subjects. Second subject CPD provides an opportunity for teachers to access Junior Cycle CPD in their other subject, usually having received CPD in another subject earlier in the year (Jan-March).

In excess of 14,800 teachers have attended a newly designed CPD day for each of the eighteen Junior Cycle subjects in the period November to December. The content of this new day reflects the emerging needs of teachers and has had input from stakeholder partners. It has been delivered online and has utilised the cluster model.

12,063 teachers have engaged with a newly designed whole school CPD day in the period September to December. Facilitated in-person by the JCIS team, the tenets of Junior Cycle reform are revisited and re-examined through a school specific lens.

The Arts in Junior Cycle team provided online and in-person workshops in 2022. Liaising and co-designing CPD opportunities for teachers with 140 partner organisations/artist partners to develop resources and programmes to support professional learning and engagement with the arts and learning in Junior Cycle. 1,762 teachers attended Arts in Junior Cycle CPD, 1,309 in the period January to June and 453 between September and December.

The STE(A)M in Junior Cycle initiative provided a series of online workshops for teachers in partnership with external partners with expertise in STEM research and design. The initiative continued to provide a series of online communities of practice to support teachers to collaborate across Junior Cycle subject areas to plan for and implement a STE(A)M in Action in school project in their schools. This culminated in a face-to-face celebration of learning event for the schools involved in this project in April of 2022. The STE(A)M in Action in School initiative invited new schools to become involved in the project for the 2022/23

academic year and provided a series of online communities of practice in October, November and December for these schools. From January to December close to 700 teachers and 53 schools (including five special schools) have engaged with the STE(A)M initiative.

A dedicated JCIS national region continues to support gaelcholáistí agus scoileanna gaeltachta: Tacaíocht le Feidhmiú na Sraithe Sóisearaí do Ghaelcholáistí agus do Scoileanna Gaeltachta. To support the Polasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta (2017-2022), a JCIS initiative was established with the following aim: Ar mhaithe le scileanna litearthachta agus cumarsáide na scoláirí a chur chun cinn mar aon le spriocanna feabhsúcháin teanga na scoileanna Gaeltachta agus na nGaelcholáistí a bhaint amach, tá módúl tacaíochta teanga nua-dheartha ag TFSS agus ar fáil do scoileanna san earnáil lán-Ghaeilge i mbliana. A new section was added to the JCT website to offer resources and supports for schools teaching Irish through another subject through involvement with the programme to use content and language integrated learning (CLIL). Twelve schools have engaged with the CLIL initiative between September and December and associated teacher support will be published in due course.

3.5 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 to develop and support school leadership, particularly principals across the primary and post-primary school network.

The Post Graduate Diploma in School Leadership (PDSL) had an intake of 219 participants in September 2022. 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. In 2022/2023 a total of 299 primary mentoring relationships and 64 post-primary mentoring relationships were overseen by CSL. Face-to-face, professional learning was provided for mentors during the year with two professional learning events organised by the team in March and November 2022. The team also developed resources to assist Mentors in guiding newly appointed principals through the challenges presented to school leaders.

338 school leadership teams are currently availing of team coaching, in primary and post-primary schools. The focus of the coaching is on developing the skillsets required to meet the standards stated in the Looking at Our Schools publications.

3.6 Development of a research-based framework for the evaluation of continuing professional development (CPD)

The department, in conjunction with the Educational Research Centre (ERC), continued this project of developing an evaluation framework for CPD In 2022.This evaluation framework 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.

The Educational Research Centre (ERC) launched two new reports from the third phase of a four-year study commissioned by the Department of Education in September 2022, the purpose of which is to develop an evaluation framework for teachers' professional learning (TPL) in Ireland.

The first phase three report (Consultation with TPL providers) describes the perspectives of respondents from ten organisations that provide TPL in Ireland. Respondents described a TPL programme designed and facilitated by their organisation and suggested areas for improvement with respect to TPL in Ireland.

The second phase three report (Small-scale consultation with children and young people) outlines children and young people's views on:

- What makes learning easier?
- What makes learning more fun/engaging?

427 primary pupils and 25 post-primary students answered the consultation questions in June 2021. Consultation was carried out at primary level using a pen and paper task and at post-primary level via two online meetings.

3.7 Cosán

The department continues to support Cosán and opportunities for teachers in their journey of professional development and is committed to supporting the development and embedding of Cosán, the Teaching Council's National Framework for Teachers' Learning. The department co-hosted the Cosán stakeholders event with the teaching council to raise awareness of Cosán and to highlight the progress made by various stakeholders in the implementation of various actions in the Cosán Action Plan in October 2022.

3.8 Teacher Professional Networks Funding Scheme

The Teacher Professional Networks Funding Scheme was established to support the work of teachers' groups and associations (TGAs) which afford continuing professional development (CPD) and professional peer support to all post-primary teachers.

The principal objective of the TPN is to advance the teaching, learning and/or classroom management skills of post-primary teachers in order to bring about improved learning outcomes for students. CPD events organised by TGAs in 2022 included suitable strategies, which support teachers and have meaningful links with the national priorities being implemented by the Department of Education.

31 TGAs were registered with the scheme in 2022.

Publications relating to teacher education

- An evaluation framework for teachers' professional learning in Ireland

3.9 Quality inspections

3.9.1 Supporting the Safe Provision of Schooling Inspection Visits

The Inspectorate continued to implement a programme of Supporting the Safe Provision of Schooling (SSPS) inspection visits to schools, up to 04 February 2022. These inspection visits, which resulted in a published report, proved school authorities were implementing public assurance that the department's COVID-19 Response Plan was being implemented by school authorities. They also enabled inspectors to provide advice and support to school leaders in relation to creating a safe learning and working environment for all. The visits ended when the context changed as public health restrictions were eased. 153 schools and eight centres for education were visited before SPSS visits were discontinued in February 2022. 159 of 161 settings were fully compliant with all the checks undertaken as part of the inspection visit and reflected the strong efforts by school leaders and other personnel to ensure safe environments for learning and teaching during the pandemic.

3.9.2 Helpline for school principals

The Department of Education, with the support of the Inspectorate, re-purposed the COVID-19 helpline for principals in early 2022, to assist, guide and support school leaders in adjusting and adapting to the evolving COVID-19 context. The Inspectorate played a lead role in supporting principals and schools on issues relating to re-opening of the system at a time of continued high levels of infection in schools and changes in public health measures.

3.10 Quality assurance – Inspectorate

3.10.1 Monitoring compliance with child protection procedures

As part of the department's oversight of the child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools 2017, the Inspectorate checks on compliance with the key aspects of the procedures during all school inspections, using one of three levels. Level one checks are undertaken during short inspections such as incidental inspections, curriculum evaluations and subject inspections. Level two checks are undertaken during more intensive inspections such as whole-school evaluations (WSE) and evaluation of action planning for improvement in DEIS Schools. Level three checks are undertaken during a child protection and safeguarding inspection (CPSI) which focuses in an in-depth way on a school's compliance with the 2017 procedures.

Level one monitoring was conducted in 2,152 schools during 2022. 96.05% (2,067 of 2152 schools) were fully compliant with the level one checks at the time of the inspection. 3.95% (85 of 2,152 schools) were not fully compliant with level one checks at the time of the inspection. All of the 85 schools, which were found to be not fully compliant at the time of the inspection, have subsequently provided evidence of compliance.

Level two monitoring was only conducted in one setting during 2022 because of necessary adjustments to the inspection programme arising from the impact of COVID-19. The setting was not fully compliant with the level two checks undertaken at the time of the inspection but provided evidence of subsequent compliance.

Sixty-three final CPSI inspections were conducted during 2022. Fifty-nine schools (93.7%) were fully compliant with level three checks at the end of the final CPSI. Four schools (6.3%) were not fully compliant with level three checks at the end of the final CPSI. Three of those schools have since provided evidence of full compliance with level three checks. Inspectors are continuing to engage with the one school who are not yet fully compliant.

In 2022, an extensive consultation process took place, involving all of the recognised primary and post-primary schools operating boarding facilities. This engagement focused on the development of clear and consistent child protection and safeguarding procedures, in line with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015. A technical working group of the

Department of Education (DE), comprising representatives of school management, principals of recognised schools operating boarding facilities, the department's parents and learners unit and the Inspectorate, was formed to develop procedures to support schools and management authorities of boarding facilities. In parallel with the development of these child protection procedures, the Inspectorate developed draft child protection checks, including an amended child protection and safeguarding inspection (CPSI) model, for use in boarding facilities. Significant progress was made during 2022, on developing an appropriate quality assurance process and this culminated in a broad consultation event with stakeholders, in December 2022.

3.10.2 Early years education inspections

The Inspectorate resumed a normal programme of inspection activity involving early years education inspection (EYEI), in early learning and care (ELC) settings, from September 2021 and throughout 2022. Inspectors continued to deploy flexible approaches to inspection in acknowledgement of the continuing public health advice in early 2022. Feedback from the ELC sector gathered during this time identified that there were positive benefits to the adoption of flexible approaches to inspection processes for example, remote engagement with staff and owner/managers that allowed for professional discussions and feedback meetings to continue to take place. These practices were integrated into the new guide to EYEI and the programme of inspection throughout 2022.

2022 was a challenging year for the completion of the programme of inspection in ELC settings. In addition to the continuing public health challenges associated with COVID-19, influenza and other respiratory illness that were particularly affecting very young children, staffing shortages and negative reaction to a new funding policy for ELC provision made for a difficult climate in which to conduct inspection. Despite these challenges, a very positive programme of EYEI and Follow-through (FT) inspections was completed in 2022 with 499 EYEI and 14 FT inspections.

The Inspectorate advanced several research projects in 2022 primarily to support the development of the Guide to Early Years Education Inspection (extends the remit to include evaluation of early learning and care provision for children aged from birth to six years). This work involved extensive consultation with partner and stakeholder organisations and the wider public. The new Guide to EYEI was submitted for approval to the Ministers for Education and to the Minister for Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth in June 2022 and is available online.

3.11 Inspection development and review

3.12.1. Development of Early Years Education Inspection Birth to Six Model

One of the actions identified for the Inspectorate in First Five: A Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children 2019-2028 is to extend the early years education-focused inspection (EYEI) model to all state funded provision for children aged from birth to six years. In 2022, work to meet this aim involved consultation with key partners on the content of the Guide to EYEI and field trials of the proposed inspection model in nine early learning and care (ELC) settings that provided the full range of services for children aged from birth to six years. A series of seminars was held, both face-to-face and online, to share the learning from the field trials and the revised content of the Guide to EYEI that had been developed. There was a very positive response from participants in the field trials and from partner and stakeholder organisations to the extended model of inspection for EYEI birth to six years. The Guide to Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) [2022] was approved by

the Ministers for Education and Children, Disability, Integration and Youth in July 2022 and officially replaced the Guide to EYEI (2018) from September 2022.

3.12.2 Inspection of prisons

A memorandum of understanding was agreed between the Department of Education (DE) and the Office of the Inspector of Prisons (OIP) in 2022. This memorandum facilitates the involvement of the Inspectorate of the DE in the inspection of prisons to evaluate the provision of education in prisons in Ireland.

The Inspectorate concluded its involvement in the first thematic evaluation of education, work and training in the following prisons:

- Arbour Hill Prison School
- Mountjoy Men's Main Prison School
- Progression Unit Mountjoy Prison
- Wheatfield Prison School

3.12.3 Alternative education model

Alternative education centres provide educational provision for some of the most marginalised young people in our society. They include emergency reception and orientation centres (EROCs), life centres and line projects.

The development work on the alternative education evaluations concluded in 2022 with a pilot in three settings.

3.12.5 Publications informing inspections and review

Following review and consultation with the education partners, the Inspectorate published updated versions of the key documents that inform and support inspection and that publicly articulate the Inspectorate's commitments regarding how it conducts its work in September 2022. These are:

- Code of Practice for the Inspectorate 2022, which sets out the general principles and standards in accordance with which inspectors carry out their work.
- Guides to Inspection in Primary Schools and Post-primary Schools 2022 which provide an overview of the range of inspection activities that are typically carried out during inspections.
- Procedure for the review of inspections carried out by the Department of Education Inspectorate under Section 13(9) of the Education Act 2022 which sets out the steps that can be taken by a practitioner or teacher, the owner/manager of an ELC setting or the board of management of a school or other education and training facility to have an inspection reviewed.

The updated Code of Practice takes account of the extended range of education settings in which inspectors carry out inspections on behalf of other departments and agencies such as early learning and care settings, schools based in emergency reception and orientation centres, centres of education, Irish language colleges and agricultural colleges.

The updated Guides to Inspection in Primary and Post-primary Schools take account of developments in inspection processes such as new inspection models, engagement with students and the management of unsolicited communications. The updated inspection guides also reflect developments in curriculum and other policy areas such as child protection and the monitoring of anti-bullying in schools.

The key changes to the procedure for the review of inspections include:

- The incorporation of publicly-funded education settings or training facilities, other than schools, in which the Inspectorate conducts evaluation and advisory work
- The inclusion of additional measures to enhance the informal review stage
- Revised arrangements for the formal review stage to make it a more visibly independent procedure

3.12.6 Evaluation of wellbeing, including monitoring of anti-bullying

In support of the implementation of the department's Anti-bullying Procedures in Primary and Post-primary Schools (2013), the Inspectorate took a number of steps during 2022 to enhance how it monitors and reports on the implementation of anti-bullying measures in schools.

- Incidental inspections carried out by the Inspectorate in primary schools, special schools and post-primary schools included a focus on how schools prevent and tackle bullying through the promotion of a positive school climate and culture during the 2021-22 year.
- The Inspectorate integrated its monitoring of anti-bullying measures in schools across all its inspection models from January 2022.

A NEPS/Inspectorate Working Group was established in 2022 to oversee:

- The development of a model of inspection, by the Inspectorate in collaboration with NEPS, in relation to the implementation of the department's Wellbeing Policy, in line with the Wellbeing Framework for Practice (2019) and Cineáltas, the new Action Plan on Bullying (2022). The group will also oversee how the Inspectorate can further integrate wellbeing into existing inspection processes and models.
- The development of a robust process, led by NEPS in collaboration with the Inspectorate, to provide reliable national data on the wellbeing of our children and young people in schools that takes account of international approaches and current best practice.

The Inspectorate supported the department's review of the 2013 Action Plan for Bullying and the Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools, through obtaining evidence of the implementation of the current anti-bullying procedures and identifying approaches that are successful in preventing and addressing bullying. The findings of this work were published in two reports in 2022:

- Report on the implementation of aspects of anti-bullying measures in schools (May 2022) based on information gathered by the Inspectorate during incidental inspections in the period September to November 2021, in over 500 primary, special and post-primary schools.

- Actions by schools to prevent and tackle bullying: Report on focus groups with primary pupils and post-primary students (June 2022) based on the outcomes of focus groups that the Inspectorate carried out with primary pupils and post-primary students in a small sample of schools in February and March 2022.

3.12.7 Promoting effective engagement with children and young people at all stages of the evaluation process through implementation of the Student Participation Project

Formal consultation with children and young people during inspection continued in 2022 and transacted in two main ways: using a survey and through focus group discussions. The national framework influenced the discussions with children and young people for children and young people's participation in decision-making.

The Inspectorate worked to ensure that involving children and young people was beneficial for the children, as well as schools and the education system as a whole. The approach and methods employed emphasised children's agency. The Inspectorate worked very closely with advisory groups of children and young people in developing its inspection policy and practice in 2022.

The Inspectorate developed its specific rights-respecting approach to working with children and young people in 2022. During subject inspection (post-primary) and curriculum evaluations (primary), inspectors facilitated children and young people to express their views freely and to have their views given due consideration. A related CPD programme for inspectors was delivered and a suite of resources created for inspectors to use in schools with children and young people including participation-agreement forms, information notes and explanatory videos for children and young people.

The Inspectorate published a suite of materials, including animated videos accompanying leaflets and an e-booklet, to help children and parents be better informed about inspection in early years and care settings, primary and post-primary schools and centres for education so that they could interact confidently with visiting inspectors. These materials were informed by research and consultation with children and young people and parents.

The resources are available at gov.ie - Information on inspection for children, young people and parents/guardians (www.gov.ie) and include:

- Leaflets and animated videos for early years (EY), primary (P) and post-primary (PP) children about inspection
- Leaflets for parents of children in EY, P, and PP about inspection
- Videos for P and PP children about focus groups about inspection
- Informational videos for parents about inspection

The Inspectorate developed information pamphlets for primary pupils and post-primary students to explain what school self-evaluation is and how pupil/students might expect to participate in the process. These information materials are available at https://www.gov.ie/en/service/3f07cf-school-self-evaluation/#sse-resources-2022-2026

3.12.8 Evaluating and reporting on the implementation of national initiatives

Creativity and education for sustainable development

In line with actions outlined in the Government's Creative Youth Plan 2023-2027 and the department's Education for Sustainment Development to 2030: Implementation Plan 2022-

2026, the Inspectorate has committed to the development of inspection processes and resources that enhance how it evaluates, gives recognition to and reports on creative and innovative practice and on education for sustainable development (ESD) in schools. The Inspectorate conducted preliminary work throughout 2022 that involved engagement with managers and principals about provision for creativity and ESD in a small sample of early learning and care (ELC) settings and primary and post-primary schools. The Inspectorate also developed its processes for evaluating and reporting on creativity and ESD. This work will inform the conduct of thematic evaluations and the publication of reports on each of these areas during 2023.

3.12 Impact of inspection

3.12.1 Enhancing the impact of School Self-Evaluation (SSE) in schools and settings

Following extensive consultation with education partners and a survey of schools, the Inspectorate led the commencement of a new cycle of school self- evaluation in September 2022. School Self-evaluation: Next Steps 2022-2026, including Circular 0056/2022, published in August 2022, sets out the requirements of SSE for the next four years. It outlines how schools can develop and use SSE in in a way that ensures that school and system goals for equity, inclusion, teaching, learning and wellbeing are prioritised and achieved. This third cycle of SSE, 2022-2026, comprises two phases that take account of

- the experiences of SSE to date including during the pandemic (**Phase one 2022-2023: Review year**) and
- the need for schools to decide the focus of SSE while considering their own local priorities and national priorities (**Phase two 2023-2026).**

3.12.2 Updating of Looking at Our School

In consultation with the education partners and the support services, the Looking at Our School frameworks were updated to take account of educational, curriculum and policy developments since 2016. The revised documents reflect recent educational reform, thinking and developments, notably in relation to child safeguarding, anti-bullying, pupil participation, parent participation, and creativity, education for sustainable development (ESD), school leadership and pupil transitions. They also include enhanced references to aspects of teaching and learning that became all the more significant as schools responded to the needs of their pupils in the context of COVID-19, including digital competence and the development of pupils' independent learning skills. The revised user-friendly documents, published in August 2022, were widely welcomed by the education sector.

3.12.3 Publication of the Chief Inspector's Report 2016-2020

The Chief Inspector's Report was published in March 2022 and covers the period from September 2016 to December 2020. It summarises the key findings from inspection, advisory and research work carried out in a range of education contexts, including schools, settings in the early learning and care (ELC) sector providing the early childhood care and education (ECCE) programme, centres for education and other types of education provision over this period. It also encompasses the work of education settings during the COVID-19 pandemic – a time of unprecedented challenge for children and young people, their parents, education settings and all involved in education in Ireland.

This report shows that children and young people in Irish schools, centres for education and other education settings, including ELC settings, are benefiting greatly from the skills and commitment of education practitioners in terms of support for learning and wellbeing. The positive findings about educational standards in Ireland set out in this report are reflected in national and international measures of quality. The inspection findings arising from the work of the Inspectorate have been presented to further the national education, inclusion and equity goals to which educators and policy makers in Ireland aspire.

The report identifies a number of aspects of the Irish education system in need of development and improvement in the years ahead. These include:

- Tackling the legacy of COVID-19 – especially in relation to the learning and wellbeing of children and young people in the Irish education system.
- Curriculum – in particular the challenge of reforming the curriculum and assessment experience for students at Senior Cycle in post-primary schools.
- Inclusion and diversity – to ensure that all students, no matter what their background or educational need, can achieve to their fullest potential.
- Governance and leadership of schools – to move towards a more effective, coherent and sustainable approach to school governance and leadership.

3.14.5 Provision of advice to support the work of the department

Curriculum support

The Inspectorate assisted in the preparation of the department's inputs and responses to draft curriculum and assessment documents, such as the wide variety of curricula and specifications that are under development at the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). It provided ongoing support for the implementation of Junior Cycle including support for the development of continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers.

The Inspectorate is supporting Senior Cycle redevelopment including working with the department's curriculum and assessment policy unit (CAP) on policy development and representing the department on NCCA subject development groups. It also supported CAP unit with the ongoing developmental work on the literacy, numeracy and digital numeracy strategy and the review of the exemptions from the study of Irish.

The Inspectorate, with the State Examinations Commission (SEC) and the NCCA, was involved in the development of the Assessment Arrangements for Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate 2023 and the Assessment Arrangements for Leaving Certificate Applied 2023 in 2022.

Support to teacher education and special education sections of the department

Bespoke evaluations were conducted by the Inspectorate to support policy advice on placements in special classes attached to mainstream post-primary schools; special classes for pupils with Specific Learning Disability (Dyslexia) in primary schools; and guidance in special schools. The Inspectorate also evaluated the impact of the COVID-19 Learning and Support Scheme (CLASS) and summer provision for 2022.

The Inspectorate provided policy advice to the department's Teacher Education Section (TES) on the teacher education continuum: initial teacher education, induction and continuing professional development.

It undertook a quality assurance role in the evaluation and approval of the summer course programme: drawing up criteria for the operation of the programme; examining proposed courses for approval; considering appeals; and monitoring on site and online courses during the months of July and August.

Support to social inclusion unit

The Inspectorate gathered feedback and insights from schools' experiences of participation in the School Excellence Fund-DEIS (SEF-DEIS) programme, in the first half of 2022, and used this to inform its policy advice to social inclusion unit. A report on Tranche One of SEF-DEIS was prepared in 2022 and was submitted to social inclusion unit in Q1 2023. Overall, the report found that there were benefits and challenges for the participating schools and settings. Of particular benefit was the constructive professional relationships that developed between schools and settings. These relationships improved teachers and practitioners' familiarity with the curriculum, pedagogical approaches and the expectations of the other sectors. Reported outcomes included improvements in engagement in learning and interest in learning activities, increases in subject-specific skills and student leadership. Overall, in projects, the processes of quality assurance, including gathering evidence and monitoring the impact of the project's actions on learner outcomes required development.

Supporting Ukrainian learners

The Inspectorate contributed to the department's response to the arrival and enrolment of children and young people from Ukraine through the provision of guidance to schools, parents and young people. This advice focused on the emergent curriculum needs of schools supporting the education of Ukrainian students.

The Inspectorate published a suite of guidance documents for schools to provide advice to primary and post-primary schools as they responded to the situation. This guidance included:

- Information on the Ukrainian education system
- Key information on supporting students' language learning
- Advice where students from Ukraine wish to follow the Ukrainian curriculum

The Inspectorate provided guidance for children and young people and their parents/ guardians on the language of instruction in schools and on Transition Year. Information for parents was also published about the early childhood care and education (ECCE) programme and the primary school system in Ireland.

During the period April to June 2022, the Inspectorate conducted a survey through a series of research-focused visits to a sample of 40 primary and 39 post-primary schools. The main purpose of the visits was to ascertain how well schools had responded to the challenge of meeting the needs of a significant number of Ukrainian students for whom the language of schooling, English, was not their home language. The Inspectorate's engagement with the schools provided an initial mechanism for gathering exemplars of effective school practice in meeting the educational needs of pupils/students.

The Department of Education established Regional Education and Language Teams (REALT) in May 2022 which were hosted by the 16 regional education and training boards (ETBs). These teams were established as a key structure in the department's response to the Ukrainian crisis, and to ensure educational provision for children and young people fleeing from war in Ukraine. The primary role of the REALT is to build on existing regional education support structures and to secure school places for newly arrived Ukrainian

refugees. REALTs also support schools in their area to meet the needs of children and young people when they arrive, and as needs emerge, to advise the schools and support the department in developing new capacity where required.

An inspector from each regional business unit was assigned to the REALTs, which are geographically located in their region in 2022. The link inspector has supported the REALTs in matters that may arise in schools relating to teaching, learning, assessment and the enrolment of Ukrainian refugees. In addition, an inspector was assigned to the department's REALT steering committee, which comprises DE officials, representatives from TESS, NCSE, managerial and patron bodies and ETBI. The team of link inspectors met on a regular basis to ensure a co-ordinated approach to their work. The REALT link inspectors provided regular updates to their regional colleagues at business unit meetings, to ensure that all inspectors are briefed on matters relating to the enrolment and educational provision for Ukrainian children and young people in primary and post-primary schools.

Work exchanges with other Inspectorates

Agreements are in place for a programme of inspector exchange experiences to be implemented between the Inspectorate and the Welsh Inspectorate (Estyn), and separately between the Inspectorate and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in Northern Ireland. These agreements were updated in 2021. A series of related meetings and workshops occurred between the Inspectorates in 2022, including a meeting of the senior management teams of ETI and the Department of Education inspectorate. The arrangements have been discussed regularly by the senior managements of the Inspectorates and agreed by the three relevant chief inspectors. No on-site work shadowing of inspection exchanges occurred in 2022 due to COVID-19 restrictions.The ETI Inspectorate attended the Department of Education Inspectorate's annual conference in 2022, as well as its Irish-language courses/seminars. The ETI and Department of Education Inspectorate consulted regularly and beneficially in the development of certain inspection models.

The Department of Education Inspectorate is a member of the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI), an association of national and regional inspectorates of education in Europe. SICI's aim is to support the improvement of education through enhancing inspection processes. The specific goals are to:

- Support improvement of inspectorates and develop the professional competences of inspectors.
- Promote and support partnership and cooperation between inspectorates.
- Actively participate in the international debate about evaluation and quality improvement in education.

These goals are realised through an annual general assembly, three to four inspection workshops each year, various evaluation projects and other co-operative activities. SICI and individual SICI inspectorate members deliver all activities jointly.

The Department of Education Inspectorate hosted the General Assembly 27 SICI General Assembly on 17 and 18 November 2022. Day one of the conference concluded the 2022 SICI theme on "The Contribution of Inspection to Equity and Excellence" and day two of the conference launched the 2023 theme "The relationship between inspection and research".

Those attending the general assembly were also invited to participate in school visits and a cultural site visit.

Achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls

The Inspectorate is committed to promoting gender equity and empowering girls and women through education for a better life and future. For that reason, the Inspectorate nominated an inspector as a subject matter expert for the education of girls in 2021. This nomination coincided with a number of Department of Education developments in this area. The interdepartmental group, established to consider period dignity is developing a pilot project to deliver free, sustainable period products to schools and to develop student-centred projects that will address the stigma around periods. The Inspectorate is also strongly committed to progressing positive gender norms in Irish education and a professional network on gender in education has been established within the Inspectorate to promote gender-equitable outcomes and experiences in education.

Circulars relating to the Inspectorate

- 0029/2022 - Arrangements for Inspectorate Engagement with Primary and Special Schools
- 0030/2022 - Arrangements for Inspectorate Engagement with Post-Primary Schools
- 0056/2022: School Self-evaluation: Next Steps September 2022 – June 2026
- 0057/2022 - Arrangements for Inspectorate engagement with primary and special schools: September to December 2022
- 0058/2022 - Arrangements for Inspectorate engagement with post-primary schools: September to December 2022
- 0061/2022 - Arrangements for Inspection of Early Learning and Care (ELC) Settings September 2022 – June 2023

3.13 European schools

There are almost 40,000 children and young people across the entire ES system. Approximately 28,765 pupils are enrolled in the 13 traditional European schools, of whom 539 pupils are Irish nationals. In the current school year, Ireland has 59 seconded teachers working in the ES system including a considerable number in management positions.

There are also 22 accredited European schools across 13 Member States, including the Centre for European Schooling in Dunshaughlin, County Meath. There are approximately 13,215 children and young people enrolled in the Accredited European Schools, approximately 64 of whom are Irish nationals.

The Inspectorate conducted 10 teacher contract reviews, two deputy director contract reviews, one assistant deputy director review, one team review of locally recruited teachers, one whole-school evaluation and one accredited European school audit. The Inspectorate also chaired or was a member of a range of working-groups relating to whole-school inspection, syllabus revisions, the delivery of continuing professional development, development of policy on pedagogical reforms on curriculum within the European schools' system and the European baccalaureate procedures and processes. With the departure of the United Kingdom from the European schools system in 2021, Ireland continues to have

responsibility for English in the European baccalaureate with the support of Malta. Ireland also has responsibility for the Irish language in the European baccalaureate.

Each academic year, an EU member state assumes the presidency of the European Schools (ES). Ireland assumed the presidency of the ES from Croatia on 01 August 2022. Ireland has a particular responsibility in its presidency to steer the ongoing implementation of the multi-annual plan for the ES system, which is achieved chiefly through chairing meetings of the key decision-making bodies of the system. This includes the board of governors, the overarching decision-making group with a mandate that covers educational, administrative and financial matters.

3.14 School building programme

The department continues to make progress to increase the infrastructural capacity in the schools sector, in order to meet demographic and other demands. There has been in excess of €4 billion invested in capital infrastructure in the education sector for schools at primary and post-primary level since 2018. Nearly 900 school building projects were completed under the school building programme during the NDP period from 2018 to 2022.

A €64 million summer works programme for the year was announced on 24 January 2022. The department also announced that the Department of Education and CDETB had agreed to facilitate strategic capital investment in the schools and FET sector in North Dublin City on 24 March 2022.

There were in excess of 180 school building projects delivered during 2022, which included accelerated delivery of modular accommodation to support provision for 900 pupils with special education needs. The department also invested in over 1,000 small-scale repair/improvement projects in schools throughout the country under the summer works scheme and emergency works scheme and 16 schools through the energy pathfinder programme, in partnership with SEAI, for deep energy retrofit projects as part of the climate action agenda.

Work continued to progress on the sites acquisition programme in 2022. Over 50 submissions to local authority development plans and 13 sites/property acquisitions were completed in 2022.

Circulars relating to planning and building unit

- 0034/2022 - Cost Limits for Post-Primary School Buildings
- 0037/2022 - Cost Limits for Primary School Buildings

3.15 Energy efficiency in schools

2022 saw work progress significantly in a number of areas.

The decarbonisation of new school building projects under the school building programme as they enter the design stage process was implemented along with continued future proofing of current school building projects advancing through the design process under the school building programme to maximise decarbonisation and renewables while maintaining programme delivery.

A pilot programme commenced in 2022 developing, testing and evaluating a decarbonisation glide path delivery approach focused on testing and establishing learnings in existing schools by transitioning from high carbon fossil fuel heating provision towards renewable heating.

Delivery of retrofitted decarbonised schools continued via the jointly funded school sector decarbonisation pathfinder between the Department of Education and the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications with the SEAI. This is testing and demonstrating energy efficiency and decarbonisation retrofit approaches. This pathfinder is a great example of collaboration ensuring the deployment of new design approaches and technologies are introduced to the educational environment on an evidence-based approach. The Pathfinder programme is paving the way for, and informing, a much larger national schools' programme for the decarbonisation of schools built prior to 2008. It is facilitating research on a range of typical retrofit options, which will have been tried and tested. It is providing valuable development information for a solution driven delivery strategy, which will be founded on a solid evidence base that has proven the robustness and scalability of renewable solutions within the schools' sector. The pathfinder programme has retrofitted 48 schools across Ireland to date with work on an additional 16 schools underway. Each school undergoes a comprehensive assessment to ensure that the measures are suitable for that school and will deliver value to both the school and learnings for the national retrofit programme.

3.16 School transport

The School Transport Scheme is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department of Education. In 2022, over 147,900 children, including over 18,000 children with special educational needs, are transported daily to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country.

The department announced the payment of €100 million in additional funding as part of a cost-of-living package to support increased school running costs and the school transport scheme on 29 November 2022.

School transport services are being provided in the current school year for over 3,800 children who have arrived in Ireland from Ukraine. The total cost of the scheme in 2022 was €338.9m.

3.17 Dealing with past abuse

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 in 2022.

The religious congregations are contributing under two rounds:

- The legally binding 2002 indemnity agreement
- The 2009 voluntary offers

One further property was fully transferred to the state, while the transfer of three properties (two under the 2002 indemnity agreement and one under the 2009 voluntary offers) remained in progress.

The total offers made by the congregations under the two rounds amount to €480.6 million. Total contributions amounting to €245.2 million had been received by the end of 2022.

The department continued to furnish the Council of Europe with updates detailing the individual and general measures being taken to implement the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgement in *O'Keeffe v Ireland*.

A revised ex gratia scheme to implement the ECtHR judgement was opened to applications on 21 July 2021. The scheme provides for ex gratia payments for €84,000 to be made to those who satisfy the criteria as set out in the terms of scheme. The ex-gratia scheme was originally established in 2015 and was put in place to provide those who had instituted legal proceedings against the State in respect of day school sexual abuse, and subsequently discontinued those proceedings following rulings in the domestic courts, with an opportunity to apply for a payment. The scheme was paused in 2019 following a report from the independent assessor who was of the view that the requirement to show prior complaint was too excessive a burden to place on applications.

141 applications had been received by the end of 2022. Of these, 104 applications had been approved and 34 had been refused. An applicant whose application was rejected by the scheme administrator can appeal that decision to an independent appeals officer. 28 appeals had been received and one had been successful by the end of 2022.

The government approved high-level proposals for the establishment of a National Centre for Research and Remembrance, which will stand as a national memorial to all those who were resident in industrial schools, reformatories, mother and baby homes, Magdalen laundries and related institutions in March 2022. The centre will comprise a museum and exhibition space, research centre and repository of records, and a place for reflection and remembrance.

A steering group, which includes representation from the department, is overseeing the establishment of the centre and the department has engaged with relevant colleagues to progress the various work streams associated with the project.

3.18 Public service reform programme

The Department of Education 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 throughout 2022. This framework supports development and innovation across the public service.

The public service reform programme office was responsible for leading Action 14 of Our Public Service 2020, "Continuous and responsive professional development", which had three key areas:

- The process for the recognition of core skills
- Leadership development
- A model of experiential learning opportunities

The successor plan to Our Public Service 2020 has not yet been published by DPER. Reform work in the department continued through the implementation of the 2022 work programme and with the PSR programme office providing programme support for priority policy areas as required.

3.19 Department expenditure

The department's provisional expenditure outturn in 2022 amounted to €10.2 billion. This comprised of €9.1 billion in gross voted current expenditure and capital expenditure of €1.1 billion.

The budget allocations in 2022 provided for among other things, the recruitment of almost 3,200 new teachers and special needs assistants, the largest-ever expansion of the DEIS programme to tackle disadvantage and achieving the historically low 24:1 staffing schedule at primary level.

This allocation is continuing to invest in special education. €2.4 billion in current funding was provided in 2022, representing over a quarter of the department's entire current expenditure budget. In addition to the original Budget 2022 allocation, further funding was provided for cost of living measures, the provision of COVID-19 and Ukraine crisis supports and services and the school building programme to increase capacity within schools.

3.20 Shared services implementation

The suite of projects and operations in the Education Shared Business Service (ESBS) centre continued to expand in 2022. ESBS is now processing payrolls for thirteen Education and Training Boards (ETBs) with two new ETBs transitioning to the service in 2022 .All ETBs are now using ESBS for payments to apprentices and learners with the final wave of learners being transitioned to the shared service in Q1 2022.

The configuration and development of additional modules including an Expenses module and an eRecruitment solution for the ETB sector has progressed throughout 2022. Work also progressed in relation to the administration of the single pension scheme.

ESBS completed the transfer of all ETBs (except City of Dublin ETB) to a common finance software solution in advance of the implementation of a finance shared service with five ETBs migrated in 2022. Helpdesk technology now supports all ETBs that have migrated off the bespoke finance solution . Planning and preparation for the stand-up of transactional shared services has advanced during 2022.

The department published its request for tenders (RFT) for a new technology solution for the schools employees' payroll function. Standard terms and conditions for interaction with the market for a cloud-based solution were developed and used in this procurement and this work will be used across other market engagements.

The department continued to work with HEAnet and EduCampus, funding their work in provision of information and communication technology (ICT) shared services to the education sector. HEAnet is the national research and education network (NREN) service providing internet connectivity and shared ICT services to approximately one million students, researchers and staff across the primary, post-primary, further and higher education sectors. EduCampus is a shared service ICT applications support provider to the institutes of technology (IoT) and TUs, and is supporting the ongoing IoT mergers to form new TUs throughout 2022. A key priority for HEAnet in 2022 was the development and implementation of cybersecurity services for its clients and SSIU worked with colleagues in DoE and DFHERIS to support the development of a business case and to secure funding for the delivery of a security operations centre/security incident event management (SOC/SIEM) service for the education sector.

SSIU sustained its support of procurement reform and advancement of centralised procurement in 2022. The Education Procurement Programme Board (EPPB) had its first full year of operation, providing procurement leadership and a forum for the sector to discuss challenges and solutions. The board reporting mechanisms were refined over the course of 2022. SSIU supported the progression of procurement projects including central arrangements for a refresh of ePayments solutions for schools, classroom furniture and a framework for management information systems (MIS). SSIU continued to support the work of the education procurement service (EPS) and schools procurement unit (SPU). Close co-operation with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) was further developed through 2022.

A reporting tool aimed at enhancing customer service was piloted in the Higher Education Payroll Shared Service project and has now been rolled out to the ETB payroll and ETB finance shared services. This builds on the implementation of a helpdesk solution in 2021 to continuously improve service delivery.

Circulars relating to shared services implementation unit

- 0052/2022: Domestic Motor Travel Rates in the ETB Sector – Staff and Members
- 0053/2022: Domestic Subsistence Allowances in the ETB Sector – Staff and Members
- 0077/2022: Once-off cost of living measure to support increased school running costs

3.21 Publication of the Action Plan on Bullying and Anti-bullying Procedures for Schools

The publication and launch of Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying was a major achievement in 2022. This landmark new action plan is dedicated to the prevention and addressing of bullying, cyber bullying, racist bullying, gender identity bullying and sexual harassment, among other areas, in schools.

Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying was developed by the Department of Education in collaboration with a diverse and dedicated steering committee led by Dr Noel Purdy of Stranmillis University College in Belfast.

Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying has been informed by the views of children and young people, parents, school staff, education partners and individual members of the public and succeeds in placing the students at the very heart of the plan.

Some of the key actions in the plan include:

- Development of a national database to enable the publication of an annual national report on bullying in schools.
- Ensuring that student teachers and all school staff have the knowledge and skills to effectively prevent and address bullying.
- Development of a recognition process, such as a Cineáltas flag, for schools who engage in measures to prevent and address bullying.
- Piloting a programme of counselling supports for primary schools.
- Developing guidance for the establishment of a student support team model in larger primary schools.

- Establishing a dedicated unit in the Department of Education to promote the voice of children and young people and to ensure that they have meaningful input into the development of department policy.
- The progression of the charter bill and the development of charter guidelines that will strengthen the voice and participation of children and young people and their parents in the development and implementation of school policies.

The implementation of the actions in this action plan will greatly enhance and compliment the work that schools already do to ensure that all the children and young people are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of children and young people is at the forefront of everything.

Circulars relating to the parents and learners unit

- 0049/2022 - Grant Scheme in respect of Maternity Related Absences

3.22 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.

The department intends to carry out PCR or all relevant agencies commencing with the teaching council. Internal deliberations on the format of PCRs have progressed significantly. Engagement has commenced with the Teaching Council and also with D/PER vote section to facilitate the establishment of a steering group and to assist in the finalisation of terms of reference. The terms of reference will inform the OGP tender process. A steering group to oversee the delivery of the PCR has been established and has met twice in Q4 2022.

3.23 Pensions and payroll

The department processed superannuation benefits for over 1,900 teachers and non-teaching staff and their survivors in 2022.The Department of Education also provided for over 900 transfers of pensionable service to/from other public service bodies, administered almost 1,500 notional service requests and processed almost 1,600 family law queries as part of the superannuation process.

The pension unit processed 100 applications for professional added years for employees in the wider education sector. Over 34,000 customer service queries were processed in 2022. The pension unit continues to issue pension benefit statements to scheme members and is actively working on improvements to increase the number of statements 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.

The Department of Education has also undertaken to provide access to an electronic pay slip for current and former school staff in primary, secondary, community and comprehensive schools. An internal end-to-end technical solution has been developed to produce and transfer PDF versions of a payee's fortnightly customised payslip to the Digital Postbox for those payees that open an account and opt in. Actions to be completed include configure and deploy system to production, finalise SLA, and to finalise communication strategy.

Circulars relating to pensions and payroll

- 0033/2022 - Permanent extension of the Employee Assistance Service (EAS) to all school staff employed in recognised primary and post-primary schools
- 0038/2022 - Coronavirus (COVID-19): Updated Working Arrangements for Teachers and Special Needs Assistants employed in recognised Primary and Post Primary schools
- 0050/2022 - Parent's Leave Scheme For Registered Teachers employed In Recognised Primary and Post-Primary Schools
- 0051/2022 - Parent's Leave Scheme for Special Needs Assistants employed in Recognised Primary and Post-Primary Schools
- 0063/2022 - Joint Data Controller Arrangement between Payroll Division, Department of Education and The Managerial Authorities of Recognised Primary, Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools and the Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards
- 0071/2022 - Teacher Supply Post-Primary: Teaching Hours Extension Scheme for 2022/2023
- 0076/2022 - Payment of Tool Allowance to Craft Workers 2022
- 0078/2022 - Bereavement Leave Scheme for Registered Teachers employed in Recognised Primary and Post-Primary Schools
- 0079/2022 - Bereavement Leave Scheme for Special Needs Assistants employed in Recognised Primary and Post-Primary Schools

3.24 Internal audit

The Internal Audit Section of the department is responsible for providing assurances to the accounting officer 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. The ESF Managing Authority in the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) manages the European Social Fund (ESF).

The annual audit programme of the Internal Audit Section is prepared under the auspices of the Audit Committee, and the Internal Audit Section reports to the committee on the conduct of this programme and the finalisation of audit reports. Six internal audit reports were considered and approved by the Audit Committee in 2022. The section tracks, on a quarterly basis, progress on the implementation of recommendations arising from internal audit reports.

The ESF Audit Authority reports on an annual basis to the Audit Committee of DFHERIS on the significant findings, recommendations and issues arising from its audit work.

No internal protected disclosures were brought to the attention of the head of internal and EU audit unit or the audit committee in 2022.

3.25 International unit

The Department of Education continued to engage with EU and international organisations and partners in support of our international obligations and to assist with the achievement of our objective of ensuring that education policy development and implementation takes account of best international practice.

Throughout 2022 this included high quality representation at EU and international meetings, conferences, enhancing Ireland's reputation for international education cooperation with relevant international institutions, such as the OECD and UNESCO, and with other countries. The Department of Education's international unit supported many visits including delegations from Governments and other education organisations to the department, agencies and schools.

The Department of Education continued to build education cooperation with Great Britain and Northern Ireland, delivering on the relevant commitments in the Programme for Government and to the Government's commitments in the New Decade, New Approach deal for Northern Ireland. This was achieved by advancing engagement under the Memorandum of Understanding on Education under the Common Travel Area MOU agreed with the UK arising from Brexit and by continued support and engagement with Northern Irish departments and organisations.

The Department of Education continued to contribute to the implementation of the EU PEACE IV Programme in the shared education space and to the development of the new PEACEPLUS Programme under the Shared Learning Together element.

3.26 Departmental communications

The Department of Education worked collaboratively throughout 2022 with education partners to produce materials and to promote key messages relevant to the sector, building on previous work to ensure appropriate timing and sequencing of materials.

Particular attention was focused on the development of good communications practices for public consultations on policy and service development, including those on the digital strategy, school transport, Irish-medium education outside the Gaeltacht and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act.

The Department of Education continued to develop its capacity to communicate effectively to a wide range of audiences and extend its reach on social media and digital channels. Some other key information campaigns included information and advertising campaigns on free school transport, teaching transforms, informing leaving certificate and undergraduate students of the routes to becoming a teacher, the launch of the action plan on bullying, and the launch of the Senior Cycle reform programme.

The Department of Education continues to ensure that we adhere to the Official Languages Act in our public communications. The latest update to the act also affects communication campaigns by influencing the percentage of assets that need to be in the Irish language and the increased use of Irish medium channels when purchasing media space.

3.27 Ukrainian students

The Department of Education had successfully supported and facilitated the enrolment of 13,323 children from Ukraine in our primary and post-primary schools as of 5 December 2022. The approach taken is based on integration and inclusion that supports both the educational and wellbeing of the children that have come to Ireland because of the ongoing war in Ukraine.

3.28 External staff relations

The Department of Education manages industrial relations for the 115,000 staff in the school and further education sector including the operation of a number of staff forums and leading at a range of industrial settings including the WRC and Labour Court. The department also works closely with the education partners to ensure a stable IR environment through timely and effective responses on issues. We also play a role in supporting the effective use of the education workforce to achieve our objectives by representing the sector at national pay talks and ensuring compliance with government pay policy.

The Department of Education supports schools in their staff management role by developing and maintaining up to date documentation on terms and conditions of employment as well as operating several administrative processes such as incremental credit and CID appeals. and provide direct support to both schools and individual staff members on such issues. The Department of Education published 39 circulars relating to terms and conditions of staff in 2022.

The Department of Education undertakes industrial relations negotiations in the education and training sector and provides industrial relations and employment law advice to the Minister. The department also represents the sector at public service pay talks. An agreement was reached in 2022 between the Government and ICTU to extend the existing national pay agreement, Building Momentum, until the end of 2023.

An agreement was reached between the department and Forsa on terms and conditions of school secretaries in 2022. Where a school employs a staff member to support those functions those staff are employees of individual schools and responsibility for terms of employment rests with the school. Fórsa trade union had tabled a claim in 2019 seeking parity of these staff with ETB public service staff. Following a series of engagements at the WRC, a suite of measures designed to improve the working conditions of school secretaries was proposed, which Fórsa agreed to recommend to its members. A ballot was undertaken, and the result was 95% agreement in favour of the deal. The Department of Education is currently implementing the agreement.

Circulars in relation to staff relations

- 0005/2022 - Revision of salaries of certain grades other than Teachers and SNAs employed by ETBs with effect from 1 February 2022
- 0006/2022 - Revision of salaries with effect from 1 February 2022 for Clerical Officers and Caretakers employed in National Schools under the 1978/79 Scheme and Clerical Officers employed in Post Primary Schools under the 1978 Scheme
- 0007/2022 - Revision of Salaries of School Secretaries and School Maintenance Staff in Community and Comprehensive Schools with effect from 1 February 2022
- 0008/2022: New Public Holiday from 2022

- 0009/2022 - Revision of Salaries for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) with effect from 1 February 2022
- 0015/2022 - Revision of salaries of certain grades other than Teachers and SNAs employed by ETBs with effect from 1 February 2022
- 0017/2022 - Implementation of Sectoral Bargaining in the Primary Sector with effect from 01 February 2022
- 0031/2022 - Recruitment of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) - Supplementary Assignment Arrangements for the 2022/2023 school year
- 0036/2022 - Revision of Salaries and Annual Leave arrangements for School Secretaries employed in recognised primary and post primary schools
- 0039/2022 - Coronavirus (COVID-19): Updated Working Arrangements For Staff Other Than Teachers and Special Needs Assistants employed in Education and Training Boards
- 0040/2022 - COVID-19: Working Arrangements for Certain Higher Risk employees of Recognised Primary and Post Primary schools in the Free Education Scheme and of ETBs, Employed Using Grant Funding for the 2022/23 school year
- 0041/2022 - Revision of Working Hours in ETBs: Implementation of the Independent Hors Body Recommendations in relation to the Haddington Road Agreement Hours for ETB Employees other than Teachers, SNAs and Tutors
- 0042/2022 - Building Momentum – A New Public Service Agreement 2021-2022 Implementation of Sectoral Bargaining in the Primary Sector
- 0044/2022 - Revision of Working Hours in Recognised Primary, Voluntary Secondary Schools in the Free Education Scheme Implementation of the Independent Hours Body Recommendations in relation to the Haddington Road Agreement Hours for certain employees in relation to the Haddington Road Hours for certain employees in Recognised Primary, Voluntary Secondary Schools in the Free Education Scheme
- 0045/2022 - Revision of Working Hours: Implementation of the Independent Hours Body Recommendations in relation to the Haddington Road Agreement Hours for secretaries and caretakers employed in department-approved posts in Community and Comprehensive Schools
- 0049/2022 - Grant Scheme in respect of Maternity Related Absences
- 0059/2022 - Implementation of Sectoral Bargaining with effect from 1 February 2022 for post-primary teachers – Payment of PME/HDip Allowance
- 0065/2022 - Revision of Salaries for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) under Building Momentum Pay Agreement
- 0066/2022 - Revision of Salaries of School Secretaries and School Maintenance Staff in Community and Comprehensive Schools under Building Momentum Pay Agreement
- 0067/2022 - Revision of Salaries of Clerical Officers and Caretakers employed under the 1978/1979 Scheme under Building Momentum Pay Agreement
- 0068/2022 - Revision of Salaries and Allowances of Certain Grades other than Teachers and SNAs employed by ETBs under Building Momentum Pay Agreement
- 0069/2022 - Revision of Teacher Salaries under Building Momentum – A New Public Service Agreement 2021-2022 (“The Agreement”)
- 0072/2022 - Standardisation of the School Year in respect of Primary & Post-Primary Schools for the years 2023/4,2024/5 and 2025/6

3.29 School leavers with disabilities

A pilot project was announced to support young school leavers with disabilities on 10 November 2022. This project will help young people with disabilities to plan for their future options when leaving school.

The pilot will involve clusters of schools in Galway and Dublin working collaboratively with a project coordinator over the next two school years. 20 schools will be involved in the project. This pilot fulfils the department's commitment to implementing Action 1.5 of the government's Comprehensive Employment Strategy for persons with disabilities to develop and demonstrate an approach to transitions for young people with disabilities to improve access to, and opportunities for, post-school options.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) will oversee the pilot project. The target group is young people with intellectual disabilities and other complex educational needs in post-primary and special schools. Their progress will be tracked over two and a half to three years, starting initially with students who are aged 16 in special school settings and those in fifth year in post-primary schools.

Appendix A – corporate data

Summary of Inspectorate activities, 2022

The inspectorate completed a total of inspections/advisory visits to schools and other settings in 2022 as outlined below.

	Summary of inspections	
Table 1	Inspections of early learning and care settings participating in the ECCE Programme* including research	513
Table 2	Inspections of primary and special schools	1517
Table 3	Inspections of post-primary schools	717
Table 4	School self-evaluation advisory visits	412
Table 5	Inspections of centres for education	21
Table 6	Other inspections, advisory visits and evaluation activities	411
Total inspections/advisory visits to early learning and care settings, schools, centres for education and other educational settings		3591

*Early Childhood Care and Education Programme

Table 1: Inspections of early learning and care settings participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme, 2022

Early Years Education Inspections	
Early Years Education Inspection	490
Early Years Education Inspection: Follow-through	14
Early Years Education Inspection: Birth to Six (Trial)	9
Total Early Years Education Inspections	513

Table 2: Inspections of primary and special schools, 2022

Primary and special school inspections	
Whole-school evaluation	0
Whole-school evaluation - management, leadership and learning	1
Evaluation of action planning for improvement in DEIS* schools	0
Incidental inspection (total)	1135
Follow-through inspection	7
Evaluation of provision for pupils with Special Education Needs (SEN)	8
Curriculum evaluation (total)	200
Child protection and safeguarding inspections: initial	21
Child protection and safeguarding inspections: final	35
Supporting the safe provision of schooling inspection visits	110
Total of primary and special school inspections	1517

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

Table 3: Inspections of post-primary schools, 2022

Post-primary school inspections	
Whole-School Evaluation - Management, Leadership and Learning	0
Subject Inspection	132
Programme Evaluation	4
Evaluation of Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS* Schools	0
Incidental Inspection	479
Follow-through Inspection	6
Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections: Initial	16
Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections: Final	27
Evaluation of Provision for Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)	10
Supporting the Safe Provision of Schooling Inspection Visits	43
Total of post-primary school inspections	717

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

Table 4: School self-evaluation advisory visits, 2022

School self-evaluation visits	
School self-evaluation advisory visits to primary schools	287
School self-evaluation advisory visits to post-primary schools	125
Total self-evaluation advisory visit	412

Table 5: Inspection of centres for education, 2022

Centres for education inspections	
Incidental Inspection	9
Follow-through Inspection	0
Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections: Final	1
Evaluation of Centres for Education (Pilot)	3
Supporting the Safe Provision of Schooling Inspection Visits	8
Total of centre for education inspections	21

Table 6: Other inspections and advisory visits, 2022

Other inspections/evaluations of provision for students and young people	
Inspection of Coláistí Gaeilge (Irish Colleges)	19

Inspection of special care units (SCU)[1]	4
Inspection conducted under Section 24 of the Education Act 1998	0
Inspections in European Schools	16
Inspection of DEIS Literacy/Numeracy camps for children (English and Irish-medium)	14
Summer Inclusion Programme (Research)	89
SEN-Focused Incidentals (Research)	25
Evaluation of summer continuing professional development courses for primary	37
Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme: advisory visits to schools	146
Evaluation for recognition as a Gaeltacht school	36
School Excellence Fund: advisory visits to schools	25
Total other inspections/evaluations	411

Table 7: Publication of inspection reports, 2022

Publication of inspection reports	
Early Years Education Inspections (early years)	438
Early Years Education Inspection: Follow-through (early years)	27
Curriculum Evaluation (primary)	75
Evaluation of Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS Schools (primary and post-primary)	0
Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections – Initial (primary and post-primary)	72
Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections – Final (primary and post-primary)	72
Programme Evaluation (post-primary)	0
Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (primary)	3
Evaluation of Provision for Students with Special Educational Needs (post-primary)	2
Subject Inspections (post-primary)	31
Whole-School Evaluation - Management, Leadership and Learning (primary)	1
Whole-School Evaluation - Management, Leadership and Learning (post-primary)	0
Follow-through (primary and post-primary)	9
Whole-School Evaluation (primary)	0
Evaluation of Schools at Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres	1
Supporting the Safe Provision of Schooling	694
Evaluation of Centres for Education	0

[1]In 2022, the inspections conducted in SCUs were subject inspections of mathematics and English.

Total number of reports published[2]	1425

Table 8: Reports issued to schools and centres, not published, 2022

Issuing of inspection reports	
Early Years Education Inspection – Birth to Six (Trial)	9
Curriculum evaluation	25
Coláistí Gaeilge[3]	16
Subject inspections[4]	8
Incidental inspections – Note on school measures to prevent and tackle	450
Evaluation of Centres for Education (Pilot)	2
Total number of reports issued	510

Supporting the parliamentary process	2011	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Parliamentary Questions Responded To	3103	3657	3434	4209	4260	4918	4561	4875	4651
Memoranda for Government Received for Observations	147	160	108	144	167	208	107	180	197
Responses to Topical Issues	60	36	18	38	41	30	18	13,624	51
Responses to Adjournment (Commencement) Debates	32	41	11	43	55	29	18	24	45

Supporting the parliamentary process	2011	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Representations received by Minister and Minister of State Offices	13000	7330	6130	6557	7266	885	12907	3880	1993

Information services	2022
Emails received through info@education.gov.ie	15,547
Visitors to gov.ie/education	900,335
Freedom of Information Requests Received	359

[2] The number of reports published in 2022 differs from the number of inspections conducted as not all reports are publishable and not all relate to inspections conducted in the current year.

3 These reports were issued to the Irish language course provider in 2022 and will be published on www.gov.ie/school-reports in 2023.

[4] These reports were issued to the school in 2022 and will be published on www.gov.ie/school-reports in 2023.

Closed	
Subject Access Requests Received Closed	74
Press releases issued	99
Twitter followers	82,122

Public sector equality and human rights duty

The Department of Education is conscious of its key role in promoting, protecting and vindicating the achievement of the key human right to education. The right to education is contained in a number of international human rights conventions to which Ireland is a party, namely:

- The International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 13)
- The Convention on the Rights of Child (Article 28)
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- (Article 10)
- The Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (Article 5) and
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 24)

The department's mission, to facilitate children and young people, through learning, to realise their full potential and contribute to Ireland's social, economic and cultural development, is a key element in ensuring that Ireland fulfils its obligations under these conventions. It also ensures that Ireland's education system recognises the rights of children and young people to an education, whatever their circumstances. The promotion of equality and human rights and ensuring access to an equitable system, underpins our mission and drives our day-to-day work.

Energy consumption and expenditure in 2022

The Department of Education's energy management and reduction programme objective to reduce energy consumption by 33% by 2020 was achieved, with a decrease of 39.4% from our 2009 baseline by the end of that year. The department remains on course to achieve its target of 50% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030.

A comprehensive programme of energy actions and behavioural changes continues to encourage energy efficiency in the department. Major improvements include the installation of sub-metering and building management systems at departmental sites and the continued upgrade of lighting to more energy-efficient alternatives such as LED.

Records have included the figures for the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, which was officially formed on 2 August 2020, and is largely co-located with this department since 2020. The total expenditure for energy for the department in 2022 was €541,980.20.

Department of Education Energy Consumption (TPER)*								
Category	2009 (kWh)	2016 (kWh)	2017 (kWh)	2018 (kWh)	2019 (kWh)	2020 (kWh)	2021 (kWh)	2022 (kWh)
Electricity	8,267,804	5,779,930	5,289,263	5,621,223	5,380,170	4,628,557	4,381,782	4,649,104
Thermal	2,567,208	2,539,568	2,589,394	2,938,402	3,138,052	2,647,680	2,621,109	2,308,280
Total	10,835,012	8,319,498	7,878,657	8,559,625	8,518,222	7,276,236	7,002,890	6,957,384

* 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.

Sustainable development goals

The department remains continually committed to the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with significant progress being made to advance key priorities and actions. The department works to ensure we support our colleagues in the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications to ensure we play our part in delivering this plan.

In keeping with Ireland's "whole-of-Government" approach to achieving the sustainable development goals, each Minister is responsible for implementing relevant individual SDG targets. The department has responsibility for leading implementation of the following as part of SDG 4, Quality Education - to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all:

1. The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

The department published its second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, ESD to 2030.

The strategy , is co-sponsored by the Department of Education, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

The strategy sets out five key priority areas:
1) Advancing policy
2) Transforming learning environments
3) Building capacities of educators
4) Empowering and mobilising young people
5) Accelerating local level actions

The strategy aims to transform educational spaces into places and spaces for sustainability. It will seek to embed ESD across teaching and learning, research and operational environments, and promote diverse and inclusive learning environments for all.
ESD to 2030 is a key strategy to deliver on SDG 4.7, which aims to ensure that "all learners have the knowledge and skills required to promote sustainable development" and can be accessed here: gov.ie - National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland (www.gov.ie). ESD to 2030 also supports delivery of SDG targets 12.8 and 13.3.
In 2022, Minister Foley announced a new Leaving Certificate curricular subject "Climate Action and Sustainable Development" which will be available in schools from September 2024.

1. DEIS

DEIS – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools is the main policy initiative of the department to address educational disadvantage at school level, and contributes to delivery of SDG 4.5 which aims to "eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations". The DEIS programme provides for smaller class sizes and other supports including additional teaching

posts, school completion programmes, home school community liaison coordinators, DEIS grants, enhanced book grants, curriculum supports and priority access to CPD for teachers and school leaders.

A refined DEIS identification model was published increasing access to the DEIS scheme to an additional 322 schools in March 2022. The programme now includes over 1,200 schools and supports approximately 240,000 students. This means one in four of all students are now supported in the programme.

The DEIS identification process is based on the principle of concentrated disadvantage and the proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds within a school. The DEIS identification model aimed to identify those schools with the highest levels of concentrated disadvantage or the highest proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds within a school using the school's enrolment data and national census data as represented by the Pobal HP Deprivation index which is publicly available.

While the DEIS programme supports those schools with the highest levels of concentrated educational disadvantage, we also recognise that there are students at risk of educational disadvantage in all schools. The department has secured funding to provide measures to support children in this regard since June 2020, and over the past three budgets. The department has also further improved the staffing schedule for all primary schools to 23:1, the lowest it has ever been.

2. STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026

The STEM education policy contributes to delivery of SDG target, 4.5 aiming to eliminate gender disparities in education.

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 by the department in November 2020. The report sets out what is known about critical barriers to girls' participation in STEM education and STEM learning, while also highlighting effective interventions to increase participation of girls in STEM.

A set of recommendations to guide national actions in relation to gender balance in STEM has been developed and will be published shortly. Development of the second STEM Education Implementation Plan 2022-2026 is underway to include public consultation and targeted education stakeholder/partners consultations. The outputs from the consultation process along with the gender balance in STEM recommendations and STEM and the arts recommendations that are being developed at present will inform the new implementation plan.

Publications related to STEM education

- Recommendations on Gender Balance in STEM Education

3. Literacy and Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy

The Literacy and Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2011-2020 has expired and development of a follow on strategy is underway. The next iteration of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy will deliver on SDG target 4.6, which aims to ensure that "all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women achieve literacy and numeracy". Research was commissioned by the department to include the identification of achievements, gaps, best practice and possible areas for action for the new 10-year strategy. Feedback from a stakeholder engagement and public consultation will also feed into the department's development of the new strategy.

4. Review of the School Transport Scheme

The department commenced a review of the School Transport Scheme in February 2021, which continued into 2022. The review is examining the current scheme, its broader effectiveness and sustainability, with a view to ensuring that it serves students and their families appropriately. The review includes an examination of options to reduce car journeys, commitments in respect of climate action and the potential of the School Transport Scheme to support broader government aims of promoting sustainability in transport.

5. School Energy Retrofit Pathfinder Programme

The Department of Education and the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications established a jointly funded pathfinder programme, which is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and the planning and building unit in the Department of Education with delivery support from Limerick Clare ETB.

This programme continues to assist the department to explore options and test various solutions for decarbonised energy efficiency solutions in our broad range of school building types.

It is facilitating research on a range of typical retrofit options, which will have been tried and tested. Each school undergoes a comprehensive assessment to ensure that the measures are suitable for that school and will deliver value to both the school and learnings for the national retrofit programme.

The pathfinder programme has retrofitted 48 schools across Ireland to date with work on an additional 16 schools currently at various stages of progress.

Appendix B – 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 non-commercial state bodies under the aegis of this department including contact details and board details can be found on our agencies webpage: https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/341d4e-bodies-under-the-aegis-of-the-department-of-education-and-skills/?referrer=http://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Agencies/

Appendix C – Direct links to further information on gov.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