

Department of Education and Skills



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O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S

Organisation and Current Issues

2016

**A Brief for the Information of the Minister for
Education and Skills**

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Introduction

The purpose of this brief is to set out the organisational structure of the Department of Education and Skills and to outline the principal issues arising in each of the Department's operational areas. The arrangement of chapters in the document, therefore, reflects the divisional structure of the Department and the constituent individual areas of responsibility within each division.

There is an overview note at the beginning of the brief that outlines some of the key current issues. The main brief sets out more detailed briefing by Management Board member. A separate brief prepared by the Department of the Taoiseach on responsibilities as a member of Government and related issues is provided separately.

Functions of the Department

In accordance with Section 4 of the Public Service Management Act 1997, Departments are required, every three years, or within six months of the appointment of a new Minister to prepare and publish a Statement of Strategy. The current Statement of Strategy covers the period 2015-2017.

The Mission Statement of the Department is as follows:

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

High Level Goals

The following are the four high level goals which will deliver on the Department’s mission statement.

- Learning for Life
We want an education and training system that provides all learners with the knowledge and skills they need to participate fully in society and the economy
- Improving Quality and Accountability
We want to provide for the delivery of a high quality education and training experience for everyone and improve accountability for educational outcomes across the system
- Supporting Inclusion and Diversity
We want an education and training system that welcomes and meaningfully includes learners with disabilities and special educational needs, learners from disadvantaged communities/backgrounds, and those with language, cultural and social differences
- Building the right systems and infrastructure
We want a modern, flexible education and training system which makes the best use of available resources

In developing the Strategy Statement, the Department took a “whole-of-system” approach to strategic planning and implementation across the Education and Training sector. This “joined up” approach enables us to plan and implement an extensive programme of reform and to balance this with the demands of supporting and sustaining the operation of our education and training system.

There are a range of bodies under the Department's aegis which support the delivery of our strategies. Each of these bodies is described in the material provided for the relevant line section to which they report. An index of the main bodies is included in Appendix 1.

Education partner organisations representing school management, unions, parents, principals and others play a strong role in operational issues and policy making processes. Under education legislation there is a formal consultative role for education partners and a legal requirement for agreement in some cases. Management bodies and unions have a formal role in industrial relations negotiations. Education partner organizations are represented on many bodies and groups. A brief description of the main education partners is attached at Appendix 2.

Management Structure

Under the Ministers and Secretaries Act, 1924 and the Public Service Management Act, 1997, the Secretary General of the Department has overall responsibility for managing the Department, implementing and monitoring policy and delivering outputs. He provides policy advice to the Minister and the Government and may assign specific powers, duties and functions to other officers in the Department, as well as managing matters relating to appointments, performance, discipline and dismissal of civil servants below the grade of Principal Officer or its equivalent.

In addition, the Secretary General is answerable to relevant Oireachtas Committees, including the Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection and, as the Accounting Officer for the Department, the Committee of Public Accounts.

Management Board

In managing the Department, the Secretary General is assisted by the Management Board, which includes the Department's Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretaries and the Chief Inspector. The Management Board, which is chaired by the Secretary General, meets weekly (Tuesday mornings). The Management Board also meets regularly with the Minister and Minister of State.

The remit of the Management Board is to set the strategic direction for the Department, including its mission, vision, values and strategic objectives, and to oversee the implementation of the Department's strategic and business plans, including its contribution to the Programme for Government, the Budget, the Education Reform Programme and Public Service Agreements.

The Management Board operates to the principle of shared participation and responsibility for the operational success of the Department in supporting the Secretary General in the fulfilment of his statutory role. Each Management Board member contributes to the management of the Department as a whole, as well as their own corporate and divisional level responsibilities.

An overview of the individual divisional level responsibilities of each Management Board member is shown in the Organisation Chart in the next section, with details given in the relevant sections of this brief.

A record of the meetings of the Management Board are published on the Department's intranet on a regular basis.

Education and Training Reform Board

The Management Board fulfils the functions of the Education and Training Reform Board, which oversees the Integrated Reform Delivery Plan, which includes Shared Services Plans, for the Education and Training sector. Detail on the reform programme is provided in the section on Public Service Reform in this brief.

Committees

In addition to its weekly meetings in plenary format, the Management Board has established a number of issue-specific committees. These committees can include other officials or external members. A short outline on these is given below. More detailed briefing on the committees is given in the relevant part of this briefing document.

Mandatory Committees

These deal with issues of financial probity and good governance and are standing committees required to be established by all Management Boards.

Audit Committee

This committee, which has an external chair, provides independent advice to the Secretary General, in his role as Accounting Officer, in relation to internal control, the risk management environment and audit matters. It also oversees the work of the Internal Audit Unit.

Procurement Review Committee

This committee reviews the operation of procurement by the Department and its compliance with the public procurement regime. It oversees the development and promotion of best practice in procurement.

Internal Governance Committees

These are standing committees which oversee ongoing functions of the Department.

Committee on Management and Information Systems (MIOS)

This committee considers all potential projects for inclusion in the IT Unit's annual business plan, following which recommendations are made to the Management Board. The Committee also monitors progress on projects and ensures that the IT Unit's work programme is aligned to the business objectives of the Department.

Committee on Data, Evaluation and Research (DERMS)

This committee directs and oversees the Department's corporate knowledge management, including the development of a Data Strategy, data management, research and evaluation in the Department.

Committee on Governance and Accountability

This committee was established to develop and enhance the Department's oversight role in relation to the governance of agencies under its aegis.

Policy-specific Cross-Divisional Committees

These committees are established on an ad-hoc time-limited basis to examine particular issues and make proposals to the Management Board. At present, the following groups have all been

established and are working on proposals on various topics, which will be considered by the Management Board in due course.

Cross Divisional Group on Gaeilge

This committee was established to oversee the Department's development of policy and implementation of actions relating to the Irish language in the context of the Government's 20 year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030.

Cross Divisional Group on Social Inclusion

This group is considering how to improve policy cohesion across the full range of current policy interventions on social inclusion and align social inclusion policy in the sector to support learners more effectively and improve the targeting of scarce resources.

Cross Divisional Group on Well Being

This group is considering the coordination of issues related to supporting the promotion of well being and mental health in order to provide coherent and consistent advice in this area.

Cross-Divisional Group on School Leadership

This group is addressing the issue of school leadership with a view to increasing the coherence and consistency of support to school leaders and to identify opportunities to exploit and deploy current capacity more effectively and generate synergies.

Cross Divisional Group on Quality, Evaluation and Assessment

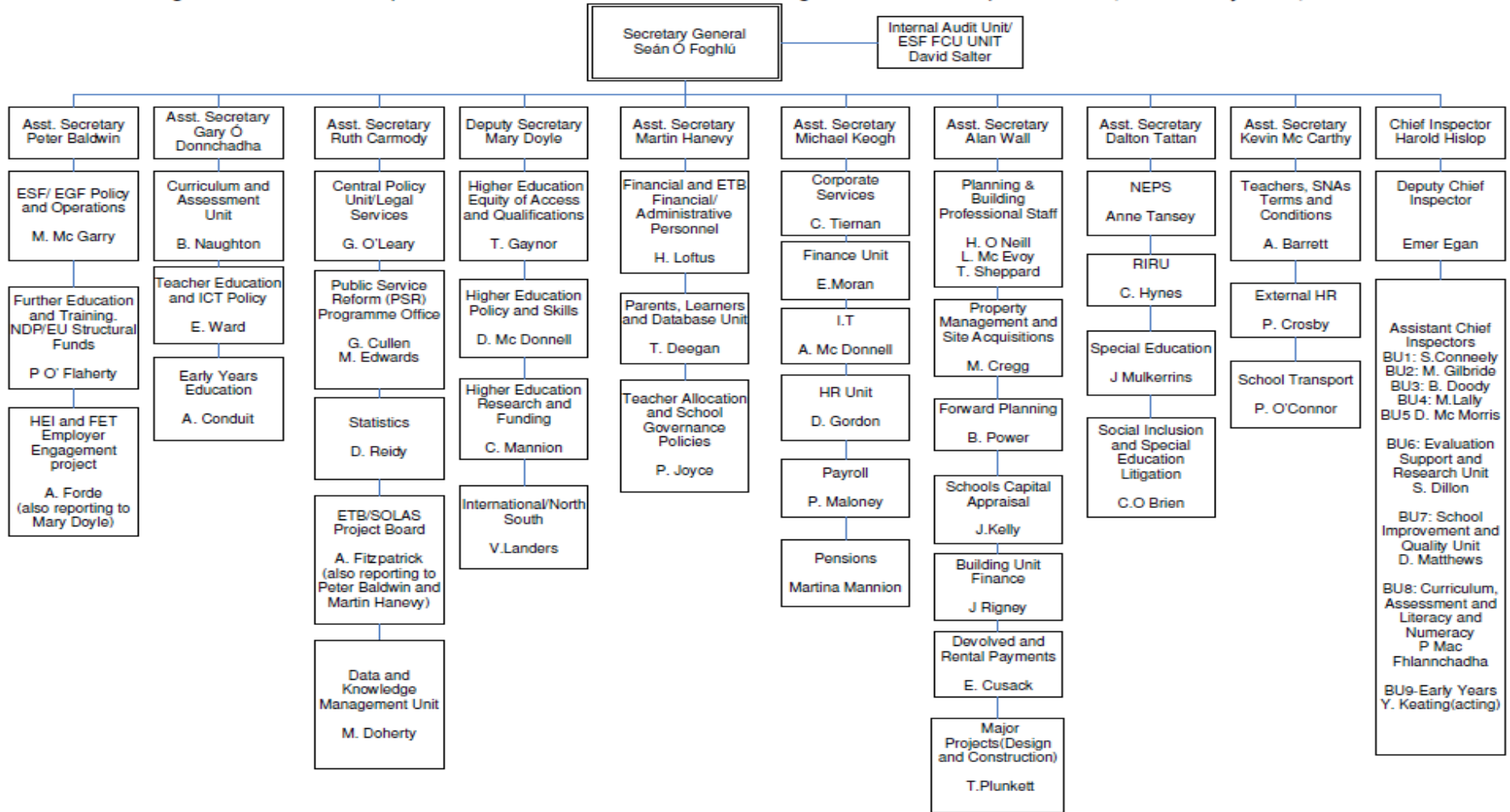
This group is considering the development of strategic/high level policy proposals regarding quality assurance, evaluation and assessment in the education system.

Cross Divisional Group on Appropriate and Effective School Governance

This group is reviewing the existing governance arrangements of schools and will recommend desirable changes, including measures relating to oversight and compliance, having regard to the purposes and objectives of effective governance.

Organisation Chart

Organisation Chart – Department of Education and Skills – Management Board Responsibilities (21st January 2016)



Financial Provision 2016

1. Overall Gross Expenditure for Vote 26 – Education and Skills

Expenditure for Education services is provided for under Vote 26: Education and Skills in the 2016 Revised Estimates for Public Services.

Gross Voted expenditure for 2016 is €8.71 billion of which €8.11 billion (93%) is current and €0.60 billion (7%) is capital. In addition, under the non-Voted National Training Fund, there is an expenditure allocation for 2016 of €362 million. Gross current expenditure on education in 2016 equates to 17% of overall Government current expenditure (DES is the third highest-spending Department in terms of current expenditure, after Social Protection (38%) and Health (26%)), while capital expenditure on education equates to 15% of overall Government capital expenditure.

Provisional outturn figures for 2015 show Gross Voted Expenditure of €8.73 billion of which €8.10 billion (93%) was current and €0.63 billion (7%) was capital. These figures for 2015 are provisional pending audit by the Comptroller & Auditor General.

	<u>€ billion</u>		
	2015 (Prov. Outturn)		2016 REV
Current Expenditure	€8.10	(93%)	€8.11 (93%)
Capital Expenditure	<u>€0.63</u>	(7%)	<u>€0.60</u> (7%)
Total	€8.73		€8.71

Additionally, the provisional 2015 outturn for expenditure under the National Training Fund was €334 million.

It should be noted that the 2015 Provisional Outturn included increased superannuation expenditure as well as the provision for an extra payday in 2015 compared to 2016.

2. Gross Current Expenditure

The 2016 Gross Current Allocation of €8.11 billion is broken down between Pay - €5.35 billion (66%), Superannuation €1.16 billion (14%) and Non-Pay expenditure of €1.60 billion (20%).

Of the €8.1 billion spent on Current Expenditure in 2015, Pay expenditure accounted for €5.26 billion (65%), Superannuation €1.21 billion (15%) and Non-Pay expenditure for €1.63 billion (20%).

	2015		2016	
Pay	€5.26	65%	€5.35	66%

Superannuation	€1.21	15%	€1.16	14%
Non-Pay	<u>€1.63</u>	20%	<u>€1.60</u>	20%
Total	€8.10		€8.11	

Pay Expenditure

The bulk of the pay expenditure goes on salary payments to teaching and non-teaching staff (mainly SNAs) at First and Second Level which accounts for €4.425 billion or 83% of the total Pay Expenditure in 2016. (It does not, however, include the pay costs of certain non-teaching staff in schools, viz. caretakers and secretaries, who are funded out of grant payments made to these schools).

Salary costs at Third level, mainly Universities and Institutes of Technology accounts for €683m or nearly 13% in 2016. €75m or just over 1% has been provided in 2016 to cover the salary costs of Departmental staff including the Inspectorate, NEPS Psychologists and General Administration staff.

Pay Expenditure

	2015 (Prov. Outturn)	2016 REV
First & Second Level Teachers' Pay	€3,821m	€3.892m
First & Second Level Non-teaching (incl SNAs, ETBs etc.)	€516m	€533m
Third-Level	€679m	€683m
Department Staff (incl NEPs)	€72m	€75m
State Examinations Commission	€44m	€45m
Skills Development	€112m	€114m
Other (Redress, Sp. Ed Council, NCCA, etc)	<u>€12m</u>	<u>€12m</u>
Total	€5,256m	€5,354m

Pay expenditure of €5.35 bn. in 2016 will cover the cost of some 100,800 posts (whole time equivalent) in the Education Sector (end 2015 figure was 98,354 (all end 2015 figures are provisional)). This represents about one-third of overall public sector employment and includes approximately 35,800 Primary Teachers (34,700 at end-2015), 30,200 Post-Primary teachers (28,965 at end-2015).

In addition, the pay allocation will also provide for some 2,007 civil and public service posts in other education bodies and agencies (1,913 at end 2015).

Increasing numbers of pupils in schools will mean that teacher pay expenditure will continue to increase until at least 2022, which is the projected combined peak year for pupil numbers attending primary and post-primary level. Upward pressure on pay is also exerted by numbers of SNAs and Resource Teachers (RTs) in schools, which are impacted by both demographic increases and other factors such as increased assessments of SNA and RT needs. (Voted expenditure of €1.45bn on special needs accounts for approximately 18% of overall current expenditure on the Education Vote).

Superannuation Expenditure

Superannuation expenditure of some €1.16 billion will provide for the Superannuation lump sums and on-going pension costs of approximately 45,380 pensioners in 2016 including almost 1,265 new retirements (approx. 2,300 in 2015). Numbers of pensioners and associated expenditure are projected to continue to increase for the foreseeable future.

Non-Pay Expenditure

Non-Pay expenditure mainly includes grants for the running costs of Schools, Universities, Institutes of Technology (IOTs), Education Trainings Boards (ETBs), Colleges of Education and various other bodies. It also includes certain Social Inclusion and Special Education grants as well as grants in respect of Student Support and School Transport.

Non-Pay Expenditure

2016

2015

School Grants (Pr/Sec Capitation, ETBs + C/C schools N/P) *	€390m	€403m
Other Grants & Services (Social Inclusion, Spec Needs etc)	€23m	€23m
Third level student grants	€411m	€403m
Universities/IOTs	€271m	€274m
School Transport	€173m	€175m
Skills Development	€178m	€186m
Redress/Child Abuse	€13m	€3m
Other third level institutions	€19m	€19m
School Accommodation Rental	€18m	€19m
Teacher In-Career Development	€23m	€28m
Administrative Budget (incl NEPS)	€13m	€12m
EU International	€5m	€5m
Schools ICT Current	€13m	€17m
Other (SEC, QQI, NCCA etc)	€38m	€36m
Public Private Partnerships **	€49m	N/A
Total	€1,637m	€1,603m

* Some of these grants may in fact be used to employ staff, e.g. caretakers/secretaries.

** PPP Unitary Payments (considered Capital Expenditure from 1/1/16)

3. Capital Expenditure

Estimated Gross Capital Expenditure in 2016 is €595 million. First and Second level Schools Capital accounts for almost 72% of this expenditure. The provisional outturn for 2015 was €625 million, with capital expenditure on First and Second-level Schools accounting for almost 81% of this total.

The following Table compares estimated 2016 Expenditure with the Provisional Outturn for 2015 under the following sub-programmes:

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
First & Second Level Schools	€506.5m	€427.0m
Higher Education Sector	€52.6m	€21.5m
Higher Education Research	€37.6m	€37.6m
Public Private Partnerships *	€17.7m	€93.3m
Reform Agenda	€0.1m	€4.0m
SOLAS Capital	€3.0m	€3.0m
Schools ICT	€0.7m	€1.0m
Department's IT Systems	€0.9m	€1.8m
Educational Disadvantage (Dormant Accts)	€0.0m	€0.1m
Book Rental Scheme	€5.5m	€5.0m
Memorial for Victims of Institutional Abuse	€0.0m	€0.5m
Total	€624.6m	€594.8m

The €595 million capital expenditure allocation for 2016 has four main components. The school sector has an allocation of €427m while €93m will be expended on PPP projects (mainly on unitary charges arising from completed PPP projects). Over €37m is allocated to Higher Education Research Activities while €21.5m is assigned to project delivery in the Higher Education sector. The balance of the capital allocation is assigned to smaller programmes.

Within the school sector allocation the concentration of expenditure will be on the delivery of large scale projects and the 'Additional Accommodation Scheme' to ensure that there are sufficient school places to meet continuing demographic increases.

Between 45 and 50 large scale projects (new schools and large scale extensions) are expected to be completed in 2016 and these together with completions on the 'Additional Accommodation Scheme' are expected to provide up to 20,000 additional permanent school places.

Legislative Programme

The Department is engaging in a programme of important legislative reform. Over the last five years, the following legislation has been enacted:

- Teaching Council (Amendment) Act 2015
- Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2015
- Further Education and Training Act, 2013
- Education and Training Boards Act, 2013
- Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Act, 2012
- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
- Education (Amendment) Act, 2012
- Residential Institutions Redress (Amendment) Act, 2011

There are two Bills which had been published but had not completed their passage through the Oireachtas before the dissolution of the Dáil in February.

Education (Admission to Schools) Bill - The objective of the Bill is to ensure that the processes for enrolling students by schools are more open, equitable and consistent. The Bill was published on 8 April 2015. It was introduced in the Dáil and circulated to members (First Stage). A date for second stage was never finalised.

Technological Universities Bill - The purpose of the Bill is to provide for the establishment of Technological Universities and the amendment of the IOT/DIT and HEA Acts. The bill passed Third Stage in the Dáil on 14 January 2016. Report Stage commenced at the end of January but had not been completed when the Dáil was dissolved.

Drafting is under way on a further two Bills.

Universities (Amendment) Bill - The main purpose of this Bill is to allow the Minister for Education and Skills to give a direction to a university requiring it to comply with policy decisions made by the Government relating to the remuneration or numbers of public servants employed in that university. The OPC is well advanced on drafting the text of the Bill and a final draft is awaited.

Retention of Certain Records Bill – The Bill is to allow for the retention of the records of the Commission into Child Abuse, the Redress Board and the Residential Institutions Review Committee in the National Archives and sealed for a period of at least 75 years. The Bill has been approved by Government for drafting.

Work is under way in the Department on the preparation of general schemes for two further pieces of legislation.

Higher Education Authority Bill – The purpose of the Bill is to replace the HEA Act 1971 and amend other relevant legislation. Work on the general scheme is under way

Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill – The purpose of the Bill is to amend the 2012 Act to address some issues that have arisen regarding the scope of QQI's responsibilities in relation to recognition of awards and regulation of private and voluntary providers; to ensure adequate protection of enrolled learners where providers discontinue a programme; and to give greater authority to Institutes of Technology to award Level 9 qualifications. Work on the general scheme is under way.

**SCHOOLS DIVISION:
MARTIN HANEVY,
ASSISTANT
SECRETARY**

Structure of Division

For decades the Department was structured by sector (separate primary and post-primary divisions each under an Assistant Secretary) in its dealings with the school system.

The creation of a Schools Division structured on a functional basis rather than by sector was completed at the beginning of this decade.

The Schools Division is sub-divided into three areas each under the management of a principal officer. Two of these areas are focused on schools and providers; the third is focused on parents and learners.

The Schools Division by virtue of its role in relation to resource allocation and governance also has a significant engagement with other divisions. Furthermore it has an involvement in the majority of schools related crosscutting issues and with policy development/implementation that is not within its direct remit

A: Teacher Allocations and School Governance Policies – Paraic Joyce

B: Schools Financial and ETB Financial & Administrative Personnel
Hubert Loftus

C: Parents, Learners and Database Section – Tom Deegan

The Division is located in the Department's offices in Athlone.

Teacher Allocations and School Governance Policies

1. Unit / Section Overview

Allocation of teaching posts to schools and ETB's in accordance with published criteria.
Provision of guidance, information and direction to schools on governance issues.

Staff Numbers by Grade

Grade	Teacher Allocations	School Governance	Total
Assistant Principal	1	2	3
HEO	4	2	6
EO	15	2.3	17.3
SO	3	0	3
CO	9	2	11
Total	32	8.3	40.3

Summary Note on Teacher Allocations

Teacher numbers are increasing year on year due to increased enrolments. There are circa 34,700 teaching posts at primary level. About two-thirds of these posts are classroom teaching posts and the remainder work in supporting roles, learning/language support, resource (special needs), administrative school principals etc. There are over 28,960 teaching posts at post primary level.

Standard published criteria is used for the annual allocation and redeployment of teaching posts to schools – mainly based on pupil enrolments. Increasing demographics at primary level are expected to peak in 2018 and at post primary level in 2025. The staffing arrangements also include an appeals mechanism for schools to submit an appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board

The redeployment of all surplus permanent teachers is key to the Department's ability to manage within its payroll budget and ceiling on teacher numbers.

Summary note on School Governance Section

The section's role are to provide guidance, information and direction to schools on governance issues. Boards of Management have the statutory responsibility for managing schools. The members of Boards give their time on a voluntary basis. Boards are also supported in their work through the various management bodies which receive funding from the Department. The section has significant engagement with the education partners on the implementation of new initiatives and developments, most recently in relation to the publication of the new Governance Manual for primary schools and is the point of contact for the partners on any day-to-day issues that arise in schools.

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Service	Outturn 2009	Outturn 2010	Provision 2011

[Add in extra lines in table if required]

3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.1 ISSUE: Adjustment to the staffing allocations at primary and post primary level for the 2016/17 school year.

BACKGROUND:

Budget 2015 provided for some 2,260 additional teaching posts for primary and post primary schools for the 2016/17 school year.

An additional 300 teachers to second level schools to bring staffing allocation from 19:1 to 18.7:1. This improvement of 0.3 in the pupil teacher ratio will allow each school to determine how best to allocate this additional resource to meet the guidance needs of the school. The improvement of 0.3 position will provide for a new staffing allocation of 17.95:1 for DEIS schools.

At primary level there will be a one point improvement to the primary staffing schedule to be implemented for the 2016/17 school year. This will see the primary staffing schedule operate on the basis of a general average of 1 classroom teacher for every 27 pupils. Lower thresholds apply for DEIS Band 1 schools. The estimated additional post requirement in 2016 for this improvement is 300 posts.

CURRENT POSITION:

The staffing schedule at primary level currently operates on the basis of 1 classroom teacher for an average of every 28 pupils. More favorable ratios operate in DEIS Band 1 schools.

At post primary level teaching posts are allocated on the basis of 19:1 with a ratio of 18.25 applying in DEIS schools and 23.1 in fee charging schools.

NEXT STEPS:

The staffing allocation and redeployment process for the 2016/17 school has commenced.

3.2 ISSUE: Redeployment

Background:

The challenge is to conclude the redeployment process each year before the schools close for the summer holidays/state exams.

The Haddington Road Agreement provided for the establishment of an Expert Group to consider and report (Ward Report) on the level of fixed-term and part-time employment in teaching, having regard to the importance for teachers of employment stability and security and taking account of system and school needs and Teacher Council registration requirements. The report recommended a suite of measures which allow fixed-term teachers to acquire permanent positions more easily and quickly and enable part-time teachers to gain additional hours.

CURRENT POSITION:

Post Primary - There are three redeployment schemes at post-primary level. 1) School Closure Redeployment Scheme to manage the compulsory redeployment of teachers in the event of a school closure. 2) Surplus Redeployment Scheme to manage the compulsory redeployment of surplus permanent teachers from a school that has more teachers than it is entitled to under its staffing allocation. 3) A pilot voluntary redeployment scheme to aid the process of redeploying all the surplus permanent teachers. Teachers that are facilitated with transfers to another location can open up a vacancy that can be filled by a surplus teacher.

NEXT STEPS:

Arising from the Ward Report there will effectively be two more redeployment schemes to deal with from 2016 onwards:

- a) The redeployment of teachers arising from subject mismatch i.e., the qualifications of the teachers no longer match the subject needs of the school
- b) Manage the redeployment of teachers arising from the inclusion of career break and secondment service in the eligibility criteria for granting a contract of indefinite duration (CID).

CURRENT POSITION:

Primary – There are two aspects to the redeployment arrangements at primary level. 1) Redeployment of surplus permanent teachers, and 2) Manage supplementary redeployment panels for the purpose of giving priority to temporary teachers with a number of years' service when filling permanent vacancies that are not required for the redeployment of surplus teachers.

NEXT STEPS:

Similar to post-primary, the priority for the Department for now is the expansion of the redeployment arrangements to cater for redeployment arising from the implementation of the Ward Report.

3.3 ISSUE: Moratorium on Posts of Responsibility.

BACKGROUND:

The Moratorium on the filling of middle management posts has been in place since 2009. There are limited alleviation arrangements in place for schools that are acutely affected by the impact of the moratorium at Assistant Principal level. These arrangements are mainly focused at post-primary level. Posts of Principal and Deputy Principal are exempt from the moratorium

CURRENT POSITION:

As part of the 2,260 additional teaching posts announced in Budget 2016, 250 of these posts are being provided to second level schools to enable Deputy Principals to be freed up from teaching time and be more fully available to assist the school principal with the leadership of the school.

With effect from 01 September 2016 second level schools with over 400 students will receive an allocation similar to schools that have over 500 pupils where the Deputy Principal is fully freed up. A pro rata allocation of additional hours to support school leadership will also be provided to the schools with 400 or fewer students enrolled.

At primary level, Budget 2016 provides for additional release days for teaching principals to range between 15 and 25 days depending on the size of the school and effective from the start of the 2016/17 school year.

NEXT STEPS:

The revised arrangements set out above for the 2016/17 school year have to be implemented.

3.4 ISSUE: Child protection in schools

BACKGROUND: A considerable program of change is underway at present in relation to what may be described as the national child protection architecture. School Governance represents the Department on the Inter-Departmental Implementation Group on Children First which was established to review child protection obligations and compliance across Government Department. School Governance Section also represents the Department on the Sub Committee of the group to review and report on the extent to which issues identified in the Louise O’Keeffe judgement have been addressed since 1973.

Current Position: The current child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools published in September 2011 set out very clear guidelines for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse. There is a requirement for each school to designate a senior member of staff as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) to act as a liaison person with Tusla for reporting child protection concerns. The 2011 procedures also introduced additional oversight arrangements to strengthen implementation and made the Stay Safe Programme a mandatory requirement for all primary schools.

Next steps

The recently enacted Children First Act 2015 will, when commenced, put elements of the Children First National Guidelines on a statutory footing. Once updated national Children First guidelines and new guidance in relation to Child Safeguarding Statements are made available to this Department, School Governance Section will, in consultation with the relevant education stakeholders, initiate a review and updating of the existing Child Protection Procedures for schools. Training may also be required to be developed for all teachers as 'mandated' persons under the act.

Following publication of the new schools procedures and prior to the Act's requirements becoming operational, schools will also require time to adapt their existing policies and procedures at local school level to meet the new requirements.

3.5 Issue: Forthcoming statutory Garda vetting arrangements

Background:

Vetting arrangements were introduced on a non-statutory basis in September 2006 in line with the setting up of the Garda Central Vetting Unit. In relation to teachers, the initial priority was the vetting of newly qualified teachers and those that have been out of schools for 3 years or more.

The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 (the Vetting Act) was commenced on **29th April 2016**. It has put in place statutory vetting requirements for persons working with children and vulnerable adults including those working in schools. The statutory vetting arrangements under the Vetting Act, in addition to the existing check for criminal offences, also include a check for any relevant "soft information". This is an important new aspect of the vetting arrangements. Soft information" referred to as "specified information" in the Vetting Act, is information other than criminal convictions held by the Garda Síochána that leads to a bona-fide belief that a person poses a threat to children or vulnerable persons.

Current Position:

School Governance Section has published a circular for schools outlining the new statutory vetting requirements. The circular was drafted in consultation with the relevant education stakeholders and sets out the new vetting requirements in respect of teaching and non-teaching staff and others involved with working with children in schools such as volunteers, sports coaches etc.

The Teaching Council Amendment Act 2015 was enacted in July 2015. The Act is designed, inter alia, to underpin the central role of the Teaching Council in the vetting of teachers and will operate in tandem with the Vetting Act. A number of Garda vetting related provisions in the 2015 Act were therefore commenced by the Minister for Education and Skills from the 29th April.

Since 2006, just under 58,000 of the almost 92,000 registered teachers have been subjected to Garda vetting under the non-statutory arrangements either at point of first registration or where a teacher moved employment within the school system. The circa 34,000 teachers on the register that have not been vetted under the non-statutory arrangements are typically

permanent teachers who are in the same school since the non-statutory vetting arrangements were introduced in 2006 and have not moved to a new appointment in a different school. The cohort of un-vetted teachers on the register also includes teachers who are retired or have left employment but have continued their registration with the Teaching Council.

Under the 2015 Act, all 91,000 teachers on the register will be subjected to retrospective vetting in the context of renewal of registration with those that were never vetted being the first cohort to be vetted under the statutory arrangements. The 2015 Act also ensures that there will be a robust statutory basis for the Teaching Council to consider, in the case of any teacher who is the subject of an adverse vetting disclosure whether or not the teacher's registration should be renewed.

Next steps

The immediate priority in respect of the commencement of statutory vetting has been to ensure that the necessary legislative and operational arrangements are in place so that the vetting arrangements for registered teachers seeking new employment operate smoothly and in accordance with the legislation. The renewal of registration provisions in the 2015 Act which allow for retrospective vetting of those who have not yet been vetted have therefore not yet been commenced. It is however intended that retrospective vetting will be commenced from the beginning of the new school year.

3.6 ISSUE: School's Admissions Policy

background:

The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill, was published in April 2015.

The Bill did not propose changes to the existing equality legislation which allows oversubscribed denominational schools to prioritise applicants of the school's denomination over other applicants.

Current Position:

Due to time constraints and the complex nature of the legislation the Bill did not proceed through the Houses of the Oireachtas.

3.7 School Improvement Group

Background:

The Department established a School Improvement Group (SIG) is comprised of members of the Inspectorate and officials from the Department's Schools Division. The SIG coordinates the Department's actions in following up on the recommendations made in inspection reports in cases where serious weaknesses are identified.

While responsibility for the implementation of improvements suggested in inspection reports lies with the board of management, principal and staff of each school, in a very small number

of cases the weaknesses in the school are so significant that intervention is required to assist the school improvement agenda.

Current Position:

In the period 2008 to date, the School Improvement Group engaged with circa 81 schools where serious weaknesses came to light.

Next steps

The School Improvement Group will continue to meet on a regular basis and engage with schools with significant weaknesses when necessary.

3.8 Recent changeover of Boards of Management at primary level

Background:

The four year term of office for the current boards of management of all primary schools came to an end in November 2015. This is a significant event across the primary school system as it involves a turnover among the membership of the boards involving over 25,000 people.

A working group comprising the Department and the relevant partners at primary level undertakes a review of the rules and procedures for the operation of Boards of Management at primary level every four years in advance of new Boards taking up office. Following the last review, a new Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015-2019 was published by the Department in September 2015. A new development of note is provision to allow schools to operate a “shared governance arrangement” on a voluntary and pilot basis

Current Position:

Boards of Management have been established in primary schools as of 1st Dec 2015,

Next Steps

Governance Issues that may arise from time to time in relation to the functioning of Board of Managements to be reviewed on an ongoing basis

3.9: Review of Deed of Trust for Community Schools

Background:

The Deed of Trust is the legal instrument which governs the establishment and management of a Community School. The Deed of Trust of Community Schools provides that trusteeship/patronage of such schools is exercised by a religious order(s) and/or the local Bishop and the local Vocational Education Committee. While the original Deed dating back to the 1970s provides for the sharing of patronage with other denominations in all instances the joint patronage is with Catholic entities

Current Position:

The Department convened a working group to consider changes that might be required to the Deed of Trust. The purpose of the working party is to revisit the Deed and to proof it inter

alia against current employment law, the Education Act 1998, current property arrangement (e.g. PPP) and the efficient use of resources.

The working group comprises nominees of ETBI and ACCS and the relevant church interests.

Next steps

It is hoped to bring finality to the work on revising the Deed this year.

ETB Financial and Administrative Personnel

1. Unit / Section Overview

Schools Financial and ETB Financial & Administrative Personnel Section is comprised of two distinct and separate sections: (i) Schools Financial and (ii) ETB Financial & Administrative Personnel.

ETB Financial & Administrative Personnel Section is responsible for:

- Department oversight of ETB governance matters.
- the determination, disbursement and monitoring of pay and non-pay grants to each of the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in respect of the range of school and non-school based services;
- the regulation of the appointment of and the application of the terms and conditions for administrative and maintenance staff in ETB schools and head offices;
- recoupment to the exchequer of the Pension Related Deduction for ETB employees;
- recoupment to PSSC (Payroll Shared Services Centre) of pensions and lump sums costs for retired ETB and Institute of Technology (IoT) staff;

As part of its work, ETB Financial & Administrative Personnel Section engages on a regular basis with Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). ETBI is the representative body for the ETB sector (a role formerly held by the IVEA). ETBI has a key role in supporting the work of the reform of the ETB sector and helping to ensure consistency of approach across the 16 ETBs.

Staffing (WTEs)

1 x APO

1x Professional Accountant

2 x HEO

2 x EO

1 x CO

2. Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2014 (€'000)	Outturn 2015 (€'000)	Provision 2016 (€'000)
ETB Pay	€659,748	€667,268	€694,805
ETB Non Pay	€61,200	€65,293	€61,335
ETB and IoT Superannuation	€240,313	€253,264	€237,516
ETB Pension Related Deduction	€47,836	€47,704	€39,570

3. Key priority issues

3.1 ISSUE: Staffing and funding issues in ETB sector

BACKGROUND:

While teaching posts in schools are protected, other staffing and funding constraints are having a significant impact on the ability of ETBs to adequately discharge their full range of functions.

In relation to staffing, ETB management are typically in a continual process of prioritising workloads in Head Offices in relation to day to day work and implementation of reform measures. The very limited alleviation in relation to school secretary/caretaker/cleaner posts has resulted in significant pressures at school level.

In relation to non-pay funding, in order to maintain service levels ETBs were given permission to spend up to the level of their 2012 allocation although the allocations from 2013 onwards were below that level. This led to funding deficits in non-pay funding which typically are managed through ETB cashflow and, if necessary, through the use of overdraft facilities. This is not sustainable over the longer term. Some initial steps were made in 2015 to address this issue but more remains to be done.

To address critical staffing needs in ETBs, a small number of appointments in the Finance and HR areas, mostly temporary in nature, were approved by the Department in late 2015.

The staffing and funding pressures are particularly acute for those ETBs that have experienced significant demographic growth.

CURRENT POSITION:

While current funding levels are starting to gradually improve, there is a historical gap to be addressed.

A key challenge in 2016 and beyond is to better support the ETB sector through the filling of critical vacancies and the strengthening of management teams. This will add to funding pressures and will be very difficult to achieve within current budgets – notwithstanding the slightly improved budget allocation for 2016.

The Department is in the process of finalising the new Delegated Sanction Agreement for the ETB sector, which will replace the moratorium and employment control framework system. However, it is important to note that this does not alleviate the staffing and funding pressures.

NEXT STEPS:

The Department will continue to engage with ETBI and the ETB sector in order to manage, as best as possible, the staffing and funding pressures.

Preparatory work is well advanced for a forthcoming recruitment competition for senior management posts in the ETB sector. This recruitment competition is being managed by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) and is currently scheduled by PAS to commence around the end of Quarter 1 2016 with appointments to ETBs due to be made later in 2016.

4. Other significant Issues

4.1 ISSUE: Reform of the ETB sector

BACKGROUND:

Through a series of decisions the Government decided to reduce 33 vocational education committees (VECs) to 16 new entities, to be known as education and training boards (ETBs) and to establish a new body to be known as SOLAS to replace FÁS with the new Education and Training boards taking over some functions previously carried out by FÁS in relation to the delivery of training.

The scale of change underway, and its multi-faceted character, gives rise to many challenges and has demanded a different way of working. In recognising the need for a sector-wide strategic approach, where there is close engagement with the education sector, the Department has established the ETB/SOLAS Programme Board which is chaired by the Secretary General and is composed of members of the Department's senior management

team and representatives from the sector. A Project Management Office (PMO) has also been established which reports to that Programme Board.

CURRENT POSITION:

The PMO has developed a Programme Plan for the current phase of its operations and implementation of this is well underway.

NEXT STEPS:

Additional information in respect of the ETB/SOLAS Programme Board and the PMO is detailed elsewhere in the brief.

4.2 Revised Code of Practice for the ETBs

The “Code of Practice for the Governance of VECs” which was in place in the sector since 2005 was replaced in March 2015 by the “Code of Practice for the Governance of Education and Training Boards” (*Circular 18/2015*). This Code clarifies the functions that are to be undertaken by ETB boards (i.e. the reserved functions as prescribed in the ETB Act 2013) and inter alia, sets out the charter for internal audit, the terms of reference of the Audit and Finance Committees, a Framework for a Code of Conduct and the reporting requirements of the Chairperson to the Department. Along with the Circular, guidelines were issued for the appointment of external members of audit and finance committees.

4.3 Audit arrangements in ETB sector

The ETB Internal Audit Unit is responsible for carrying out the internal audit function of the ETB sector. A steering committee is in place to oversee the work programme of the Unit. This steering committee comprises of representatives of the ETB sector, Department and relevant external persons. It is chaired by an external independent person.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) is responsible for auditing the accounts of the ETBs. Where the C&AG considers that it is warranted, he may produce a special report in accordance with Section 7 or Section 11 of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act.

The last such special report was done in February 2015 and related to internal controls in County Cork VEC. This report was laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas in April 2015 and was discussed at the Public Accounts Committee meeting on 9 July 2015.

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Name of Body:

Education and Training Boards.

There are 16 ETBs which are headquartered in the following locations:

- Cavan & Monaghan ETB – Monaghan.
- City of Dublin ETB - Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.
- Cork ETB - Cork.
- Donegal ETB - Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
- Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB - Tallaght, Dublin 24.
- Galway & Roscommon ETB - Athenry, Co Galway.
- Kerry ETB - Tralee, Co. Kerry.
- Kildare & Wicklow ETB - Naas, Co. Kildare.
- Kilkenny & Carlow ETB - Carlow.
- Laois & Offaly ETB - Portlaoise, Co. Laois.
- Limerick & Clare ETB - Dooradoyle Road, Co. Limerick.
- Longford & Westmeath ETB - Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.
- Louth & Meath ETB - Navan, Co. Meath
- Mayo Sligo & Leitrim ETB - Castlebar, Co. Mayo.
- Tipperary ETB - Nenagh, Co. Tipperary.
- Waterford & Wexford ETB - Ardcahan, Wexford.

The new boards of the 16 Education and Training Boards were established in late July 2014 under the provisions of the Education and Training Boards Act, 2013. In each ETB, 12 members are appointed by the relevant Local Authorities, 2 members are elected by staff of the ETB, 2 representatives of parents are nominated by the National Parents' Council (Post Primary) and the remaining 5 members are selected by the Board from among nominations received from bodies specified by the Minister.

Main responsibilities:

ETBs carry out their duties in relation to the provision of education in accordance with Education and Training Boards Act 2013 and more recently under the legislation that established SOLAS in relation to training.

They are responsible for the provision of a wide range of education services and, in addition to the full range of second-level courses, they are also the main provider of adult education and community education courses and all but five of the boards provide training directly through former FAS centres. Detailed briefing on the future role of SOLAS and the ETBs in relation to further education and training is contained in the section of this brief that covers those matters.

Staff numbers:

The approximate WTE staffing levels in the ETBs (*second level and PLC staff only, i.e. excludes most of further education and training*) are as follows:

Teaching/ Instruction Posts (2015/2016)	Special Needs Assistants (2015/2016)	Head office staff and schools secretarial/caretaker/cleaning staff (Q2, 2015)	Total
9,960	810	1,695	12,465

Number of schools (2015/16 school year):

There are 265 Vocational Schools and Community Colleges operated by the ETBs. Twenty six (26) of these provide Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses only.

Enrolments (2015/16 school year):

Second Level Enrolments	PLC Enrolments	Total Enrolments
94,756	30,888	125,644

Schools Financial

1. Section Overview

Schools Financial is responsible for the allocation of non-pay funding to all primary and voluntary secondary schools in addition to non-teaching pay and non-pay funding to Community & Comprehensive Schools. This section also processes a range of grants payable to schools and parents in respect of children with special educational needs. The policy in relation to the grants concerned resides with special education section.

The section also process payments of grants-aid to various bodies, including school management authorities, and the National Council for Special Education.

Staffing (WTEs)

1 x APO

2 x HEO

8.0 x EO

9.9 x CO

2. Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2013 €000	Outturn 2014 €000	Outturn 2015 €000
Tuition Grants	21,870	24,309	26,552
Special Education -Initiatives	4,731	5,280	5,680
National Braille Production Centre	1,280	1,280	1,280
NCSE	8,020	7,989	7,987
Special Education Misc. Costs	508	788	707
Model Schools	458	452	472
Capitation Grants Primary	186,189	188,028	189,919
Book Rental (2014 et seq.)	0	4,996	5,489
Primary Miscellaneous	315	1,173	1,000
Grants To Sec. Schools	100,375	100,814	101,343
C&C Running Costs	45,140	44,869	45,054
Disadvantage Initiatives & Capitation	3,116	3,293	3,137
Miscellaneous	957	1,287	947
Primary & Post Primary Management Bodies	2,059	2,040	2,118
Post Primary Assistive Technology	363	343	470

3. Key Priority Issues

3.1 Funding pressures for schools

Background:

School funding levels have reduced in recent years due to the impact of various budget measures.

The various capitation grant are the main funding instruments for schools. In the period 2011- 2015 the budgetary reduction is just over 11% in aggregate. Capitation and related grants were reduced by 5% in 2011, a further 2% in 2012, 2% in 2013, 1% in 2014 and a further 1 % in 2015.

Since 2012 the budgetary reductions have been achieved through a reduction in the basic capitation grants at primary and post primary.

Current position:

The adequacy of capitation funding for schools is a critical issue. Many schools supplement the grants with voluntary contributions and fundraising activities. Throughout the recession grants have been reduced and schools would have found it more difficult to raise additional funding.

The current reduced funding levels create a risk that some schools may not be able to cover critical costs such as insurance or heat and light, the absence of which could trigger school closure. ETB schools may also face difficulties as reductions in other income utilised by ETBs to supplement core funding for schools has also declined primarily due to the impact of the recession.

The situation is being alleviated to some degree by the recent reductions in energy costs.

Next steps:

A key challenge for the next budget and beyond is to start making progress on improving the funding levels for schools.

4. Other significant issues

4.1 Ancillary staffing levels in schools sector

Ancillary staffing levels (secretaries, caretakers and cleaners) are determined at individual school level in the primary and voluntary secondary schools sector based on the funding provided via Department grants. A small improvement was made to these grants in 2016 in order to enable schools implement a recent arbitration finding in relation to the pay of grant funded secretaries and caretakers.

Ancillary staffing levels in the Community & Comprehensive sector and in the ETB sector are primarily based on pay budgets and the number of posts approved by the Department. The ability to approve posts has been significantly affected by the moratorium on recruitment with just minimal alleviation provided to keep schools operational. The need for additional staffing is raised on a regular basis by schools in both sectors.

4.2 Equalisation of funding between sectors at post-primary level

The funding arrangements in the Community & Comprehensive sector and the ETB sector are primarily based on budgets determined by the Department. The enrolment in the individual schools is the main driver of the level of these budgets.

The funding arrangements in the Voluntary Secondary School Sector are based on per capita grants provided by the Department. Some equalisation measures were introduced to rectify historical inconsistencies in the funding arrangements for this sector of post-primary schools. The level of disparity in the funding arrangements between the three sectors would need to be revisited to determine what remains to be done on the equalisation agenda.

Parents, Learners and Database Section

1. Unit / Section Overview

The Section can be divided into two distinct units, Parents and Learners Unit; and Database Unit. A summary of the main areas of responsibility for each is set out beneath.

a. Parents and Learners Unit

Statutory Appeals

Administration of parental appeals, within defined timeframes, in accordance with Section 29 of the 1998 Education Act.

This gives parents the right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills¹, in respect of a decision by a Board of Management;

- to permanently exclude a student from the school,
- to suspend a student from the school for a period which would bring the cumulative period of suspension to 20 school days in any one school year,
- to refuse to enroll a student.

Other Parental Grievances

Under the 1998 Education Act, the Minister for Education and Skills provides funding and policy direction for schools. Neither the Minister nor the Department has legal powers to investigate individual complaints. While the Department does not pass judgement on individual complaints, staff in this section can clarify for parents and pupils how their grievances and complaints against schools can be progressed. Section 28 of the 1998 Act refers to the desirability of resolving grievances locally.

Procedures for Departmental Staff to report Child Protection Concerns

The Department has published *Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse Brought to the Attention of Staff Employed by the Department of Education and Skills*. The purpose of these procedures is to provide direction and guidance to Department staff in dealing with child protection concerns which are brought to the attention of the Department, taking account of *Children First* and guidelines issued to schools (by School Governance Section). In accordance with these procedures, all Departmental staff must, as a priority,

¹ In the case of a school which is established or maintained by an Education and Training Board (ETB), the appeal against the decision of the board of management of the school shall be made, in the first instance, to its (ETB).

transmit details of any allegation received to Parents Learners and Database Section, which is responsible for reporting all allegations brought to its attention to the relevant investigatory authorities, including schools and the Child and Family Agency (TUSLA); as well as monitoring and reporting bimonthly to the Management Board and the Minister on the implementation of these procedures.

Student Councils and the Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU)

Student Councils are established in post-primary schools in Ireland in accordance with Section 27 of the Education Act 1998.

The ISSU is the umbrella body for Student Councils in second-level schools in Ireland.

PLDS manages the Department's relationship with ISSU and, by extension and in collaboration with the DCYA, Student Councils.

Home Tuition

Parents and Learners' Unit (PLU) processes applications for home tuition under a scheme for children who are temporarily without a school place for reasons other than a medical condition or special educational need. [Separately, *the Special Education section administers a home tuition scheme for reasons of medical condition or special educational need*]. PLDS also administers a home tuition scheme where the school attendance of schoolgirls is significantly affected for maternity-related reasons.

Home tutors are engaged by the parents/guardians of the child who is to receive tuition. The Department funds the cost of tuition provided where this complies fully with the terms of the approval which issued to the parents/guardians on foot of their application.

In 2015, in order to comply with a determination from the Revenue Commissioners, the Department moved from issuing home tuition payments in the gross amount to paying home tutors less any statutory deductions. To facilitate this, home tuition payments are now issued through the Non-teaching Staff payroll system. It is still the pupil who engages the tutor.

Since January 2016, all home tuition claims for both PLU and Special Education home tuition schemes are processed by Special Needs Tuition Grants section within the Schools Division. PLDS continues to process applications. While it is always the parent who engages the tutor, the Department acts as payroll agent for the purposes of PAYE, PRSI and any other pay-related deductions.

b. Database Unit

Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD) helpdesk

The Department of Education and Skills hosts a national database called the Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD), which post-primary schools can use throughout the school year to record the details of the students enrolled in their schools, together with information on the programme and subjects which the students are taking, and any exemptions which the students may have, in order to repeat a year, or from the study of Irish. The Database section operates a P-POD helpdesk throughout the year to provide assistance to the school users of P-POD in the 730+ post-primary schools.

Annual Returns of post-primary students (October Returns)

Each year, the post primary schools recognised by the Department of Education and Skills are required to make a return (called the October Returns) to it providing the details of the students enrolled in each school as at 30th September. These returns are made in accordance with *The Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools*². Since 2014/15 all schools use P-POD to generate their October Returns.

From the October Returns the Department of Education and Skills calculates the teaching posts and core funding to be allocated to each recognised post-primary school for the following school year. The details of entrants for the State Examinations at Junior and Leaving Certificate are extracted from the Returns and transferred to the State Examinations Commission.

Exemptions from the Study of Irish

Database Unit provides information to schools, parents and other interested parties on the exemptions from the study of Irish and provided for in *Rules and Programme* and associated circulars available at both primary and post-primary. The policy for these exemption schemes is devised elsewhere within the Department and is governed by way of circular 12/96 for primary schools and M10/94 for post-primary schools. Under both circulars the authority to grant an exemption from the study of Irish to a student in accordance with the criteria of the circular is delegated to school management.

² A “secondary school” means a school which is recognised by the Minister as providing instruction in an approved curriculum and which complies with the *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools*. School in this category include secondary voluntary, vocational and community & comprehensive post-primary schools.

Consideration is currently being given within the Department to the revision of these circulars.

Emergency Planning

The Department of Education and Skills is not a lead agency in the event of a national emergency. Its role is to act as a conduit of information between the national level and the education sector. At a national level PLDS represents the Department on the Government Taskforce for Emergency Planning. The Database Unit provides administrative support in respect of issues arising in the areas of public health or other national emergencies.

It also represents the Department on national co-ordination committees convened to provide a whole of government response to emergencies such as the severe weather and flooding experienced in December 2015/January 2016, and has provided significant input to the Winter Ready booklet in the form of guidance and advice for the education sector in the event of severe weather alerts issued by Met Eireann.

National Parents' Councils

The Unit liaises with and provides funding towards the operational costs of the National Parents' Councils for both the primary and post-primary sectors, and oversees the governance requirements of the Councils in accordance with recent DPER Circulars.

Secretariat to Schools Division

PLDS through the Database Unit co-ordinates the input across the three Principal Officers' areas within Schools' Division to a wide range of materials and in response to wide range of requests, including the Division's Business Plan and the Annual Output Statement.

The Section is staffed by:

Grades	Parents and Learners	Database	Total
PO			1
Aps	1	1	2
HEOs	2	1.8	3.8

EO	3	2.6	5.6
SO		0.5	0.5
CO	4	5	9

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
	€'000	€'000	€'000
Section 29 Appeals	280	280	280
National Parents' Councils *	532	526	536

*The National Parents' Council Post-Primary received once-off additional funding of €65k in 2014/15 to fund the Chief Executive Officer's post which had been established as part of the Council's Strategic Plan. The Department has indicated its willingness to provide a further €70,000 in 2015/16 to fund the CEO post.

Both Councils may also avail of additional funding for training of parental representatives on boards of management and for training for parents under the Action Plan on Bullying which are administered by Teachers' Education Section and Central Policy Unit respectively.

3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.1 ISSUE:

3.1 Parent and Student Charter

Background

The Education Act 1998 makes certain provisions that can guide and influence the relationship between a school and its students and their parents. However it does not provide any cohesive approach or strategy to enhance how students and parents are served by schools. The legislative provisions that attempt to set out what students and parents can expect from schools are limited and those that do exist are not supported by principles which could guide practice, help set standards and increase the extent to which schools are responsive to their needs and expectations.

In specifically providing for student and parental grievances and appeals, the Act recognises that difficulties can arise. However the legislative provision in Section 28 is narrowly focused

on creating procedures to process grievances or appeals once they have arisen. It is concerned with managing the process of responding to a grievance, complaint or appeal as distinct from contributing in any way to managing issues in a school differently and before they give rise to grievances or appeals.

Sections 26 (Parents' Associations) and 27 (Student Councils in second-level schools) make certain provision for parents and students to deal collectively with schools through a representative organisation. However, the Education Act has no more composite provision that covers the engagement that should exist between a school and individual pupils of that school and their parents.

Section 28 of the Act provides for the parent of a student under 18 or a student that has reached the age of 18 years to appeal against the decision of a teacher or other member of the school staff or to have a grievance relating to the school heard. It expresses a desirability of determining appeals and resolving grievances in the school concerned. Section 28 as constructed at present can at best resolve matters that have occurred. There are no measures to set out how schools should work to ensure that school practice and the relationship between school and parents and students individually, eliminate to the greatest extent possible reliance on grievance procedures to resolve problems. The alternative is to take a legislative approach that could foster a culture change in schools in terms of student and parent engagement and where schools as reflective and learning organisations seek continually to address parent and student concerns.

Current position

Work has been ongoing in the section on drafting a revision to Section 28 that would set out principles to govern the relationships and to require each school to have a Parent and Student Charter that is based on national guidelines. Changing how schools engage with, listen and respond to parent and student concerns will be an important part of a Charter. A core objective of the Charter will be to shift away from reacting to problems only after they give rise to grievances. Instead the emphasis will be on improving the day-to-day experience students and their parents can expect from schools so that grievances do not arise at all or are resolved quickly and informally, and as a result having to resort to a formal grievance process should be much reduced.

Next Steps

The current intention is to have a totally revised Section 28 enacted by introducing it during the passage of the School Admissions Bill.

3.2 Child Protection – internal Department procedures

Background

The Department has a role to ensure that it brings any child protection concerns that it receives to the attention of both the school concerned and the CFA/Garda, in accordance with Office Notice SGO 01/10: *Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse brought to the Attention of Staff Employed by the Department of Education and Skills*. The over-riding concern of the Department in respect of any child protection concern received is the welfare and protection of the child, and to that end ensuring that information received is transmitted to the appropriate authorities in order that the matter may be investigated. The Department does not have a role in investigating child protection concerns. The Child and Family Agency (formerly the Health Service Executive) has statutory responsibility for child protection and therefore for investigating child protection concerns, and An Garda Síochána have responsibility for investigation of matters that may involve a criminal offence.

Current Position

The procedures require School's Division to provide a bimonthly update to the Management Board on the number and nature of child protection concerns received by the Department as well as any issues arising in relation to the implementation of these procedures. The Minister is provided with a copy of the bimonthly report and briefed on any issues arising.

Next Steps

The procedures are revised as required to take account of any amendments to *Children First* and any issues that surface in relation to the allegations received by Departmental staff.

3.3. Further development of the Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD)

BACKGROUND:

Between 2012 and 2013 the Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD) was developed in-house by the Department. It was also developed in consultation with the post-primary Management Bodies (the JMB, ACCS and ETBI) and the Principals' and Deputy Principals' body, the NAPD. In 2014 P-POD was deployed to all 730+ post-primary schools.

Data on post-primary students for new purposes, subject to meeting all data protection provisions, is now potentially accessible to the Department throughout the year. P-POD also

has the potential to reduce the administrative burden on schools through assistance with data collections and through the sharing of relevant extract of data with other public sector bodies where this can be done in compliance with data protection provisions.

In 2015/16 the Department deployed a Primary Online Database (POD) which it had developed for use by primary schools. POD was developed and is managed by the separate Statistics Section within the Department.

CURRENT POSITION:

P-POD is currently used by post-primary schools to produce annual student returns/October Returns for the Department and for the collection of exam entrants for the State Examinations Commission.

NEXT STEPS:

The next steps are to harness the potential of P-POD to meet the needs of the wider Department and where possible to reduce the administrative burden on schools.

Subject to data protection provisions the potential to transfer data on student between schools when the student is moving from primary to post-primary is to be examined and functionality to support this put in place. This in turn will lead to the development of a Learner Database which will assist in devising evidence based policies regarding the progression and retention of student in the schools' system.

P-POD also has the potential to meet some of the data collection requirements arising from initiatives being implemented by other business areas within the Department. For example, P-POD may be used to assist schools with any additional data collections arising as part of the implementation of the new Junior Certificate which is being overseen by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP) section.

4. OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

4.1. Data Protection and student personal data at post-primary level

Background

The Department currently operates two databases for post-primary students. The old database which has been in use for many years and which is known as the Pupil Entity (previously the Post-Primary Pupil Database- PPPDB) and as outlined above the new Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD). Both databases contain some personal data of each post-primary student.

Current

In 2015 with the deployment by Statistics Section of the Primary Online Database (POD), which collected individual personal data on primary students for the first time, a number of data protection concerns were raised with the Department. These were mainly with the data of primary students, with a lesser number of concerns raised in respect of post-primary students.

The Department provided full information to address these concerns and also engaged with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner to ensure that it was complying with data protection requirements.

Data protection provisions are met in both POD and P-POD through a mixture of processes and statutory provisions. The initial collection of personal data by schools at the request of the Department is supported by way of Fair Processing Notices which outline the purpose for which the data is sought. The sharing of personal data of students between schools and the Department is supported by legislation, mainly under the Social Welfare Consolidation Acts, as the data includes use of the PPSN.

However a concern remains as to whether all data protection provisions underpinning both databases (POD & P-POD) are being met fully in a totally clear and unambiguous manner, especially where a small number of parents may still have concerns in the first instances in provide details of their child to the school to be stored in an electronic format for use by the school and the Department.

The impending new Regulations on Data Protection from the EU will also increase the data protection requirements around the collection and storing of personal data.

Next Step

In co-operation with the Statistics Section, PLDS are considering the engagement of an expert on data protection to conduct formal Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs) of both databases and their current uses. A PIA may also be conducted of further potential uses of the databases which may fall for consideration. The PIA would also assess if current data protection practices are future proofed against impending changes from the EU in this area.

In the medium term both sections are considering the necessity for a specific statutory provision to underpin the collection of some personal data of students by schools for sharing with the Department where these schools are recognised and funded by the Department.

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Name of Body:

Main responsibilities:

Allocation 2010:

Staff numbers:

[Please provide details above in respect of each body (if any) in your area]

**HIGHER EDUCATION
AND INTERNATIONAL
DIVISION: MARY
DOYLE, DEPUTY
SECRETARY**

Structure of the Division

The Division comprises of four sections dealing with Higher Education Research and Funding, Policy of Skills, Equity and Access and Qualifications and also with International/ North South Co-operation.

There are four Principal Officers working in the area:

- Higher Education, Research and Funding, Christy Mannion
- Higher Education Policy and Skills, Deirdre Mc Donnell
- Higher Education, Equity of Access and Qualifications, Tony Gaynor
- International/ North South, Vincent Landers

The Division has staff in more than one location. Higher Education Policy and Skills, International/North South Co-operation and Qualifications are based in Dublin. Higher Education, Research and Funding and Higher Education, Equity of Access are based in Tullamore.

Higher Education, Equity of Access and Qualifications

1. Unit / Section Overview

The Higher Education-Equity of Access and Qualifications section has responsibility for leading the development of national policy on equity of access to higher education for all students, but particularly among those groups who are currently underrepresented in the sector.

The Higher Education System Performance Framework has developed a number of key system objectives for equity of access to higher education. The high level indicators in the Framework to assess performance in relation to these objectives are:

- Progress towards Bologna objective to ensure that the student body entering/participating/completing higher education reflects the diversity of Ireland's population.
- Increase in numbers and proportions of entrants from non-traditional routes.
- Increased numbers and proportions of entrants into flexible learning opportunities in higher education.
- Higher education persistence and completion rates for under-represented groups.
- International benchmark comparing the percentage of students in tertiary education by mode of enrolment.

The section supports a range of measures which facilitate greater levels of participation by disadvantaged students, mature students and students with disabilities. The principal support in financial terms is provided for under the student grant scheme, which makes available means-tested financial assistance to students in further and higher education. The student grant scheme is administered on behalf of the Department by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), which is a section in City of Dublin ETB. The Department exercises oversight and governance functions through a Management Framework Agreement concluded with CDET B.

Other targeted access supports include the Student Assistance Fund and the Fund for Students with Disabilities. Institutional funding for access is also made available through the Higher Education Authority. A number of third-level scholarships and bursaries, including those targeting disadvantaged students are also provided by the section.

The section is also responsible for policy development in relation to qualifications, including the National Framework of Qualifications, and the quality assurance of education and training provision. This is supported through funding and oversight of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The section is also the national coordination point for the implementation of

EU Directive 2005/36 which promotes mobility across the EU for those with professional qualifications.

A key system objective of the System Performance Framework is to promote excellence in teaching and learning to underpin a high quality student experience. High level indicators include meeting the Bologna Process objectives to ensure that quality assurance procedures are in line with international best practice.

The Department's governance and oversight functions in relation to QQI are detailed in a Management Framework Agreement.

WTE staffing of the section: 1 PO, 3.2 AP, 5.8 HEO, 4.7 EO and 4.15 CO

2. Financial Provision & Statistics

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
Student Grants	€345.3m	€387.6m	€375.4m
Student Grants Administration	€8.9m	€8.5m	€9.5m
Targeted Access Support (Fund for Students with Disabilities and the Student Assistance Fund)	€16.2m	€16.2m	€19.2m
Scholarships, Bursaries & European University Institute (EUI)	€1.8m	€1.7m	€1.65m
Student Grant Appeals Board Administration			€0.08m
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	€5.5m	€3.6m	€5.4m

3. Key priority issues

3.1 Access and Participation

Background

The Department has responsibility for promoting inclusive and equitable access to higher education from under-represented groups and improved participation by students from

socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, students with disabilities and mature or second-chance students. The Department works closely with the National Access Office (NAO) in the HEA on this agenda. Achieving a more equitable higher education system has been a long-standing priority for the Department and the Higher Education Authority.

There has been significant progress in promoting access to higher education in Ireland in recent years including:

- Overall enrolment has increased from 194,963 in 2008/2009 to 210,963 in 2013/14.
- Between the years 2011/12 and 2014/15 there has been a 9% increase in total part-time enrolments and a 43% increase in remote (distance, e-learning and in service).
- In the four year period 2011/12 to 2014/15 postgraduate enrolments increased by 7%.
- In 2014-15, 11% of undergraduate new entrants indicated a disability; this figure was 3.2% in 2005.

However there remain pockets of educational disadvantage and access to higher education is not distributed equitably across different groups in the Irish population:

- Participation of those from the semi-skilled and unskilled socio-economic groups is at 26%, while there is practically full participation by those from the higher professional socio-economic group. In Dublin there are differences in participation between postal districts –over 99% of 18–20 year olds in one postal district go on to higher education, while in another the rate is as low as 15%.
- Among and across the national target groups there are also subgroups that experience difficulties participating in higher education and who require particular support – these include lone parents, teen parents and some people from ethnic minorities.
- Students with sensory disabilities continue to be less likely to enter higher education than students with other types of disability.
- Participation in higher education among Irish Travellers remains comparatively low.

The Department and the HEA are addressing these issues through the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-19.

Current position

The third National Access Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2015 – 2019) was launched in December 2015. The Plan contains 5 key goals and more than 30 actions. Key actions to be delivered in 2016 include:

- Developing a system for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). This is an important access tool and also a means of labour market activation.
- Addressing the issue of non progression and non completion in higher education. This is currently a significant issue that has human and financial implications for individuals and the higher education system as a whole.
- Review of the Student Assistance Fund. (The objective of this Fund is to assist students in a sensitive and compassionate manner who might not otherwise, due to their financial circumstances, be able to continue their third level studies. Data available for the last academic year indicated that in excess of 14, 904 students were supported by the fund in 2014-15.)
- Review of the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD). (This Fund provides supports for full-time students with disabilities. Funding is allocated to institutions for additional tuition/learning support, the purchase of assistive technologies, targeted transport services, sign language assistance/interpreters and personal assistants. Some 9,937 students benefitted under the fund in 2014-15).
- Development of measures to promote participation in initial teacher education by target students
- Development of pre and post-entry mentoring programmes.
- Development of measures to engage directly with communities where participation in higher education is low.

The new Plan also contains a number of key targets to increase participation in higher education by groups that are currently under-represented. To facilitate measurement of progress towards achievement of these targets, the Plan contains a key focus on ensuring that the necessary data is collated. Monitoring of progress on access is also facilitated through data collated through the Department's Higher Education System Performance Framework 2014 – 2016.

Next Steps

A Steering Committee, to be chaired by DES and comprised of key stakeholders, will be established to oversee progress of the key actions/targets in the National Access Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education. There will be an annual report on progress under the Plan.

3.2 SUSI – The Student Grants Unit of the Single Grant Awarding Authority

Background

With effect from the 2012/13 academic year, City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETB) formerly City of Dublin VEC, is the designated centralised awarding authority for the

administration of student grants. The student grants unit in CDET B is referred to as Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI). SUSI's first year of operation 2012/13 was problematic and delays in processing applications did arise.

For its second year of operation in 2013, SUSI made significant improvements to its systems and procedures to streamline the grant application, processing and payment processes. Key among these changes were the information sharing arrangements implemented with Government Departments and agencies to reduce the amount of documentation sought from applicants and enable tighter controls.

In April 2015 the C&AG published a Special Report on Restructuring the Administration of Student Grants. Special Report No. 88 examined the implementation of the extensive programme of reform of student support undertaken in recent years, including the change management involved in the establishment of SUSI. It also examined the operational issues encountered by SUSI in its first year of operation in 2012/13 and the factors which contributed to those difficulties. The Report concluded with a series of recommendations. These recommendations are being addressed by the Department in conjunction with CDET B/SUSI.

Current Position

For the 2015/16 academic year, SUSI is expected to process approximately 108,000 applications, of which circa 80,000 will qualify for grant support. There are a further 1,300 grant recipients in the old 66 awarding authorities.

Each year there has been an ongoing focus on work to continually improve the system, particularly relating to the processes and systems in operation and SUSI continues to build on its achievements.

In 2015/16, SUSI met or exceeded its key processing and payment targets as set in the Management Framework Agreement between CDET B and the Department. These targets represent the essential requirements for the timely delivery of the core services provided to students by SUSI/CDET B on behalf of the Minister.

A legacy from the initial year of SUSI operations is a number of overpayments that were incurred by SUSI in the administration of student grants in 2012/13. These overpayments amounted to €3.7m and the number of students affected is 1,239. CDET B initially sought DES approval to write off the overpayments. Following receipt of legal advice from the Office of the Attorney General, the Department in July 2015 requested that CDET B/SUSI write to the affected individual to request the repayment of the amount paid in error by SUSI and submit a report to the Department within six months detailing the outcome of efforts to recoup the overpayments.

CDETB reported to the DES at the end of February on the outcome of the recoupment process. While 99 individuals had indicated a willingness to engage with SUSI, actual repayments had only been received from 25 students. The total amount repaid amounted to €7,071.

Following consideration of the outcome of the recoupment process to date the DES wrote to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform seeking approval to write off the specific set of overpayments that arose in 2012/2013, on the following grounds;

- Limited prospect of repayment
- Uniqueness of the case at a particular point in time
- The fault lies with SUSI rather than the individuals
- Potential of reputational damage for SUSI if it continued to pursue students
- The costs of further action by SUSI would likely outweigh the potential benefits
- Consistency with legal advice received on the subject.

Approval to write off the specific set of overpayments that were incurred in 2012 was received from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on 24th March. Approval was also received to reimburse the small number of individuals who had started to make repayments. The DES is currently communicating with relevant stakeholders about the outcome of this process.

The overpayments from 2012 were one of a number of issues about which the Office of the Ombudsman had been communicating with the DES.

Next Steps

SUSI is focusing on further strengthening its capacity and building greater robustness and efficiency into the centralised student grant system through the development of an integrated IT system. The project is expected to take 2 years to complete and is intended to “go-live” in 2017.

3.3 Third Level Scholarships

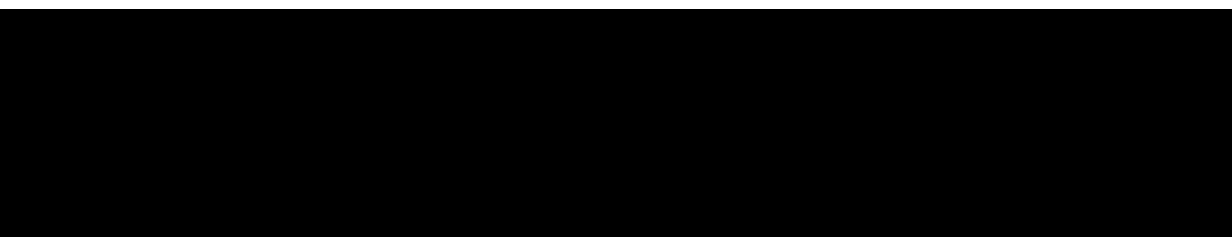
Background

Budget 2012 replaced the five existing scholarship schemes for higher education, including the Easter Week 1916 and Irish scholarships, with a new single scheme of bursaries. The change was made in order to make the best use of scarce resources so as to focus on the best performing students in the cohort of those who are most in need of financial help.

Current Position

The awards under the bursary scheme are fixed at €2,000 per student. The bursary is an extra support and incentive to recognise high achievement for students who are from disadvantaged families and attending DEIS schools. Those students to whom bursaries are awarded are also entitled to apply for student grants towards the cost of maintenance and the student contribution or fees. Bursaries are paid annually for the duration of one undergraduate course and up to a maximum 4 years postgraduate study. In the 2015/16 academic year 100 bursaries have been awarded under the bursary scheme. Awards under the bursary scheme are made on a regional basis and students from all DEIS schools, who are exempt from payment of the Leaving Certificate examination fee, are considered.

The All Ireland Scholarship Scheme is a privately funded scheme that has been operating since 2008. It awards 100 undergraduate scholarships each year across the 26 counties, with a minimum of two scholarships to be awarded in each county to Leaving Certificate students recognised as being from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (exempt from payment of the Leaving Certificate examination fee). This scheme is funded by the JP McManus Trust and administered by SUSI on behalf of the Department.



3.4. Independent Student Grants Appeals Board

Background

The Student Grants Appeals Board was established on 8 September 2011 under Section 25 of the Student Support Act 2011 and is independent in the performance of its functions. It comprises a Chairperson and six ordinary members, all appointed in their individual capacities based on their knowledge and expertise. Administrative support to the Appeals Board is provided by the Department.

Prior to an applicant making an appeal to the Appeals Board, an initial appeal in writing to the relevant awarding authority is provided for under the Student Support Act 2011. This provides for a review of the decision by an appeals officer of the grant awarding authority, independently of the original assessment process.

If, after this initial appeal, the grant applicant still remains of the view that the scheme has

not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board.

Current Position

The Student Grant Appeals Board appeal rate has reduced from 1% of the overall applications to SUSI in 2013/14 to 0.5% for the 2014/15 academic year.

A total of 537 appeals were received by the Student Grants Appeals Board for the 2014/15 academic year of which 364 were upheld and 158 overturned. The remaining 15 were withdrawn or triaged back through SUSI. Statistics for 2015/16 are not yet available.

The term of office of the current Board is due to end in September 2016. The process for the appointment of a new Board has recently commenced. Six of the seven current Board members have expressed an interest in being reappointed for a second term of office. The second term will cover the period from September 2016 to September 2021.

It is proposed to increase the size of the Board from 7 to 11 (the maximum number allowed under the Act). The existing Board is considered to be too small as it does not adequately cater for occasions when one or two members may be absent through illness or other reason. Also Board members can only sit for two terms of office. Therefore to ensure that there are enough experienced members available to be considered for the third term of office in 2021, it is considered prudent to increase the Board size.

Next Steps

The process necessary to appoint a new Student Grant Appeals Board is underway.

3.5 Pilot Support Scheme, 2015

Background

The Working Group on the Protection Process, which was chaired by Dr. Bryan McMahon, was established by the Minister for Justice and Equality, Ms Frances Fitzgerald and the Minister of State for New Communities, Culture and Equality, Aodhán Ó Ríordáin, in October 2014.

The Group was tasked with identifying practical measures that could be implemented in the short and longer term to enhance the dignity of persons in the protection system and improve the quality of their lives while their applications for protection were under investigation.

The Report of the Working Group was published on 30 June 2015. The Report contains some 170 recommendations covering almost every aspect of the protection system. These include a number of recommendations relating to the education sector. One of these recommendations (Recommendation 5.70) relates to the extension of student supports for third-level and Post Leaving Certificate students, to students in the asylum seeking process who have been in the Irish school system for five years or more.

In accordance with recommendation 5.70, a new pilot scheme was introduced for the 2015/16 academic year. The scheme provides supports, in line with the Student Grant scheme, to students in the protection system, or at the Leave to Remain (but not deportation order) stage to enable them to attend undergraduate or PLC courses.

A number of criteria have to be met by applicants, including a requirement to have:

- 5 years in the protection system at the 31st of August 2015,
- 5 years in the Irish school system as at the 31st of August 2015, and
- Have obtained a Leaving Certificate.

The five-year requirement is designed to address the position of the children of asylum seekers who have already been fully integrated into the Irish education system, while also ensuring that this provision does not represent a pull factor for migrants currently resident in other jurisdictions.

The new scheme is being operated on a pilot basis for one year. A one year pilot measure was considered appropriate and prudent in light of the other broader policy developments that have been proposed to strengthen and improve the protection system.

Current Position

A total of 39 applicants were received of which 2 applicants were deemed eligible for support.

Next Steps

The scheme will be reviewed in 2016, particularly in the context of progress made on the implementation of the International Protection Bill by the Department of Justice and Equality and other recommendations from the Working Group.

3.6 Private College Closures

Background

Since the beginning of 2014, 17 private English language colleges have closed affecting approximately 5,000, mainly non-EEA, students. Most of the closed colleges shared similar characteristics: a business model built primarily on the enrolment of non-EEA students, reliance on overseas accredited education programmes so as to avoid the more rigorous standards applied by Irish authorities, poor exam progression by students, major deficiencies in student attendance record keeping and the charging of low fees. In some cases, there was also evidence of concealed ownership and of individuals that were involved in one closed college re-emerging as employees or directors in other ventures.

The closure of these colleges received much media coverage, with the focus primarily on the failure of the colleges to provide refunds to students.

It is important to note that the State did not close these colleges, nor were they prevented by the State from recruiting Irish or other EEA students. These were all private businesses which made their own decisions to shut down. Because these colleges were registered as private limited companies, the Department or the State is not obliged to provide refunds to students or to reimburse teacher salaries.

While many students affected by the closures were genuinely in Ireland for the purposes of study, a significant cohort were attending these colleges in order to access the labour market.

In response, a Task Force on Students Affected by the Closure of Private Colleges was established jointly by the Ministers for Justice and Equality and Education and Skills in May 2014. The Report of the Task Force was published on 2nd September 2014 and provided for alternative educational arrangements for affected students.

A number of major regulatory reforms to the international education sector were also announced jointly by the Minister for Justice and Equality and the Minister for Education and Skills on 2nd September 2014. These reforms were due to come into effect on 1st January 2015. However in November 2014, two private English language colleges launched legal proceedings in respect of some of the planned reforms. Implementation of the reforms was deferred to facilitate the Court in considering its judgement.

The effect of the Court's judgement, received on 13th January 2015, was that some of the reforms could not proceed in the manner as had been previously agreed by Government. Based on legal advice it was decided not to appeal the judgement.

In May 2015 Government approved the implementation of a series of revised reforms to the student immigration system for international education. The key reforms include the restriction of the list of education programmes considered to justify the granting of permission to students to live and work in Ireland (known as the Interim List of Eligible

Programmes – the ILEP). All private colleges now have to comply with certain new requirements including declaration of ownership, shadow directors, physical infrastructure and teaching capacity. The reforms also include a number of measures designed to protect students including compulsory learner protection arrangements and a separate account facility to safeguard student advance payments.

Current Position

The Department of Justice and Equality is leading on the implementation of the reforms in conjunction with this Department. A core element of the new ILEP application process involves unannounced on-site inspections of providers, and the first tranche of inspections was completed in December 2015. The first full iteration of the new ILEP was published by the Department of Justice and Equality on 20th January 2016.

A positive effect of this process while it has been underway is that no further English language colleges have closed. The Department of Justice and Equality has however advised that they anticipate further closures following publication of the ILEP. Further legal challenge from providers who are unsuccessful in being included on the ILEP is also possible. The Department of Justice and Equality is continuing to monitor the situation in consultation with this Department.

Next Steps

A second application cycle for inclusion on the ILEP opened on 20th January 2016, with the next iteration of the ILEP expected to be published before the end of April 2016. A second round of inspections of English language providers will be conducted as part of this process.

A key element of the strengthened regime for international education will be the introduction of an International Education Mark (IEM) and related Code of Practice for the provision of education to international learners. These are provided for under the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012*. There are however some difficulties with the current legislation (outlined in the next section) which has delayed the introduction of the IEM. It is anticipated that the IEM will be rolled out in 2018.

3.7 QQI Fees

Background

A legacy provider refers to an education and training provider that had a previous quality assurance agreement with any of QQI's predecessor agencies - FETAC, HETAC, the NQAI and the IUQB. Some legacy providers have a statutory obligation to re-engage with QQI (such as

the Universities and the Institutes of Technology) while other legacy providers may choose to re-engage voluntarily (such as private providers of further and higher education and training).

It is estimated that in total QQI is engaging with approximately 770 legacy providers; 600 in the further education and training sector, 65 in the higher education and training sector and the remainder in the English language teaching sector.

In accordance with Section 80 of the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012*, QQI is authorised to charge fees for some of the services that it provides. One such fee relates to the process of re-engagement.

The process of re-engagement involves agreeing revised quality assurance procedures with QQI in accordance with specified requirements as set down in the 2012 Act. The re-engagement process will allow providers to demonstrate their capacity to provide and maintain, on an ongoing and sustainable basis, the infrastructure required to develop programmes consistent with national standards and to assess the achievement of stated learning outcomes by learners. It will happen only once for a provider. Thereafter, the provider will have to undergo periodic review of the effectiveness of its quality assurance procedures.

While fees had always been applied to providers in the higher education and training sector by HETAC, QQI has now introduced fees for providers in the further education and training sector which formerly came under the remit of FETAC. This was necessary as QQI has responsibilities for providers in the further, higher and English language sectors and is applying its policies equitably across the providers with which it engages.

The fee for new providers in the further education and training sector wishing to agree their quality assurance procedures with QQI and thereby gain access to QQI's awards is €5,000 (a fee of €10,000 applies to new providers wishing to offer programmes leading to higher education awards). The one-off re-engagement fee for legacy providers has not yet been proposed by QQI but it is not expected that it will exceed these figures.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Social Protection wrote to the Department in January 2014 seeking further information on the introduction of fees and expressing concern regarding the potential impact of a re-engagement fee on the community and voluntary sector. Most of the providers in the community and voluntary sector are legacy providers since they had a previous quality assurance relationship with FETAC. Subsequently, AONTAS made a submission on behalf of community and voluntary providers, arguing that a re-engagement fee should not apply to its members. A number of meetings with QQI and representatives from AONTAS and other voluntary and community groups were held in 2014.

In early 2015 QQI established a Joint QQI/Community and Voluntary Working Group in partnership with the community and voluntary sector. The purpose of the Working Group was to enable a process of collaboration and engagement between QQI and key stakeholders and providers on a range of operational, developmental and strategic matters in the specific context of quality assurance and re-engagement. The issue of the re-engagement fee did not come under the remit of the Working Group. The Working Group met on 7 occasions in 2015.

Current Position

The Working Group had constructive discussions about re-engagement and quality assurance issues in general. However the focus of the community and voluntary sector remains strongly on securing a waiver for the re-engagement fee. This was not discussed by the Working Group.

While the introduction of a re-engagement fee is clearly of real concern to community and voluntary providers, the underlying issues relating to the capacity of certain providers in this sector to deliver quality assured programmes needs to be addressed.

Although they agreed quality assurance procedures with FETAC, one of QQI's predecessor bodies, many of those providers in the community and voluntary sector will find QQI's rigorous standards very difficult to comply with. Therefore, even if the re-engagement fee was to be waived for all providers in this sector, it is likely that many of those providers would be unable to continue to have access to QQI's awards without an alternative framework being put in place.

Some of these providers will be of sufficient size and capacity to be able to meet the quality standards required of QQI providers. Other will have to explore alternatives which are currently under consideration. These include working collaboratively with other providers to ensure the required critical mass of expertise or formalising links with local Education and Training Boards.

Next Steps

The DES, in consultation with the QQI, is currently developing a set of options to address the issue of re-engagement fee for the Community and Voluntary sector. Any re-engagement fee that will ultimately be proposed by QQI is required to be submitted to the Department for consideration and is subject to the approval of both the Minister and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

3.8 Transposition of Modernised EU Directive 2005/36

Background

The treaty establishing the European Community establishes fundamental rights for EU citizens in regard to freedom of movement of workers, goods and services, and right of establishment (of a business or employment). The EU Directive 2005/36/EC on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications, which came into effect in October 2007, consolidated a number of existing Directives and is designed to give effect to these rights.

The Directive sets out procedures for the recognition of a wide range of professional qualifications. This includes seven professions, known as sectoral professions, where training requirements are closely coordinated at EU level, enabling automatic recognition of qualifications. Examples of sectoral professions include architect, doctor and general nurse and the Directive was transposed for these professions through specific legislation sponsored by the relevant Ministers.

There is also a large range of other professions in which qualifications are recognised through a “General System” laid down in the Directive, which was transposed in regulations made in July 2008. In total, the Department, which holds the coordinating role for this Directive, liaises with approximately 40 competent authorities regarding the implementation of the Directive.

In addition to its coordinating role, the Department also acts as the Contact Point for the Directive. This involves assisting migrants in having their rights vindicated by providing them with necessary information and putting them in contact with relevant authorities, as well as liaising with the Contact Points of other Member States.

Following an extensive consultation process, the European Commission made comprehensive proposals for the modernisation of Directive 2005/36 in December 2011. Political agreement was achieved during the Irish Presidency of the EU in June 2013.

Current Position

The modernisation of the Directive involves the revision and updating of existing provisions of the Directive, as well as the introduction of some new features. These include:

- Introduction of a “European professional card”, to facilitate speedier recognition of qualifications.
- Greater transparency regarding regulation and the number of regulated professions.
- Modernisation of the system of automatic recognition for the sectoral professions, and updating the “general system” of recognition for all qualifications outside of the sectoral professions.

- Clarifying the language requirements applicable to applicants seeking recognition of professional qualifications.
- Introducing an alert mechanism, particularly for the health professions, to protect patient and public safety e.g. in cases where a professional has been convicted of an offence or suspended from practicing.
- Provision of information to migrants through points of single contact and assistance centers.

The Department is currently working with the relevant Departments, regulatory bodies and with the European Commission to implement the various aspects of the modernised Directive.

Next Steps

Ireland was required to have fully transposed the modernised Directive by January 2016. To this end, the Department is leading the drafting of a new Statutory Instrument (S.I.) which will bring effect to the provisions of the Directive in national law. The draft text of the S.I. is nearing completion. The EU Commission have indicated their intention to initiate infringement proceedings against a number of Member States, including Ireland, who have not yet completed transposition. It is anticipated that the finalization of the relevant Statutory instrument will avoid any actual infringement proceedings being initiated against Ireland.

In its coordinating role, this Department will continue to liaise with other Departments and agencies as necessary to compile and supply relevant information and reporting material in compliance with the Directive's transparency requirements.

The Department will continue to provide support to the national regulatory bodies to ensure that they meet their responsibilities under the Directive.

4. Other significant Issues

4.1 Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill

Background

QQI was established in November 2012 under the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012*. In January 2015, following the High Court ruling on the international education reforms referred to above, a comprehensive review by QQI of its powers under the 2012 Act was conducted. This review identified a number of issues that are impeding QQI from fulfilling its intended role in relation to the quality assurance of the further

and higher education sectors. These issues were subsequently confirmed by the Attorney General's office.

A number of amendments are required to the existing legislation:

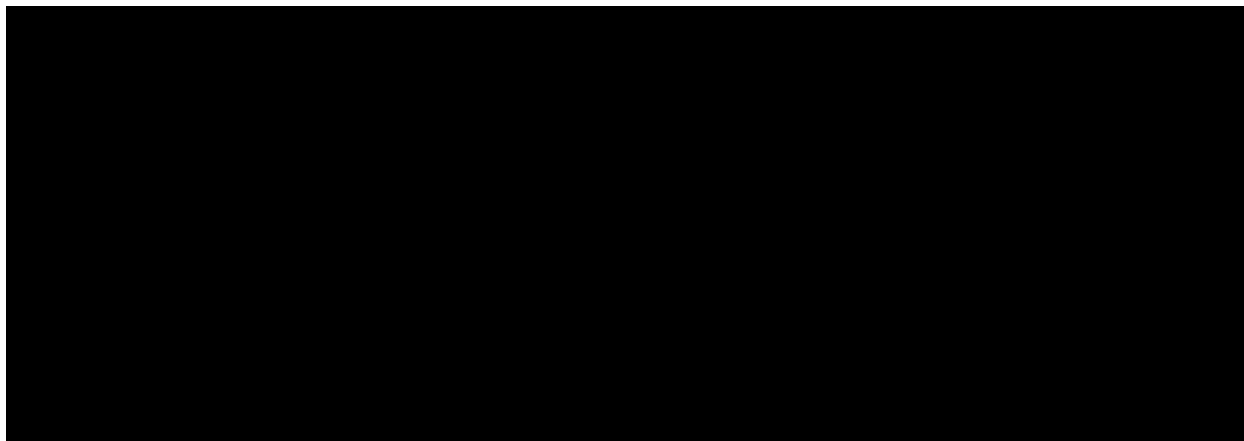
- To give QQI the explicit authority to recognise awards within the National Framework of Qualifications.
- To provide clarity on the scope of QQI's quality assurance responsibilities in relation to private and voluntary providers.
- To allow QQI to impose conditions on providers whose quality assurance procedures it approves.
- To facilitate the introduction of the International Education Mark (IEM).
- To provide for improved and workable procedures for the protection of enrolled learners.
- To provide a legal basis for QQI to examine the *bona fides* of providers.
- To involve providers more centrally in the application process for recognition of prior learning.
- To provide a legal basis for QQI to charge 'relationship fees' to providers.
- To increase the size of the Board of QQI.

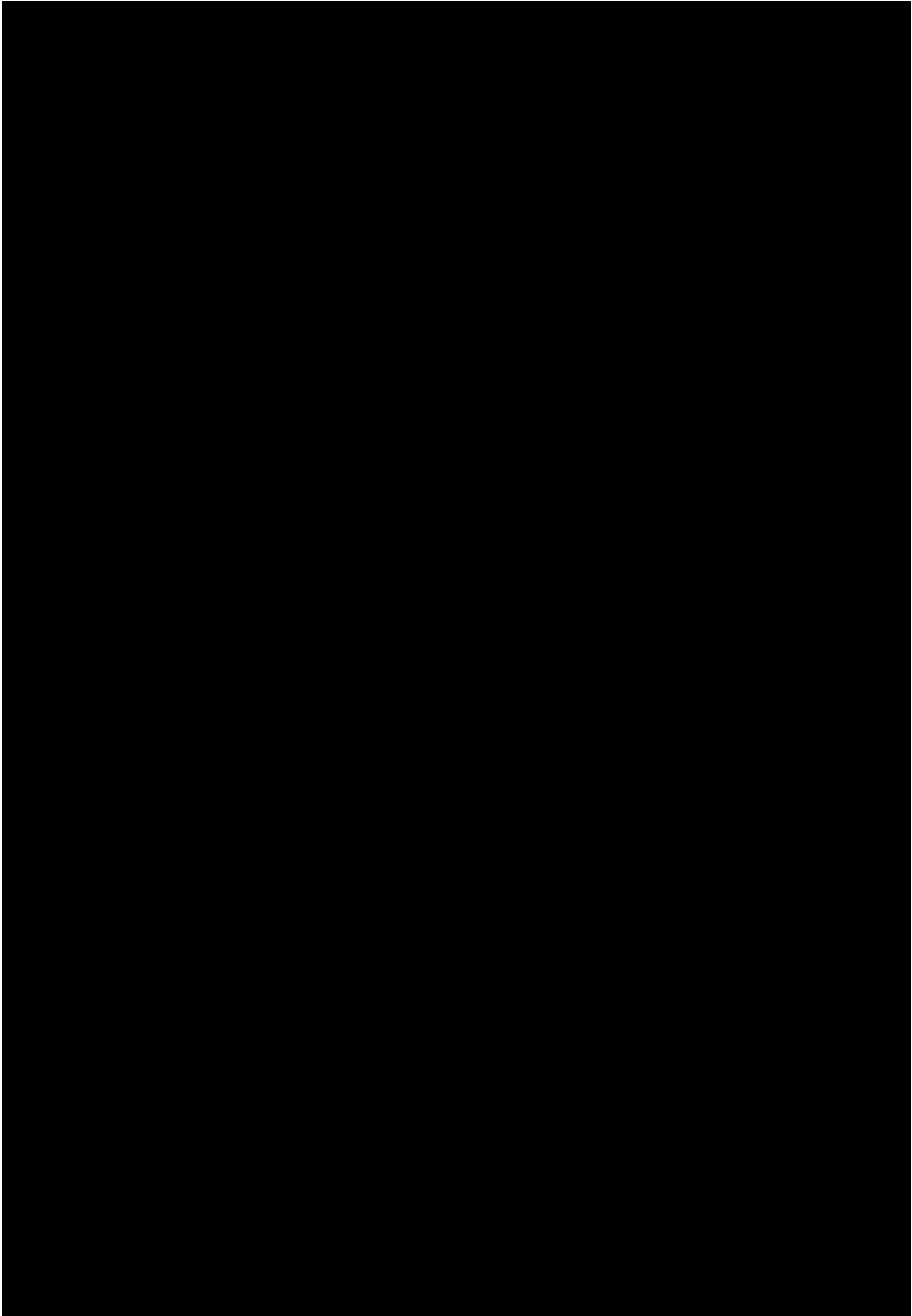
Current Position

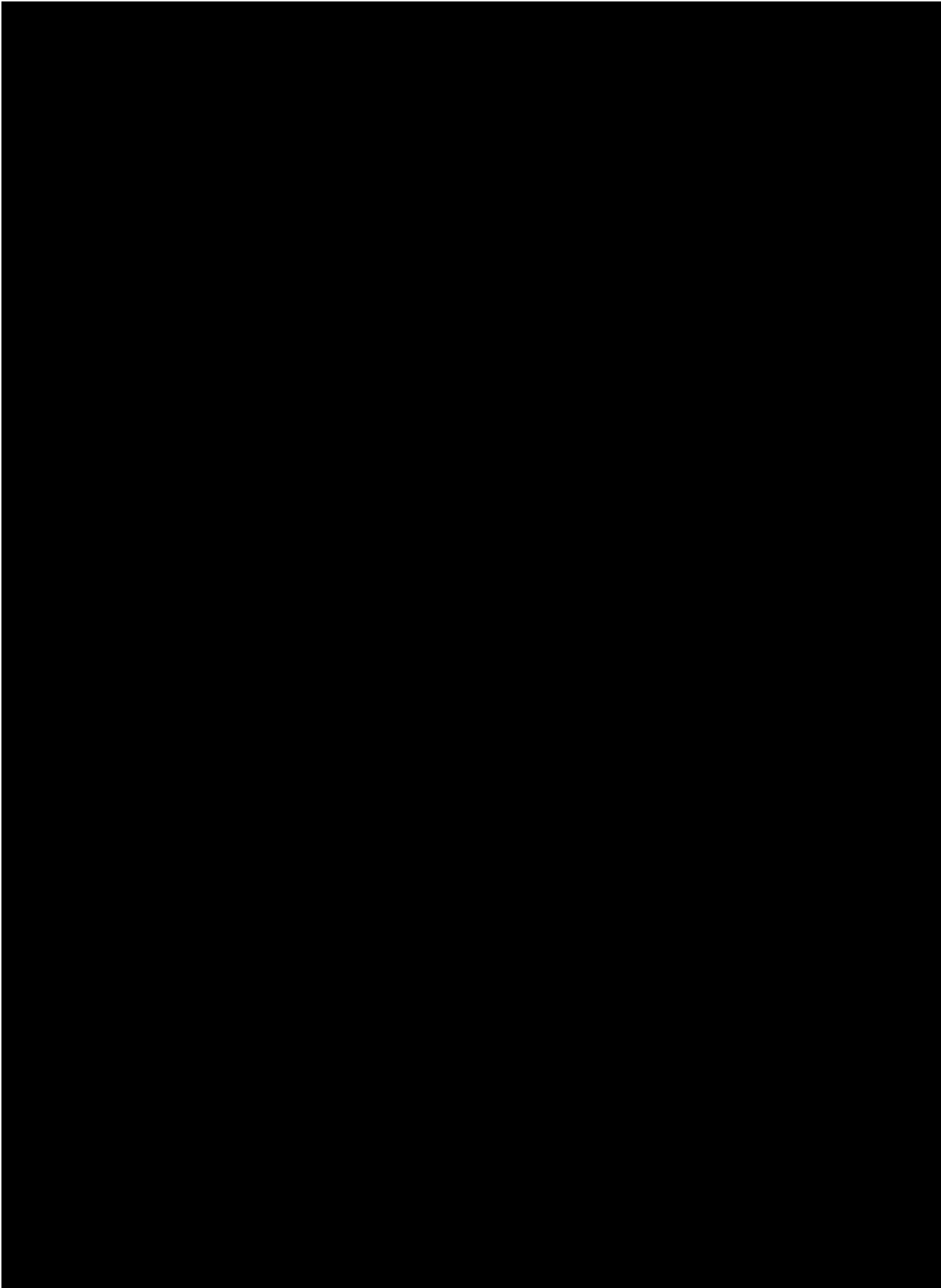
Ministerial approval to initiate a new Bill to amend the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012* was received in November 2015.

Next Steps

A Memorandum will be prepared seeking Government approval to proceed with the preparation of the General Scheme of this Bill. This will be submitted for Ministerial approval in the first instance.







5. Bodies under the Aegis of the Department

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

Main responsibilities: QQI was formally established on 6th November 2012 through the amalgamation of the NQAI, HETAC, and FETAC, and it also assumed the functions performed by the Irish Universities Quality Board. The purpose of the establishment of QQI was to bring greater coherence to the sector, creating a single body to deliver a more efficient and integrated service.

The main statutory functions of QQI can be summarised as follows:

- To maintain the National Framework of Qualifications.
- To agree, and review the effectiveness of, the procedures for quality assurance of education and training established by providers.
- To validate programmes of education and training leading to QQI awards.
- To establish and review the standards of knowledge, skill or competence associated with awards.
- To make awards and, where appropriate, delegate authority to make awards to providers.
- To determine and monitor policies and criteria for access, transfer and progression.
- To establish a Code of Practice for the provision of education to international learners and the related International Education Mark and to authorise use of the Mark.

In addition, QQI has assumed responsibility for a number of other functions undertaken by its predecessor bodies, and therefore:

- Serves as the national coordinating authority for Europass, ENIC (European Network of Information Centres) and NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre) and as the National Reference Point for vocational education and training.
- Operates Qualifications Recognition Ireland as a single point of contact for all queries concerning the recognition of international awards.
- Maintains Qualifax, the National Learners Database containing information on approximately 18,000 programmes of education and training.
- Provides advice and support to this Department and to the Department of Justice and Equality regarding the regulatory reforms to the student immigration system for international education.
- Provides the secretariat for EQAVET (European quality assurance in vocational education and training).

QQI currently provides its services to almost 600 further education and training providers, over 60 higher education and training providers and over 100 English language training providers, leading to awards at every level of the National Framework of Qualifications.

Allocation 2016: €5.4m
Staff numbers: Approx. 78 WTE
Chair: Gordon Clark
CEO: Padraig Walsh

Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) and the National Access Office

The Higher Education - Equity of Access and Qualifications Section exercises significant oversight responsibility for the funding, policy and operation of the National Access Office (part of the HEA) and SUSI (part of CDET), although the direct corporate responsibility for the HEA and CDET lies with other sections of the Department.

The National Access Office was established by the Department as an office within the Higher Education Authority in 2003. The Office manages the Student Assistance Fund and the Fund for Students with Disabilities on behalf of the Department. It also provides advice to the Department to inform policy development and works with Higher Education Institutions to implement agreed policy at institutional level.

Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), a unit of City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDET), was designated as the appointed awarding authority for student grants on 22nd May 2012 as set out in the Student Support Act. The Department provides funding to the CDET for the administration of student grants by SUSI.

Higher Education - Policy and Skills

1. Unit / Section Overview

The Higher Education Policy and Skills Unit (HEPSU) has responsibility for development, review and implementation of higher education policy and for the legislation governing the sector. Higher education policy is focused **on implementation of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030**, which was published in January 2011. The Strategy sets out a comprehensive roadmap for reform of the higher education system, with the aim that the system becomes more performance-oriented and more flexible and responsive, while the diversity of mission is retained and enhanced.

HEPSU also leads on the development and implementation of higher education responses to national skills needs to support sustainable economic development and implementation of activation policy led by the Department of Social Protection. HEPSU also works in collaboration with colleagues from Skills Division and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit on cross-divisional skills policy development. In 2015, HEPSU led on the development of the new **National Skills Strategy 2025 – Ireland’s Future**.

HEPSU is also leading on coordinating a response to the HEA report on the demand and supply of student accommodation, which was published in 2015.

HEPSU also provides the secretariat for the Transitions Group which is leading on the reform programme related to student transition from school to higher education.

Key elements of the Higher Education Reform Programme include:

An overarching system performance framework aligned with performance funding, which sets out national priorities and seven key system objectives for the higher education system against which higher education institutions (HEIs) will be monitored and which forms the basis for the agreement of compacts between the HEA and the HEIs; enhanced teaching, learning and engagement; system development and restructuring including; mergers; regional clusters and reform of the initial teacher education system.

Implementation of the Strategy requires a range of governance, funding and structural reforms which need to be enabled through legislation. The current state of play regarding higher education legislation is as follows:

Technological Universities Bill: This Bill was published in December 2015 and was at Report Stage at the time of dissolution of this Dáil in February 2016.

General Scheme for the Higher Education Reform Bill: the current draft provides for University governing body reform and reform of the HEA. Priority issues for inclusion in the Bill are currently being reviewed, however, the aim is to publish the General Scheme of this Bill in Q2 2016.

The Systems Performance Framework includes 40 indicators by which individual HEI and overall system performance is assessed and reported on through the new Systems Performance Reports. The first of these reports was published in June 2014 and the second Systems Performance Report is currently being drafted by the HEA and it is expected that it will be ready for publication in Q2 2016.

Key elements of the Skills Policy priorities include:

The Higher Education system contributes to meeting Ireland’s human capital needs through both mainstream provision of courses across a wide range of disciplines and through participation in targeted initiatives which seek to address national priorities.

The two main targeted initiatives managed by HEPSU are Springboard+ and the ICT Action Plan 2014 – 2018.

- **Springboard+** provides flexible, free part-time higher education and training courses for unemployed and previously self-employed people who require up-skilling or re-skilling in order to return to sustainable employment. Since 2015, Springboard+ also includes ICT Conversion courses provided for under the ICT Action Plan 2014-2018. The ICT Conversion courses differ from the main Springboard+ programmes in that they are open to individuals regardless of their employment status (i.e. they do not have to be unemployed).
- **ICT Skills Action Plan 2014-2018** has the aim of making Ireland the best location in the world for ICT Skills availability. This includes meeting a target that 74% of demand for high level ICT skills (NFQ level 8 or above) will be met from the Irish higher education system by 2018. The Action Plan includes a range of actions including the ICT conversion programmes mentioned above, incentivizing the provision of additional places on mainstream ICT courses and a range of awareness-raising activities.

HEPSU is also currently working in cooperation with colleagues to develop a **Foreign Languages in Education Strategy** and an **Entrepreneurship Education Policy Statement**.

STAFF (WTEs): 1 PRINCIPAL OFFICER, 2 ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL OFFICERS, 1.8 HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS, 1.8 EXECUTIVE OFFICERS.

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Funding for the Higher Education sector is managed through the Higher Education Research and Finance Section. Funding for Springboard+ and elements of the ICT Action Plan 2014 – 2018 (i.e. ICT conversion courses) are provided for from the National Training Fund and the allocation for these amounts to approximately €27.8 million in 2016.

3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.1 Higher Education Reform Programme: Increasing Accountability

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 sets out a comprehensive roadmap for reform of the higher education system. In order to ensure that the system becomes more performance oriented, more flexible and responsive while its diversity in terms of mission is retained and enhanced, a range of governance, funding and structural reforms are being progressed.

System Performance Framework

A system performance framework covering the period 2014 – 2016 is in place, aligned to performance funding. National priorities of Government, key system objectives and a set of high level indicators have been identified and are being used to evaluate and demonstrate the level of performance of the system and benchmark it internationally in the new system performance reports. The first Higher Education System Performance Report was published in June 2014 and a second report is currently being prepared by the HEA. It is expected that this report will be ready for publication in Q2 2016. There will be a review of the Systems Performance Framework during 2016 with a revised framework put in place for the 2017 – 2019 period. Performance Funding is overseen by Higher Education Research and Finance section and further information on the process is included in their brief.

3.2 Higher Education Reform Programme: System Development and Restructuring

In May 2013, the then Minister set out his response to HEA advice on the future configuration of the higher education system, particularly in relation to the establishment of regional clusters, the implementation of the recommendations of the Initial Teacher Education review and the technological university expressions of interest. The Minister's policy direction is now being implemented.

Process to Apply for Designation as a Technological University

As part of the implementation of the Strategy, the HEA in 2012 published a four-stage process and criteria for applicant groups of institutes of technology wishing to apply to become technological universities. **This process and criteria will be placed on a statutory basis through the enactment of the Technological Universities Bill.**

Initially three consortiums of institutes of technology expressed an interest in applying to become technological universities. A fourth consortium (CUA) expressed an interest in applying to become a technological university in early 2015. These consortia are:

- Dublin Institute of Technology, the Institute of Technology Tallaght and the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown (TU4Dublin)
- Cork Institute of Technology and the Institute of Technology, Tralee (Munster Technological University – MTU)
- Waterford Institute of Technology and Carlow Institute of Technology. (Technological University for the South-East – TUSE)
- Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Sligo Institute of Technology and Letterkenny Institute of Technology (Connacht Ulster Alliance – CUA)

Current Status of Consortia Seeking Designation as a Technological University

At the end of 2014, two of the consortia successfully passed stage 3 of the four-stage process. These are the **TU4Dublin consortium and the MTU consortium**. Both the TU4 Dublin and the MTU consortiums are working towards full merger in 2016. However, the proposed mergers cannot proceed until the Technological Universities Bill has been enacted and the relevant provisions commenced.

The TU projects in Dublin and Munster are complex given that they are programmes of change which impact every aspect of the institutions involved.

With regard to the **Technological University for the South-East**, consisting of Institute of Technology, Carlow (ITC) and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), following the publication of the report (July 2015) on the process of regional engagement, led by Mr. Michael Kelly, a preliminary facilitation process has been underway since September 2015 involving the Chairs and Presidents of both institutions and there has been strong engagement in the process by both parties. This facilitation process involves a series of meetings, and is an important building block in terms of building trust between the parties and in developing a strong working connection. Not all of the facilitative meetings have been scheduled yet so as to allow the participants time to reflect and to complete any tasks required to move the process on. Most recent progress includes a joint meeting held by the Governing Bodies of both institutions. Subsequent to that meeting, WIT Governing Body met and formally lifted the suspension on activities related to the TU project.

Earlier in 2015 the **Connacht-Ulster Alliance**, made up of Galway Mayo Institute of Technology, Sligo Institute of Technology, and Letterkenny Institute of Technology, also expressed in applying to become a technological university. This application was approved to proceed to the next stage in October 2015. In line with the process for designation as a TU, Stage 2 of this process involves the preparation of a plan by the Connacht-Ulster Alliance, to meet the criteria for designation as a Technological University.

Regional Clusters

Regional clusters of institutions in identified regions have been established and regional plans and structures are being developed focusing initially on shared academic planning and access, progression and transfer pathways in Dublin/Leinster, the South/South East and West/Mid/West. All seven universities, colleges of education and 14 ITs are grouped as follows:

- Dublin I (UCD, TCD, IADT, NCAD, MIE);
- Dublin II (DCU, MDI, SPD, NUIM, AIT, IT Dundalk; DIT, IT Tallaght, ITB);
- Mid-West (UL, LIT, MIC);
- West/North-West (NUIG, GMIT, LKIT, IT Sligo, St. Angela's College);
- South (UCC, CIT, IT Tralee, WIT, IT Carlow).

The HEA have recently led on a consultation process regarding progressing in developing the regional clusters and future priorities, particularly in the context of the development of the new Regional Skills Fora being led by DES and also in the broader context of broader policy

initiatives have a strong regional development focus (e.g. Regional Action Plans for Jobs and Innovation 2020). Further work will be undertaken in 2016 in reviewing and developing policy in this area.

Initial Teacher Education Reform

The re-configuration of the HE system also incorporates the rationalisation of initial teacher education recommended in a report published by the HEA and the recommendations of the review of creative arts provision in the Dublin area published in 2012. Progress has been made on all six centres of excellence for teacher education. Further details are included in the section under Teacher Education.

3.3 Higher Education Reform Programme: Legislative

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 sets out a comprehensive roadmap for reform of the higher education system. In order to ensure that the system becomes more performance oriented, more flexible and responsive while its diversity in terms of mission is retained and enhanced, a range of reforms need to be enabled through legislation.

In summary – legislation is required to provide for:

- legal consolidation and mergers within the institute of technology sector;
- Process to allow for the designation as a technological university after the published process and criteria have been met.
- Strengthening and reforming the governance structures and accountability of higher education institutions (smaller, less representative, skills based, external majority governing boards);
- Putting in place a new funding, performance and accountability framework for the system that provides statutory underpinning for respective roles, functions and powers of the Minister and a new Higher Education Authority for the governance and regulation of the system;

Current Position:

The Technological Universities Bill (TU Bill) was approved by Government, and published, in December 2015. The main purpose of the Bill is to provide for the establishment of technological universities. The Bill also provides for the revision of the governance arrangements of the Dublin Institute of Technology and the institutes of technology under the Dublin Institute of Technology Act 1992 and the Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 respectively.

The TU Bill passed Committee Stage in the Dáil on 17 December 2015 was at Report Stage at the time of dissolution of this Dáil in February 2016. Subject to Government approval, it is intended that the TU Bill will be enacted during 2016 to enable the first mergers in the institute of technology sector to take place and for the merged institutes to proceed to the next stage of the process.

General Scheme for the Higher Education Reform Bill: University governing body reform and Reform of the HEA will be provided for in a Higher Education Reform Bill. The policy priorities to be addressed in the Bill are being reviewed and the aim is to publish the General Scheme of this Bill in Q2 2016.

3.4 Higher Education Reform Programme: Teaching, Learning and Engagement

The key initiatives in this area include the development of the new National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, the new National Employer Survey and the new National Student Survey.

The **National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning** was established in 2012 and is a key system-level infrastructure for the enhancement of teaching and learning in Irish higher education. The National Forum is engaged in a range of activities aimed at providing students with the highest quality teaching and learning experience. Its focus is on ‘adding value’ by providing a structure through which institutional and network initiatives can be synergised and leveraged to support a vibrant community of grass-roots’ activity.

The Department is committed to ensuring learners are provided with more flexible learning options and that they are enabled to move through and across the continuum of education as it suits their education/training needs and requirements through life.

A report on the findings of the **National Employers Survey** was published in May 2015. Overall, in terms of satisfaction with FET and HE graduates, employers were very satisfied with recent recruits across a range of workplace and personal attributes. These included ICT skills; teamwork; communication; adaptability and flexibility; positive attitude and energy. A lower level of satisfaction was noted for foreign language capability, entrepreneurial skills and business acumen/awareness.

In addition, the results of the **Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)** published in November 2015, showed broad satisfaction among HE students with their experience. 68% of all participating students reported positive relationships with teaching staff, finding them to be *available, helpful and sympathetic* (a score of 5 or greater on 7 point scale) and 79% of all participating students selected good or excellent, when asked how they would evaluate their entire educational experience at their institution. 63% of all participating students selected often or very often, when asked if they were improving knowledge and skills that will contribute to their employability.

3.5 National Skills Strategy

The National Skills Strategy (NSS) has recently been launched to provide a framework for skills development that will help drive Ireland’s growth both economically and societally over the next decade. The availability of a well-skilled labour force is key to Ireland’s continued recovery and return to economic growth. The availability of “talent” is a key selling point for Ireland in attracting foreign direct investment to locate in Ireland. The quality of the education and training system is also one of the “quality of life” factors impacting on our ability to attract highly-skilled individuals to live and work in Ireland.

The new NSS has been developed in the context of significant reform in the education and training sector to ensure a more dynamic, responsive and high quality system that provides all learners with the knowledge and skills they need to participate fully in the economy and society. The reform programme and NSS recognise the importance of all levels of education and training as integral elements of a framework for lifelong learning and skills development which starts through quality early childhood provision and is continually developed during school years and in learning beyond school.

The NSS sets out a wide range of actions under six key objectives aimed at improving the development, supply and use of skills over the next decade. The objectives are:

- Education and training providers will place a stronger focus on providing skills development opportunities that are relevant to the needs of learners, society and the economy
- Employers will participate actively in the development of skills and make effective use of skills in their organisations to improve productivity and competitiveness.
- The quality of teaching and learning at all stages of education will be continually enhanced and evaluated
- People across Ireland will engage more in lifelong learning
- There will be a specific focus on active inclusion to support participation in education and training and the labour market.
- We will support an increase in the supply of skills to the labour market.

The Strategy encompasses a range of existing actions which are already underway (e.g. rollout of Síolta and Aistear in Early Childhood Education, Junior Cycle Reform, development of the new Apprenticeship model and implementation of the Further Education and Training Strategy and Higher Education Strategy to 2030) and sets out new actions in each priority area. New actions include:

- The production of employability statements by further education and higher education institutions;
- The development of a new Entrepreneurship Education Policy Statement and guidelines for schools to support the delivery of Entrepreneurial Education and experiential learning opportunities;
- A full review of guidance services, tools and resources to ensure they are fit-for-purpose;
- Support for 50,000 apprenticeship and traineeship places up to 2020. Review of progress will take place in 2020 with a view to setting new ambitious targets for the period to 2025;
- A review of the school leaving age with a view to increasing it; and
- Promotion of lifelong learning to all people in Ireland and a target to increase participation from 6.7% in 2014 to 10% in 2020 and to 15% by 2025.

The Strategy also provides for the establishment of a new National Skills Council to oversee research, to provide input to the prioritisation of identified skills needs and how to secure delivery of identified needs. A new Unit is being established in the Department to provide support to the Council, to continue to develop the new Regional Skills Fora, give a dedicated

focus to enterprise engagement and enhance the coordination of responses to identified skills needs across the economy.

3.6 Higher Education contribution to national skills needs

One of the core system objectives for higher education is to meet Ireland's human capital needs across the spectrum of skills and to contribute to sustainable economic growth, activation, job retention and job creation.

The Systems Performance Report published in 2014 shows that the system has responded strongly to the challenges posed during the economic crisis, with student intake increasing at the same time as budgets were being reduced. However, concerns have been raised about the impact on quality and this and related issues are being considered by the Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education (see section on Higher Education Research & Finance for further detail on this project).

In terms of higher education graduate output, the Employer Survey findings highlight lower rates of satisfaction for graduate attributes related to business acumen, entrepreneurship and foreign languages. Another concern was that there will not be sufficient quality graduates available in the next three to five years.

Other concerns raised in various fora and in the submissions received during the consultation process for the development of the new National Skills Strategy include the responsiveness of education and training providers to emerging employer needs and the quantity of graduates in STEM disciplines and in particular ICT graduates.

As outlined above, there are a number of initiatives underway across the education and training sector that relate to these issues including the development of the Foreign Languages in Education Strategy, the development of the Regional Skills Fora and the implementation of the ICT Action Plan 2014 – 2018.

However, within each of these issues are a complex set of variables that the education and training system can contribute to resolving but cannot resolve alone. For instance, employers and other stakeholders need to raise awareness of the need for particular languages combined with other skillsets (e.g. ICT and German or Spanish and Marketing) and the level of competence required for particular occupations. More also needs to be done to address the cultural issues around language acquisition. Employers need to engage with education and training providers to create a shared understanding of their skills needs and how they can be addressed. Careers in STEM need to be promoted, particularly to women.

A number of targeted initiatives are also in place across FET and HE to meet skills demands in growing areas of the economy and also to support activation of the long-term unemployed. Against the background of the economic crisis, the higher education system has performed well in meeting significantly increased demand, in addressing areas of specific skills needs and in delivering labour market activation programmes.

Springboard was introduced in 2011 as part of the Government's Jobs Initiative and was renamed to **Springboard+** in 2015 following the incorporation of ICT Conversion courses. The Springboard element of the programme targets funding to provide free part-time higher education courses to enable unemployed people who have lost jobs in sectors where employment levels will not return, to upskill or reskill in areas where there are identified skills shortages or employment opportunities. Courses are delivered in areas such as ICT, high-end manufacturing, international financial services and skills to trade internationally. Entrepreneurship courses are also delivered to support those people who wish to start their own business. **ICT Conversion Courses** are open to individuals who meet the qualification criteria regardless of employment status. All courses approved for funding under Springboard+ are selected by an independent panel with industry and educational expertise having regard to guidance from the **Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN)** on current and future skills needs of enterprise.

The cumulative spend on Springboard, ICT Conversion Courses and Springboard+ from 2011 to end 2015 is just over €98.6 million. Total number of course participants on all programmes since 2011 to end 2015 is 31,980.

Both Springboard and the ICT skills conversion programme are eligible for ESF funding under the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2014-2020 (HCIOP).

Springboard+ is monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. A scan carried out by the Department of Social Protection in 2015 indicates that 74% of all Springboard+ participants 2011 – 2014 are no longer on the Live Register. A survey of ICT skills conversion graduates indicates that 87% of graduates are in employment within 18 months of completing their course.

Current Position:

Springboard+ 2015 was launched in May 2015 and provided for 9,000 places on over 285 programmes in nearly 50 providers around the country. The Exchequer invested over €27m in 2015 for these programmes from the National Training Fund. To-date some 7,000 places have been filled on Springboard+ 2015 and it is unlikely at this stage that all 9,000 places will be filled (intake is still continuing), particularly in the context of reducing levels of unemployment.

A call for proposals has issued to education providers for **Springboard+ 2016** courses. The closing date for receipt of proposals is 11th March and Springboard+ 2016 is due to be launched in May 2016 (date TBC – but probably week of 30th May and is subject to Ministerial availability). The call includes a new pilot part-time ICT Conversion Course which will be provided over two years.

ICT Skills

In March 2014, the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation, launched a new ICT Skills Action Plan 2014 - 2018. This was developed in close collaboration with industry. The plan sets out a collaborative, system-wide response, across Departments, agencies and the education and enterprise sectors aimed at:

- Building the domestic supply of graduates from the education system; and
- Ensuring Ireland maintains a strong ICT talent pool and promoting Ireland internationally as a centre for high-level ICT skills.

A range of actions have been agreed between Departments, agencies and industry, under three main areas of focus:

- Increase output of high-level graduates
- Enhance ICT capacity and awareness in the education system
- Ensure Ireland maintains a strong ICT talent pool and promote Ireland as a centre for high level ICT skills.

Key education actions include: additional incentivised undergraduate places in ICT-related areas and ICT Skills conversion programmes which include 3 to 6 month placements with an industry partner.

Current Position:

Implementation of the **ICT Skills Action Plan** is underway, with oversight of a high level steering group comprising D/ES, D/JEI and representatives from industry and the education sector. HE graduate output met 58% of demand for high level ICT graduates in 2014 and it is projected that 59% will be met in 2015. Based on current projections the 74% target will not be achieved in 2018. The DES is currently reviewing what additional measures can be taken to achieve the target in 2018. As referred to above, the Springboard+ 2016 call includes a request for proposals for places on a new pilot part-time ICT conversion course to broaden the pool of potential candidates. Candidates enrolling on such a course in 2016 would graduate in 2018.

3.7 Improving the Transitions from School to Higher Education

A Transitions Steering Group is chaired by the Secretary General and has membership from Department of Education and Skills, the NCCA, HEA, SEC, QQI, IUA and IOTI. During 2015, this collaboration resulted in an ambitious package of reforms, including changes to the grading scheme for the Leaving Certificate and how points will be awarded for those grades by the CAO, both of which will come into force in 2017.

From 2017 all students' results will be graded according to a new grading scheme for the Leaving Certificate, which will reduce the number of grade bands from 14 to 8 at each level. Related to the new grading scheme, a revised Common Points Scale has also been introduced for students sitting their Leaving Certificate in 2017.

In addition, universities and institutes of technology are working to broaden entry routes into higher education, which should serve to reduce the pressure on students to achieve very high points scores, and allow them time to more informed choices about their studies. These reforms, will, when implemented together, contribute towards easing the pressure experienced by students under the current system, improve their overall learning experience, and provide them with a better foundation for third level education. Taken together with

further work on transitions and related reforms in curriculum and assessment at post-primary level, will hopefully serve to increase popularity and competence in STEM subjects - science, technology, engineering and maths.

3.8 Student Accommodation

Background:

The significant increase in demand for higher education places over the past decade is projected to continue beyond the mid-2020s. This has had a very positive impact on Irish economic performance through the supply of well-educated and skilled graduates to meet the demand of the labour market. However this increase in student numbers, including international students, is creating an unprecedented demand for suitable, affordable student accommodation.

The lack of such accommodation has become a feature of media coverage in recent years particularly in the Autumn as the new academic year commences. The sourcing of suitable accommodation is complicated by the timeline between the Leaving Certificate results, the CAO outcome, acceptance and start of semester. This leaves a very short timeframe for students and their families to identify and access accommodation.

Current Position:

The HEA completed a report on supply and demand and this report was published by the Minister in September 2015. The report, "Student Accommodation: Demand & Supply" sets out the forecasted demand for student accommodation which will be greater than the available supply in certain areas of the country in the coming years.

There are a number of significant challenges in addressing the issues around student accommodation. One of the major challenges, specifically for Institutes of Technology, is that they are precluded by legislation from entering into loan arrangements in the absence of an appropriate agreed borrowing framework. As IOT borrowing would be considered to form part of general government debt, there has been no sanction forthcoming for an agreed borrowing framework for IOTs. This restricts their ability to borrow to fund the building of student accommodation, even where the projects will have a guaranteed income stream available to fund repayments.

Some IOTs (specifically DIT) have been able to fund projects through the utilisation of PPP's. One of the major benefits of PPP projects is that the funding is not considered to form part of general government debt or borrowing. However, the utilisation of PPP's is being closely examined at a European level, and it is getting more difficult to get sanction to proceed with new PPP projects.

A further issue is the lack of available capital funding from central Exchequer funding. The Government's capital infrastructure plan has been published through to 2021 and there is no scope, at this point, for additional capital funding to be made available to fund the construction of student accommodation.

Next Steps:

There are thirteen recommendations in the report and relate to a range of issues including capital financing, tax considerations and planning issues, as well as support for the rent-a-room scheme. Two immediate actions were taken at the time of publication of the report. Firstly, a grant of €30,000 was allocated to the Union of Students' in Ireland (USI) to progress short-term solutions for students in need of accommodation. This funding will allow USI to develop their homes.usi.ie website, to communicate more effectively to student and homeowners, and to carry out research into related issues.

Secondly, an inter-departmental steering group was established to oversee follow up on the issues and recommendations in the report. The first meeting of which took place on 1 October 2015. The group is chaired by Mary Doyle, Deputy Secretary and includes officials from this Department, the Higher Education Authority, Department of Finance, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and Department of Environment and Local Government, as well as representatives of the higher education sector and a student representative from USI.

This group will provide a coordinating mechanism to ensure that the higher education institutions have access to information on new potential funding and delivery models to support the delivery of student accommodation projects in the coming years.

Higher Education, Research and Financial Section

1. Unit / Section Overview

The Higher Education (Research and Finance) Section is responsible for the development and implementation of funding policy, for formulating and reviewing the budgetary allocations for the provision of higher education and for research funding and policy in approved institutions in the state.

This involves financial management and reporting on the funding framework that combines a system grant funding model with the Free Fees schemes; the provision of funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct allocation to institutions; overview and liaison with the HEA who deal with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on a day-to-day basis; direct funding to non HEA designated HEIs; review and development of robust systems of monitoring and evaluation to promote accountability within the institutions, including compliance with Code of Governance requirements; ongoing impact of changes in legislation (both Irish and EU) on the free fees schemes; input to and implementation of national research policy; ongoing review of DES funded research programmes to determine their effectiveness; and national representation in the Bologna Process.

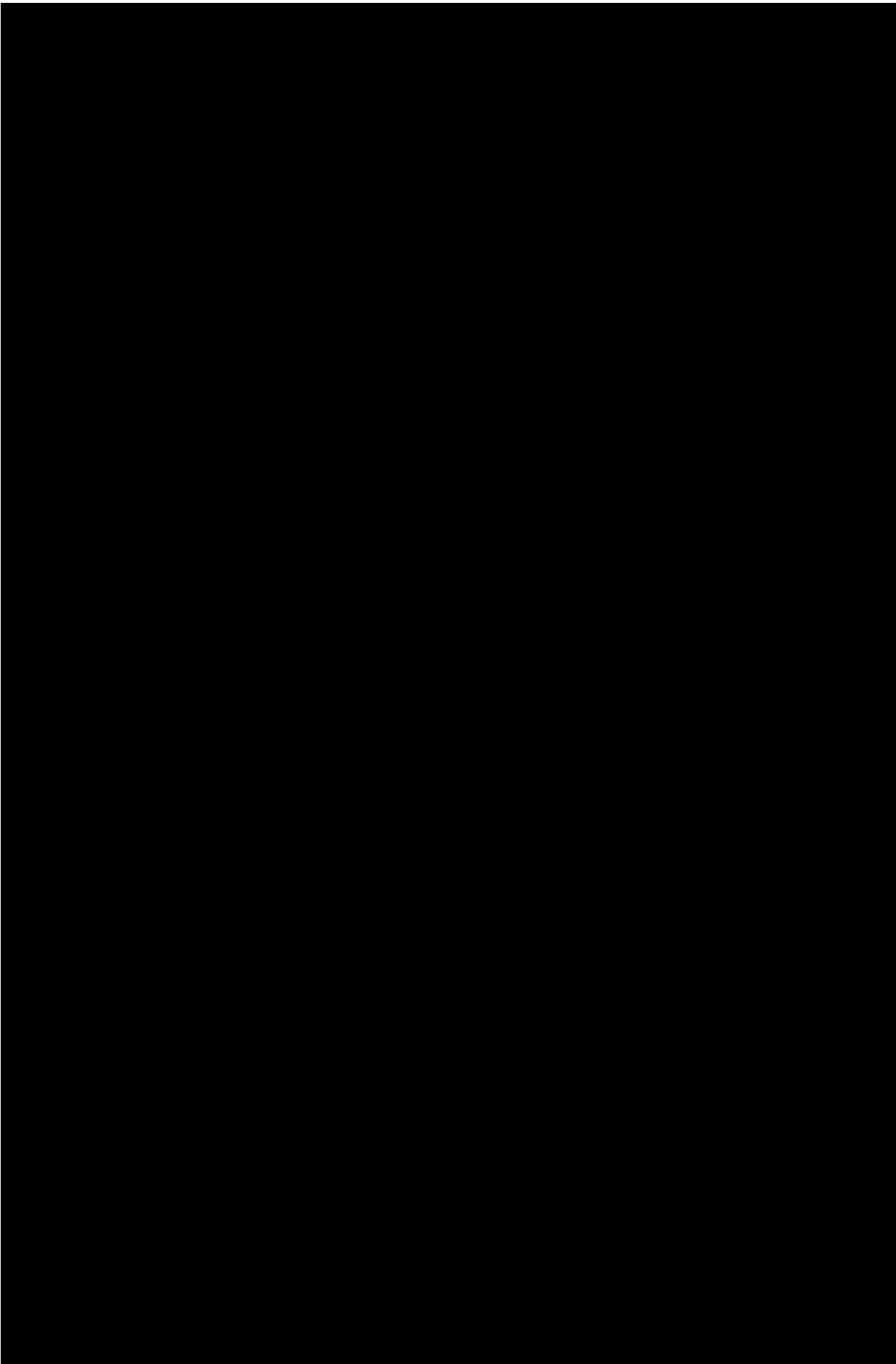
STAFF

1 Principal Officer, 1.7 Assistant Principal Officers, 2 Higher Executive Officers, 2 Executive Officers and 1 CO.

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Service	Outturn 2013	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015
Recurrent funding to Higher Education Institutions funded by the HEA (Univs/IoTs/Others)	€1,011,987,000	€938,943,000	€922,849,000
Recurrent funding to Higher Education Institutions funded directly by the Department	€31,994,708	€30,173,207	€28,533,185
Research	€37,590,854	€37,600,000	€37,600,000

3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES



4. OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

4.1 ISSUE: Higher Education Funding

BACKGROUND:

The Department provided nearly €1 billion in 2015 in direct funding to higher education institutions for current and capital purposes.

Recurrent Funding

The Department allocates recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) who then apportions funding between the universities, institutes of technology and other designated colleges.

Recurrent funding to the HEA designated institutions (Universities, Institutes of Technology and designated institutions) to cover block grant and free tuition fees amounts will amount to over €928 million this year (2016). Recurrent funding to institutions in 2015 amounted to over €923 million. This has fallen from a level of €1.4 billion in 2008.

This reduction has been offset by public sector pay cuts and the rise in the student contribution (which currently stands at €3,000), but has still resulted in a net reduction in core funding per student (22%) given the scale of increase in student numbers (15%).

The Employment Control Framework has led to a reduction of 2,000 staff (12%) from the sector since 2008.

Additional state funding of €2m is being made available to the sector in 2016 to develop Technological Universities in Dublin, Munster and the South-East.

CURRENT POSITION:

The sector has shown itself to be flexible and dynamic over the recent period and has continued to offer high quality programmes and undertake world class research. Surveys of both students and employers in the last year have confirmed high levels of satisfaction with the system.

As part of the National Strategy for Higher Education, consolidation is taking place across the system with 39 institutions consolidating to 25 in the first phase. This includes the creation of centres of excellence in teacher education and the consolidation of the Institute of Technology sector. Rationalisation is also occurring across the smaller third level colleges.

Another key reform is the creation of 5 regional clusters which will see institutions working together in their regions to enhance progression and transfer pathways and develop greater co-ordination of academic provision. This will bring significant benefits to students and will create centres of academic excellence at undergraduate level, remove unnecessary

duplication of provision and offer a co-ordinated approach to research and doctoral programmes.

There are a range of other national initiatives underway which are seeking to ease the financial pressure on institutions including the development of shared services and shared procurement agreements, and supports to capitalise on external funding sources such as EU research funding and international student markets.

NEXT STEPS:

Await recommendations of the Future Funding Group.

4.2 ISSUE: Strategic Dialogue/Performance Funding

BACKGROUND:

In 2013, the Minister set out an overarching framework to assess system wide performance. The HEA, using its new performance funding approach, engages with HEIs to assess performance, and reports to the Minister on the outcomes. The first such report was presented in April 2014.

CURRENT POSITION:

The HEA is currently nearing the completion of the second phase of performance funding. This has involved:

- Institutional self-reporting on agreed HEI compacts
- HEA and external expert review of reports
- Strategic Dialogue meetings with HEIs to discuss particular issues of concern

NEXT STEPS:

On foot of these steps the HEA has now set out preliminary assessments of HEI performance, and in some cases, where performance has not been to expected standards, has indicated that a funding penalty may apply in respect of 2016. HEIs have been invited to provide feedback to the HEA on any aspects of this preliminary assessment. The HEA will take this into account when making final allocations.

4.3 ISSUE: Student Contribution

BACKGROUND:

A Student Contribution of €2,000 was first introduced in higher education with effect from the 2011/12 academic year. The charge replaced the previous Student Services Charge (which stood at €1,500) and applies to all students who benefit under the free fees

schemes. The contribution has increased each year since its introduction and currently stands at €3,000 for the 2015/16 academic year.

The contribution is paid by the Exchequer for those students who qualify under the Department's Student Grant Scheme. In addition, tax relief provisions were put in place which provide for tax relief at the standard rate of tax for full-time fees in excess of €3,000. HEIs also have provisions in place to allow students to pay the contribution in two moieties.

CURRENT POSITION:

Budget 2016 did not include any increase to the Student Contribution for the 2016/17 academic year.

NEXT STEPS:

Await recommendations of the Future Funding Group.

4.4 ISSUE: New Employment Control Framework for HE Sector

BACKGROUND:

Since the introduction of the moratorium on public sector recruitment, an Employment Control Framework (ECF) has been in place for the higher education sector which provides institutions with considerable flexibility to fill vacancies, through recruitment or promotions on the basis of meeting an overall ceiling of posts. The current ECF, agreed for the period 2010 to 2014, remains currently in place.

The higher education sector has met, and indeed exceeded, all the required reductions in posts since the introduction of the ECF.

CURRENT POSITION:

In Budget 2015, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform announced that the existing ECFs and associated moratoriums would be lifted and replaced with a system of delegated sanction for recruiting and promoting up to Principal Officer level, subject to adherence by Departments to binding three year pay ceilings and ongoing compliance with Workforce Planning requirements. In light of this announcement a new Framework for the higher education sector will be put in place shortly.

NEXT STEPS:

New Framework to be agreed and implemented in 2016.

4.5 ISSUE: National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning

BACKGROUND:

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning was established in 2012 and is the key system-level infrastructure for the enhancement of teaching and learning in Irish higher education. The National Forum is engaged in a range of activities aimed at providing students with the highest quality teaching and learning experience. Its focus is on 'adding value' by providing a structure through which institutional and network initiatives can be synergised and leveraged to support a vibrant community of grass-roots' activity.

CURRENT POSITION & NEXT STEPS:

Work in 2016 will include the formulation of a professional development framework for those who teach in higher education. This will support the implementation of the National Forum's "A Roadmap For Enhancement In A Digital World 2015–2017", which was published in 2015, enhancing the skills base for engagement with digital technologies and pedagogies. The National Forum's new enhancement theme is, 'assessment for learning', given how students are assessed has a profound impact on what they learn and how they learn.

4.6 ISSUE: Research

BACKGROUND:

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 emphasises the key linkages between teaching and research, and the role research plays in the quality of teaching and learning in the formation of students. The Strategy recognises the wide ranging benefits from research investment – improving the quality of education for all students, developing a cadre of highly trained PhD graduates, producing new knowledge to address national and international problems, enhancing international competitiveness, and informing public opinion.

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

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

CURRENT POSITION:

The Innovation 2020 Implementation Group will have its first meeting in February 2016 and will be responsible for overseeing implementation of the various actions under the Strategy.

NEXT STEPS:

Commence work towards implementing appropriate actions.

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Name of Body: Higher Education Authority (HEA)

Main responsibilities: The HEA is the statutory funding authority for the universities, institutes of technology and a number of other designated institutions and is an advisory body to the Minister for Education and Skills in relation to the higher education sector. The HEA was established with the enactment of the Higher Education Authority Act 1971. The functions of the HEA as defined in that and subsequent acts include:

- *Furthering the development of higher education;*
- *Assisting in the co-ordination of State investment in higher education and preparing proposals for such investment;*
- *Promoting an appreciation of the value of higher education and research;*
- *Promoting the attainment of equality of opportunity in higher education;*
- *Promoting the democratisation of the structure of higher education;*
- *Conducting reviews of the strategic plans and equality policies and to publish reports of such reviews;*
- *Promoting attainment and maintenance of excellence in learning, teaching and research in higher education;*
- *Allocating moneys provided by the Oireachtas to publicly funded institutions;*
- *Ensuring proper oversight of the governance of the higher education sector;*
- *Regulatory oversight of the higher education system.*

Allocation 2016: The 2016 provisional allocation of funding is €5.729m

Staff numbers: The actual staffing numbers 31st December 2015 was 60.3 (whole time equivalents)

Name of Body: Irish Research Council (IRC)

The IRC is a sub-board of the HEA. The IRC remit is to support and enhance human capital development, in particular at postgraduate and early stage postdoctoral researcher levels, and to encourage independent exploratory research. Its remit covers the full range of disciplines spanning the humanities, social sciences, business, law, sciences, engineering and technology. The Council has also developed a range of enterprise-targeted schemes, which offer researchers the opportunity to complete a Masters or PhD degree while associated with or employed by a private company or public organisation. The Programme facilitates links between academia and industry and provides students with vital enterprise experience.

Allocation 2016: The 2016 provisional allocation of funding is €31.25m.

International Cooperation Unit

1. Unit / Section Overview

The International Co-Operation Section co-ordinates the Department's engagement with high level transnational partners, including the European Union, the North/South Ministerial Council, the OECD, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, to enhance policy co-operation in education and training.

The Section also has responsibility for the development, publication and implementation of the Government's international education strategy.

The Section has responsibility for the delivery of the Department's Foreign Travel Service including Official and Ministerial travel to meetings and on overseas Trade missions.

Key current areas of focus include:

- Implementing the key actions in Ireland's International Education Strategy (2016-2020) once published such as:
 - To promote Ireland as a centre of excellence for international education, by encouraging Academic, Research and Student mobility.
 - Engaging in Ministerial led Trade missions to core markets and supporting inward and outward high level visits to promote the Irish Higher Education and English language sectors.
- Maximising opportunities presented by the EU *Erasmus+* Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport 2014 -2020.
- Managing Ireland's engagement on EU cooperation in education and training at the Council of Education Ministers which are held twice a year.
- To take forward co-operation and common action in education between both parts of the island of Ireland, in the context of the *Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, 1998*, through the **North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC)** and to co-ordinate and develop, within that framework, common policies in the four designated areas of co-operation: special education needs; educational underachievement; teacher mobility; and school, youth and teacher exchanges.
- Acting as Accountable Department for the new PEACE IV EU-funded Programme.
- Administering the programmes and further developing Ireland's policy regarding the secondment of Irish teachers to the European Schools and the placement of English language assistants in schools in our partner countries.
- Managing activities as the National Commission for UNESCO in Ireland to further promote Ireland's interests in the organization.

- Co-ordinating Ireland’s engagement with the OECD as it relates to Education and Training matters

Staffing

WTE Staff

1 PO, 2 APs, AP (Attaché on secondment to Irish Permanent representative in Brussels) 2 HEOs, 4 EOs (1 vacancy), 2.5 SOs (1 vacancy) and 3.6 COs

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
EU International	€2,791,951	€2,799,986	€2,804,000
International Education (C13.2)	€433,695.88	€519,859.79	€585,000
Foreign Travel (X2)	€130,134.11	€146,953.47	€160,000
North South Cooperation Section (General activities)	€9942,555	€624,024	€1,000,000
George Mitchell Scholarship Fund	€337,921	€556,274	€900,000

3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.1 ISSUE: International Education Strategy

Following a public consultation exercise, supplemented with a call for submissions from the education sector, the Department reviewed the International Education Strategy (2010-2015) in the form of a discussion paper which was presented to and agreed by the High level group on International Education in February 2015.

The first draft of the new Strategy (2016-2020) was circulated to and discussed with the High Level Group on International Education in November 2015. It included an assessment of the economic trends and value of international students to the economy. It is clear from

this initial draft that international student numbers have increased substantially in recent years and that the financial benefit to the economy is growing substantially.

The Section is currently in the process of finalising the new Government International Education Strategy (2016-2020) and aims to present it to the Minister and Government, during the first quarter of 2016.

3.2 ISSUE: Education and Training Co-operation at EU Level

Under the EU treaties, Member States have full responsibility for the organisation of their education and vocational training systems, the content of teaching and their cultural and linguistic diversity. The EU's role in education is to encourage and facilitate cooperation and support and supplement the actions of the Member States.

In practice, the European Commission and Member States work together on a range of education and training policy areas according to mutual priorities and with the objective of sharing best practice between national experts under the so-called "open method of coordination". Ireland's contribution is generally managed by our Education Attache based in the Irish Permanent Representation in Brussels.

EU Education Ministers generally meet at the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council in Brussels three times each year to discuss and agree policies for co-operation. These meetings are held at least once during each six-month Presidency.

The next meeting of Education Ministers at the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council is scheduled for the 30 May in Brussels.

3.3 ISSUE: Erasmus+ EU Programme

Erasmus+ is the EU-funded Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport for 2014-2020. It aims to make a contribution to meeting the key challenges facing Europe to boost growth and jobs and to foster social equity and inclusion. Erasmus+ will provide opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad.

At European level, €14.7 billion has been allocated for the seven-year Programme, 40% higher than the level for its predecessor programme, the Lifelong Learning Programme. The allocation for Ireland is expected to be €169m over the seven year duration. The Programme aims to boost skills and employability while supporting the modernisation of education, training and

youth systems. The Higher Education Authority and Léargas are the National Agencies responsible for Erasmus+ in Ireland. Funding is provided for mobilities, organisational partnerships and policy work.

It is anticipated that there will be an increase in funding to the participating countries of the Erasmus+ Programme from 2017 onwards. It is expected that these funding increases will be made known by the EU to the member states in September, 2016.

In 2016, there has been a marked level of interest in this first year of the International Credit Mobility action under Erasmus+ which supports the mobility of staff and researchers in higher education institutions to countries beyond the EU. Twelve Irish institutions have been successful in accessing support in the call which was celebrated at a recent event hosted by the HEA.

The Department's International Co-Operation section is National Authority for the Erasmus + Programme.

3.4 ISSUE: Meetings of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC)

BACKGROUND:

The NSMC, established in December 1999, is the principal institutional framework developed under Strand Two of the *Good Friday Agreement*. The Council comprises Ministers of the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government, working together to take forward co-operation for the mutual benefit of both parts of the island.

The NSMC meets in **Sectoral** format to oversee co-operation in 12 agreed areas, one of which is education. At meetings of the NSMC in **Education Sectoral** format, the Irish Government side is represented by the Minister for Education and Skills, while the Northern Executive is represented by the Minister of Education (currently John O'Dowd MLA (Sinn Féin) and an accompanying Minister, (usually Mervyn Storey, MLA (DUP), Minister for Social Development). The NSMC meets in Education Sectoral format in Armagh about twice a year. All NSMC decisions are arrived at by agreement between the two sides in the Council. The NSMC also meets in **Plenary** format to take an overview of the North/South institutions and co-operation on the island and in **Institutional** format to consider institutional and cross-sectoral issues and to resolve any disagreements. The Minister for Education and Skills usually attends Plenary meetings. The NSMC is supported in all three formats by a Joint Secretariat based in Armagh.

In 2002, the NSMC, in Education Sectoral format, established a number of Joint Working Groups, dealing with special education, pupil attendance/retention, literacy/numeracy, child protection, teacher qualifications/pensions and school, youth and teacher exchange. These were eventually consolidated into two groups – The Educational Underachievement Working

Group and the North South Teacher Qualifications Working Group. Meetings alternate between the two jurisdictions and are co-chaired by officials of the respective Departments of Education.

CURRENT POSITION:

The most recent meetings of the NSMC in Education Sectoral format and Plenary format both took place in Armagh on 11th December 2015.

NEXT STEPS:

The next Education Sectoral meeting is scheduled to take place in Spring 2016 in Armagh. The next NSMC Plenary meeting is scheduled to take place in June 2016 in Dublin.

4. OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

4.1 ISSUE: Europe's Growth Strategy – EU 2020

The EU 2020 strategy is aimed at enabling the EU to make a full recovery from the current economic crisis and help speed up the move towards a greener, more sustainable and more innovative economy.

Education and training feature prominently in the EU 2020 strategy. Under the strategy, Heads of Government agreed to set five EU headline targets for 2020 which constitute shared objectives guiding the actions of the Member States and of the Union in addressing “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”. The targets are in the areas of education, employment, research, climate/energy and poverty.

The ***EU headline 2020 target for Education*** is that:

- the share of early school leavers [18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training] should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation [30-34 age group] should have a tertiary degree.”
- Progress towards achievement of the five headline targets will be measured on an aggregate basis for Europe as a whole. However, in recognition of the different positions of member states, the EU has requested Member States to set their own national targets, which are appropriate to national circumstances.

- Ireland's national targets for early school leaving and tertiary attainment, which are based on a translation of related existing 2020 targets under the National Skills Strategy (NSS) are as follows:
- 8% target for 18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training;
- 60% target for tertiary attainment in the 30-34 age group.

Ireland is showing positive movement towards achievement of these targets.

The percentage of early school leavers in Ireland fell from 11.4% in 2010 to 8.4% in 2015. This represents positive progress towards achievement of our 8% target.

The latest Eurostat data show that Ireland's tertiary attainment rate for 30-34 year olds was 52.6% in 2015. Since 2009, Ireland has the highest rate for this indicator of all EU countries. In the tertiary attainment rate for 25-34 year olds indicator presented by OECD, Ireland ranks 1st in EU and 4th in OECD.

Governance of EU 2020 includes monitoring of growth-enhancing reforms in areas such as innovation, employment, education and social inclusion. Member States are required to report via their National Reform Programmes (NRPs), submitted annually to the European Commission under the EU 2020 process.

Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020)

The ET 2020 strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training is the main instrument to develop exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the education and training systems of the Member States.

As part of the ET 2020 strategic framework, cooperation inter alia takes the form of working groups, which were first established by the Commission under the Education and Training 2010 work programme in order to implement the Open Method of Coordination in education and training.

These working groups offer a forum for the exchange of best practices in the field of education by bringing together, on a voluntary basis, experts from the Member States. The WGs are fora for exchange on key education and training topics, where pertinent examples of policies within the EU will be identified, to draw common principles and factors for challenges and successes transferable to other Member States.

In accordance with the 2015 Joint Report, it has been decided that the working groups will focus during the period 2016-mid-2018 on:

- (1) WG schools,
- (2) WG vocational education and training,
- (3) WG higher education, and
- (4) WG adult learning.
- (5) WG digital skills and competences, and
- (6) WG on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education (follow-up of the Paris Declaration).

The department's International Co-Operation Section has responsibility for contributing to the discussions on what the focus for the working groups should be through participation on the Education Committee and the EU High Level Group on Education and Training. International Co-Operation Section is also responsible for ensuring that Ireland is represented by experts with the appropriate level of skills to give high quality input on these working groups.

4.2 ISSUE: Cooperation between the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the Department of Education Northern Ireland (DE) and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) on Further and Higher Education

BACKGROUND:

The relationship with the **Department of Education Northern Ireland (DE)** is largely governed by the terms of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, 1998 which established the North South Ministerial Council in 1999.

DES and DE take forward co-operation and joint action in primary and secondary education by co-ordinating and developing, within the NSMC framework, common policies in the four designated areas of co-operation: special education needs, educational underachievement, teacher mobility and school, youth and teacher exchanges. DCYA leads on inputs on youth affairs matters at Education meetings.

In 2002 the NSMC established a number of Joint Working Groups comprising officials of the two Departments and related bodies intended to advise on progressing co-operation on special education needs, pupil attendance/retention, literacy/numeracy, child protection, teacher qualifications/pensions and school, youth and teacher exchanges.

CURRENT POSITION:

The two Working Groups currently active are:

[The North South Educational Underachievement Working Group \(NSEUWG\)](#)

This Working Group coordinates joint strategies for tackling educational underachievement amongst children and young people in Ireland and the north of Ireland in line with agreed North South Ministerial Council priorities for the education sector. The NSEUWG assumed co-ordination of the formerly separate joint working groups for literacy and numeracy; attendance and retention; and child protection. It brought together the work of these groups at a strategic level in a concerted and co-ordinated effort to tackle underachievement. The Working Group usually meets twice a year and alternates its meetings between northern and southern venues.

In addressing the challenges posed by educational underachievement/disadvantage the Working Group focused cooperation on the exchange of expertise and experience on current interventions in schools for children who are educationally disadvantaged. The NSMC Education meeting on 11th December 2015 agreed that it was appropriate to take cooperation in this area to the next level to achieve a wider dissemination of the learning to date. Ministers accordingly decided to procure external assistance for the design and delivery of an all-island strategy for the dissemination to schools of best practice in literacy and numeracy based on the work of the schools inspectorates in both jurisdictions; and teacher professional development in respect of tackling barriers in the area of educational achievement. At year's end arrangements were being finalised for the project to commence in early 2016. The estimated cost of the project is €100,000 to be funded on a 50/50 basis by DE Northern Ireland, and the DES. The day to day management of the project including the procurement of external assistance is being led by DE Northern Ireland. It is anticipated that the commission will last for a number of months into 2016. Appropriate mechanisms will be developed to monitor progress, expenditure, quality and expected deliverables. Formal progress reports will be provided to the Ministers and the NSMC.

[The North South Teacher Qualifications Working Group \(NSTQWG\)](#)

The Joint Working Group examines a range of issues related to teacher mobility, including qualifications, induction and probation arrangements. In its most recent inputs to the NSMC the NSTQWG has reported progress on the mutual recognition of teaching qualifications and the facilitation of teacher mobility; the scope for co-operation in training for teachers' continuing professional development, including Irish medium education and the sharing of best practice and research. The Working Group meets approximately twice a year, and alternates its meetings between northern and southern venues.

Officials from across the range of business units within the Departments and bodies under their aegis are actively engaged in an ongoing basis in advancing this co-operative work through extensive formal and informal bi-lateral contacts.

The Education Departments fund separately and jointly some 10 cross-border co-operation and exchange projects managed by parties external to the Departments. These projects are

designed to raise awareness of cultural similarity and difference, increase mutual understanding and promote cross-border co-operation in education. They involve a range of participants and beneficiaries including first and second level schoolchildren, teachers, inspectors, young people, parents and community groups, and other stakeholders in education in Ireland and in Northern Ireland.

The Departments have worked to ensure that supported projects comply with specific criteria set for the award of funding, and that the projects deliver measurable results reaching the maximum numbers of beneficiaries in both jurisdictions. In 2014 and 2015 the Departments ceased joint funding for two-longstanding programmes - the European Studies Programme; and Dissolving Boundaries. Both were considered to have fulfilled their original purpose.

Relations with the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland (DEL)

BACKGROUND:

The Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland (DEL) has responsibility for further/vocational and higher education matters as well as employment matters in NI.

In recent years there has been significant North-South engagement and cooperation on education and skills issues. As well as periodic bilateral Ministerial meetings, meetings take place twice yearly at senior official level between the Department of Education and Skills and the Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland. Following are details of DES/DEL high-level meetings in the last three years:

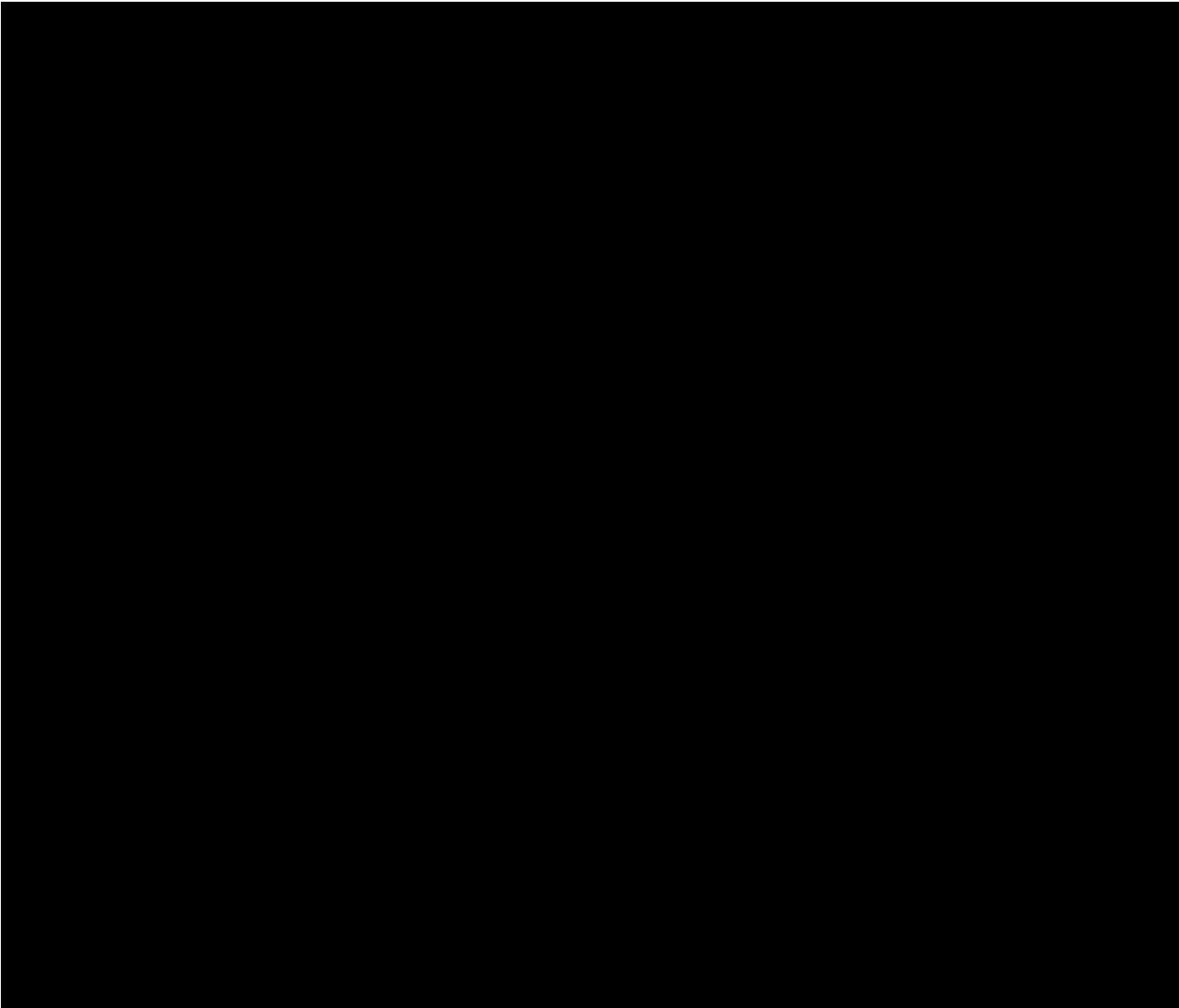
	2012/2013	2014	2015
Ministerial bi-lateral meetings	2nd Nov '12, Armagh	2nd April, Armagh 5th December, Armagh	None
Senior officials meetings	11th Jan, '13 Belfast 13th May, Dublin	13th January, Belfast 19th June, Dublin	27th January, Belfast

These meetings reviewed issues of joint concern and the potential for mutually beneficial cooperation in:

- higher and further education strategies and policies
- legislative and institutional reform
- funding of higher and further education
- access/student mobility issues
- cross-border student flows
- research
- possible collaboration on EU funding programmes.

At institutional level, there is a broad range of cross-border collaboration particularly in research and innovation, which has been supported by EU funding programmes and national research funding programmes in Ireland.

Both the Irish Government side, and the NI Executive, are of the view that it is appropriate to consider the inclusion of higher education within the NSMC framework. However, the timeframe for formalisation of cross-border cooperation on higher education is likely to be subject to the outcome of restructuring of Government Departments in the North ahead of the Assembly elections there in May 2016.



DES/DEL Working Group on Cross-Border Student Flow

In 2014 the Departments agreed to establish a joint working group representative of their further education, higher education, statistical, and North-South coordination functions. The group was tasked with producing:

- the blueprint for a periodic report of student flows setting out the data and an analysis with a view to establishing the nature of, and factors influencing, student choice
- a specific assessment and proposals on further education flows in the North West region.

In June 2015 the Department of Education and Skills, and the Department of Employment and Learning jointly published a paper reporting cross-border undergraduate and post graduate flows in higher education and further education in 2013/2014, which is available on the websites of both Departments.

The Report shows, amongst other things, that applications from Northern Ireland students to Irish institutions have been increasing since 2010. This and future reports will assist policy-makers North and South in better understanding the nature of the student traffic, and student choices, and to inform further measures for re-balancing of cross-border flows.

The North West Gateway Initiative

The North West Gateway Initiative (NWGI) was established in May 2006 to foster and encourage economic growth in the North West area, covering Derry City Council, Limavady Council, Strabane Council and Donegal County Council. While the NWGI has no dedicated funding, it aims to drive synergy in the North West through the effective co-ordination of existing public expenditure. The Initiative has played an important role in providing a focus on the region and in encouraging practical co-operation between Departments and agencies North and South in developing a range of projects:

- Letterkenny IT received €700,000 under the Department of Education and Skills Strategic Innovation Fund to examine the potential for a strategic alliance with University of Ulster.
- The University of Ulster and Letterkenny Institute of Technology jointly developed and are delivering the MSc in Innovation Management in the Public Service.
- £38 million was invested in new building and refurbishment of North West Regional College sites.

After a lull in this initiative, a renewed focus on the North West region emerged through successive Plenary NSMC meetings in 2014 and 2015. At these meetings both administrations reaffirmed their commitment to convene a meeting of Ministers and officials in the North West to consider the future strategic approach to the development of the region. A commitment to hold this meeting is also included in the Stormont House Agreement.

Despite several failed attempts, efforts are on-going to agree a mutually acceptable date for a meeting of Ministers. It is anticipated that the next meeting to be held sometime in 2016 will focus on economic development of the region, which may ultimately draw in interconnected policy areas such as education provision in the region, provision for skills development and pathways to employment.

A paper on the NWGI that was considered at the NSMC on 11th December 2015 focused on the endeavours of Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council to produce a collaborative framework aimed at placing cross-border co-operation on a more formal basis within local government structures. It also set out how they intend to engage the Irish Government and NI Executive in the various initiatives they plan to undertake.

The proposed arrangements set out in the Regional Prospectus will see the establishment of a North West Strategic Growth Partnership (NWSGP) and a North West Regional Development Group (NWRDG). A Regional Parliamentary Reference Group will also be established as part of the proposed structures. The purpose of this group will be to bring local and national politicians from both jurisdictions together to focus on the high-level strategic objectives of the North West region.

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Name of Body: Léargas, the Exchange Bureau. The nine-member Board of Directors is appointed by the Minister and includes two officials of the Department of Education and Skills.

Main responsibilities: Léargas is a company limited by guarantee which manages European, national and international exchange and cooperation programmes in education, training and youth and community work for over 20 years.

It acts as national agency for the majority of the elements of the Erasmus+ programme.

Léargas anticipates receiving €19 million in EU project beneficiary funding in 2016.

It is proposed that Leargas will undertake a lead partner role in the new EU PEACE IV Programme for the period to 2020. Details on its involvement and the cost and staffing implications are being worked on at this time.

Allocation 2016: €1.13 million from the Department of Education and Skills. It draws income towards administrative costs from other sources also, such as the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the EU Commission.

Staff numbers WTE: 28

**SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION: PETER
BALDWIN, ASSISTANT
SECRETARY**

Structure of the Division

Skills Development Division comprises three areas (i) Further Education and Training Section and (ii) ESF/EGF Policy and Operations and (iii) Employer Engagement/Regional Skills Fora Unit. The Employer Engagement/Regional Skills Fora Unit is being reconfigured to support the implementation of the National Skills Strategy in a manner that links Further Education, Higher Education and skills issues involving the wider department.

ESF/EGF Policy and Operations Unit and Structural Funds

1. Unit Overview

The Unit is responsible for both the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) in Ireland. It operates as three distinct entities: the ESF Managing Authority; the EGF Managing Authority and the ESF/EGF Certifying Authority.

Staffing: 11 wtes - 1PO; 2 APs; 1Prof Accountant; 3 HEOs; 3EOs; 1 CO

In addition a separate Unit known as the Structural Funds Unit (operating under the Principal for the Further Education and Training Unit) acts as an Intermediate Body and provides a further layer of management and checks on ESF and EGF programmes and claims.

Staffing: 10 wtes – 1 PO (shared with FET Unit), 2 APOs, 2 HEOs, 4 EOs and one Auditor.

Consideration is being given to the amalgamation of these two Units in the context of the implementation of the new (2014 – 2020) ESF Programme.

ESF:

The European structural and investment funds (ESIFs) are the European Union's main investment policy tool. Partnership Agreements between the European Commission and individual Member States set out the national authorities' plans for the use of ESIF funding, linking the priority investments to the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. There are 5 Coordinated Funds – the ESF; the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); the Cohesion Fund (CF); the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime & Fisheries Fund (EMFF). While the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is the Member State Authority with overall policy responsibility for the ESIF, this Department has primary responsibility for the ESF.

The ESF works by investing in Europe's human capital – its workers, its young people and all those seeking a job. Funding is allocated over 7 year programming periods. The 2014-2020 rules for ESIF funding are set out in the Common Provisions Regulation [EU 1303/2013] while there are also specific rules relating to the ESF [EU 1304/2013]. These Regulations set out the general principles of the management and control systems to be applied to EU funds and the obligation on Member States to ensure that their systems function effectively. Member States are required to designate a Managing Authority (MA), a Certifying Authority (CA) and an Audit Authority (AA) for each ESF Operational Programme. The Partnership Agreement for Ireland 2014-2020 sets out the proposed designation of the Department as fulfilling these roles. The ESF co-financed operations are implemented by the appropriate statutory bodies and the Financial Management and Control system is based on the principle of shared responsibilities by way of delegation and administrative agreements. Each level of the cascade takes responsibility for ensuring that the regulatory requirements are adhered to at its own level.

The overall allocation for the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020 is €1.153 billion, comprising ESF and Exchequer contributions of €542.43m each and an EU Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) budget contribution of €68.145m. The YEI was launched in 2013 to increase the EU financial support available to those regions where youth unemployment was higher than 25% in 2012. It supports the implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes and is delivered using the ESF support framework. The PEIL 2014-2020 was accepted by the EU Commission in February, 2015 and launched in April 2015. It comprises 23 Activities being implemented across a range of bodies – as set out in Annex 1.

During 2007-2013 the ESF was delivered through the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCI OP) with an overall programme allocation of €751m, including 50:50 funding from the EU and the Exchequer (€375m each). The Programme comprised 14 distinct areas of investment which contribute to the Programme's overall objectives, with over 90% of the programme expenditure relating to activities in the education and training sector. €612m of the total €751m expenditure has been certified to date. Expenditure up to the end of 2015 can still be claimed and arrangements for closure of this OP, including the submission of final claims and documentation, are in train.

EGF:

Operational since 2007, the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) is an EU co-funding instrument to assist workers made redundant as a result of globalisation or due to the global financial and economic crisis. Drawing on savings in the EU budget, the EGF has a maximum annual budget of €150m for 2014-2020 which can be approved to fund 60% of the cost of Member State's individual active labour market programmes of guidance, education, training and enterprise supports.

Approved EGF programmes are of 24 months duration. The EU rules on the EGF (2014-2020) are set out in EU Regulation 1309/2013. To be eligible for assistance there must be at least 500 redundancies in a specific company (including suppliers/ downstream producers) in a 4 month period, or at least 500 redundancies in a specific sector in a 9 month period. However, in small labour markets or in exceptional circumstances, applications can be made where these criteria are not entirely met and the Member State can substantiate that there is a serious impact on employment and the local, regional or national economy. Furthermore, in response to the youth unemployment crisis, special arrangements were introduced until the end of 2017, whereby Member States can assist young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) residing in regions eligible under the Youth Employment Initiative up to a number equal to the redundant workers supported.

Ireland has made 10 successful EGF applications, of which 7 are closed and 3 are on-going. Expenditure of €59.7m was certified on the 7 closed programmes (including €38.2m EU co-financing) which collectively represents 61% of the total programme allocations, exceeding the EU average of 57%. Irish applications are submitted to cover as many workers as possible who can meet the strict EGF criteria and who are realistically expected to avail of support by the agencies. However, it is not possible to predict how many workers will actually avail of these supports. This gives rise to the risk of almost inevitable underspending on an approved EGF allocation. Ireland's reimbursement of unused EU co-funding currently stands at a rate

of 40%, ranking us the seventh highest in utilization of the EGF of 19 EU Member States and better than the 43% average reimbursement rate across all participating Member States. Almost 10,000 people have been assisted under the 7 closed programmes and summary details of these programmes are contained in Annex 2.

The 3 current EGF programmes are in respect of:

- Andersen Ireland (jewelry manufacturing-Rathkeale Co. Limerick) to May 2016;
- Lufthansa Technik Airmotive Ireland (Rathcoole, Co. Dublin) to September 2016;
- PWA International (aircraft maintenance - Rathcoole, Co. Dublin) to June 2017.

All 3 programmes avail of the special arrangements whereby a similar number of NEETs can be included. The programmes are implemented by a range of service providers both public and private, with the SOLAS National EGF Coordination Unit coordinating services on the ground and liaising with the redundant workers/NEETs and local service providers.

More recent programmes have taken on board recommendations and experience gained with earlier intervention, greater worker input, front-loading of funding, tailored measures, improved reporting, steering group and technical support services being in place. There is a greater focus on the outcomes of EGF supports with longitudinal surveys being undertaken. In compliance with new EU requirements, an independent audit body was contracted in January 2016 to provide audit opinions on the Andersen Ireland and Lufthansa Technik Airmotive Ireland programmes.

The work of the Unit involves:

- Representing Ireland’s position at EU level in relation to the ESF/EGF;
- Preparing and securing EU approval for ESF Operational Programmes and individual EGF Programmes;
- Managing the implementation of ESF/EGF Programmes across the range of providers and ensuring their proper financial management and compliance with EU and national requirements;
- Processing and certifying claims to the European Commission and dealing with all audit issues; and
- Providing interim and final reports on all activities to the European Commission; Programme Monitoring Committee; Partnership Agreement Monitoring Committee where relevant.

2. Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2013	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015
Subhead B.4.2-	€0.325m	€0.374m	€0.437m

ESF Technical Assistance ³ .			
E.2.1 ESF Receipts	€0m	€22.9m	€27.1m
Subhead B.4.1 - EGF Enterprise Supports ⁴	€0.243m	€0.144m	€0.144m
NTF EGF Payments	€0.429m	€0.889m	€0.079m
E.2.2 EGF Receipts	€0.001m	€0.137m	€0.000m

3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.1 ISSUE: CLOSURE OF THE HCI OP

BACKGROUND:

The Unit seeks to manage the drawdown of available ESF monies to ensure that Ireland's financial commitments under the ESF regulations are met and Ireland receives its maximum ESF allocation over the life of ESF Operational Programmes. Expenditure on the HCI OP ceased at end 2015 and arrangements are in train to close the Programme.

CURRENT POSITION:

The HCI OP 2007-2013 has received €306m (81.5%) from claims submitted to-date. The Commission is currently considering our request to re-allocate funding within the above Programme in order to facilitate maximum drawdown of funds and facilitate closure of the Programme. We expect a positive response and will then seek to ensure that the re-allocated funds are draw down in full.

NEXT STEPS:

Work is ongoing in this closure phase of the HCI OP to claim the remaining €69m EU co-financing based on certified expenditure of €139m, which must be completed by 31 March, 2017.

3.2 ISSUE: MANAGE THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF PEIL 2014-2020

BACKGROUND:

Effective implementation of the PEIL 2014-2020 is necessary to ensure drawdown of available funds from the EU. In line with the investment priorities set out in the ESF Regulation. The key areas chosen for the ESF in Ireland revolve around activation of the unemployed, social

³ relates to the Technical Assistance support for the ESF Operational Programmes and encompasses the costs associated with Programme Monitoring Committee meetings, external evaluations and reviews; information & publicity; audit costs and participation in ESF-related activity nationally and at EU level.

⁴ provides for national co-funding element (currently 40%) required for draw down of EGF funding for EGF programme enterprise supports (mentoring, advice, business planning, priming grant aid) while the NTF EGF meets the national co-funding for approved EGF interventions delivered by SOLAS, higher education institutions (IOTs/universities), ETBs and related technical assistance activities where funding is not provided for such interventions through the national budgets of relevant service providers.

and labour market inclusion, education and youth employment. The full list of activities is attached at Annex 1.

CURRENT POSITION:

The PEIL 2014-2020 was launched in April, 2015. A Programme Monitoring Committee comprising representatives from the ESF Managing Authority, the implementing Departments and Agencies, the ESF Certifying Authority, other relevant Departments and Agencies, the European Commission, the Social Partners and Regional Representatives has been established and met following the launch of the OP in 2015. There are a range of EU requirements for the OP which must be complied with and while progress has been made on a number of them and any statutory deadlines have been complied with, there is ongoing and further work to be completed.

NEXT STEPS:

Service level agreements/administrative agreements setting out the relative roles of the various bodies in the PEIL 2014-2020 are to be finalised and agreed with the relevant bodies and arrangements confirmed to ensure appropriate management and control systems are in place. The beneficiary bodies are pursuing data collection strategies to ensure compliance with the EU information requirements.

3.3 ISSUE: MANAGE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF 3 CURRENT EGF PROGRAMMES

BACKGROUND:

There are 3 current EGF programmes as set out in the following table:

Programme	Allocation	Closure	Target Beneficiaries		Uptake ⁵	
			Workers	NEETs	Workers	NEETs
Andersen	€2.5m	16.5.2016	138	138	132	131
LTAI	€4.2m	19.9.2016	250	200	215	137
PWAI	€0.74m	19.6.2017	108	108	36	

CURRENT POSITION:

To date on the LTAI EGF programme the uptake of supports by NEETs has been challenging with 137 out of 363 persons who were invited to participate, availing of the benefits provided by the programme. Following approval of the PWAI programme, the Department met with the key players such as DSP, ETBs, SOLAS, Skillnets and the community and voluntary sector to consider the optimal approach to engaging NEETs on the new programme and it is expected that the DSP will identify NEETs in the Tallaght and Clondalkin areas to participate in the programme in the coming weeks. Similarly with the other programmes, further liaison with key players is being undertaken to increase participation and take-up of benefits.

While the take-up of EGF measures by workers and NEETs on the Andersen Ireland programme has effectively reached the target levels set out in the EGF application to the EU, related expenditure is running below the level anticipated as persons seek to do shorter

⁵ Andersen Uptake at October 2015; LTAI uptake at December 2015; PWAI uptake at January 2016.

courses in many cases and return quickly to the workforce in the improved economic climate. For example, as at October 2015 only 12 workers out of the entire 171 workforce were still classified as unemployed.

The same lower than anticipated expenditure situation is developing in the LTAI programme, where as at mid-December 2015 some 86% of the targeted number of assisted workers and 69% of the targeted number of assisted NEETs had taken up supports. Lower than expected take-up rates will impact on expenditure levels. As the programmes are still running with public beneficiary bodies funding the cost of EGF measures from national budgets and subsequently submitting expenditure declarations at programme end, it is difficult to accurately forecast the final expenditure.

It must be stressed that final programme expenditure is dependent ultimately on the take-up of measures, and the particular measure type, if any, by many hundreds of individuals on a personalised basis. Moreover, the improving economic climate reflected by 65% of the LTAI workers being in employment at the end of mid-December 2015, would seem to be a factor mitigating against higher programme participation rates.

4. Other significant Issues

4.1 ISSUE: YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE PRE-FINANCING

background:

The EU provides initial pre-financing for Member States' ESF OPs. For the PEIL 2014-2020, this initial pre-financing for Ireland to date amounts to €20.4m and this money has been distributed across the selected activities. However, in the case of the YEI, EU Regulation 2015/779, adopted in May 2015, increased the initial pre-financing rate to 30% of the YEI allocation. This resulted in an additional €19.8m EU receipts being received by Ireland in 2015. The more generous pre-financing was provided in response to the budgetary constraints facing Member States and the urgent need to address youth unemployment. However, in an attempt to ensure that the funding was used for the immediate implementation of the YEI, the Regulation provides that if a Member State does not submit an interim payment application by 23 May 2016 for at least 50% of the additional pre-financing amount, that the Member State must reimburse the Commission the total YEI pre-financing contribution.

Current Position:

Article 135(3) of the Common Provisions Regulation provides that the first application for an interim payment shall not be made before notification to the Commission of the designation of the managing and certifying authorities for the 2014-2020 Programme. This designation is

based on the opinion of an independent audit authority which must be satisfied across a range of criteria that systems are in place to allow the ESF authorities to perform their required functions. The systems designation requirements include the provision of a computerised accounting and information system for EU funds to meet the 2014-2020 functionality requirements. In this regard, Article 122(3) of the CPR requires Member States to ensure that, by 31.12.2015, all exchanges of information between beneficiaries and a managing authority, a certifying authority, an audit authority and intermediate bodies can be carried out by means of electronic data exchange systems (known as E-Cohesion).

Ireland is developing a national IT system to meet the 2014-2020 requirements for a number of ESIF funds. An IT system implementation group was established in September 2014 and is chaired by D/PER, as the Department with lead responsibility, and we have a representative on this group. While the RFT for the IT system issued on 4th March 2016, it will not be possible for Ireland to comply with the necessary requirements to make an interim claim by 23 May 2016. This will result in the €19.8m additional pre-financing provided and held in a Departmental Suspense Account, being reimbursed to the Commission. Such a reimbursement will not result in a loss of any EU monies for the Exchequer as the full YEI allocation of €68m to Ireland is still available to drawdown once fully claimed before year-end 2018. Sufficient YEI claims before year-end 2018 are expected to drawdown all available YEI funds.

Next Steps:

In late January 2016, the Commission raised the possibility of designating the authorities in advance of the E-Cohesion system being in place and using the pre-existing system to make a claim. However having considered the current state of play and the various tasks to be completed for closure of the 2007-2013 claim, we have re-iterated our position to the Commission that we will not be making a claim by 23 May 2016. We are fully engaging with D/PER and participating in the work of the Project Board/Project Team to realise the roll-out of the new system, by end November 2016 as stipulated in the RFT.

4.2 ISSUE: PROSPECTIVE EGF APPLICATIONS

BACKGROUND:

The EGF MA monitors collective redundancy situations with a view to identifying further potential EGF applications. Calls were considered in 2015 for EGF support for workers being made redundant at Bose in Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan and potentially at Roche Ireland Ltd. in Clarecastle, Co. Clare. The Bose case was not considered sustainable for EGF support and the Roche Ireland Ltd. case is being examined currently but does not appear to have EGF sustainability either. Both sets of redundancy encompassed smaller cohorts than the required

500 redundancies and would have had to be applied for under the exceptional circumstances provision of the EU Regulations had sustainable cases been feasible.

Due to Ireland's improving economic situation after the global financial and economic crisis in 2008, it is becoming arguably more difficult to sustain prospective EGF applications as the EU budgetary authorities become more concerned at the increasing number of exceptional circumstances cases for which there is a limited budget of 15% of the total annual €150m fund.

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

N/A

PEIL 2014-2020	ESF	YEI	National	TOTAL:
	2014-20	2014-15		€m.
Priority 1: Promoting the attainment of sustainable and quality employment through relevant upskilling measures and supporting labour mobility.				
Access to employment for job-seekers and inactive people, including the long-term unemployed and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility;				
ETB Training for the Unemployed	122.851		122.851	245.702
Springboard	20.797		20.797	41.594
ICT Skills Conversion Course	4.203		4.203	8.407
LMETF (Momentum)	13.333		13.333	26.667
Intra EU Mobility	1.350		1.350	2.700
Transnational	0.250		0.250	0.500
Totals (Priority1)	162.785		162.785	325.570
Priority 2: Promoting Social Inclusion and combating discrimination in the labour market				
Active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability;				
Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)	15.000		15.000	30.000
Youthreach	119.316		119.316	238.632
Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs)	36.401		36.401	72.802
Young Persons Probation (YPP) projects	5.820		5.820	11.640
Social inclusion of Prisoners/Ex-offenders	1.163		1.163	2.325
Disability Project	5.000		5.000	10.000
Transnational	0.250		0.250	0.500
Sub Priority total:	182.949		182.949	365.898
Combating all forms of discrimination and promoting equal opportunities;				
Integration and employment of Migrants	1.663		1.663	3.325
Tus Nua project	1.196		1.196	2.393
Gender Equality	5.500		5.500	11.000
Equality mainstreaming	2.500		2.500	5.000
Sub Priority total:	10.859		10.859	21.718
Totals (Priority 2)	193.808		193.808	387.616
Priority 3: Investing in Education, Training and Life Long Learning with a view to upskilling and re-skilling the labour force				
Improving the quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increasing participation and attainment levels, especially for disadvantaged groups;				
Third Level Access	11.200		11.200	22.400
Sub Priority total:	11.200		11.200	22.400
Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences;				
BTEI	50.470		50.470	100.940
Adult Literacy	45.779		45.779	91.558
Transnational	0.250		0.250	0.500
Sub Priority total:	96.499		96.499	192.998
Totals (Priority 3)	107.699		107.699	215.398
Priority 4: Youth Employment Initiative				
Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee;				
Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) Scheme	1.549	1.549	1.549	4.648
JobsPlus Incentive Scheme	2.664	2.664	2.664	7.992
Tus	11.782	11.782	11.782	35.347
JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme	19.080	19.080	19.080	57.240
Youthreach	26.625	26.625	26.625	79.876
Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)	2.000	2.000	2.000	6.000
LMETF Momentum	4.444	4.444	4.444	13.333
Totals (Priority 4)	68.145	68.145	68.145	204.436
Priority 5: Technical Assistance				
Technical assistance for OP	10.000		10.000	20.000
Totals (Priority 5)	10.000		10.000	20.000
	ESF	YEI	M.F	Overall:
Total OP:	542.437	68.145	542.437	1153.018

Annex 2: Timelines and Expenditure Overview of Completed EGF Programmes

<i>EGF Programmes</i>	<i>DELL</i>	<i>Waterford Crystal</i>	<i>SR Technics</i>	<i>NACE 41 construction buildings</i>	<i>NACE 43 specialised construction</i>	<i>NACE 71 architectural services</i>	<i>Talk Talk</i>	<i>Total</i>
Reference Period	2/09 - 6/09	1/09 - 5/09	4/09 - 8/09	7/09 - 3/10	7/09 - 3/10	7/09 - 3/10	9/11 - 1/12	
Date Application	19/06/09	07/08/09	09/10/09	09/06/10	09/06/10	09/06/10	29/02/12	
Implementation Period	2/09 - 6/11	3/09 - 8/11	3/09 - 10/11	7/09 - 6/12	7/09 - 6/12	7/09 - 6/12	9/11 - 2/14	
Date Final report sent	23/12/11	06/02/12	05/04/12	07/12/12	07/12/12	07/12/12	28/08/14	
Programme allocation	€22,817,000	€3,955,159	€11,455,174	€19,522,829	€33,329,459	€2,135,107	€5,392,765	€98,607,493
EU Co-financing (as % of allocation)	€14,831,050 (65%)	€2,570,853 (65%)	€7,445,863 (65%)	€12,689,838 (65%)	€21,664,148 (65%)	€1,387,819 (65%)	€2,696,382 (50%)	€63,285,953
Actual Expenditure (as % of allocation)	€13,619,598 (60%)	€3,089,633 (78%)	€4,504,198 (39%)	€12,615,818 (65%)	€20,249,086 (61%)	€1,809,136 (85%)	€3,793,765 (70%)	€59,681,234 (61%)
EU Budget Utilised	€8,852,739	€2,008,261	€2,927,729	€8,200,282	€13,161,906	€1,175,938	€1,896,883	€38,223,738
EU reimbursements (as % of EU Receipt)	€5,978,311 (40%)	€562,592 (22%)	€4,518,134 (61%)	€4,487,558 (35%)	€8,502,242 (39%)	€210,906 (15%)	€799,499 (30%)	€25,059,242 (40%)
Affected Population	2,883	639	1,006	4,504	2,688	816	585	13,121
Beneficiaries	2,622	537	769	2,962	1,988	490	353	9,721

Total interventions	6,402	1,931	2,181	5,194	4,862	762	1,126	22,458
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Further Education and Training

1. Unit / Section Overview

Further Education and Training Section brings together what was previously two separate sections of the Department; one dealing with further education provision in the former Vocational Education Committees and one dealing with training provided by FÁS. The bringing together of further education and training into a single section reflects the major institutional reforms that have occurred in the sector, where :-

- 33 VECs were amalgamated into 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs)
- the ETBs have taken on responsibility for training provision previously managed by FÁS
- FÁS was dissolved and SOLAS was established on 27 October 2013 as the overall Further Education and Training Authority, providing strategic direction, co-ordination and funding to the overall sector.

The section has responsibility for policy development and oversight of the Further Education and Training (FET) sector in Ireland. This includes oversight of the very substantial reform programme in FET, set out in the Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-19, which was developed by SOLAS and approved by the then Minister.

FET is largely funded by SOLAS and delivered or contracted by the 16 ETBs. FET provision includes both labour market focused programmes and programmes with a strong social inclusion dimension. FET programmes are delivered in a wide range of settings including Post Leaving Certificate and Further Education Colleges, Training Centres, Youthreach and adult education centres. FET is also provided through community and voluntary groups,

commercial training providers and in workplaces. There were due to be 341,000 beneficiaries of FET programmes in 2015 (and a further 40,000 on Skillnets programmes).

The section engages with SOLAS in relation to policy and funding in the sector, monitors SOLAS in order to ensure that monies received by the agency through both the Exchequer and from the National Training Fund are spent in accordance with the purposes for which they were allocated and that value for money is achieved. This involves liaising with SOLAS on a range of issues, including the agency's governance and expenditure and negotiating funding for SOLAS as part of the annual Estimates services process.

The section also has responsibility for the administration of the National Training Fund (NTF) including reporting on its expenditure and agreeing annual allocations from the Fund to each of the NTF funded Schemes as part of the Estimates process. The total funding allocation to SOLAS in 2016 is €631 million.

The role of the section also involves policy development regarding the provision of further education and training places to the unemployed to enable them to up-skill or re-skill in occupational sectors where vacancies exist. The section also supports policy development regarding the provision of training to those who are in employment, including the apprenticeship programme and Skillnets. In addition, the section liaises on the provision of opportunities for young people and adults who have either left school early or who need further education and training to enhance their employment prospects and to enable them to progress their education up the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). In all cases, the aim is to deliver quality programmes, well aligned with labour market requirements, to deliver the best possible employment, progression and personal development results for learners.

An important role of the section is to co-ordinate the Department's engagement with other Government Departments on assisting people back to work and on job creation.

Much of the work in this area is centered on the implementation of the annual *Action Plans for Jobs* and the *Pathways to Work* initiatives. Implementation has been overseen by the

Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs chaired by the Taoiseach and supported by Senior Officials Groups.

The recent publication of the National Skills Strategy provides another important context for the work of the section. The Strategy sets out new arrangements for overseeing the prioritisation of skills needs and liaison with employers.

*Staffing: The section comprises (whole time equivalents) 1 PO, 2 APOs, 3 HEOs and 2.5 EOs

2. Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2014 €m	Outturn 2015 €m	Provision 2016 €m
Exchequer Funding - SOLAS	332	339	329
National Training Funding – SOLAS	286	282.2	302.6
National Training Fund - Other Bodies	61	65.8	59.4
	679	687	691

3. Key priority issues

ISSUE: Implement the Recommendations of the Review of the Irish Apprenticeship System

Background: A comprehensive review of the Irish apprenticeship system was undertaken by an independent review group that reported in December 2013. Following consideration of their recommendations and consultation with stakeholders on implementation arrangements, an Apprenticeship Implementation Plan was published in June 2014. Apprenticeship is being extended to new sectors, overseen by an Apprenticeship Council with membership from industry, unions, state agencies and provider bodies. In parallel, the existing 27 apprenticeship trades are being reviewed and modernised.

Current position: The Apprenticeship Council issued a call for proposals for new apprenticeships from consortia of industry bodies and education and training providers. The response to the call was very strong, with 86 proposals received. The proposals were evaluated against a set of criteria, including sustainability, employer engagement, readiness and cost and were placed in three categories. 25 proposals were placed in category one, meaning that they were evaluated as sustainable and ready to enter a development phase. Following the submission of project plans, development funding has been released to a number of the consortia.

New curricula are being rolled out for 5 of the largest existing trades, with the remainder to follow.

Next Steps: It is envisaged that a number of the new apprenticeship programmes will be in a position to move to enrolment in 2016. New governance and quality assurance and awarding arrangements for apprenticeship are also being developed.

Registrations have been increasing in the existing trades and are forecast to continue to do so until at least 2018. The National Skills Strategy sets an ambitious target to have 50,000 registrations on apprenticeships and traineeships in the period 2016-2020 (an annual average of 10,000), subject to employer demand and overall levels of economic activity. Annual registrations on those programmes in 2015 were approximately 5,800.

**ISSUE: Contribute to Labour Market Activation and Job Creation Policies
(Action Plan for Jobs 2016 and Pathways to Work 2016 – 2020)**

Background: The Unit is heavily involved in the implementation of a number of important policies relating to job creation including the Pathways to Work (PTW) and the Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) documents. During the previous administration, the work of Government Departments in implementing PTW and APJ was monitored through a Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs.

PTW Current position: A new PTW providing for the period 2016 – 2020 was published in January 2016. This Department was actively engaged with DSP in the development of the policy which takes a two pronged approach, initially focusing on the consolidation of reform and retaining the focus on long term and young unemployed and moving on to expanding the scope to activation services to other cohorts, as the economy and labour market position improves.

A new strand *Building Workforce Skills* identifies a number of actions in the education sector, and particularly in the Further Education and Training sector, to address the needs of unemployed people and to enhance co-operation between DSP and the education sector.

PTW Next steps: The Department is engaging closely with DSP to plan education and training provision that meets the needs of unemployed people. As the economy and employment position improves, the quantum and focus of this provision will be kept under review. The Department will work closely with the Department of Social Protection to enhance the models of co-operation between the DSP regions and the ETBs and on referral arrangements and capacity planning.

APJ 2016 Current position. APJ 2016 retains a strong focus on talent and skills issues to support economic development and job creation. For the first time, a series of Regional APJs have also been published.

APJ 2016 Next Steps: The Department and its agencies are committed to a number of measures under the Plan, the majority of which are contained under the *Step-Up in Enterprise Skills Supply* disruptive reform.

The objective of this reform is to put Ireland in a better place to compete to develop and attract talent in the coming years. Key DES actions in this section include implementation of the new National Skills Strategy, , the development of apprenticeships in new areas of the economy and the establishment of the Regional Skills Fora which will provide a more systematic way for employers and the education and training system to work together to build the supply of skills to support job creation and the growth and development of each region.

ISSUE: Implementation of the Further Education and Training Strategy 2014 -2019

Background

In May 2014, the first Further Education and Training Strategy, providing for the period 2014-19, was published by SOLAS, setting out a vision to deliver a world-class integrated system of further education and training to support economic development, increase social inclusion and to meet the needs of all who engage with FET. It contains five strategic goals;-

Skills for the Economy – The aim of this goal is that FET will address current and future needs of learners, jobseekers, employers and employees and will contribute to national economic development. It is critical that FET provision is well connected to the labour market and informed by the needs of employers and the wider economy. Actions in this area include the development of the apprenticeship model, the better engagement of ETBs with employers, the use of labour market data to inform provision and developing provision for people in employment.

Active Inclusion – The aim of this goal is that FET provision will support the active inclusion of people of all abilities in society with special reference to literacy and numeracy. Actions in this area include addressing barriers to participation in FET and improving adult literacy and numeracy provision.

Quality Provision – The aim of this goal is that FET will provide high quality education and training programmes and will meet appropriate national and international quality standards. Actions in this area include improving engagement with learners, enhancing curriculum design and quality assurance processes, addressing the CPD and skill needs of people working in the FET sector and improving progression opportunities for learners.

Integrated Planning and Funding – The aim of this goal is that FET provision will be planned and funded on the basis of objective analysis of needs and evidence of social and economic impact. Actions in this area are the ongoing reform of the FET service planning model, the development of a fit for purpose data infrastructure and systematic review of all FET programmes.

Standing of FET – The aim of this goal is to ensure a valued learning path leading to agreed employment, career developmental, personal and social options.

The implementation phase of the FET strategy began with the establishment of the Strategy Implementation Advisory Committee (SIAC -chaired by the Department) and the preparation of **a Detailed Implementation Plan** that sets out all of the strategy actions, timelines for delivery, performance indicators and identifies all of the lead organisations responsible for each action.

Current position: Since the publication of the strategy, significant improvements have been made in putting in place a framework for improved planning and funding of the FET sector overall. The development of the annual FET Service planning model agreed between SOLAS and the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs), provides details on the FET provision to be funded along with numbers, costs and estimated outputs.

Next steps: During 2016 work will continue between SOLAS and the ETBs to further develop the FET services planning model.

A series of independent evaluations of the full time and employment focused FET programmes are scheduled to take place over the lifetime of the FET Strategy. The first of these evaluations, currently under way, will examine the effectiveness of the national Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) programme. Following completion of the PLC evaluation in mid-2016, the commissioning of an independent evaluation of the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) will commence.

Work is continuing on the development (*by SOLAS and ETBI*) of a new FET data infrastructure, the *Programme and Learner Support System* (PLSS) which will include a national FET course calendar, a national FET programme database and a national FET learner database.

ISSUE: Manage the corporate funding of SOLAS

Background: SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority was established, as part of the reform of the Further Education and Training Sector, under the aegis of the Department with responsibility for the coordination and funding of the provision of an integrated further education and training programme.

The Further Education and Training Section (Athlone) manage the annual financial cycle for SOLAS funding including: administering funding, laying annual accounts before Oireachtas, preparing Appropriation Accounts, PAC, Estimates, Dáil Select Committee briefing, and meeting Finance Unit and D/PER Reporting Requirements etc.

Current position: Ongoing – In 2016, SOLAS plan to provide services to 341,000 beneficiaries across a range of Further Education and Training Programmes. Funding of €631 million has been provided for SOLAS in 2016, partly from the Exchequer (€329 million) and from the National Training Fund (€302 million).

ISSUE: Skillnets Limited

Background: Skillnets Limited was established in **1999** and is funded from the National Training Fund (NTF) through the Department of Education and Skills (DES).

It operates as a limited company and along with enterprise and co-funds training networks in a range of sectors and/or regions throughout the country. The Training Networks Programme (TNP) funds demand led training through a network model, where companies from networks representing specific industry sectors or geographical regions co-operate to delivery training programmes specifically designed and adapted to current market requirements. This ensures projects remain enterprise-led and aligned with their needs.

A more recent feature of the programme is the requirement to allocate a dedicated quota of provision for unemployed people.

Current position: In 2016, Skillnets Limited will be provided with an allocation of **€16.2m**, from the National Training Fund to provide in the region of 40,000 training places. Of these, it will be required to allocate approximately 19% to training for individuals who are unemployed.

Next steps: The section will continue to monitor the performance and progress of Skillnets Limited through the setting of agreed targets and will liaise with Skillnets Limited in relation to the development of particular programmes in line with FET policy.

ISSUE: Manage the National Training Fund (NTF)

Background: The National Training Fund Act, 2000 provides for the imposition of a levy on employers in respect of certain employees to be used to give skills or to raise skills amongst those in, or seeking employment. The levy on employers is 0.7% of reckonable earnings in respect of employees in Class A and Class H employments.

Section 7 of the National Training Fund Act, 2000 provides that payments may be made from the Fund in respect of schemes, which are established to:

- (a) raise the skills of those in employment;
- (b) provide training to those who wish to acquire skills to take up employment; or
- (c) provide information in relation to existing, or likely future, requirements for skills in the economy.

The Further Education and Training Section (Athlone) manage the annual financial cycle of the National Training Fund in conjunction with the Department's Finance Unit.

Current Position: Ongoing - In 2016, funding of almost €362 million, set out in the table below, will be provided from the National Training Fund for a range of training activities and services.

Body	€000
SOLAS	302,636
Skillnets Limited	16,200
IDA	3,000
Enterprise Ireland	3,500
The Wheel	375
Engineers Ireland	75
Springboard	22,438
ICT Skills	5,380
European Globalisation Fund	500
Technical Employment Support Grant	3,200
Community Employment	4,200
Expert Group on Future Skills Needs	490

Total	361,994
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4. Other significant issues

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Name: An tSeirbhís Leanúnagh agus Scileanna - SOLAS

Main Responsibilities:

The main functions of SOLAS are:

- Implementation of the FET Strategy 2014-19
- Fund, manage, co-ordinate and support the delivery of integrated further education and training in conjunction with the Education and Training Boards (ETBs);
- Monitor delivery, providing funding based on reliable, good quality data and positive outcomes;
- Promote further education and training provision that is relevant to individual learner needs, business and employer needs in line with overall national skills needs and future skills needs.

Budget Allocation 2016: €631 million

Name: Skillnets Limited

Main responsibilities: Skillnets Limited along with funding provided from the NTF by the Department *co-funds* enterprise-led training networks nationwide

Training places in 2016: 40,000 places **2016 budget allocation:** The Skillnets budget provided from the NTF for 2016 is €16.2 million.

Skills Planning and Enterprise Engagement Unit

1. Unit / Section Overview

The SPEE Unit will give a dedicated focus to enterprise engagement and will enhance a co-ordinated response to skills needs across the different sectors of education and training. It will also provide Secretariat support to the new National Skills Council (NSC) and oversee the development of the new the network of Regional Skills Fora which have been established as part of the national skills architecture provided for in the new National Skills Strategy

2. Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
Support for Regional Skills Fora	n/a	n/a	€1m

3. Key priority issues

- 3.1 Establish the National Skills Council to oversee research, advise on prioritisation of identified skills needs and how to secure delivery of those needs.

background:

The new National Skills Strategy sets out the elements of a new skills architecture which seeks to foster close collaboration between relevant Government Departments and agencies and develop structures to strengthen engagement between the education and training system and enterprise. The National Skills Council will provide a mechanism to mediate demands across the full range of needs identified through the research and analysis conducted under its direction and by the new network of Regional Skills Fora.

current position:

Draft proposals for the operation of the National Skills Council and its supporting bodies are being prepared for submission to the Minister. This will include proposals for a refreshed mandate for the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs on which we will be consulting with the Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation

NEXT STEPS: FOLLOWING AGREEMENT OF THE OPERATING PROCEDURES, IT IS PROPOSED TO PROCEED WITH ESTABLISHING THE COUNCIL

3.2 Issue: Manage the establishment and development of the network of Regional Skills Fora

BACKGROUND: A NETWORK OF 9 REGIONAL SKILLS FORA IS BEING CREATED AS A MECHANISM FOR EMPLOYERS AND THE FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM TO WORK TOGETHER IN BUILDING THE SKILLS NEEDS OF THEIR REGIONS. THE PROCESS TO DEVELOP THE FORA IS UNDERWAY ACROSS 9 REGIONS, THE NORTH WEST, NORTH EAST, MID EAST, MIDLANDS, DUBLIN, MID WEST SOUTH EAST AND SOUTH WEST. KEY OBJECTIVES ARE TO HELP EMPLOYERS BETTER UNDERSTAND AND ACCESS THE FULL RANGE OF SERVICES AVAILABLE ACROSS THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM, TO HAVE MORE INFORMED DIALOGUE WITH EMPLOYERS TO INFORM PROGRAMME PLANNING AND TO IMPROVE LINKS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS IN PLANNING AND DELIVERING PROGRAMMES, REDUCE DUPLICATION AND INFORM NATIONAL FUNDING DECISIONS.

Current Position: A team of 9 Regional Skills Forum Managers have now been appointed to coordinate the work of each Forum and to be a key contact point on skills issues in each region. The RSFMs will also be members of the Implementation Committees being established to oversee the implementation of the Regional Action Plans for Jobs. The HEIs and ETBs in each region have come together and agreed that one institution will be the host employer for the RSFMs but they will be a shared resource for the providers to lead on developing the work programmes and activities for each Forum.

Next Steps: A new website *Regionalskills.ie* is being developed to support the work of the Fora and provide information on the labour market and skills issues in each region. This website will be live before the end of May. **Work will continue on the governance and reporting arrangements for the Fora and the links with the National Skills Council.**

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department N/A

Name of Body:

Main responsibilities:

Allocation 2010:

Staff numbers:

[Please provide details above in respect of each body (if any) in your area]

**PLANNING AND
BUILDING DIVISION:
Alan Wall, ASSISTANT
SECRETARY**

Structure of the Planning and Building Division

Overview of Division

There are 7 main constituent parts to the Planning and Building Division:

- Forward Planning Section;
- Property Management and Site Acquisitions
- Capital Appraisal Section
- Major Projects (Design and Construction) Section
- Devolved and Rentals Section
- The Professional and Technical Section
- Third-level Building, Finance and Public Private Partnerships Section

While large scale projects are the central element of the School Building Programme, there are also a number of other significant components in the Programme including the Summer Works Scheme, the Additional Accommodation Scheme, Emergency Works and Remediation schemes, the Purchase and Rental of Temporary Accommodation, the Acquisition of Sites, Furniture and Equipment Grants and the Minor Works Grant for primary schools.

Through these varied mechanisms, the objectives of the Building Programme in providing new accommodation and improvements to existing schools are realised.

The Planning and Building Unit identifies the need for school accommodation using all available statistical and other information, sets out the technical specifications for educational buildings and ensures that standards are maintained, prioritises the allocation of resources and oversees the delivery of the capital programme. Most major school building projects are managed and delivered with the assistance of external design teams working in accordance with the Department's technical guidelines. There is greater devolution of responsibility to schools in respect of smaller projects and to Education and Training Boards in respect of projects within their remit. The Department also has devolved delivery partnership arrangements in place with the OPW, the National Development Finance Agency and local authorities to assist in the overall delivery of the capital programme.

The Third Level Building Unit works closely with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in relation to capital matters. When capital works are funded in the higher education sector, the institutions are responsible for engaging design consultants pursuant to appropriate procurement procedures, procuring the approval of regulatory authorities to the planned

development, procuring contractors and overseeing the actual development and execution of the works.

The Division is located in the Department’s offices in Tullamore.

Capital Allocation

The overall education capital allocation under the Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021 is as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS	
Year	Allocation
2016	€545m
2017	€599m
2018	€623m
2019	€654m
2020	€700m
2021	€700m
TOTAL 2016 -2021	€3,821m

The 2015 capital outturn amounted to €625m

Under the Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021 the Department allocates capital funding to five main sub-programmes as follows:

- Schools – school building and school furniture and equipment.
- Higher Education – higher education buildings and infrastructure generally.
- Research Activities - payments to PhD students and early stage postdoctoral researchers in higher education.
- PPPs – these are mainly the VAT payments arising from the completion of PPP buildings, the unitary charges arising from the delivery of PPP projects as well as the costs of local authority contributions and advisors fees for the delivery of the projects.
- ICT programme for schools – general ICT investment in schools.
- Other programmes – includes IT services within the Department, Public Sector Reform, the Book Rental Scheme, capital allocations to SOLAS and the Further Education sector and capital funding for educational disadvantage.

Expenditure in 2015 and projected expenditures in 2016-2018 are broken down as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS						
CAPITAL EXPENDITURE 2014 – 2018						
	<i>Schools</i>	<i>Higher Education</i>	<i>PPPs</i>	<i>ICT for schools</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
2015	€506.5m	€90.2m	€17.6m	€0.7m	€10m	€625m
2016	€427m	€59.6m	€93m	€1m	€14.4m	€595m
2017	€441m	€49.6m	€120m	€30m	€9.4m	€650m
2018	€472m	€62.6m	€101m	€30m	€8.4m	€674m

Note:

- The Higher Education capital expenditure includes €37.6m annually for Research Activities.
- Since the publication of the Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has decided that Unitary Charges in respect of PPP contracts entered into prior to July 2010 be classified as capital from 2016 onwards. The additional annual €51m is included in the PPP section of the above table.

2016 Allocation

The 2016 allocation is broken down as follows in the Book of Estimates:

SUBHEAD	SUBHEAD	ALLOCATION (€m)
A.5.1.1	Admin Budget	1.8
A.10.1.1	Book Rental Scheme	5
A.13.4	Special Memorial (Abuse)	0.5
A.14.1	ICT (Schools)	1
A.14.3.1	Educational Disadvantage	0.1
A.14.3.4	Public Sector Reform	4
B.3.1	SOLAS	0.5
B.5.1	Further Education Grants	2.5
C.12	Research Activities	37.6

D.3.1&2	Schools	427
D.4	Higher Education	21.5
D.5.2	PPPs	93
	TOTAL	594.5

School Sector Allocation 2016

The school sector allocation of €427m for 2016 will be expended on:

Large Scale Projects;

The Additional Accommodation Scheme;

Site Acquisitions;

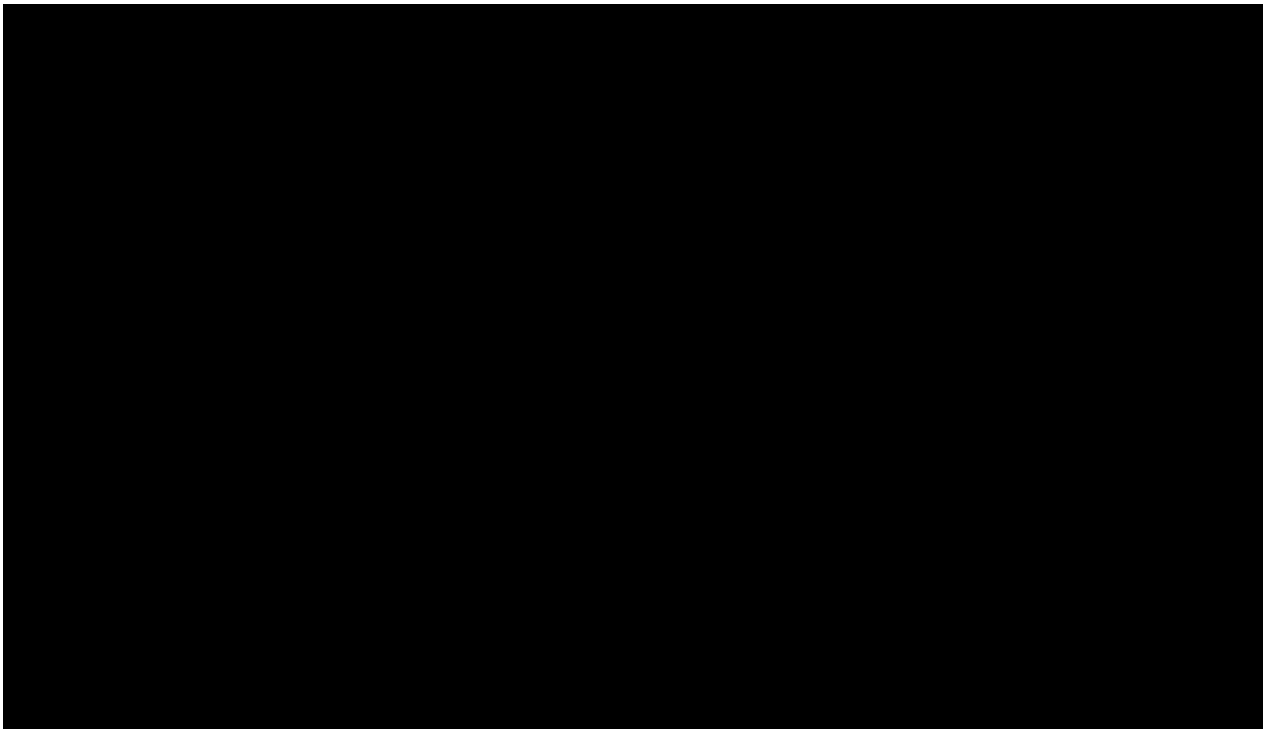
The Emergency Works Scheme;

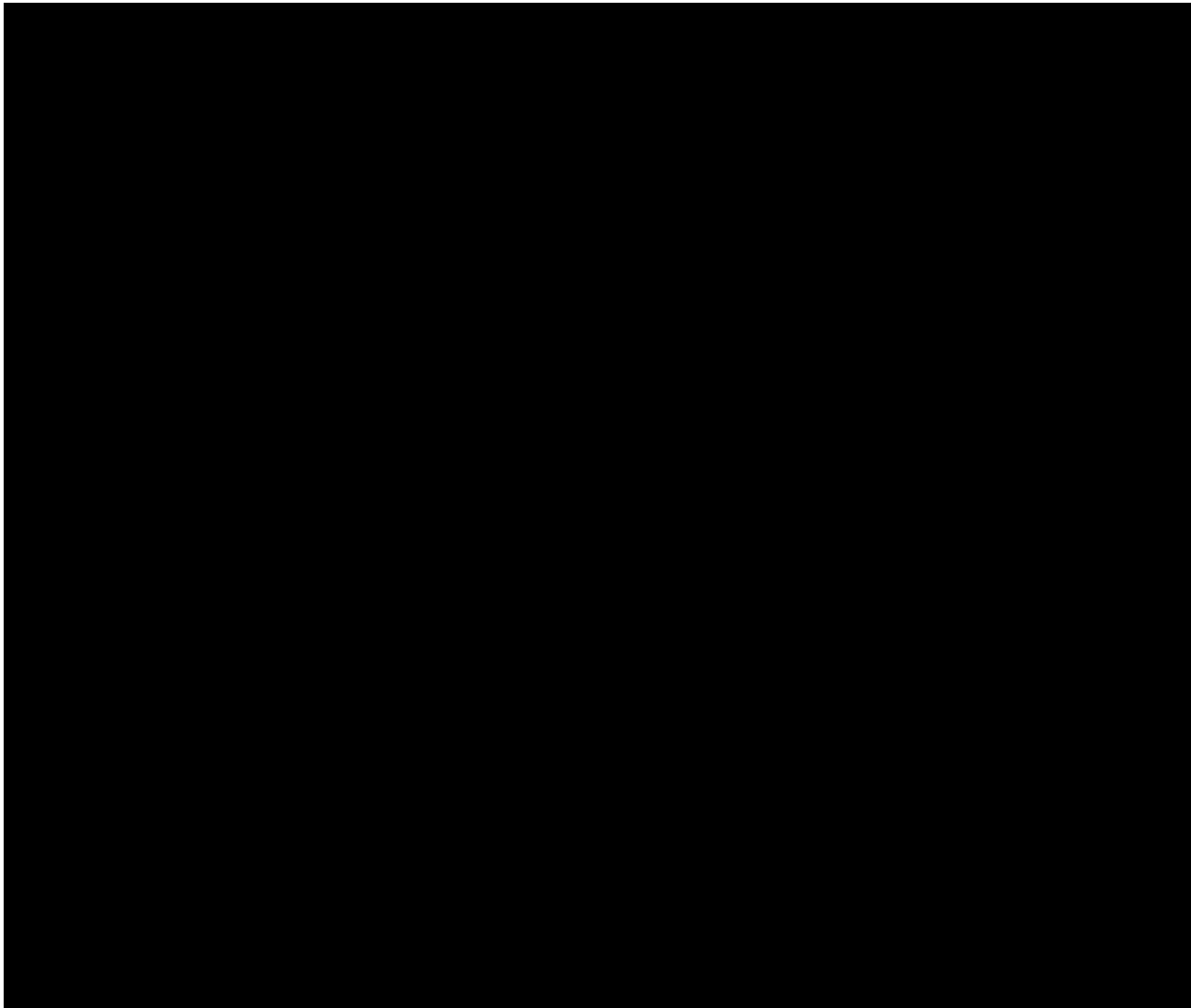
Remaining works under the Summer Works Scheme 2014/2015;

Furniture and Equipment requests;

ETB Headquarters;

Miscellaneous Items.





Professional and Technical

1. Unit / Section Overview

The Professional and Technical Section is responsible for providing specialist technical advice and assistance as required to all sections within the Planning and Building Unit. Its remit includes the development of policy and procedures in relation to Capital Works, design research including the development of design guidance and standard or template designs, and the provision of assistance to schools and Design Teams at all stages in the progression of projects through the design and construction stages.

To ensure the smooth progression of projects from Forward Planning through to Design and Construction, the Professional and Technical Section provides advice on request to Forward Planning Section, Site Acquisitions & Property Management Section, School Capital Appraisal Section, Major Projects (Design & Construction) Section, Devolved & Rental Payments Section, Third Level Building Unit, PPP & NDFA Devolved Projects Section. Professional and Technical Section personnel also provide professional and technical advice in relation to briefings, PQ answers, etc., on an ongoing basis through the year.

In particular the Professional and Technical Section is tasked with assisting the progression of building projects through Architectural Planning to Construction. The Professional and Technical Section operates a policy of proactive engagement with Design Teams to ensure smooth passage through the project stages. The objective is to ensure that at each stage of the Design process, (a) the School, the Design Team and the Department are agreed at all times on the strategy to be adopted thus reducing abortive work by consultants and reducing the time taken to complete a stage and (b) to ensure that the stage submissions meet the Educational, Design and Cost requirements of the project thus minimising delays in the progression of a project to the next stage. Under this strategy a greater level of authority and responsibility rests with the school authority and their Design Team. Technical reviews of projects are high level reviews only, i.e. checking only the critical areas and spot checking other areas. The Professional and Technical Section also carries out audits and post-occupancy evaluation of completed projects in order to improve the relevance of standards and guidance.

Other areas of technical advice and assistance are:

- Assisting in the delivery of the “rapid delivery” programme for projects needed in an established short timeframe, through participation in a technical/admin fast track team which manages the programme.
- Assisting in the delivery of the “ADAPT delivery” programme for projects needed in an established medium timeframe, through participation in a technical/admin fast track team which manages the programme

- Liaison with Forward Planning Section, Site Acquisition & Property Management Section, and School Capital Appraisal Section in the identification of suitable sites, in ensuring that appropriate criteria are used in determining and reviewing locations for new schools and extensions, interaction with Local Authorities and in the definition of briefs.
- Liaison with Forward Planning Section and Site Acquisition & Property Management Section in reviewing and commenting on draft Local Authority Development Plans to anticipate future schools infrastructure needs.
- Liaison with Devolved/Rental Payments Section and Capital Appraisal Section with regard to Summer Works, Emergency Works and Devolved projects, providing technical and procurement guidance and carrying out audit and project assessments.
- Working with PPP Section/NDFA, to ensure that appropriate criteria are used in development of briefs and the development of Public Sector Benchmarks [PSBs] and Output requirements.
- Liaison with 3rd Level Section and provision of appropriate Technical advice.
- Procurement advice and support in the preparation and implementation of consultancy frameworks for all areas of work to improve programme delivery, as well as procurement policy development.

Staff Numbers: 3 Technical Managers (PO grade), 4 Senior Architects (plus 2 vacant posts), 4 Senior Quantity Surveyors (plus 1 vacant post), 3 Senior Engineers, 4 Architects (plus 1 vacant post), 10 Architectural Assistants.

In addition there are 6 Graduate Architects, each on a 3 year placement, as part of the scheme operated by the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland for work experience placement for graduate architects.

2. Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2012	Outturn 2013	Provision 2014
Capital	No direct financial provision for Technical Section		
Current	No direct financial provision for Technical Section		

3. Key Priority issues

3.1 Procedures and Procurement

The Professional and Technical Section provides advice and guidance on the procurement of Capital Works and Construction related services (Design Consultants). This detailed guidance (including procedures for the appointment of Consultants and Contractors) is published on the web under School Planning/Building – Technical Guidance.

In addition the Professional and Technical Section prepares and publishes procedural documents including the Design Team Procedures and associated Practice notes (effectively a manual of how to design and build a school).

Public Procurement is a constantly changing area with many factors influencing procedures and giving rise to constant updating of the Department's procurement documentation, for example:

- The Public Works Contracts and associated Capital Works Management Framework documentation introduced by the Department of Finance/Public Expenditure and Reform in 2007 and the review of the performance of these contracts which has been completed and the resultant amendments will be implemented during 2016 (see 3.2)
- The introduction of the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations in March 2014
- EU procurement case law, the new EU Procurement Directives published in March 2014 and due for transposition into Irish law before April 2016
- The Construction Contracts Act 2013, due to be implemented in 2016.

Each change at national and EU level is implemented by an appropriate amendment to the DoES procedures. The nature of the change is identified, the revised or new procedures are published on the web and the superseded documents are archived.

3.2 Changes to the Public Works Contracts (PWCs)

A review of the Public Works Contracts commenced in December 2013. Following engagement between the Office of Government Procurement (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform) and industry stakeholders, in December 2014 the Government Contracts Committee for Construction, (GCCC), published its *Report on the Review of the Performance of the Public Works Contract*. The report proposed 4 interim measures to amend the Public Works Contracts (PWCs) "*In recognition of the changed market and to encourage more realistic pricing of public works projects...*" Three of the four measures are proceeding and implementation procedures have now been issued. The three changes are:

1. Reducing the level of risk currently being transferred by making the bill of quantities the primary reference document for tender purposes on employer-designed contracts.
2. Direct tendering of specialist works packages where specialist works make up a significant proportion of the overall project value or where they have a significant impact on the long term performance of the project.
3. The inclusion of informal dispute resolution methods to reduce the volume of disputes that are currently being referred to the formal procedures prescribed in the contract.

With regard to the changes and the implementation deadlines, a number of issues arise for the Planning and Building Unit.

- (a) All Design Team appointments after 4th April 2016 must include the new arrangements in the scope of service for each Design Team member.
- (b) All projects going to tender after 8th January 2017 must be based on the new arrangements, i.e. the tender documents (Stage 2b documentation) must be based on the new arrangements.

In effect (a) above means that any Design Team appointment from now on must be based on the new arrangements as these projects will not be out to tender by the 8th of January 2017.

Also any project currently in the system (e.g. at Stage 1, 2a) is most unlikely to get out to tender by 8th January 2017 – bringing these projects in line with the new arrangements will incur additional fees and project delays. The Department’s Design Team Procedures and guidelines will have to be amended so that Design Teams can be made aware of how the changes are to be implemented on School projects.

For projects currently at Stage 2b, or even at tender stage, that for various reasons cannot proceed to construction before 8th January 2017, the tender documents will have to be amended. In some cases prequalification of contractors may have to be repeated and projects re-tendered causing delays to the capital programme.

There is a provision in the implementation procedures to seek a derogation, through the Government Construction Contracts Committee (GCCC), to proceed with a project under the existing PWC form after 8th January 2017. It is unlikely that this avenue will offer much relief as there is already pressure within the industry to implement the new arrangements as quickly as possible. There is a likelihood that tendering contractors given a choice will only opt for public works projects based on the new arrangements.

Based on experience of previous procedural changes (e.g. the introduction of the PWCs, the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2014), delays to individual projects on the capital programme are inevitable. For example, the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2014 gave rise to delays of 8 to 12 weeks, on average, on the progression of all major projects caught up in the transition.

3.3 Design Guidelines and Design Research

To promote quality and efficiency in the provision of educational accommodation and infrastructure the Professional and Technical Section continually develops and up-dates educational Design Guidelines and Construction Standards for publication on the web. For example Design Guidelines on Special Education were published in 2012 and updated in 2013 and through representation on the DoECLG Building Regulations Advisory Board (BRAB), it contributed to the development of a policy on Disability Access Certificates for schools; Fire Strategy in Schools was developed in consultation with the DoECLG and published in February 2014.

New standard designs and templates have been developed for use to maintain educational design standards, reduce the project timescales and improve administrative efficiency. A

complete review of post–primary teaching spaces has recently been completed and new updated room layouts have been developed. Extensive updating and further work is envisaged in reviewing schedules of accommodation and revising design guidelines in response to curriculum developments and international best practice. This is progressed in collaboration with the Inspectorate.

3.4 Energy Efficiency and Sustainability

The Department is at the forefront of design with respect to sustainable energy efficiency in school buildings and this performance has been recognised at both National and International level with sustainable energy awards for excellence in Design and Specification.

For the past nineteen years the Planning and Building Unit within the Department of Education & Skills have been using a process called the DART approach to develop policy, sustainability and energy efficiency in educational buildings. This acronym focuses on four key areas, namely; **D**esign, **A**wareness, **R**esearch and **T**echnology. The policy is informed by the Building Unit Professional and Technical staff, driven by its technical guidance documents and updated by continued energy research and development.

The Department’s Technical Guidance Documents set the benchmark for sustainable design in school buildings with a clear focus on energy efficiency and they are based on solid energy research projects. The Department’s policy is supported by a strong research programme with forty seven research projects at various stages including the schools energy website at www.energyineducation.ie. Outcomes and learning from this programme are fed back into the Technical Guidance Documents thus ensuring that Educational Buildings meet and exceed the current best practice on energy use and conservation.

Schools that are designed and built in accordance with the Department’s Technical Guidance Documents for Schools must achieve an A3 Building Energy Rating.

With EU targets for energy efficiency and carbon reduction being tightened the energy research programme will remain a key priority for the PBU.

3.5 Value for money in the Delivery of the Capital Programme

The Professional and Technical Section is tasked with ensuring that appropriate procedures and procurement options are in place to ensure value for money in the delivery of the Capital Programme. It also advises on Project Budgets, Stage Cost-plans, and Tenders. It reviews Post-Contract change Orders and Final Accounts, maintains cost data for VFM comparison and advises on published Basic Building Costs.

3.6 Spatial planning and Capital Programme Pipeline

Technical analysis of draft Development Plans and Local Area Plans produced by Local Authorities to improve the timely availability of suitable lands for the development of schools is also a key priority for the Professional and Technical Section in consultation with Forward Planning and Site Acquisitions & Property Management.

4. Other Significant Issues

4.1 Construction Inflation

Construction costs reached a peak in the first half of 2007 and from then until early 2011 tender levels fell dramatically, by as much as 30%. Since mid-2011 average tender levels have begun to recover with modest increases in 2011 (approx. 2%), 2012 (approx. 3%) and 2013 (approx. 3%). As the economy has begun to recover in 2014 and 2015 tender levels have begun to rise at a faster pace (5% in 2014, 6 % estimated for 2015). Industry forecasts are predicting continued rise in tender levels at similar or slightly higher annual rates in the coming years as the volume of work increases with consequent increase in demand for labour and materials. This will reduce the number of projects that can be brought to construction if capital allocations are not increased in line with construction inflation.

4.2 Increased Building Standards to comply with energy efficiency targets

New Building Regulations which are due to come into force in the near future will increase the requirements for energy efficiency in buildings. Whilst the required standards have not been published yet, initial review indicates a potential 5% to 10 % uplift in current costs to meet these regulations.

Under the Recast Energy Performance of Buildings Directive 2010/31/EU, new buildings owned or occupied by public authorities after 31st Dec 2018 must be Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB) and all new buildings are to be NZEB by 31st Dec 2020, which will be 'to a very large extent' from renewable sources. According to the Department of Environment, Community and local Government, the NZEB building regulations will be developed during 2016 and will be in place by 2018. Research on achieving NZEB is underway within the Department with a project currently at design stage and due to commence construction this year. The required standards have not been published yet; however, initial review indicates a potential 20% to 30 % uplift in current costs to meet NZEB requirements.

5. Bodies under the Aegis of the Department

Not directly applicable; however, all technical guidance and procurement guidance documentation applies equally to ETBs and any public body delivering school accommodation.

Property Management/Site Acquisitions

1. Unit / Section Overview

Section staff complement: 1 PO, 2 APOs, 2 HEO, 3.75 EOs, 2 COs

The unit is supported with technical advice and guidance from the Planning and Building Unit's technical and professional staff as required. Legal support relating to conveyancing and securing state grants is provided by the Chief State Solicitor's Office (CSSO).

The Unit's priorities in 2016 are centred around (a) delivering on its site acquisition programme and (b) the administration of the Department's property portfolio, which includes securing the State's investment in school land and buildings through appropriate legal instruments. In addition, the Unit is responsible for ensuring due diligence is applied to any school sites transferring under the Redress scheme.

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION 2016

Outturn 2013	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
€11.46m	€21m	€13m	

3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.1 ACQUISITION OF SUITABLE SITES TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING PROGRAMME

BACKGROUND:

3.1.1 How the Department acquires school sites

The Department's reliance on the traditional education partners (*i.e.* Church authorities) to provide sites for school building has lessened in recent years reflecting societal changes in Ireland. New school patrons, such as Educate Together and An Foras Pátrúnachta Na Scoileanna Lán Ghaeilge Teo. are rarely in a position to fund the provision of sites for schools under their patronage. Therefore, the Department has been acquiring the majority of new sites required for new school buildings.

There are three main ways in which the Department purchases sites:

- (a) through the Local Authorities either from their own lands or under a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2012 whereby the local authority and the Department work together in the selection and acquisition of suitable lands;
- (b) through the Education and Training Boards (formerly VECs), which have a track record of purchasing sites for their own requirements; and
- (c) by direct negotiation with landowners/developers;

Previously the OPW had also engaged in site acquisitions on behalf of the Department but the number of OPW-assisted acquisitions has decreased in recent years.

The Department has developed technical guidance documents (available on the Department's website) which set out the criteria to be used in assessing the technical suitability of school sites. The factors considered include zoning, local area plan objectives, environmental factors, vehicular and pedestrian access, topography, relative development costs where significant access infrastructure is required, and location and adequacy of utilities and services.

3.1.2 Collaboration with the Local Authorities

With the shift in demographics in the school-going population forecasted to continue and the emergence of developing areas where little or no school provision exists, the Department has primarily relied either on direct negotiations or sought the assistance of local authorities in relation to acquiring sites.

Increasingly the latter arrangement is used, whereby the assistance of local authorities is sought under the Memorandum of Understanding between the Minister for Education and Skills and the County and City Managers' Association on the acquisition of sites for school planning purposes. The advantages of the arrangement include:

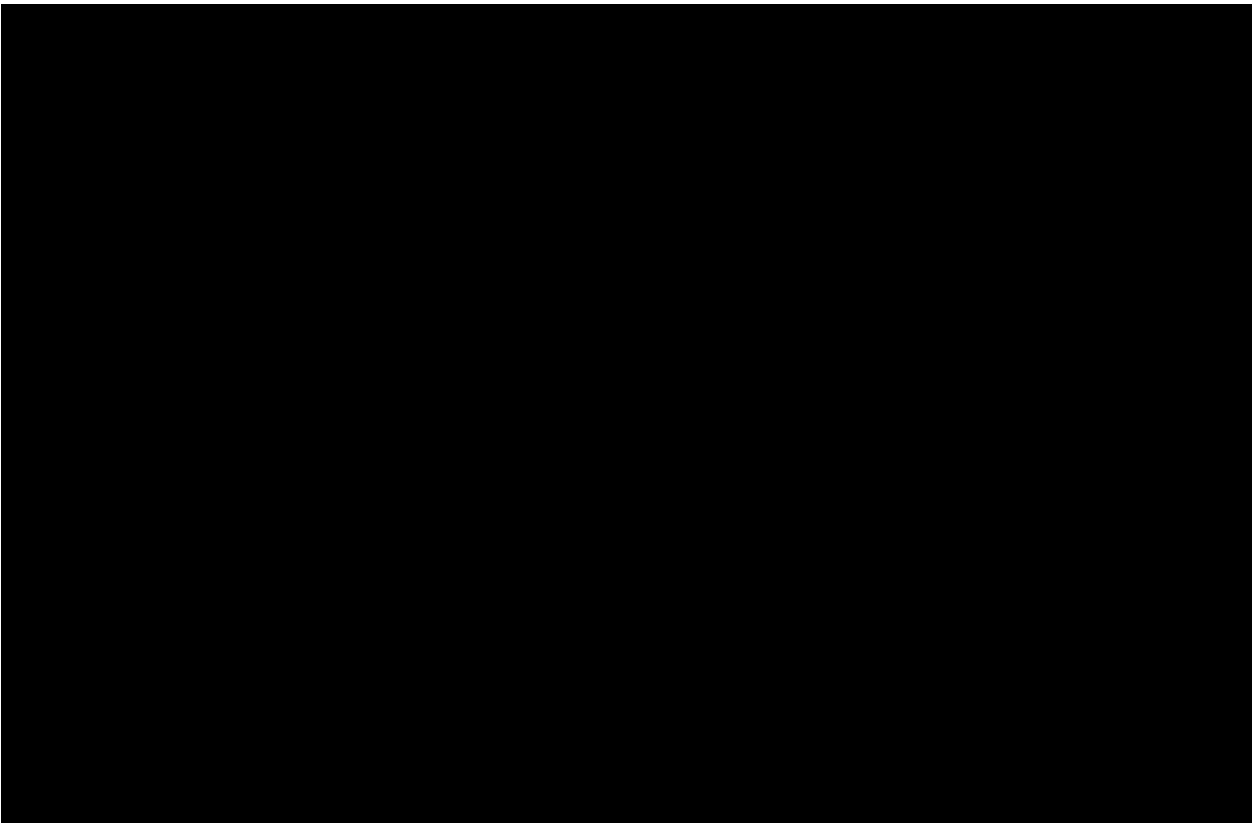
- long standing experience in the acquisition of land for a wide range of functions and by virtue of their position can exercise much greater degrees of leverage than the Department;
- there is a synergy to be exploited whereby local authorities, as the planning authorities identify/zone specific sites for schools;
- Local Authorities have CPO powers (which have been used to acquire school sites)

Under the MoU, the local authority identifies a number of site options. These sites are then subject to a joint inspection by the local authority and the Department to gauge technical

feasibility. The sites are ranked in order of suitability and following a valuation process, the local authority arranges for negotiations on the site deemed most suitable. Once agreement in principle is obtained the formal conveyancing process is conducted by the CSSO.

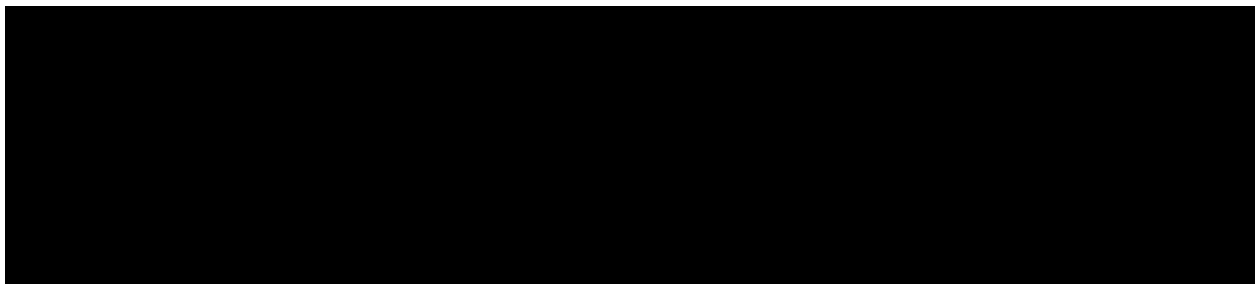
3.1.3 Compulsory Purchase Orders

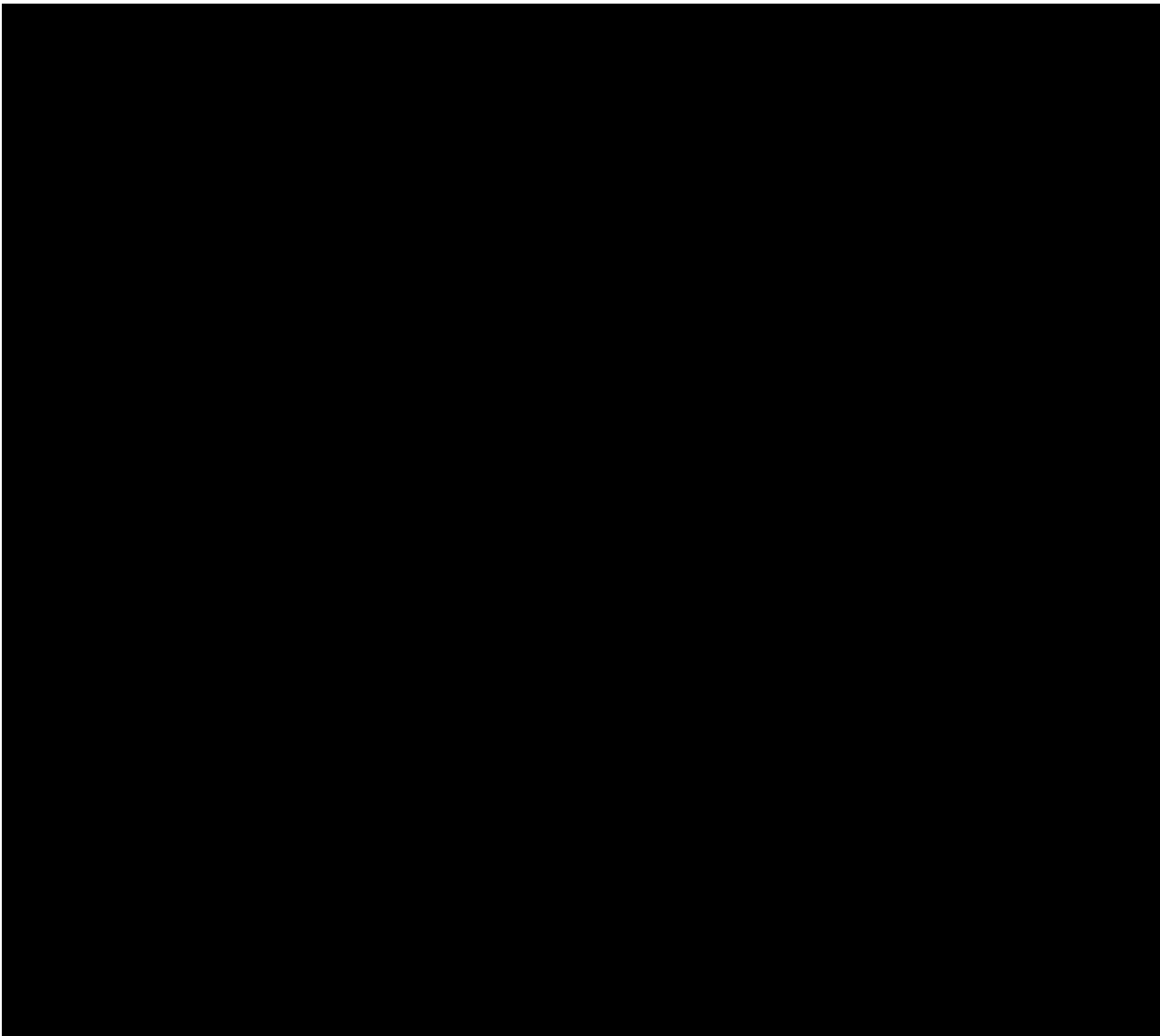
The Minister for Education and Skills does not have statutory CPO powers but, on two occasions, in Meath (Navan) and Westmeath (Mullingar), the relevant Local Authorities have used their powers to assist in the acquisition of land for educational use. This generally occurs where a landowner is unwilling to sell a site which has been zoned for educational use.



3.1.3 Interactions with NAMA in relation to school sites

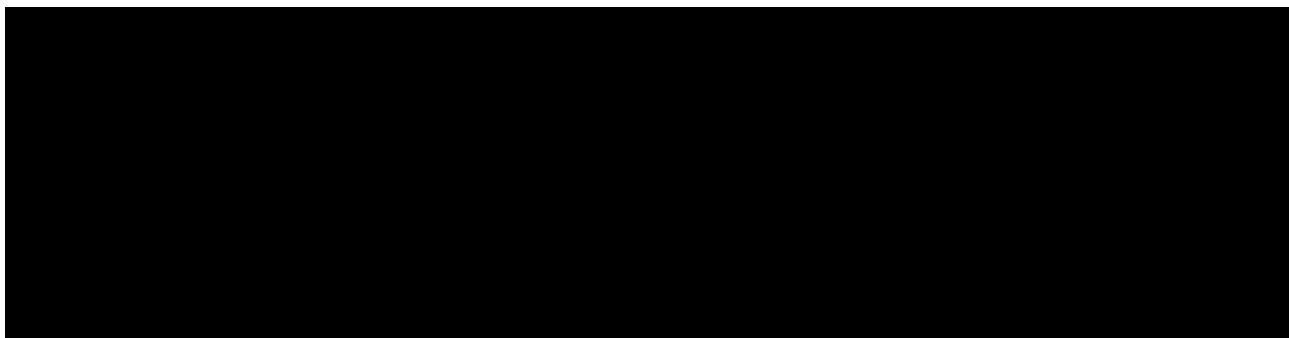
The Department has ongoing contact with officials from NAMA who are aware of the scale of demand and location of sites required for education and have provided assistance to the Department of Education and Skills in this regard, where possible.

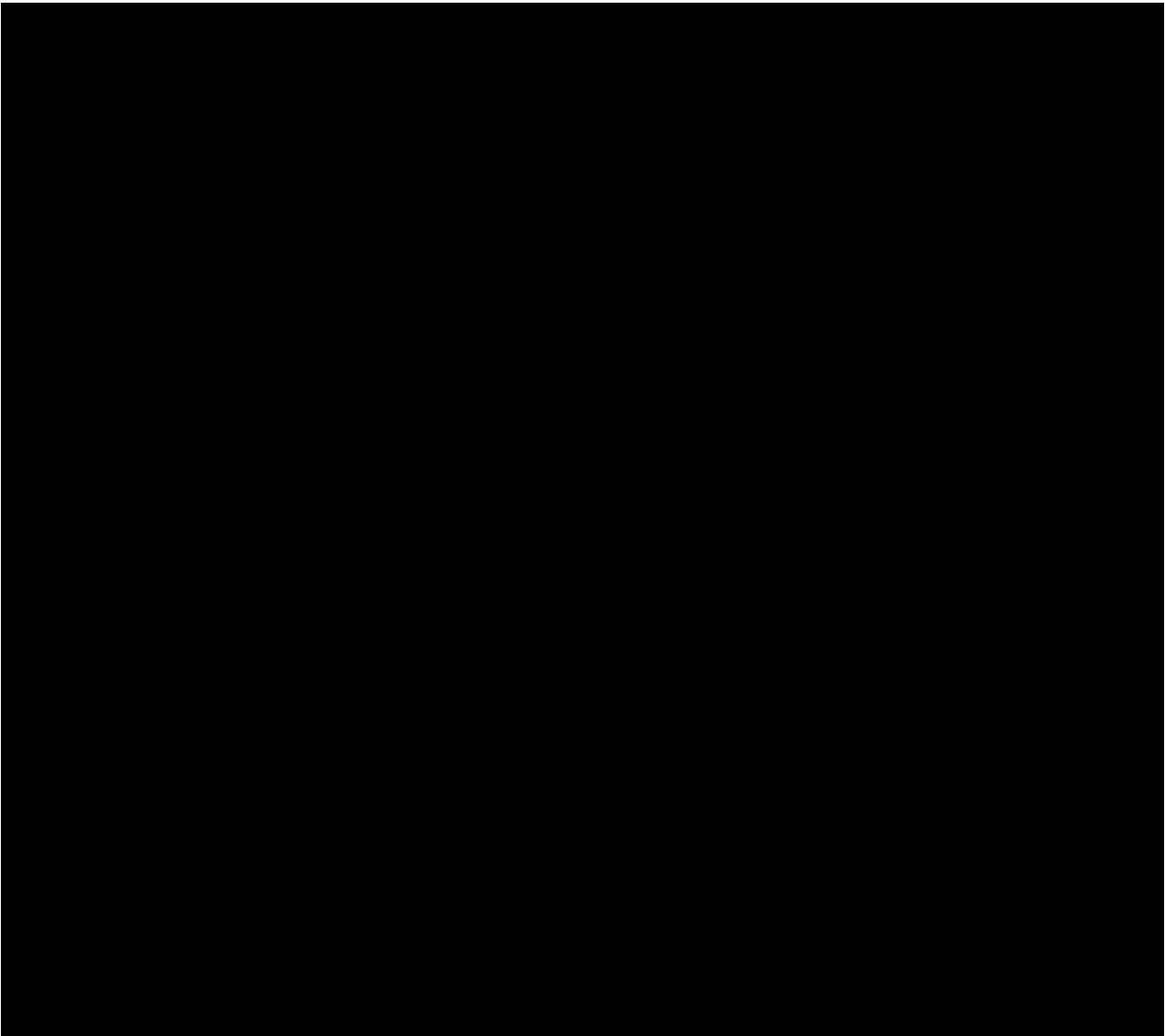




CURRENT POSITION:

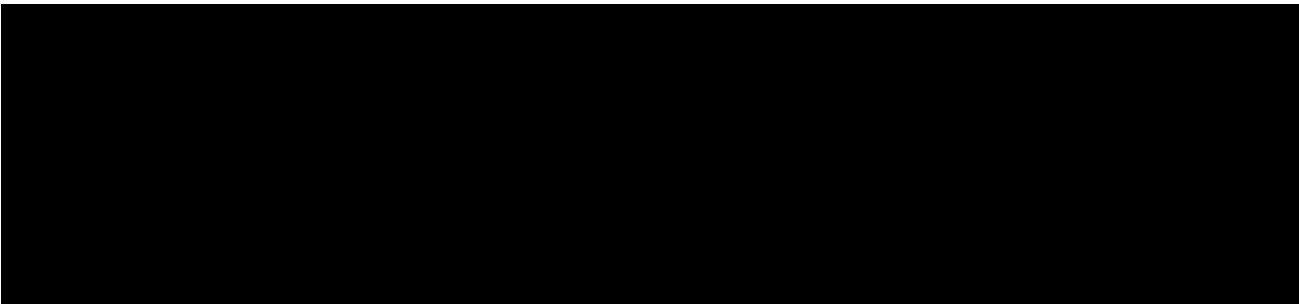
The site acquisition programme is aimed predominantly at acquiring sites in areas experiencing a rapid growth in demand for school places. Specifically sites are required to provide permanent buildings for new school entities or for projects included in the 6 year school building programme.





NEXT STEPS:

The Department's annual site purchase programme will continue to be needed for the foreseeable future to ensure that sites are secured in the appropriate locations to meet the demand for new school facilities. This process relies heavily on close interaction with various local authorities to secure the required sites.



The Department will continue to work with the local authorities and the other State agencies mentioned above with a view to the timely identification and acquisition of school sites. The

Department is included among the prescribed bodies to whom local authorities are statutorily obliged to send draft development plans or proposed variations to development plans for comment and observations. This enables local authorities to develop implementation and phasing strategies in the identification of future school sites to ensure ready access to existing infrastructure and to mitigate the risk of disproportionate costs to the Department. It is anticipated that the benefits of this interaction will be seen in future years but the current challenge is to obtain sites in areas where no specific sites have been reserved.

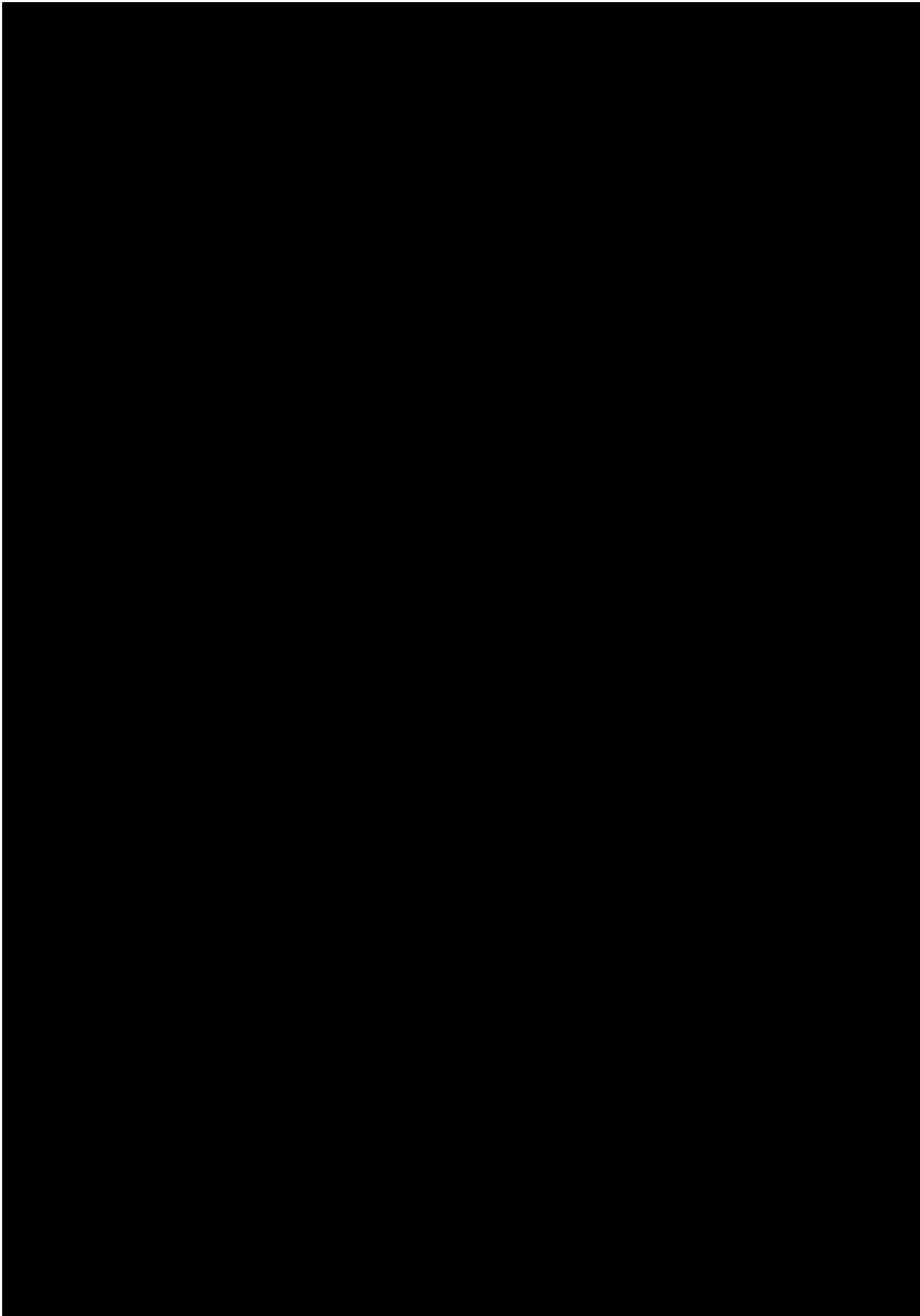
Therefore to supplement the existing site acquisition arrangements, the Department intends to outsource an element of the work and has embarked upon a tender process for a Site Acquisition Project Manager and advisory team. This will be modelled upon the existing successful structures used in the Rapid Delivery schools programme. The Department will retain oversight of the process by means of a Project Board.

3.2 PROPERTY ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY ISSUES

3.2.1 Securing State Grant-Aid by means of Charging Lease

BACKGROUND

The vast majority of schools are privately owned but publicly funded institutions, *i.e.* the site is owned by the relevant school patron. Where schools building projects are funded through grant-aid, the Department secured these grants through leases (known as Charging Leases or Declarations of Trust) with the relevant school Patron or Diocesan Trust. Charging Leases/Declarations of Trust are put in place between the Minister for Education, the landowner and Trustees under the Leases for Schools (Ireland) Act, 1881. These leases generally run for a term of 99 years and protect the Minister's capital investment in the school building for the duration of the term.





3.2.3 New School Lease

BACKGROUND:

Whilst the vast majority of schools remain privately owned and publicly funded institutions, *i.e.* where the site is owned by the school patron, an increasing number of school sites are directly owned by the Minister.

Following negotiations with the Education Partners, the terms of the New School Lease which deals with schools on sites owned by the Minister were agreed in 2011. This lease, where the Minister is the landlord, differs in two fundamental respects from the 99 year lease (where the Patron is the landowner) in that:

- the period is for 24 years, and
- the Minister has the right to insist on shared occupancy of the school building



4. OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

4.1 Redress Properties transferring to the Department of Education and Skills (2002 Indemnity Agreement) and Property contributions as part of sharing costs of response to residential institutional abuse (Post Ryan Report)

Under the 2002 Indemnity Agreement a number of properties were offered to the Department by the religious orders involved and transfers have been completed in respect of all but four of these which are currently ongoing.

Following the publication of the Ryan report in May 2009, the Government requested the Religious Orders involved to reconsider their original contribution of cash/properties by way of contribution to the State as a sharing of the costs of the response to residential institutional abuse. A number of revised offers involving additional sites have been considered.

The Unit is responsible for ensuring that these or any other sites to be contributed to the education sector are viable for the education sectors requirements. The CSSO provides advice in relation to conveyancing aspects.

5. BODIES UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE DEPARTMENT

N/A

Forward Planning

1. Unit / Section Overview

The primary function of the Forward Planning Section is to analyse demographic and enrolment trends and anticipate future demand for primary and post-primary school places to ensure that sufficient school accommodation will be provided and inform the identification of projects to meet future demands. The section also facilitates the patronage determination process for all new schools, patronage divesting for primary schools in identified areas and arranges for temporary accommodation to ensure that new schools can open as planned, pending the delivery of their permanent school buildings.

The forecasting of future school infrastructure needs is conducted using a Geographical Information System (GIS) which manages a range of relevant statistical and population datasets to identify areas experiencing a significant increase in demographic demand for additional school provision. The section examines population growth, demographic trends, current and projected enrolments, recent and planned housing developments and the capacity of existing schools to meet demand for pupil places. These demographic analyses are carried out across 314 school planning areas nationwide.

The section also co-ordinates interaction with local authorities on county development plans, local area plans and strategic development zones so as to ensure an adequate supply of appropriately zoned land for educational use to meet future demand for primary and post-primary school development.

Staffing: The current staffing complement for Forward Planning Section is 1 PO, 1.8 APOs, 2 HEOs, 4.8 EOs (1 EO post is currently vacant) and 2 COs (1 CO post is currently vacant).

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
Capital	No direct financial provision for Forward Planning Section – costs arising for temporary or start-up accommodation provided for from Large-Scale Projects or other financial sub-programmes as appropriate.		
Current			

3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.1 ISSUE: FORECASTING FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

BACKGROUND:

The number of births in Ireland started to rise substantially from the beginning of the last decade and continues to remain at an historic high. The challenge for the Department is to provide accommodation to cater for a significant increase in school-aged children and to establish in which areas throughout the country this accommodation will be required.

Primary enrolments, which have already risen substantially in recent years, are projected to rise by an additional 25,000 pupils by 2017 and will continue to rise to a peak of over 574,000 in 2018. This peak figure is reflective of primary enrolment levels last seen in Ireland in the early 1980s, where enrolments rose to a peak of 566,000 pupils in 1985 before beginning to reduce. Post-primary enrolments are also projected to rise by approximately 15,000 by 2017 and will continue to rise until 2025, at which point enrolments at second level are expected to be in excess of 400,000 pupils for the first time in the history of the State. In total therefore, for the three years from 2015 to 2017, an additional 40,000 pupils are expected to enter the system across first and second level education and continuing increases are expected up to near the end of this decade at primary level, and until 2025 at post-primary level.

Meeting this level of significant increased demand for education services is a major challenge. For example, the expected increase of 25,000 pupils at primary level could necessitate the provision of up to 926 additional classrooms if all the pupils cannot be accommodated in existing schools. If new schools were required to cater for these additional pupils, this would equate to the provision of 58 new 16-classroom primary schools at the current pupil teacher ratio of 27:1. Similarly, the projected increased pupil numbers at post-primary level of 15,000 to 2017 would equate to 15 new 1,000-pupil post-primary schools if all pupils could not be accommodated in existing post-primary schools. However, it is more likely that the additional school capacity required will be met through a combination of the use of any existing spare classroom capacity and extensions and expansions of existing schools in addition to the provision of new schools where necessary.

While these figures indicate the situation at the national level, the challenge is to establish in which locations the school going cohort will increase most significantly, so that sufficient school accommodation can be put in place to meet demand. To this end the Department uses a Geographical Information System (GIS). The Department's GIS uses data from the Central Statistics Office, Ordnance Survey Ireland, the Department of Social Protection and the Department's own databases. GIS allows the Department to conduct detailed analysis on the

demographics of each part of the country (broken down into 314 school planning areas) and to assess the likely changes to the school-going population in those areas.

NEW SCHOOLS

In June 2011, following an extensive demographic analysis conducted to identify the areas nationwide where, due to demographic changes, there may be a requirement for significant additional school provision at both primary and post-primary levels over the coming years, the then Minister announced that some 20 new primary schools and some 20 new post-primary schools were to be established up to 2016 to cater for increasing student numbers. The remaining school accommodation needs were to be addressed under the Department’s five-year capital investment programme, which comprised 275 major building projects to go to construction over the period 2012-2016.

In February 2015, following further demographic analyses, the Minister announced that 7 new primary schools would be established in 2015 and 2016 to cater for the continued increase in primary school pupils in addition to extending a number of existing schools. In total between 2011 and 2016, 27 new primary schools and 27 new post-primary schools have been, or are in the process of being, established.

CURRENT POSITION:

Following the most recent demographic analyses at primary and post-primary level, in November 2015, the Minister announced the establishment of a further 4 primary schools and 9 post-primary schools, which will open in 2017 and 2018 to cater for the continuing increase in the number of young people. She also announced a new programme of capital investment in schools running from 2016 to 2021 and comprising 310 major school projects, providing an additional 62,000 school places nationwide over the lifetime of the plan.

New Primary schools announced to open in 2017 and 2018

Area	Size – Mainstream Classrooms	Year of Opening
Pelletstown, Dublin 15	16 Classroom	2017
Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin	16 Classroom	2017
Ballincollig, Co. Cork	8 Classroom	2017
Dublin South City Centre (Regional – D2, 4 & 6)	24 Classroom	2018

New Post-Primary schools announced to open in 2017 and 2018

Area	Size – Number of Pupils	Year of Opening
Carpenterstown & Castleknock, Dublin 15	1,000 Pupils	2017
Limerick City & Environs (South-West)	600 Pupils	2017
Lucan, Co. Dublin	1,000 Pupils	2017
Malahide & Portmarnock, (Regional solution)	1,000 Pupils	2017
Portlaoise, Co. Laois	1,000 Pupils	2017
Swords, Co. Dublin	1,000 Pupils	2017
Limerick City & Environs (East)	600 Pupils	2018
Dublin South City Centre (Regional – D2, 4, 6 & 8)	1,000 Pupils	2018
Firhouse, Dublin 24	1,000 Pupils	2018

As part of the work on new school provision at post-primary level, the Section also examines issues concerning additional Irish-language provision. This involves consultations with relevant stakeholders and may result in the establishment of Gaelcholáistí.

NEXT STEPS:

Emerging demographic data indicate that in the period after 2018 new schools may be required in other areas to cater for increased numbers, particularly at post-primary level. This data is being kept under review to take account of updated enrolment numbers and updated child benefit data and also to take account of any ongoing and planned increase in capacity through expansion/extensions of existing schools.

The data indicates that new schools may be required at post-primary level in areas such as North-West Dublin City, the Dublin 13 and 17 area and other areas nationwide such as Galway City.

The Forward Planning Section is currently arranging to input the latest child benefit data and the enrolment data for the 2015/2016 school year into the GIS system and conduct further nationwide analyses.

In addition, the section is currently involved in delivering a cross-divisional project (together with Social Inclusion Unit and Statistics Section) to link the data from the Primary Online Database (POD) into the GIS system. This will facilitate a deeper analysis in planning for school provision in addition to providing a means of identifying the most disadvantaged schools as part of the ongoing review of the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) programme.

3.2. ISSUE: SCHOOL PATRONAGE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND:

The Forward Planning Section oversees the operation of a process and criteria introduced from June 2011 for establishing and determining the patronage of new schools. In areas where the population is growing, there are opportunities for consideration of new schools with patronage reflecting the parental demand for increased availability of different types of schools such as those providing Irish medium and multi-denominational education.

The criteria to be used in relation to patronage of the new schools place a particular emphasis on parental demand for plurality and diversity of patronage, with parental preferences at the centre of the process. In this regard, patron bodies and prospective patrons applying for the patronage of a new school announced by the Department must collect and demonstrate evidence of parental demand for the model of provision proposed as part of their application under the patronage process.

As part of the process, a New Schools Establishment Group was put in place to advise the Minister on the patronage of the new schools following its consideration of a report prepared by the Department on the applications received from patron bodies. The Group is chaired by Dr. Seamus McGuinness (retired senior lecturer in the Education Department at Trinity College Dublin) and also includes Ms. Sylva Langford (retired Director of the Office of the Minister for Children) and Prof. Seán Ó Riain (Sociology Department, NUI Maynooth).

Between 2011 and 2016, 27 new primary and 27 new post-primary schools have been, or are in the process of being, established. The arrangements for this involve running a patronage process for each school and securing temporary start-up accommodation for them where the permanent school building is not in place. It also involves continuous liaison with the patron bodies to dovetail their responsibilities e.g. appointment of principal & staff, enrolment procedures etc. with the start-up dates for the individual schools.

Current position:

The patronage process for the three new primary schools which will open in September 2016 commenced on 16 February 2016. These will serve the following school planning areas:

- Goatstown/Stillorgan,
- Cabra/Phibsborough/Dublin 7
- Drumcondra/Marino/Dublin 1

Under this process it is open to all patrons and prospective patrons to apply for patronage of a new school. Parental preferences are central to this process and prospective patrons are required to provide evidence of demand for their particular type of school.

As part of this process, the Department holds an information meeting with patron bodies to inform them of the details of the schools requiring a patronage process and to outline the mandatory requirements and criteria involved in the process. The patron/prospective patron bodies can then make applications for consideration.

Next steps:

The patronage process for new schools is overseen by the New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG). Department officials will draft a report based on the applications received for the consideration of the NSEG which will in turn submit a report with recommendations for consideration by the Minister.

It is envisaged that the process for these schools will be completed in May 2016, allowing the Minister to announce the outcome at that point

Once the patronage process for these three primary schools is under way, consideration will be given to the commencement of further patronage processes for the four primary schools and nine post-primary schools already announced to open in 2017 and 2018.

3.3 Issue: Divesting patronage of existing primary schools

BACKGROUND:

At primary school level, 90% of schools are under the patronage of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has itself highlighted the necessity for a greater plurality of provision to respond effectively to the changing social needs. The possibility of the Catholic Church divesting itself of the patronage of certain primary schools was raised by Catholic Church authorities initially. However, the issues surrounding divesting are sensitive and complex and are not to be underestimated.

Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector

In 2007, the Irish Bishop's Conference published a document entitled "Catholic Primary Schools, A Policy Provision into the Future." That document made it clear that "*the Catholic Church accepts there should be choice and diversity within a national education system, and so it believes that parents who desire schools under different patronage should, where possible, be facilitated in accessing them.*" Following on from the publication of the Bishops' document, the Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin, was among those who first proposed the idea of a forum on patronage and pluralism.

The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector was established by the then Minister in March 2011 and its Advisory Group reported in 2012. The report of the Advisory Group, chaired by Prof. John Coolahan, examined how demand for different types of patronage could be met in areas of stable population by divesting patronage of existing schools where there is evidence of parental demand for change. As part of an action plan published in June 2012 in response to the report it was announced that the Department would undertake surveys of parental preferences in 44 areas, beginning with five pilot areas in the autumn of 2012.

The aim of the surveys was to establish the level of parental demand for a wider choice in the patronage of primary schools within these areas. The areas concerned had relatively stable populations and in these circumstances there is little prospect that new schools will be established there over the next number of years for demographic reasons. Therefore, the only mechanism for alternative patrons to become involved in school provision in these areas is through the possible divestment of some existing school provision in the areas provided there was sufficient parental demand for wider choice of patronage.

Sufficient parental demand for a wider choice of school patron emerged in 28 areas to support change in the patronage of schools. Parents expressed a preference for Educate Together as the alternative patron of choice in 25 of the areas and in 2 of the areas the alternative patron of choice was the local VEC (now ETB) and the Community National School model. One area (Birr, Co. Offaly) demonstrated demand for an Irish language national school under the patronage of An Foras Pátrúnachta.

Intensive consultations ensued with the main Catholic patrons in each of the 28 areas to discuss divesting options. To date, eight new schools have opened under the patronage divesting process between 2013 and 2015.

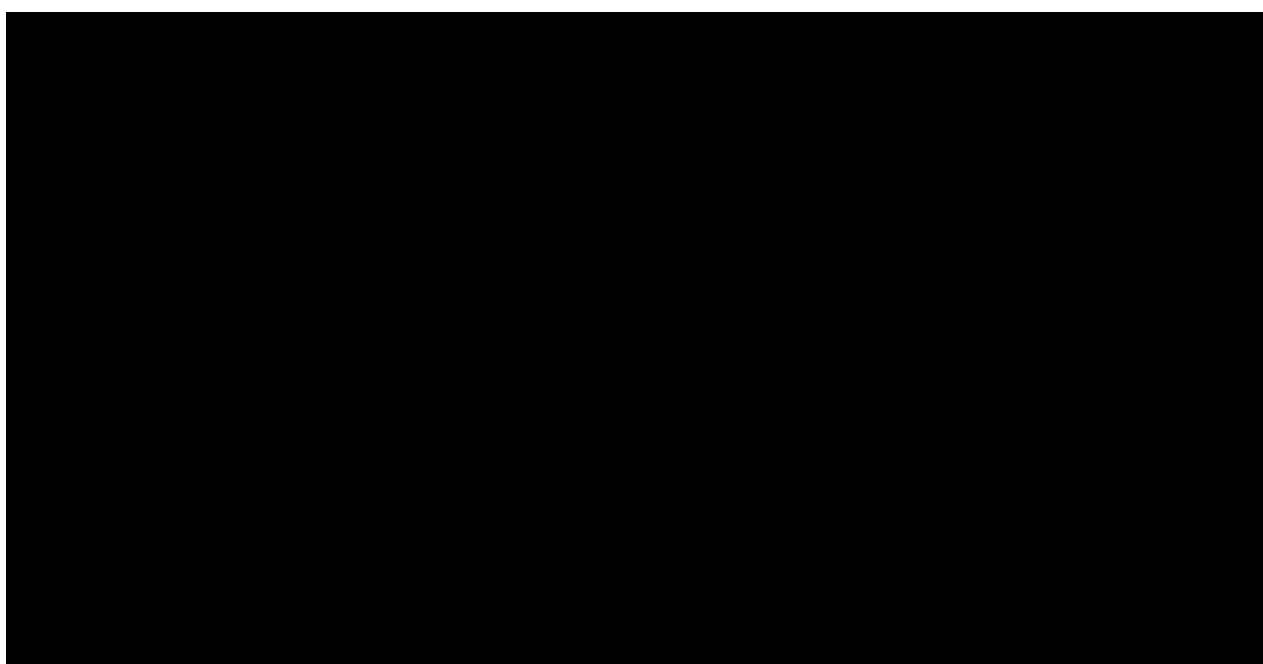
These are set out in the table below:

Count	Roll No	School Name	Address	Patron	Ethos	Year Opened
1	20430N	Canal Way Educate Together NS	Basin Lane, Dublin 8	Educate Together	Multi denominational	2013
2	20444B	Trim Educate Together NS	Glebe, Kildalkey Road, Trim, Co. Meath	Educate Together	Multi denominational	2014
3	20446F	Tramore Educate Together NS	Pond Road, Tramore, Co. Waterford	Educate Together	Multi denominational	2014
4	20445D	Malahide/Portmarnock Educate Together NS	Malahide Road, Kinsealy, Co. Dublin	Educate Together	Multi denominational	2014
5	09040K	Newtownwhite ETNS *	Newtownwhite, Ballysacerry, Ballina, Co. Mayo	Educate Together	Multi-denominational	2014
6	20456I	Tuam Educate Together NS	Dublin Road, Tuam, Co. Galway	Educate Together	Multi denominational	2015
7	20458M	New Ross Educate Together NS	Barret's Park, New Ross, Co. Wexford	Educate Together	Multi denominational	2015
8	20461B	Gaelscoil na Laochra	Biorra, Co. Uíbh Fhailí	An Foras Pátrúnachta	Multi denominational	2015

*This school resulted in the transfer of existing school from the Church of Ireland.

The Department considers the establishment of these eight schools as an initial but important step in giving parents confidence of the Department's intent about providing a plurality of education and a real choice for them in the type of primary school in their localities.

Where there was a strong degree of certainty on securing suitable permanent accommodation for a new school under the divesting process, the Department has facilitated the school opening in temporary accommodation, while the permanent solution is being advanced. In this regard, six of the eight schools established under the divesting process are currently in temporary accommodation. The Department is continuing to advance their permanent accommodation, while also expanding their temporary accommodation, where necessary. The Department is continuing to work closely with relevant stakeholders to progress the patronage divesting process as effectively as possible.





NEXT STEPS:

The previous Minister had publicly stated that the patronage divesting process needed to be re-examined to better accommodate parental demand for diversity. To that end, a round of consultations with the principal patron bodies has taken place over the last number of weeks with the aim of reinvigorating and accelerating the process. Following on the consultations to date, it is clear that patrons and patron bodies recognise the need to give new impetus to the process and that school communities need to be supported in achieving this increased momentum for diversity.

Among the outcomes of the consultation process is a clear view that, although the aim of the patronage divesting process is to facilitate diversity of patronage through reconfiguration of existing school provision, the term “divesting” is frequently misunderstood and that there needs to be a clearer message to school communities that the process is about patrons working together to make the best use of existing school facilities to accommodate the diverse needs of all children.

Another point emerging from the consultation process was that school amalgamations continue to present important opportunities for school reconfiguration leading to patron diversity and it was decided that a working group would be established by the Department to examine how support for amalgamations might provide a greater impetus for reconfiguration for diversity.

In areas that were not included in the surveys of parental preferences in 2012/13, there is also a need to examine further ways in which emerging demand for diversity of school provision can be accommodated.

3.4 ISSUE: SMALL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Ireland has a high proportion of primary schools relative to its population and has a high proportion of small primary schools. A value for money review of small primary school provision was conducted in the period 2010- 2013. The context in which the review was commissioned is the economic cost of the requirement in recent years to provide significant additional pupil places to cater for demographic growth. The report of the review proposed some re-organisation of the provision of small schools. The report was published in February 2015 and its recommendations were not accepted by government.

In publishing the report of the value for money review, measures were announced to better support the sustainability of small schools, particularly those in isolated areas. These measures were implemented in the 2015/6 school year. They consisted of improvements to the teacher retention thresholds for small schools of 2, 3 and 4 teachers and an improved teacher allocation threshold for isolated 1-teacher schools. It was also announced that a voluntary amalgamation protocol would be developed with the education partners for 1-teacher schools with reducing enrolments.

4. Other significant Issues

4.1 ISSUE: SCHOOL PATRONAGE LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS

The Education Act, 1998 legislatively defined a school patron for the first time and created the requirement for the Minister to maintain a register of school patrons. Since enactment in December 2000 there have been significant developments on the school patronage front and as a result of experience it seems clear that legislative amendment is required to deal with these developments. New types of patron have emerged and are going to continue to emerge; a new process was devised in 2011 for the appointing of a school patron for a mainstream school. The entire system of new school establishment has moved from one which was led by private initiative and partly privately funded to a system that is entirely state-led and state-funded. Under the existing legislation, a new school patron can only be appointed in the context of their achieving recognition of a school.

4.2 ISSUE: PROVISION OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION SOLUTION FOR NEW SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND:

Increasingly over the last number of years, the Section has become much more involved in the provision of temporary accommodation for new start-up schools. This work includes making arrangements to source, lease and fit out temporary accommodation for new schools and also to enhance, further expand or put in place new arrangements for schools already in temporary accommodation where their permanent accommodation solution is not yet in place. This includes the procurement of consultants to manage the planning process with relevant local authorities, appoint contractors to carry out the necessary building works and arrange for completion and handover of temporary accommodation in time for the commencement of the new school year.

CURRENT POSITION:

Forward Planning Section currently has responsibility for managing and delivering some 29 ongoing temporary accommodation projects.

NEXT STEPS:

The planning and provision of temporary accommodation for the 4 primary and 9 post-primacy schools due to open in 2017 and 2018 will require significant resources. In addition, where the permanent buildings for schools currently in temporary accommodation are not in place, arrangements need to be made to provide additional or alternative temporary accommodation for these growing schools. A range of delivery mechanisms for this provision, both internal and outsourced, are currently under consideration.

Devolved and Rental Payments

1. Unit / Section Overview

Devolved Grants/Rental Payments Section provides funding to schools on a devolved basis to expand and improve existing school accommodation and to provide grant aid to schools towards the rental/purchase of temporary accommodation.

It administers and monitors the devolution of the delivery of 47 major school projects by the Office of Public Works, Education and Training Boards, the National Development Finance Agency and Local Authorities.

The main grants administered by the Section to schools are: Major Devolved Projects, Additional Accommodation Scheme, Prefab Replacement Initiatives, Summer Works Scheme, Emergency Works Scheme, Furniture and Equipment for general use and for special needs pupils.

Staff Numbers: 1 PO, 1 AP, 2 HEO's, 5.2 EO's, 1 SO and 4 CO's

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Service	Outturn 2013	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
Capital	Covered in overall allocation for Building Unit			
Current (Rental budget)	€26.0m	€16.4m	€18m	€19m

3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

Reducing Prefab numbers in schools:

Under the Department's Prefab Replacement Initiatives, first introduced in 2012, approval was given to 209 primary and 8 post primary schools nationally to replace their rented prefab accommodation (614 units) with permanent accommodation. In excess of €57m has been allocated for these initiatives of which €52.2m has been paid to date.

Prefabs are continuing to be replaced in schools that are on the Department's 5-year capital programme (2011-2015) and on the Department's new 6-year programme (2016-2021) as part of their major projects. In this regard, 984 prefab units are currently being rented. The number being rented in 2014 was 961 with 1,094 units being rented in 2013.

Under the Department's new 6-year capital programme (2016-2021). The intention is to replace all purchased prefabs with permanent accommodation over the lifetime of the programme. It is expected that this element of the capital programme will commence in 2019.

Devolved Major Projects

The Department has devolved the delivery of a number of major school building projects to Office of Public Works, Education and Training Boards, National Development Finance Agency (NDFA), Louth and Westmeath County Councils and the Grangegorman Development Agency (GDA). The purpose of this approach is to expedite the delivery of school building projects to meet, in the main, on-going demographic needs. The NDFA have recently completed 15 school building projects and it is expected, subject to the availability of funding, that further projects will be devolved to them in the course of 2016.

The Section is responsible for overseeing the delivery of these projects within the agreed parameters which are outlined in a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which is put in place for each devolved project.

The following is a summary of the number of active major building projects currently devolved:-

- Education and Training Boards – 34 projects
- Office of Public Works – 8 projects
- Local Authorities – 4 projects
- Grangegorman Development Agency – 1 project

3.2 ISSUE:

National Radon Control Strategy

BACKGROUND:

This Section represents the Department on the National Radon Control Strategy Group, which is a Government initiative overseen by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

As well as this Department, the Group comprises a range of Government Departments and Agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency, the HSE and the OPW.

The purpose of the group is to devise a strategy for raising awareness of radon and the measures that can be taken to remediate it levels beyond the accepted reference levels where this is found.

As the Department has previously carried out a radon testing and remediation programme in all schools it is not envisaged that a further programme of testing will be carried out. The Department will fully engage with the Strategy Group to assist in the raising awareness of radon in schools including the need to maintain the systems already put in place by the Department in schools to remediate radon levels.

Current position:

The Section is implementing a range of measures to raise awareness of radon in schools including linking our Website to the Environmental Protections Agency's new Radon website, referencing the radon remediation works already carried out in schools in new building project approval letters etc.

NEXT STEPS:

The Section has plans to the step of the awareness campaign by using Patrons and Teacher Unions as conduits to disseminate information to schools. It will continue to engage with the National Strategy Group to devise other methodologies of information dispersal as appropriate.

4. OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

4.1 ISSUE:

Oversight arrangements put in place by the Planning and Building Unit to monitor shadow economy issues

In March 2013 the Department appointed Contractors Administration Services (CAS) to conduct random audits on school building projects in order to verify compliance with the relevant Pay and Conditions clauses in the Public Works Contracts. In tandem with the appointment of CAS the Department also provided an on-line complaint system on its website to enable individuals bring to the Department's attention, cases where they are of the opinion that issues of non-compliance are taking place.

Contractors Administration Services are continuing to conduct audits on school and college building projects when requested and any issues of non-compliance brought to the attention of the Department will be audited by CAS and should irregularities be uncovered in terms of non-compliance with employment law, enforcement and prosecution falls under the remit of the National Employment Rights Agency (NERA).

If an audit uncovers any other matters of concern regarding tax compliance or social welfare fraud, such matters will be referred to either the Revenue Commissioners and/or the Department of Social Protection as appropriate.

When a complaint is received the Department liaises with Revenue/Social Protection/NERA and where issues are currently being dealt with by one of these bodies the Department does not forward the complaint to CAS for audit.

Since May 2013 no action can be taken by the Department in cases where complaints are received regarding the non-payment of REA rates as these cannot be legally enforced by the relevant statutory authority (NERA) as a result of the Supreme Court decision.

Nature and number of complaints received by Department

A total of 31 complaints have been received in respect of 26 building projects with the majority received via the Department online system.

Type of complaint received	Number of complaints
Registered Employment Agreement (REAs) issues	28
Tax/Welfare issues only	3

Number of Audits carried out

To date CAS has been requested to carry out 26 audits of building projects as well as 2 full monitoring service for the duration of the building contract. (1 monitoring service was for the final six months of the contract). CAS has completed the 26 audits and the full monitoring service on both sites. (An individual audit may be in respect of 1 or more complaints received).

Breakdown of Audits	
Reason for Audit	Number of audits
Complaints received	13
Selected by Department for random audit	13
Selected for full monitoring service	2

Audits were not carried out on 13 projects where complaints were received for the following reasons:

- the project was not being funded by Department
- the project was being audited by others
- the project was nearing completion and contractor/subcontractors would have left the site before CAS had an opportunity to audit them.

Outcome of audits completed by CAS

As a result of the audits to date, information in relation to 10 projects has been referred to the Revenue Commissioners, mainly dealing with queries regarding individuals on site being self-employed workers or employees. Information in relation to 1 project has been referred to the Department of Social Protection and information in respect of 1 project has been referred to the National Employment Rights Agency. Any follow-up action taken by those agencies in the individual cases referred is a matter for those agencies (the Department would not be informed of the outcome).

Current Position

The draw-down framework under which CAS were appointed was for a period of two years (26th March 2013 to the 26th March 2015) with the option to extend by a further year by mutual agreement with the appointed service provider. The Department has renewed the contract with CAS for a further year to 26th March 2016.

It is proposed to commence a new tender competition shortly to ensure that a new service provider can be appointed at the end of the current contract which is 26th March 2016.

4.2 ISSUE:

The Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015

Background

The Act was introduced to provide a revised legislative framework to replace the Registered Employment Agreement system. The Act will allow unions and employers to apply to the

Labour Court to initiate a review of pay/pensions/sick pay terms of workers in a particular sector and make recommendations to the Minister for the making of an order in these areas. The new mechanism will also provide for flexibility in response to changing economic climates or changes in the make-up of any sector.

The new legislation is intended to provide certainty for employees as well as for businesses tendering for contracts. It will also help promote industrial peace in the crucial construction sector, and establish universal standards which will help prevent Irish firms being undercut in tendering for contracts.

What does the Act provides for:

1. the reintroduction of a mechanism for the registration of employment agreements between an employer or employers and trade unions governing remuneration and conditions of employment in individual enterprises, and
2. to provide for a new statutory framework for establishing minimum rates of remuneration terms and conditions of employment for a specified type, class or group of workers, particularly in the context of transnational provision of services and promoting harmonious relations between workers — in effect a framework to replace the former sectoral Registered Employment Agreements.
3. to put in place the legislative amendments to the Industrial Relations Acts 2001 and 2004 required to give effect to the Programme for Government commitment to reform the current law on employees' right to engage in collective bargaining (the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2001), so as to ensure compliance by the State with recent judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Furthermore, the Statement of Government Priorities 2014-2016 prioritised the enactment of the Collective Bargaining legislation as approved by Government.

Present Position:

Minister Richard Bruton signed the commencement order on the 27th July 2015 and the Act came into force on the 1st August 2015.

It is now up to the employer and/or trade union side to initiate the process. After that there are a number of timelines for the Labour Court to carry out the review and make a recommendation to the Minister. The Minister is required to make an order within 6 weeks of receiving the Court's recommendation, but not before the Oireachtas has passed a positive resolution on the proposed order.

It is unlikely that there will be any new REAs for the construction sector for some time as discussion have only commenced between unions and employers.

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

None

Schools Capital Appraisal Section

1. UNIT / SECTION OVERVIEW

The School Capital Appraisal Section is responsible for:

- Assessment of applications from schools for large scale capital works;
- Devising accommodation solutions and recommending which school projects should be prioritised to meet demographic demand and provide essential school accommodation;
- Preparation of school project briefs and schedules of accommodation;
- Processing and assessment of applications for additional classroom accommodation (temporary and permanent);
- Assessment of applications for funding under the Summer Works Scheme. and
- Assessment of applications for change of school status, including amalgamations

Staffing:

The Section's staffing schedule is as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| ○ Principal Officer | 1 |
| ○ Assistant Principal Officers | 2 |
| ○ Higher Executive Officers | 4 |
| ○ Executive Officers | 11.75 (WTE) (includ. 1 shorter working day & 4 job sharing).
Currently, there is 1 EO vacancy and 1 job sharing EO is on maternity leave. |
| ○ Clerical Officers | 4.73 (WTE) Currently there is one vacancy |

2. Key priority issues

2.1 Progress projects published in the 6 Year Construction Programme

background:

In November 2015, a 6 Year Construction Programme (2016-2021) was announced as part of a €2.8 billion schools capital investment plan, that will provide funding for over 300 large scale school building projects that are planned to proceed to construction over the duration of the Programme as well as provide for the completion of large scale projects announced under the 5 Year Plan (2012-16). Under the Programme, a further 62,000 additional places will be provided by 2022 in addition to addressing the requirements of schools that have a major deficit of mainstream accommodation capacity in respect of current enrolments and future increases in enrolments.

The demographic position requires a continuation of the school building programme to meet projected demand for primary and post primary school places. Primary enrolments are projected to rise to a peak of over 574,000 pupils in 2018, an increase in enrolments of over 64,000 since 2011. Post-primary enrolments are projected to reach over 358,000 pupils in 2018, an increase in enrolments of over 41,000 since 2011 and will continue to rise until 2025, at which point enrolments at second level are expected to be in excess of 410,000 pupils for the first time in the history of the State. In total therefore, an additional 104,000 pupils are expected to enter the system across first and second level education up to 2019.

current position:

The 6 Year Construction Programme (2016-2021), as in the case of the 5 Year Construction Plan (2012-16) and subsequent stimulus packages, prioritises the delivery of Large Scale School Projects mainly in areas where significant pupil enrolment increases are projected. Provision has also been made for devolved funding for essential classroom accommodation for schools outside the Programme where an immediate enrolment need in an area has been identified. This prioritisation of capital spend is to ensure that every child will have access to a physical school place and that our school system is in a position to cope with increasing pupil numbers.

In the period 2012 to 2015, 189 large scale projects have been completed. When the number of physical school places delivered by large scale school projects is combined with the additional places provided by smaller scale projects, new modern classroom accommodation has been delivered since 2012 for over 80,000 pupils in primary and second level schools across the country.

Due to the scale of the building programme and the need to prioritise available funding towards the provision of actual school places, there are significant challenges in operating each year within the allocation available for the school sector. In providing a financial commitment to school projects, the 6 year Programme has provided certainty to school

communities that, barring unforeseen technical obstacles, their projects will be progressed to completion. The immediate consequence is that whilst this commitment will be maintained, the start date for when large scale projects can commence construction may need to be rescheduled that in many cases may involve the continuance of temporary accommodation and approval of additional temporary accommodation.

Next Steps:

The completion of the project briefs and schedules of accommodation for the schools contained in the Programme is core to the progression of the projects into the architectural planning process. This is a process that involves engagement with school authorities in relation to the scope of accommodation required and is dependent on factors such as the availability of sites. In addition, the progression of projects within the Programme is monitored so that alternative or interim accommodation solutions are explored where warranted.

2.2 Alternative Means of Delivery of Major Projects

In order to expedite the process of delivering projects and to maximise the output from within existing resources, the Department has initiated alternative methods of delivering major projects.

The traditional method involves a design team appointed by the school progressing the project stage by stage with input and assistance by the Department. Progression to each subsequent stage is contingent on the satisfactory completion of the relevant stage (see the Architectural Planning, Construction and Developing Areas section below).

Agencies such as the Office of Public Works, Education and Training Boards (ETBs), National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) as well as a number of Local Authorities are all assisting with the delivery of over 70 large scale school projects.

This initiative has drawn on the Department's experience of devolving responsibility for the management of minor projects such as those under the Summer Works Scheme (see below) to individual school authorities. This practice is facilitating the delivery of a greater number of projects for a similar level of administrative and technical resources.

Current Position:

As stated, in order to maximise the use of available capacity to assist in the delivery of the schools construction programme, the Department has made arrangements for the delivery of primary and post-primary building projects, on behalf of the Department, by other agencies, on the basis of Service Level Agreements.

Over 40 projects have being delegated to Education Training Boards, 17 projects have been delegated to the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA), the Office of Public Works is managing 15 projects, Louth County Council is managing the delivery of a primary school and two 1,000 pupil post primary schools while Westmeath County Council is progressing a 16 classroom primary school. Finally, the delivery of a 24 classroom primary school has also been devolved to the Grangegorman Development Agency.

The bodies in question are progressing the projects that have been devolved to them for delivery. This generally includes the appointment of a design team and project managing the design team in designing the new building, applying for planning permission and progressing the project to tender and construction. The Department continues to interact with these bodies regarding the progression of the projects, giving approval to proceed to the next stages of the architectural planning process where appropriate and monitoring the process to ensure that delivery timelines are met.

Next Steps:

The Department will continue to consider the various means of ensuring the delivery of school building projects in a way that ensures speedy delivery of projects while also meeting the requirements of the public procurement guidelines and good financial practice. The devolution of further projects in the case of any individual agency will depend on the capacity of the agency concerned to deliver projects within the required timescale and the agreed cost plan.

2.3 Publish an Annual Plan relating to planned expenditure on individual major school projects commencing construction.

Background :

Further to the announcement of the 6 Year Construction Programme, the Department is committed to publishing a detailed annual programme in relation to individual major school

projects commencing construction. This continues the position that was introduced under the 5 Year Plan.

Current Position:

In the period 2012 to 2015, details of 246 projects were included in annual announcements. The Plan for 2016 is contained in the 6 Year Programme announced in November last

Next Steps:

It is intended that the Annual Plan for 2017 will be announced in December 2016.

The progress of projects on the 6 Year Plan (and annual programmes) will be detailed on the Department's website, www.education.gov.ie, and will be updated regularly. This is consistent with the Department's commitment to provide increased information in relation to the status of individual school building projects, as they proceed through the various stages of the architectural planning process.

2.4 Process applications from schools for both temporary and permanent accommodation to meet urgent needs for additional accommodation, which cannot be met by a school's existing accommodation.

Background:

In assessing applications for additional accommodation, priority is accorded to schools requiring additional mainstream classrooms where an immediate increase in enrolments is arising or due to the appointment of additional teachers where no existing suitable accommodation exists.

Where the need for additional accommodation is likely to be for a finite period of less than three years, the school is given approval to rent temporary accommodation for this period. The rental contract is between the school authority and the rental company and the Department provides grant aid. Where the need for additional accommodation is likely to be for a period of more than three years, the school is given grant aid to construct a permanent structure.

There is a policy commitment to ensure that children with special needs are educated in mainstream schools, where appropriate. As a result, there has been an increase in demand for the provision of accommodation to house Special Needs Units (SNUs) in existing schools. It is general practice to include an SNU in the accommodation brief for new school buildings, unless local circumstances indicate that it will not be required.

In addition, the needs of special schools for refurbishment and/or extensions must also be taken into account in drawing up major capital programmes.

Current Position:

The section continues to prioritise applications from schools for essential accommodation and to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking places. Since 2012, under the additional accommodation scheme and the Prefab replacement scheme, over 830 small scale projects have been approved to replace inadequate infrastructure and provide additional capacity.

As in the case of large scale projects, there are significant challenges in operating each year within the allocation available for the school sector. Many of the requests to the Department from schools for additional funding is for upgraded accommodation such as refurbishment, reconfiguration of small classrooms, GP rooms/PE Halls in addition to classrooms as well as replacing dilapidated prefabs purchased in previous years. In view of the over-riding objective to prioritise available budgets towards essential accommodation, it has not been possible to fund such requests from schools.

In addition, requests are received from schools for additional accommodation where other schools in the same locality may have capacity available. The provision of additional accommodation must take priority over the replacement or duplication of existing accommodation and steps must also be taken to ensure that existing accommodation is fully utilised. The appraisal of any application made by a school for additional classroom accommodation must necessarily take into account overall enrolments and the extent of the existing and planned school accommodation in that area. This may result, however, in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice.

Next Steps:

Due to the number of school applications (over 400 annually) and the need to prioritise available resources towards meeting demographic need, the focus of the scheme will continue to be the funding of essential classroom accommodation.

3. Other significant Issues

3.1 Summer Works Scheme (SWS)

Background:

The purpose of the Scheme is to devolve funding to individual school authorities to undertake small and medium scale improvement works that will upgrade existing school facilities, which can be carried out during the summer months or at other times that avoid disrupting the operation of the school. The scheme is designed to address necessary and immediate works; funding is not made available for projects considered by the Department to be desirable but not essential.

The SWS announced in October 2015 will apply on a multi-annual basis for the years 2016 and 2017. Accordingly, a new call for proposals from schools will not be sought in respect of 2017. A total fund of €80 million, €40 million in 2016 and €40 million in 2017, was announced for the scheme. Under SWS 2016 and 2017, valid applications from schools that are not reached for funding reasons from within the funding made available in 2016 will qualify to be assessed for purposes of the funding available in 2017, subject to the overall availability of funding.

Primary and second level schools, participating in the Free Education scheme and in non-rented accommodation, were invited to apply under the SWS. Schools submitted their proposals on-line using the Esinet portal. The use of this on-line application system has brought significant enhancements to the application process generally and removed the need for paper-based applications. The Esinet system opened for applications on 2nd November 2015 and the closing date was on the 27th November 2015.

Under the SWS, the onus is on school authorities to identify and decide on what project they regard as being a priority to address necessary and immediate works. Each school can apply for one small scale project only. The onus is also on schools to ensure that full and complete applications are submitted in accordance with the scheme. A key component of the SWS is that responsibility for the delivery of works is devolved to schools; school authorities are

responsible for managing the projects, including cost management, through to successful completion.

Current Position:

Over 1,600 projects applications have been received under the 2016-17 Summer Works Scheme with a total projected expenditure of almost €189 million.

Under the SWS, schools were advised that it would not be possible to progress all valid projects depending on demand and the level of funding available. Therefore, commensurate with the level of funding set aside for the Scheme, applications are being assessed on a top down basis in accordance with the prioritisation criteria.

Categories of work eligible for funding under SWS 2016/2017 in order of priority.

Priority/Category 1:	Gas Works
Priority/Category 2:	Electrical Works
Priority/Category 3:	Mechanical works
Priority/Category 5:	Toilet facilities
Priority/Category 6:	Roof works
Priority/Category 7:	Window projects
Priority/Category 8:	Curricular requirement projects
Priority/Category 9:	Other structural improvements
Priority/Category 10:	External environment projects

Note: Category 4, under previous Summer Works Schemes facilitated applications for special needs projects. These applications are now funded under the Emergency Works Scheme.

Next Steps:

As described in the overview of the Planning and Building Division, above, it is intended that subject to the availability of funding, that the 1st round of successful projects will be announced in due course.

The notification to the successful schools will include guidance on the next steps that they should take, including tendering for consultants and contractors for the works approved. Detailed Technical Guidance Documents are also available on the Department's website, www.education.ie for schools' assistance.

3.2 Demand for major capital works in schools not on 6 Year Programme

Background:

There are almost 1,000 applications for major capital funding on hand in the Department. Given the forecast increase in demand and the indicative levels of resources available, it will be necessary to focus the school building programme for the foreseeable future on the provision of essential classroom accommodation.

Current Position:

In the past, the system was primarily reactive i.e. the building programme was formulated in response to applications from individual schools for capital investment. In light of the data regarding future demographic demand from Forward Planning Section, the Department has had to become more proactive in formulating accommodation solutions to identified demand.

In the development of the 6 Year Programme, the Department recognized that there will be a small number of additional projects that will need to be included in the lifetime of the 6 Year Programme. These are projects which will be required to cater for demographic demand but where arrangements have not been finalised by the Department with the schools concerned.

There are also some schools that have not been included in the Programme which have a deficit of mainstream accommodation capacity in respect of current enrolments and/or require major refurbishment/ replacement. These are schools that will progress into architectural planning. While these projects are not planned to advance to construction during the 6 Year Programme, progression on these will be updated on the website.

Next Steps:

The Department is engaged with school Patrons seeking their co-operation in facilitating extensions to their schools in order to meet identified and anticipated demand. This is however dependent in some cases on the capacity of existing constrained school sites to facilitate extension projects.

3.3 Applications for Amalgamation from existing schools

Background:

The decision making authority for any amalgamation belongs to the Patron of a school, and this is subject to the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills. The initiative for any amalgamation may come from a variety of sources, such as parents, staff, Board of Management and patron(s). Any such proposal to amalgamate schools must first involve consultation with all of the relevant stakeholders. The Department's role is to facilitate any such proposal or discussions between the relevant parties.

Following the consultation process, a decision taken at local level will follow. In that regard, any proposed changes must be well planned and managed in a manner that accommodates the interests of students, parents, teachers, local communities and contributes to an inclusive education system. The Department has said on several occasions that any decisions to amalgamate schools will be voluntary and follow decisions taken at local level.

The Patron and relevant stakeholders are also advised to consider the implications that any amalgamation proposal may have on items such as school accommodation, funding, staffing and school transport so that an informed decision can be made. Proposals that may have major capital implications can only be considered within the context of the Department's capital budget and the challenges facing the Department in meeting national demographic demands.

Every case needs to be considered by all involved on its own merits. In many cases, there will be a strong case for progressing with an amalgamation. For example, in the case of very small schools with reducing numbers, parents and the local school community may themselves see benefits in amalgamation opportunities. In areas of mature population where enrolment numbers are reducing over time and school buildings are not being utilised to full capacity or where there is separate single sex provision and local parental preference for co-educational arrangements, there can also be strong merit. Equally, it has to be recognised that there can be significant sensitivities involved. These are best addressed through a process of local level dialogue and consultation aimed at ensuring that any proposal meets the interests of the communities concerned.

Current Position

Protocol for future sustainability of small schools

In order to support sustainable school communities, two policy initiatives were announced in 2015. Firstly, an improvement to the staffing schedule for some small schools. These consist of improved teacher retention thresholds for schools of 1 – 4 teachers and new teacher allocation thresholds for isolated 1-teacher schools. Full details on both measures are contained in the briefing notes from Schools Allocations Section.

The second measure is the development of a voluntary protocol for the very smallest schools with reducing enrolments. This protocol is being developed with the INTO and CPSMA. The Church of Ireland have also been party to discussions on this topic. The protocol embraces schools that are under Catholic patronage, have an enrolment of 20 pupils or less and are located within an 8km distance of a school of the same ethos and language of instruction. The protocol is designed to help 1 teacher schools (or those who are likely to become 1 teacher schools) to proactively, and voluntarily, plan for their futures. The Protocol will provide a framework to facilitate a series of voluntary local conversations to be initiated by the Patron including whether in effect amalgamation of local schools would create more sustainable school communities into the future. Under the Protocol, the Department will seek to address any obstacles, where appropriate, that may be viewed as impeding the process. Capital funding to support such amalgamations may also be considered where extensions or other work to schools are required. Whilst schools under the Protocol will be encouraged to amalgamate, engagement with the process is on a voluntary basis.

Next Steps:

In relation to amalgamations generally, the Department will consider any requests from Patrons within the parameters outlined in the background note above.

In the case of the Protocol, whilst engagement with the protocol will be entirely voluntary, it is envisaged that the following steps will be followed summarised below:

- a. Department will write to all patrons of 1 teacher schools, asking them to reflect on the sustainability of these schools. In future, similar letters will issue in the case of any schools which fall below 25 pupils (and are therefore approaching 1 teacher status)
- b. Patrons will lead local community discussions, and when they have considered potential future options, can contact a single coordinating point of contact in the Department.

- c. Department will provide clarifications to the patrons on issues such as staffing, school transport, DEIS status, capital implications or grant funding
- d. Patrons to use this information to re-engage with communities and identify possible courses of action. Patron retains authority to make final decision and notify Department, which will seek to support decision.

3.4 Capital Works in the Further Education Sector

Background:

The Department does not have a specific capital subhead for the Further Education sector. The Further Education sector occupies a mix of accommodation, some of which is rented, some of which is shared with post primary schools (this is the case particularly with PLC courses) and other of which is owned by the relevant ETB.

PLC courses accommodated in post primary schools have benefited from investment in the school buildings under major capital works, as well as grants under the Summer Works, Emergency Works and other such schemes.

In the past, limited capital grants have been made available to the further education sector when available. Often this has been to address urgent needs or emergency situations. However, there has not been a systematic programme of capital investment in the sector.

Current Position:

The level of demand for capital investment in schools and in the higher education sector has impacted on the Department's capacity to initiate a programme of capital investment in further education and training accommodation. The delivery of education and training is pivotal to the delivery by SOLAS of the Government's Action Plan for Jobs. This does create challenges for the sector and the need for dedicated capital funding is identified as an element of the Further Education and Training Strategy. The future investment needs in the sector was identified as part of the Department's submission under the capital expenditure review.

Next Steps:

It is intended that in the context of a review of the Capital Investment programme, that the matter of funding for the Further Education and Training sector will again be raised.

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Name of Body:

Main responsibilities:

Allocation 2010:

Staff numbers:

[Please provide details above in respect of each body (if any) in your area]

Third Level Building and PPP Unit

1. Unit / Section Overview

Third Level:

The Third Level Building Unit (TLBU) supports the delivery of higher education through the provision of accommodation and facilities. It is responsible for identifying, prioritising, and overseeing capital investment needs within the sector. It does so in close collaboration with the HEA.

With the exception of funding for the Grangegorman project, no new capital was provided for the sector from the announcement of the moratorium on Third Level funding in November 2011 until the Budget announcement in October 2014. Even then, funding was provided for only three projects: the Human Biology Building in NUIG, the Glucksman Library in UL and the Confucius Project in UCD. Further funding was announced in the Capital Plan 2016-21. However, despite the existence of up to €4bn of demand in the sector, the Plan provided only €110m of additional Exchequer funding and €200m worth of Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects for the Sector.

PPP's:

Managing all Department of Education and Skills related PPP programmes also falls within the remit of the TLBU. PPPs are a structured arrangement between public sector bodies and private sector investors for the purpose of providing infrastructure projects that would otherwise be delivered through traditional procurement mechanisms with all related expenditure being made upfront.

Educational PPP projects to date have been and continue to be designed, built, financed, operated and maintained (DBFOM) by the selected tenderer. In effect the PPP operator takes responsibility for each of these elements of the project. The contract between the Department and the PPP operator provides for an annual payment - referred to as the unitary charge (UC) - subject to the services outlined in the contract being provided to the satisfaction of the Department.

The UC comprises loan repayments (capital and interest) for the project financing which covers design, construction and equipment, building and equipment, life cycle funds and facilities management. The latter includes maintenance costs, staff costs of cleaning staff, and sundry expenses. The charge is made up of two elements - a fixed cost element and a variable (indexable) element. The UCs are indexed linked in that the element latter changes in line with the Consumer Price All Item Index (CPI). UC Payments are spread over **25** years but the first UC payment is not made until construction is completed and the school is open ("service commencement").

PPP projects for which the Department is responsible can be divided into four categories:

1. *Operational PPP's*: these are PPP projects which are already in the operation and maintenance phase. The DoES is responsible for **6** projects in this respect. The **6** projects are made up of **4** bundles of schools containing an all-in total **23** schools and a further **2** PPP projects that are in operation within the higher education sector: both of these latter projects are part of the Cork Institute of Technology.
2. *PPP's under construction*: Schools Bundle 4 falls under this category at present.
3. *PPP's in procurement*: Schools Bundle 5 falls under this category at present
4. *PPP's in pre-procurement*: The Phase III Programme of Third Level projects fall under this category.

A complete review and evaluation of the first bundle of schools to be delivered is underway within the Department and is targeted for completion later this year. Cork Institute of Technology is also reviewing its projects.

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Table 2: Financial Provision 2014-2016

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
Third Level	€79,094,116.53	€52,638,547.62	
PPP's *	€79,469,729.94	€66,355,541.77	
GDA (Current Budget)	€2,480,405.00	€2,880,633.00	

Third Level Expenditure

Despite the lack of funding allocated to the Higher Education Sector, the sector has benefitted from a small amount of savings in other areas within the Department's budget. In 2014, a supplementary budget to provide an additional €35.5m of expenditure in the Sector was agreed. In 2015, savings on the current side allowed an additional €6.7m of expenditure in the Third Level Sector. The primary driver of funding in the last two years has been the enabling works at Grangegorman (see 3.3 below). Other key projects have included the Human Biology Building at NUIG and the Campus Development at St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. We have also been able to provide a total of €20m worth of grants to the IoT Sector in 2014 and 2015. These grants allow the Sector to discharge costs already incurred on a range of small-scale building works, refurbishment of existing facilities and / or upgrading equipment.

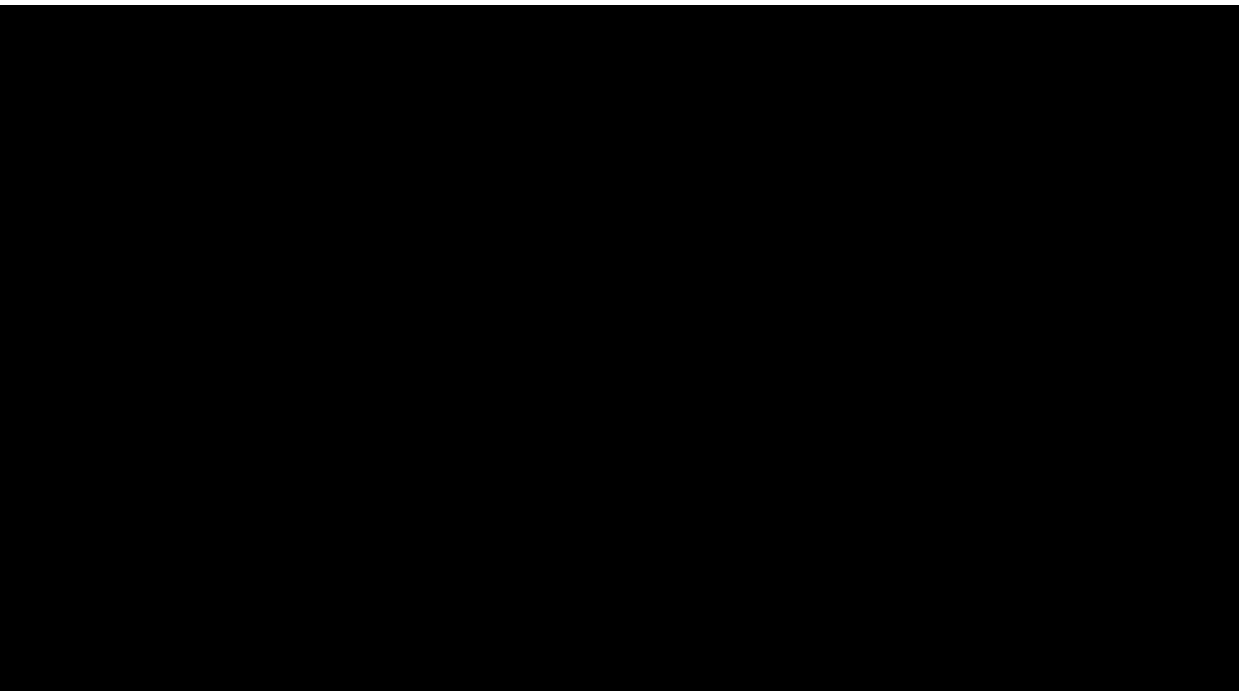
However, in the context of up to €4bn of demand in the Sector, and even taking into account the projects that can be delivered by way of PPP, the funding provided for Higher Education

in the Capital Plan 2016-2021 is woefully inadequate for the Sector and will not address its needs. The €110m of Exchequer Funding provided in the programme is almost entirely committed at this stage so there is no prospect of funding any additional non-PPP Higher Ed projects until at least 2022.

Commitments on PPP projects

At 31/12/2015 the Department had paid c. **€427m** for UCs.

Outstanding commitments (including commitments for bundle 4) amount to **€1.34b**. This figure does not allow for indexation. As matters stand this Department has the 2nd highest level of PPP commitments nationally. Discharging UC liabilities is a priority demand on funding. The above figures do not take account of UCs that will arise from PPPs in planning i.e. bundle 5 and the Grangegorman project. The Phase III Third Level PPP projects can also be expected to increase those commitments. However, it should be noted that by the time these projects become operational (around 2020/2021), the Pilot Schools projects will be nearing completion (final payments will be made in 2027).



3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.1 ISSUE: Implementing DoES Phase III PPP Programme (Third Level)

BACKGROUND:

€200m worth of PPP's were provided for the Third Level Sector in the Capital Plan 2016-2021. Increased Exchequer funding in that amount would have been preferable to PPP

delivery. Nonetheless, the offer to provide PPP funding was welcome in the context of the considerable demand.

CURRENT POSITION:

The first step in progressing the project is the selection of the individual projects to be included in the PPP programme. TLBU has been working closely with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) with a view to developing a robust, transparent and effective selection process in this respect.

Next Steps:

TLBU is in the final stages of its consultation process with the HEA in this respect. Consultation with the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) through its National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) (see 4.3 below) may also need to take place but an announcement in relation to this process can be made within the coming weeks. A timetable for delivery of the project can form part of that announcement. Delivery of the projects themselves will take a number of years. There are a number of variables to consider in terms of when and how these projects are delivered. Further briefing will be provided in this respect once we are in a position to make recommendations as to how we should proceed.

3.2 ISSUE: Managing Infrastructural Deficits and Demand in the Third Level System

Background:

Between 2012 and 2016 the capital investment framework provided **€125m** to the sector to meet contractual commitments that existed at November 2011. This marked the start of a second moratorium on new capital investments in the sector in recent years. The first applied between 2002 and 2005.

Participation levels within the sector have grown from **20%** of the school leaving cohort in 1980 to over **70%** currently. Between 2007/08 and 2014/2015 all-in enrolments grew by **22%**. Actual total all in enrolment levels in 2014/15 are over **200,000** as indicated in the table below. This upward trajectory is expected to continue. Many commentaries point to the need for sustained growth to keep pace with economic needs, technology changes and to avoid a shortage of skills in various areas.

Table 3: Enrolment Trends in the HE Sector

Enrolment Trends in the Higher Education Sector 2007/2008 to 2014/2015								
Undergraduate	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Full-time	119,512	124,990	133,849	139,092	141,226	142,718	147,420	151,300
Part-time	21,013	20,456	19,097	19,355	20,616	21,130	20,728	21,062
Total Undergraduate Enrolment	140,525	145,446	152,946	158,447	161,842	163,848	168,148	172,362
Postgraduate								

Full-time	18,807	20,700	22,419	21,880	21,560	21,780	21,566	21,924
Part-time	10,973	11,242	12,801	12,860	12,785	14,051	14,419	15,141
Total Postgraduate Enrolment	29,780	31,942	35,220	34,740	34,345	35,831	35,985	37,065
Total Full-time	138,319	145,690	156,268	160,972	162,786	164,498	168,986	173,224
Total Part-time	31,986	31,698	31,898	32,215	33,401	35,181	35,147	36,203
Overall Enrolment	170,305	177,388	188,166	193,187	196,187	199,679	204,133	209,427

Current position:

The planned total investment in the higher education sector in the period 2016 to 2021 amounts to €350m. Aside from the €200m capital value available for PPP's, a direct Exchequer capital fund of €110m has been provided. This will enable the funding of a minor works scheme which will allow institutes plan for and undertake necessary improvements works as well as commence programmes of equipment renewal including upgrading of IT facilities. It is a hugely important investment for the sector and is broadly welcomed. However, in the context of up to €4bn of demand in the Sector, and even taking into account the projects that can be delivered by way of PPP, the funding provided for Higher Education in the Capital Plan 2016-2021 is woefully inadequate for the Sector and will not address its needs. The €110m of Exchequer Funding provided in the programme is almost entirely committed at this stage so there is virtually no prospect of funding any Higher Ed projects, other than PPP's, until at least 2022.

In addition to this, there remains €40m of approved direct Exchequer capital that was provided for expenditure on the Grangegorman project in 2016 and 2017. (Actual remaining expenditure on that project is €32.7m - the balance consists of spending that was accelerated in earlier years). Accordingly, the sector will derive an upfront capital injection of €150m in the period up to 2021.

Next Steps:

It remains the case that further funding is needed to address the infrastructural deficits within the sector and allow the sector cope with continuing expansion. The €110m funding will go some way towards addressing the most critical needs in respect of minor works, equipment renewal and IT needs. However, it is unlikely to meet those needs entirely and does not allow any provision for investment in major capital projects. In this regard, there are over **100** major capital projects which have, in one form or another, been presented to the Department for support since the implementation of the moratorium in November 2011. While the costs details are not available in all cases, known extent of funding requested for these demands is **€1.3bn** for projects with a capital value of at least **€1.7bn**.

This does not complete the picture, however. Not every possible project will have come to our attention at this stage. The total demand in the sector in that context is estimated to be **€3.8 bn**. An investment of **€1.5bn** is estimated to be necessary to meet continued growth in the Sector. To address substandard condition of existing accommodation requires **€1.3bn**. To bring student space ratio to international standards requires **€880m**.

In addition, in the current market conditions opportunities exist for some institutes to acquire strategically located facilities at competitive prices eliminating the need to address these needs conventionally at considerably greater costs. The lack of funding continues to impede the capacity to support such strategic opportunities. In the case of the Institutes of Technology, this constraint is all the greater as a result of the absence of a borrowing framework for the sector.

3.3 ISSUE: Grangegorman

Background:

The origins of this project dates back to 1999 when a decision was taken to consolidate Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) at Grangegorman. The Grangegorman Development Agency (GDA) - an aegis body of the Department details of which are outlined at Section 4 below - is primarily responsible for this project working in collaboration with both the Department and the NDFA. The need for the project derives from the dispersal of DIT's student population across **39** separate locations.

While the Government's *Programme for Government* supported the planned development of Grangegorman it contained the caveat of being subject to resources. The Government's *Capital Investment Framework 2012-2016* published in November 2011 prioritised investment in schools ahead of Grangegorman. This decision was rescinded by Government when it was decided to include the project as part of the Economic Stimulus Plan announced in July 2012 with approval to proceed with the Grangegorman project. The decision approved the delivery of **50,000m²** of accommodation for **10,000** students to be delivered through the Public Private Partnership (PPP) process.

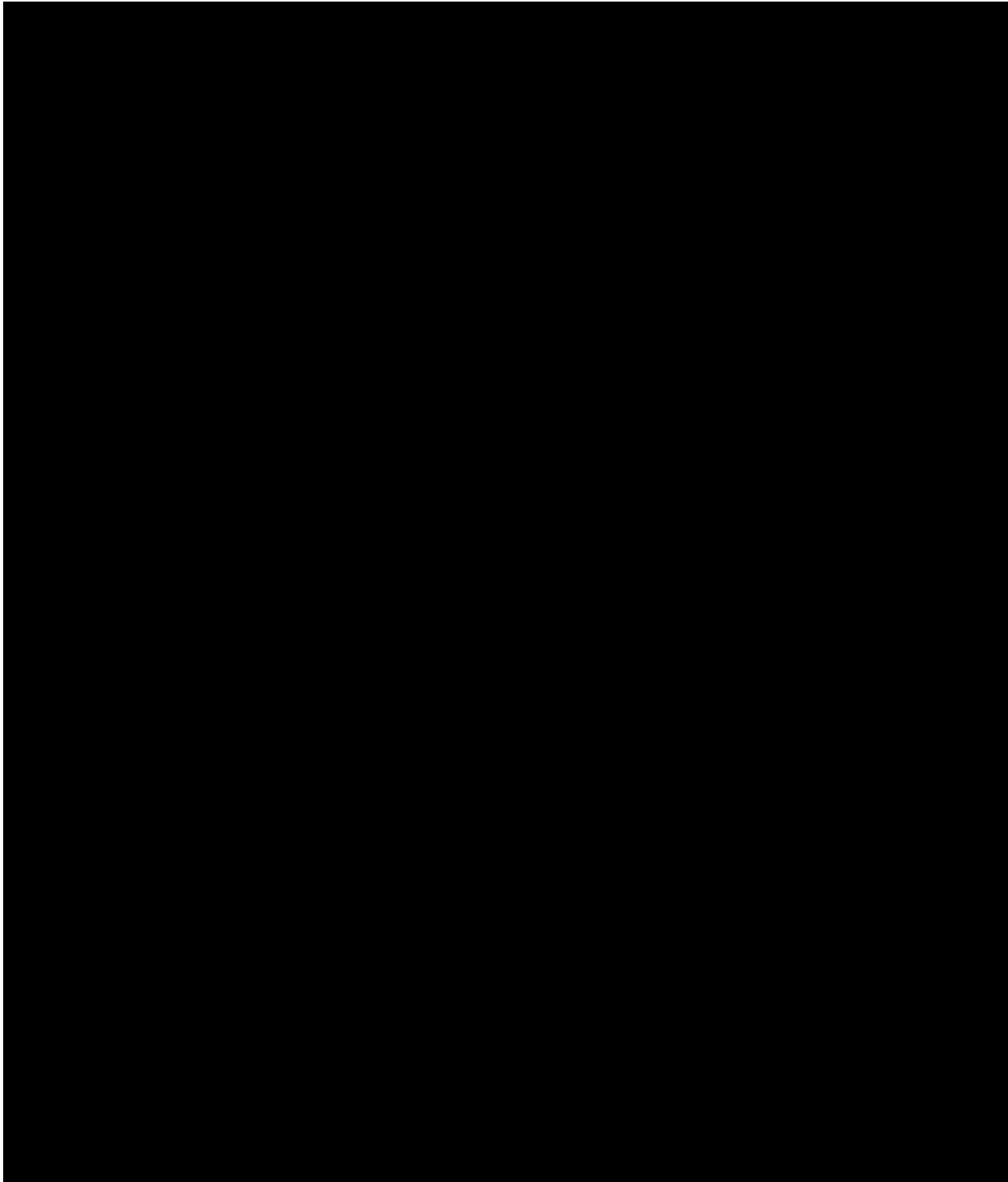
Preparatory enabling for delivery through conventional means were also approved and **€90.7m** for site preparatory works was provided to facilitate these. The total costs of these works is c**€130m** of which this Department is contributing **€90.7m**. To date **€58m** has been incurred by the Department on these works. The works add value to the site ahead of a PPP project. The balance of **€32.7m** is made up of VAT of **€21.4m**, local authority development charges of **€8m** and **€3.3m** for remaining works on the site. A master plan prepared for the site, which had been approved by Government in 2010, formed the basis for the strategic plan that is now at various stages of delivery. In addition to the DoES-funded works, new health care facilities and research buildings have been delivered at the site. The overall Grangegorman project also represents an opportunity for substantial development and rejuvenation of an important inner city urban quarter. It will also link in with the Luas as part of the proposed Luas interconnector with a stop provided at the Grangegorman Campus.

Current position:

PPP Phase

The PPP phase of the works reached the point of selection of a preferred tenderer in November 2014. Tenders from 3 short listed tenderers were required to be submitted

electronically to the NDFA by 5pm on 28th November 2014. The target was to select the preferred tenderer in February 2015 with the objective of PPP works commencing on site in the Autumn of 2015. The target handover date was September 2017.



3.4 ISSUE: Completion to Site of PPP Schools Bundle 5

Background:

The roll out of Schools PPP Bundle 5 (SB5) was announced as part of the Government's Economic Stimulus Package measures in July 2012. SB5 is actually the sixth bundle of PPP schools as the first bundle was a pilot project and is called PPP Pilot Schools. Schools in SB1, SB2 and SB3 have been operating since 2010, 2011 and 2013 respectively. SB4 is currently at construction stage.

The Minister for Education & Skills announced details of the schools that are to be delivered in PPP SB5 in May 2013. The five schools in question will provide accommodation for

approximately **4,800** students. The schools are located in Carlow (a campus consisting of two school buildings which will provide accommodation for over 2,000 post primary and further education students) ; Bray, Co Wicklow (a primary and post primary school sharing a single campus); and single post-primary school buildings in Wexford Town and Kells, Co Meath.

The project was handed over to the NDFA in January 2015 to commence the tender procurement process. The Preferred Tenderer (Inspired Spaces Consortium) was announced by the Minister for Education & Skills in November 2015.

Current position:

The project is now going through the funding competition stage in which funders vie for the opportunity to fund the project. We understand from the NDFA that there is a healthy interest in this competition. This stage will be followed by a due diligence stage in which the successful funder(s) carries out its due diligence in relation to the project. These two phases combined take approximately six months to complete. Hence, the formal awarding of the contract (termed “financial close”) can be expected to take place this coming June.

Next Steps:

It is anticipated the construction of the project will commence in summer 2016 and the new school buildings will be available for occupation in the second half of 2017. In the the meantime, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed prior to financial close, primarily relating to lease arrangements with the third parties who currently own three of the four sites on which the schools will be located (Kells is a Minister owned site).

4. OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

4.1 ISSUE: Managing Operational PPP Schools

Background:

The first bundle of PPP schools was a pilot project and is called PPP Pilot Schools. Schools in SB1, SB2 and SB3 have been operating since 2010, 2011 and 2013 respectively. In addition, two 3rd Level PPP projects – the National Maritime College and Cork School of Music, both in Cork IT – are also operational. The following table shows projected expenditure in 2016 on these projects (including Bundle 4 which will become operational later this year):

Table 4: PPP Commitments for 2016

Project	Operational From	Final year of Payment	2016 (€000's)
National Maritime College	2004	2029	7,423
Cork School of Music	2007	2032	7,774
5 Pilot Schools	2002	2027	10,374
School Bundle 1	2010	2035	8,603

School Bundle 2	2011	2036	11,674
School Bundle 3	2013	2039	14,129
Schools Bundle 4	2016	2041	4,642
Total 2016 PPP UC Costs			64,619

Current position:

The five operational schools projects are managed on our behalf by the NDFA. The CIT projects are managed by CIT itself. Most of the issues that arise in relation to these projects are managed by the NDFA/CIT, sometimes with DoES input. However, there are a very small number of occasions where issues arise that may need to be brought to your attention.

For example, an issue has arisen with respect to some of these schools whereby the enrolment numbers set out in the project agreement (PA) (i.e. contract) with the PPP Company have been exceeded. Revised statutory consents have to be sought by the PPP Company in these cases but, more particularly, additional costs are likely to arise to facilitate the accommodation of the additional pupils in the schools in question. Recommendations in respect of this matter will be forthcoming shortly.

Next Steps:

The management of these projects is ongoing by the NDFA/CIT with our assistance where necessary. Key issues of importance will be brought to your attention when and where necessary.

4.2 ISSUE: Completing Construction of Schools Bundles 4 Programme

Background:

Bundle 4 was announced as part of the Government’s stimulus package measures of July 2012. The bundle originally consisted of six schools on five sites. However, planning permission in respect of one site consisting of two schools in Celbridge, Co. Kildare was refused and the bundle proceeded on the basis of the remaining four schools. The schools in question are located in Tulla, Co. Clare; Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary; Dundalk, Co. Louth; Skibbereen, Co. Cork. These will be available for occupation on a staggered basis between March and May this year with Comeragh College, Carrick-on-Suir being the first school to open its doors which it is expected to do on 15th March.

Current position:

Construction is proceeding on schedule and no delays are expected.

Next Steps:

The schools will open between March and May and will be operational from their opening date. They will be managed by the NDFA with the assistance of DoES in that context as per 4.2 above.

4.2 ISSUE: Managing Relationship of Department with National Development Finance Agency (NDFA)

Background:

In rolling out PPPs, the Department works closely with the NDFA. The NDFA operates under the aegis of the Department of Finance. It is responsible for advising State bodies on all key PPP aspects and issues including crucially optimal financing options. In effect it provides a centralised expert service to Government Departments in relation to PPP matters. It has also in recent times assumed certain responsibilities on behalf of this Department with respect to contract management issues (as outlined at 4.1 above).

Line Departments remain responsible for selecting, assessing, determining output specifications, setting overall budgets, outlining service requirements and agreeing the public sector benchmark – the latter in conjunction with the NDFA. Once Departments have carried out these functions, the project transfers to the NDFA. The NDFA prepares contract documents, arranging tendering, evaluation of tenders, selection of preferred bidders and monitoring the construction of the project.

TLBU has developed a very effective working relationship with the NDFA and its officers. This relationship is essential for the efficient and effective progression of PPP projects.

Current Position:

DPER have set up a working group to progress the merger of elements of the NDFA with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). This will bring challenges in terms of maintaining our relationship with the new body and ensuring a smooth transition in the relationship between DoES and TII while maintaining existing relations with those elements of the NDFA that will remain in the NTMA.

Next Steps:

DPER have asked the Department for its observations on the merger with the TII. These will be provided shortly. Otherwise, the relationship will continue to be managed effectively on a day-to-day basis.

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Name of Body:

Grangegorman Development Agency

Main responsibilities:

To implement Government policy in relation to the consolidation of DIT at Grangegorman in an integrated sustainable manner; provide for healthcare facilities at the site; and in the process of delivering these 2 projects aid the rejuvenation of an inner city quarter. The Agency operates under the Grangegorman Development Act 2005. Section 17 of the Act provides for the establishment of a Board of the Agency with representation from a range of stakeholders including DIT, HSE, Dublin City Council and the local community. GDA developed the master plan for the site which is now in implementation as noted at paragraph 3 above.

Allocation 2016:

The Agency's allocation is made up of both capital and recurrent elements. The capital element forms part of the overall higher education 2016 budget of **€21.5m** of which **€3.3m** is expected to be spent in relation to this project. The recurrent budget is made up of both a pay element of **€1.66m** and non-pay of **€1.37m**.

Staff numbers:

The staffing allocation originally agreed for the Agency in 2001 with D/Finance was **15**, but was reduced in February 2012 to **8**. This figure was increased to **12** when the project was resurrected in July 2012 but was supplemented by the use of agency workers and workers on secondment from other agencies. The current pay allocation allows for **20** staff members in the GDA. Under new delegated sanction arrangements, the agency workers will be phased out and replaced by full-time direct employees. The savings achieved will allow increases in staff numbers on that basis. The GDA has presented a workforce plan providing for 35.3 staff. Negotiations with the GDA on a revised workforce plan to take account of the budgetary realities are ongoing.

Finance Section – Building Unit

1. Unit / Section Overview

The Section's workload breaks into two main elements. Firstly, it processes capital payments arising from the implementation of the capital programme. In this regard it deals with upwards of **10,000** payments annually. In the process the Unit ensures compliance with a Government stipulation that payments are made within **15** days of receipt and ensures all relevant tax laws and other statutory requirements are met. In 2015, **€577m** was disbursed by the Unit. All data associated with payments is stored and retained to enable and assist staff in the front line delivery of the capital programmes.

A related responsibility is managing the extensive reporting requirements. Some of these requirements are prescribed as a condition of delegated sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Others are needed to enable the Department produce its annual accounts, address C&AG queries and related issues. Due to the scale of funding it is normal for the C&AG to audit each year.

Secondly, the Unit monitors expenditure across the entire capital allocations. This involves profiling anticipated monthly expenditure at the start of the year, monitors adherence to these profiles and plans decisive remedial measures in the event that budgetary targets are not being met or if budgetary targets are in danger of being exceeded. It liaises heavily with Finance Section in Marlborough St in preparing estimates of expenditure as part of annual budgetary planning.

Staffing

PO	AP	HEO	EO	CO
Shared with TLBU.	1	2	1.7	3.7

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
Capital	Covered in overall outturn/allocation for the Building Unit		

3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.1 The Unit continues to explore innovative ways to do its business without compromising on the quality of its service. With the co-operation and assistance of its colleagues in the Finance Section in Marlborough Street, the Unit continues to update its financial management and budgetary systems.

3.2 Managing Expenditure

The section is responsible for managing the overall education capital allocation under the Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021, the details of which are described in the overview of the Planning and Building Division.

Major Projects (Design and Construction)

1. Unit / Section Overview

Major Projects (Design & Construction) Section administers major building projects to provide new schools and to refurbish and extend existing schools.

The section is currently progressing delivery of 106 major building projects under the 6 year Construction Programme (2016-2021). There are currently:

- 6 projects at tender stage and
- 92 projects at various design stages of the traditional architectural planning process (50 of which are scheduled to proceed to construction in 2016)
- 8 “RAPID” – Design & Build projects
- Other projects on the 6 year programme will be assigned to Major Projects Section for delivery as appropriate.

From the 5 year Construction Programme 2012-2016, the section continues to progress

- 19 major projects in architectural planning,
- 31 “RAPID” projects
- 15 projects at tender stage and
- 39 projects at construction stage.

The biggest difficulty currently facing the section is the limited availability of funding to progress this number of major projects to construction stage in 2016 and 2017.

This section is responsible for the administration of projects from the appointment of the design team to the point where a building is completed and the final account settled. The traditional architectural planning process involves 5 stages under the Department’s Design Team Procedures (DTPs) 2012. These can be broadly divided into Design, Tender and Construction stages. A normal school building project can take between 4 and 6 years to complete this process.

The section also administers the Department’s annual “Rapid” Design & Build programme which sees approximately 12 - 15 new schools delivered every year under a design and build process which typically takes less than 24 months to complete. In 2016, for the first time, full Post Primary Schools will be delivered under this programme. These schools are

- Edmund Rice College, Carrigaline;
- Colaiste Ghlór na Mara, Naul Road Balbriggan;
- Colaiste Bhaile Chlair, Claregalway; and

- Post Primary School, Carrigtohill.

The current staffing of the section is as follows:

Principal Officer	1
Assistant Principal Officers	2
Higher Executive Officer	5
Executive Officer	11.6
Clerical Officer	3.5 including 1 vacancy.

2. Financial Provision

See Planning and Building Unit Overview.

3. Key priority issues

3.1 Availability of funding

Background:

The Department was allocated a Capital budget of €427m for 2016 as part of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's 5-year multi annual Capital Envelope System.

Current Position:

Major Projects Section is currently progressing 185 projects from the two Capital Programmes (2012-16 and 2016-21).

The Department has been in discussions with D/PER with a view to re-profiling the multi-annual allocation to increase the 2016 and 2017 allocation. Currently there are 15 major traditional projects and 13 RAPID projects at tender stage which may have to be held back from progressing to construction if additional funding is not allocated.

Next Steps:

If additional funding is not allocated, it may be necessary to disallow projects currently out to tender from progressing to Construction.

3.2 ADAPT Programme (Accelerated Delivery of Architectural Planning and Tender).

Background:

On average, a major school building project can take between 4 and 6 years to progress from design team appointment to handover of the finished building.

Current Position:

In 2015, the section introduced the new ADAPT programme (Accelerated Delivery of Architectural Planning and Tender). This programme is designed to deliver schools within 36 months from appointment of design team to occupation of the school. It is modelled on the RAPID programme with the appointment of an external Project Manager to “drive” the design team. Meetings with the Project Manager are scheduled to take place every month.

Next Steps:

The current ADAPT 2018 programme has 20 projects and the section is in the process of preparing to tender for a project manager for a similar programme for 2019 and 2020. It is envisaged that between 20 and 30 projects could be delivered each year under the ADAPT programme.

3.3 Disputes initiated by Contractors.

Background:

The downturn in the construction sector coincided with an increase in legal and quasi-legal disputes usually generated by main contractors.

School building projects are required to use standard procurement and contract documents developed by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. These contract documents contain an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) process for resolving disputes under the contract. This process currently provides for the referral of a dispute to conciliation, with the option for either party to then proceed to arbitration.

Current Position:

Three conciliations were initiated and settled in 2015. A further three projects have been identified as having the potential to lead to additional disputes which may arise over the course of 2016 and beyond.

Next Steps:

Despite reduced incidence of conciliation/arbitration cases in 2015, the threat of dispute is still prevalent under the terms of the current forms of Public Works Contract. The Department, with assistance from the Chief State Solicitor’s Office (CSSO) where necessary,

continues to deal with such disputes as they arise. However, these disputes constitute a significant additional burden on the resources of the section.

The new Public Works Contract, announced recently by DPER, will come into effect for projects going on-site from 8th January 2017. The new Contracts include new built-in measures for dispute resolution including the mandatory introduction of a Standing Conciliator for all projects with a value in excess of €20 million (it is optional for projects valued between €5m and €10m).

A significant body of work will be required from both the Department and Design teams to deal with the requirements of the new Public Works Contracts. This is covered in the Professional & Technical section of this briefing document. For comparison, however, the introduction of the 2014 revisions to the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations (BCAR 2014) resulted in, on average, an 8 to 12 weeks delay on the progression of all major projects.

**CENTRAL POLICY AND
PUBLIC SECTOR
REFORM, RUTH
CARMODY,
ASSISTANT
SECRETARY**

Structure of the Division

This Division develops significant centrally focused policy initiatives on behalf of the Department and has a general remit to improve the Department's policymaking, its research and evaluation capacity, data usage and data and knowledge management and to drive public service reform and shared services across the sector. In so doing it supports the Data, Evaluation & Research Management Board Sub-Committee (DERMS), the Education and Training Reform Board, the Higher Education Programme Board and the ETB/SOLAS Programme Board. It prepares and disseminates statistical data on the education sector and provides data to various national and international bodies and is responsible for the individualised pupil database at primary level. It co-ordinates the Department's legislative programme, with responsibility for drafting remaining with sponsoring sections. It co-ordinates and manages the implementation of the education and training reform programme, within the overall context of the Public Service Reform Plan 2014-6. It drives the development and implementation of shared service initiatives under the Departments Shared Services plan for 2014 -16.

The Division has 5 main areas to which 8 Principal Officers or equivalents are assigned:

- Central Policy Unit (CPU)– Gavan O'Leary PO;
- Public Service Reform Programme Management Office (PSR-PMO) - Grainne Cullen, PSR Programme Manager and Marion Edwards, Shared Services Advisor;
- ETB/SOLAS Project Management Office (ETB/SOLAS Project Office) – Ann Fitzpatrick ETB/SOLAS Programme Manager (also reporting to Assistant Secretaries in Schools and Skills Divisions); Kevin Cullen (Project Manager Payroll Shared Services), Michael Morgan (Project Manager Finance Shared Services)
- Statistics Unit – Diarmuid Reidy, Senior Statistician;
- Data & Knowledge Management Unit (DKMU) - Margaret Doherty, PO

Central Policy Unit

Unit / Section Overview

The Central Policy Unit (CPU) develops significant centrally focussed policy initiatives on behalf of the Department and has a general remit to improve the Department's research capacity and policy focus.

Significant current areas of work include:

- Managing the development and implementation of a new patronage model at primary level – Community National Schools under ETB patronage;
- The follow up to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism;
- The development of a central evaluation and research support function;
- Coordinating Departmental input to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Sector Reform on a range of cross-cutting issues;
- Managing the implementation of the Action Plan on Bullying;
- Coordinating DES input and representing DES on various cross-Departmental initiatives, such as the NESC, Growing up in Ireland (GUI), National Disability Strategy, National Women's Strategy and National Drugs Strategy.
- Overseeing the Department's funding for six projects in local drugs task force areas in Dublin as part of the implementation of the National Drugs Strategy; and
- Coordinating the Department's administration of Dormant Accounts Funding.

CPU Staffing

Central Policy Unit is staffed as follow (WTEs): 1 PO, 3 Assistant Principals (including one AP on secondment from the Irish Government Economic Evaluation Service (IGGES), 0.5 Administrative Officer (on extended leave of absence), 1 Higher Executive Officer, 2.2 Executive officers, 0.5 Clerical Officer.

The PO in CPU also has responsibility for the DES administrative staff in the Navan Office where the staffing is: 0.6 Higher Executive Officer, 1 Executive Officer, 1 Clerical Officer. ***With the exception of work relating to the July Education Programme and the Assistive Technology Scheme (see note below), the work of the Navan staff comes under the responsibility of CPU.***⁷

⁷ The July Education Programme (JEP) is a programme of support for pupils with autism, which is delivered through a school-based system. Children with severe/profound learning disability can also avail of the JEP. The work related to the JEP engages the three staff members in the Navan Office for the period July to November. The Assistive Technology Scheme (ATS) provides grant-aid to schools to allow them to purchase the type of specialist equipment which has been recommended by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) as

Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
Projects in Local Drugs Task Force Areas (A.14.3.2)	393	398	398
Educational Disadvantage (Dormant Account Funding) (A14.3.1)	0	0	600
Appropriations-in-Aid: - Educational Disadvantage (Dormant Account Funding) (E5.1 A-in-A)	0	0	600

* This subhead provides for a number of key projects:

- (A) Implementation of the Action Plan on Bullying
- (B) Implementation of the recommendations of the Forum on Patronage and the patronage divestment process
- (C) Research and Development – Community National Schools project

3. Key priority issues

3.1 Forum on Patronage and Pluralism

Background:

In line with a commitment in the 2011 Programme for Government, the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector was established in 2011. The terms of reference of the Forum gave it the task of coming up with recommendations on what steps could be taken to ensure that the education system at primary level could provide a sufficiently diverse number and range of primary schools to cater for children of all religions and none.

The Forum consulted with various stakeholders and held a number of public meetings with stakeholders to discuss the key issues arising. The Advisory Group to the Forum published its report in April 2012. The Report's recommendations can be broadly divided into four areas:

- Those dealing with planning towards future patronage arrangements and having a more diverse range of patronage types for new schools in areas of rising population;

being essential for pupils who have been diagnosed with specific needs. A separate reporting arrangement exists for the JEP and the ATS to Special Needs and Tuition Grants Section (DES Athlone Offices).

- those dealing with the practicalities of achieving divesting of patronage where there is a stable population and a demand for diversity of school types;
- those dealing with Irish language provision; and
- those dealing with the creation of more inclusive schools, particularly so-called ‘Stand Alone’ schools, often in rural areas, which account for about 1,700 of the near 3,200 primary schools and where divesting to another patron is not a feasible option.

Current Position

An Action Plan in response to the Forum report was produced in June 2012 and work on implementation is being advanced by the Department in consultation with relevant stakeholders. A number of different steps have been taken to implement many of the recommendations contained in the Action Plan, in particular in relation to:

- Divesting School Patronage and Planning towards Future Patronage Arrangements;
- Enrolment policies;
- The ‘Stand Alone’ School and Issues Underpinning Diversity in all Schools; and
- Education about Religion and Beliefs and Ethics.

Further information on the divesting process, planning towards future patronage and enrolment policies is given by the relevant business units elsewhere in this briefing document. Developments in relation to the remaining areas are outlined below.

[The ‘Stand Alone’ School and Issues Underpinning Diversity in all Schools](#)

The Forum recognised that outside urban areas, there is unlikely to be sufficient population to warrant the opening of more than one school in a given geographic area. Therefore, the existing school has to cater for the full range of traditions, religions and beliefs in the community.

A public consultation on inclusiveness in primary schools commenced in September 2013. Views were sought on issues such as:

- how best to accommodate students of various belief systems and traditions;
- having school policies on the conduct of religious celebrations and the display of religious symbols.

The submissions received, together with the Forum Report findings and recommendations in this area, and the findings of consultations with other stakeholders contributed towards the recent paper “Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector: Progress to Date and Future Directions” which was published on 1 July 2014.

[Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector: Progress to Date and Future Directions](#)

The paper gave an update on the progress made to date on implementing the Forum's recommendations on new schools, divesting, enrolment legislation and the development of the programme on Education about Religion and Beliefs and Ethics. It also outlined good practice and options for promoting diversity in schools, in particular in relation to:

- The right to opt out of religion classes;
- Scheduling of Religion Classes and other Religious Activities;
- Options for Pupils in relation to Religious Ceremonies of the Ethos of the School;
- Celebration of Religious Festivals;
- Display of Religious Artefacts.

The paper was not prescriptive on how schools should address these issues but instead it encouraged school authorities to engage in consultation with stakeholders and to review their policies and practices on an ongoing basis to ensure that they remain suitable for the school population that they serve. It recognised that each school should arrive at solutions that suit its own particular context. It also noted that this is an evolving situation and that practices may evolve over time as circumstances change.

The paper invited stakeholders to continue to provide feedback and information on these issues which will continue to inform the future development of policy in this area. Following on from the paper, in March 2015, the Catholic Schools Partnership published a resource for Catholic schools on developing policies and sharing best practice with regard to inclusion for all pupils.

Education about Religion and Beliefs and Ethics

The Forum recommended that the State has a responsibility to ensure that all children have the right to receive Education about Religious Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is developing a curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics. It has opened public consultation on the proposals for this new curriculum and will continue this consultation into spring 2016. The NCCA will be engaging with a range of audiences including: teachers, schools, parents, children, educational partners, patrons, children's advocacy groups and other members of the general public. Consultation materials designed to support engagement in this process have been developed and are available on the NCCA's website www.ncca.ie

ERB and Ethics is intended to complement existing religious education and not to replace or supplant it. However, it will ensure that children whose parents have chosen to withdraw them from religious instruction classes in denominational schools will have the option of learning about religion and belief in school.

Next Steps

Work will continue on follow up to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism.

3.2 Community National Schools (CNS)

Background

The distinguishing feature of CNSs is that they are multi-denominational schools which allow for the provision of faith formation during the school day.

In 2008, the Government approved the development of a new model of primary school patronage in response to the increasing demand for parental choice in the patronage of primary schools. The aim of the model is to cater for the diversity present within the community in a single school setting, rather than in more than one school. The model has an ethos of inclusion, equality and harmony, where each child and member of the school community is valued and treated with respect. The pilot Community National School model commenced in two locations in Dublin 15 in September 2008 and there are now a total of eleven schools:

- Scoil Choilm, Dublin 15
- Scoil Ghrainne, Dublin 15
- Citywest and Saggart CNS, Citywest, Dublin 24
- Lucan, CNS, Lucan
- Scoil Aoife, Tallaght
- Naas CNS, Naas Co Kildare
- Scoil Ard Rí, Navan Co Meath
- Scoil Aonghusa, Mallow Co. Cork
- Scoil Chliodhna, Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork
- Greystones, CNS, Greystones, Co. Wicklow

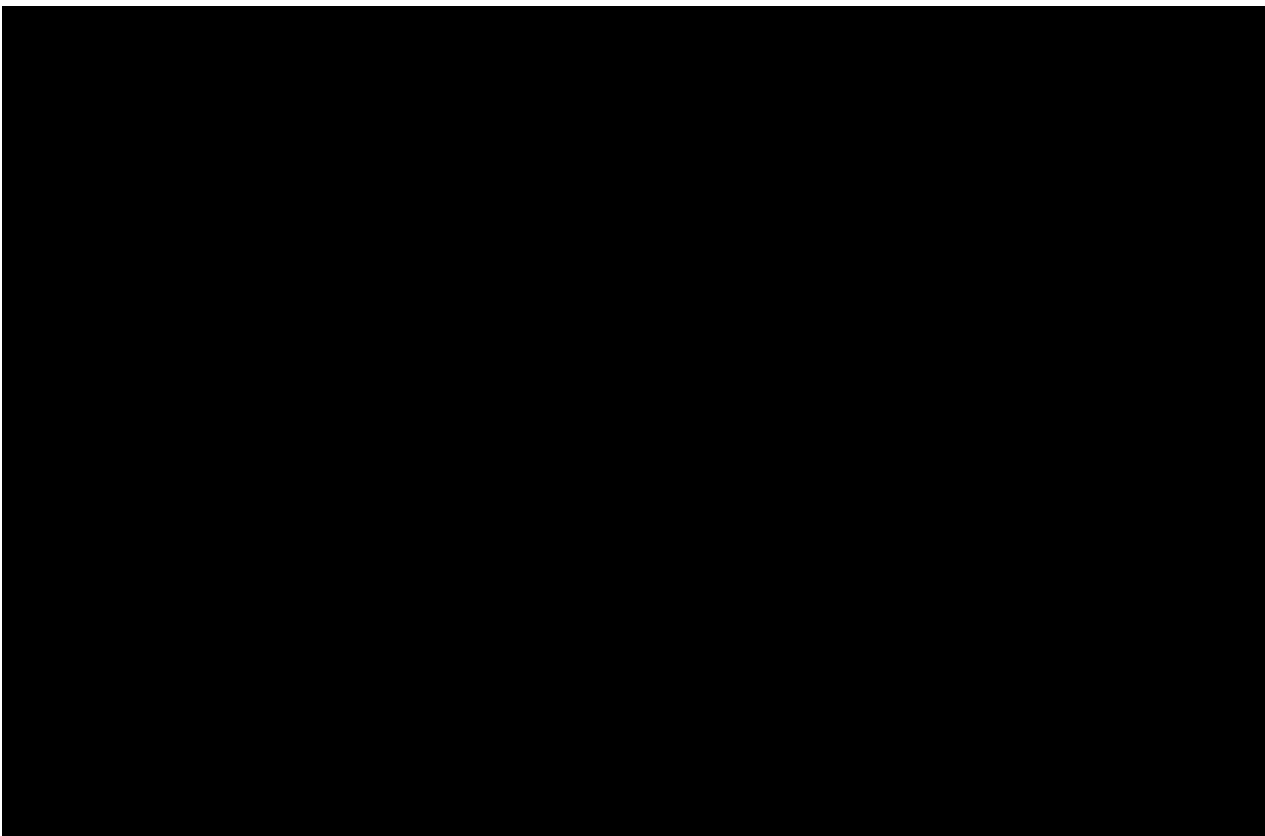
The Community National Schools are currently under the interim patronage of the Minister for Education and Skills with a single manager appointed to the schools (A retired Inspector in the case of the schools in Dublin and ETB employees in Kildare, Wicklow, Cork and Meath). Dublin & Dun Laoghaire, Kildare & Wicklow, Cork and Louth & Meath Education and Training Boards (ETBs) are currently acting as patrons-designate, pending transfer of patronage from the Minister.

Current Position

Work on the implementation of the model is continuing, overseen by the CNS Steering Group, which comprises representatives of the Department and the relevant ETBs.

Religious Education Programme

The distinguishing feature of CNSs is that they are multi-denominational schools which allow for the provision of faith formation during the school day. The schools are multi-belief and welcome and respect children of all faiths and none. They recognise and aim to accommodate the wishes of parents to have their children receive religious education and faith formation within the school day. This commitment, within a multi-belief environment, is an important distinguishing feature of the model. A programme providing for the delivery of religious education and faith formation, *Goodness Me, Goodness You* (GMGY), in the new schools is being developed by the NCCA on an action research basis. This method of curriculum development gives an opportunity for all involved, including the faith and belief communities, teachers and parents, to share in addressing the practical classroom challenges involved. The NCCA hosts a GMGY Network, attended by religious education co-ordinators in the schools, to oversee the development of GMGY lessons.



Transfer of Patronage and Establishment of Boards of Management

Work is underway on the transfer of patronage of Community National Schools from the Minister to Education and Training Boards and the establishment of Boards of Management (BoMs) in each school.

There are a number of issues to be resolved before patronage can be transferred from Minister to the ETBs. These include:

- Employment Issues, including employment status of staff;
- Finance Arrangements, including allocation of resources and accountability; and
- Composition of Boards of Management.

Discussions have taken place with ETBI regarding these issues and a draft MoU on how the ETB role as patron would work in practice regarding the operation and management of the school is in development.

Next Steps

Work will continue to transfer the patronage of the schools from the Minister to the ETBs and to establish boards of management in the schools.

ETBI and the schools themselves have expressed a wish for greater promotion of the CNS model as an alternative form of multi-denominational patronage, which offers religious instruction classes during the school day.

A recent article in the Irish Times regarding the Community National School model involved an interview with the Principal of one of the CNSs. This in turn drew a statement from Educate Together, which was critical of the CNS model and, in particular, the separation of children for certain periods of faith-specific learning, while also indicating an openness to working with the ETBs on patronage issues.

3.3 Cross-Departmental Role

Background

Central Policy Unit co-ordinates DES input to, and representation for, a number of cross-departmental initiatives, including:

Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform (CCSP & PSR)

CPU co-ordinates the DES input into the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform and represents the Department on the related Senior Officials Group. The CCSP & PSR which meets, in principle, on a monthly basis, has, in the past year, dealt with a range of issues, including:

- The New Model for Allocating Teaching Resources for Students with Special Educational Needs (detailed briefing on this matter is provided in the Special Education section of this brief);
- Proposals for extending school autonomy and accountability (see below); and
- Publication of a Study on Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS (detailed briefing on DEIS and its evaluation is provided in the Social Inclusion Unit section of this brief).

School autonomy and accountability

The 2011 Programme for Government contains commitments regarding the devolution of greater autonomy to schools. A research paper on the matter was prepared by the Inspectorate. This drew on international research on the topic and considered the implications of the findings of international research in an Irish context. The paper covered issues such as curricular autonomy, financial autonomy, autonomy over the employment, payment and deployment of staff, school self-evaluation, school leadership and accountability mechanisms.

In December 2015, the Department published the comprehensive research paper and a consultation paper on the issue of advancing the autonomy of state-funded primary and post-primary schools in Ireland. The consultation ran until 29 January 2016 and the issues raised will be discussed and progressed with the education partners.

National Drugs Strategy

The Department contributes to Government policy on drugs through the Prevention Pillar of the National Drugs Strategy. Central Policy Unit staff represent DES on the following committees established under the National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016:

- The Oversight Forum on Drugs (OFD), the high-level body which monitors the implementation and roll-out of the strategy
- The National Co-ordinating Committee for Drug and Alcohol Task Forces (NCC-DATF), the body providing advice on operational and policy matters to the Minister of State in the Department of Health with responsibility for the Strategy.

A Steering Group to develop a new National Drugs Strategy was established by the Department of Health and Children in December 2015. CPU represents the Department of Education and Skills on this Steering Group.

CPU also oversees the Department's funding for six projects in local drugs task force areas in Dublin.

National Disability Strategy

CPU staff represent the Department on the National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan Group (NDSIG) and on the related Senior Officials Group. The Unit co-ordinates the Department's input to the Implementation Plan and collates the Department's response on issues relating to the Strategy.

CPU coordinated the Department's input to the *Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities*, which was launched in October 2015. A cross governmental group has been established to oversee the implementation of the Strategy and CPU represents the Department on this Group.

CPU is also coordinating the Department's input to a new National Disability Inclusion Strategy, the development of which is being led by the Department of Justice and Equality.

CPU chairs the Department's consultative committee, which was established in December 2014 as part of the implementation of the National Disability Strategy. The committee, which provides a forum for engagement on the commitments in the Strategy that are being led by the Department of Education and Skills, includes representatives of the National Disability Authority (NDA), the Disability Stakeholders Group (DSG) and relevant sections of the Department.

International Human Rights Reporting Obligations

CPU coordinates the Department's contributions on some international human rights instruments, where the right to education and the right to freedom of religion are mentioned. CPU is currently coordinating the Department's input to Cycle 2 of the UN Universal Periodic Review Process. Ireland's second National Report was submitted to the UN in February 2016 and the interactive UPR dialogue is due to take place in Geneva on 11th May 2016.

Other CPU Representational and Co-ordinating Roles

Central Policy Unit also provides DES input and/or representation for:

- The National Economic and Social Council
- The National Women's Strategy
- Growing Up in Ireland – Longitudinal Research Study.

3.4 Monitoring Committee established under Part V of the Disability Act, 2005

The Disability Act 2005 provides a framework for monitoring the performance of public bodies in meeting the public sector employment target of 3% for people with disabilities. The Monitoring Committee, established by the Minister for Education and Skills under the Act, forwards a Statutory Report to the National Disability Authority (NDA) for this purpose, in respect of public bodies in the Education Sector that meet the legal definition of a public body under the Act. CPU (Dublin and Navan offices) provides administrative support for the Committee and is responsible for requesting, and collating, the relevant data annually. Additionally, a large

number of bodies in the education sector, which are not obliged to report under the Act, do so on a voluntary basis.

A separate report is also drafted annually and approved by the Monitoring Committee which, in addition to details of those bodies obliged to report, also includes details of bodies which report on a voluntary basis. Both reports are submitted for noting by the Minister for Education and Skills.

Current Position

The 2014 Report was recently approved for publication by the Government. Overall, the Department and the bodies under the Minister's aegis required to report, exceeded the target of 3%.

The Chair and Secretary of the Monitoring Committee together with representatives from other Departmental Monitoring Committees met with the NDA in December 2015 to discuss the findings of the NDA Part 5 Report and any significant developments or requirements with regard to the preparation of the 2015 Report.

Next Steps

The Monitoring Committee met in January to progress recommendations arising from the 2014 report and prepare for the process of compiling data in respect of the Department's 2015 report.

The Government recently approved a recommendation in the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with disabilities that the existing 3% target for the employment of people with disabilities in the public service should be increased to 6% in the coming years.

3.5 Dormant Account Funding

Dormant funds/unclaimed life assurance policies, which have not been reclaimed by the original account/policy holder or their beneficiaries, are transferred each year by the financial institution/insurance undertaking to the Dormant Accounts Fund which is managed by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA). The legislation also introduced a scheme for the disbursement of funds that are unlikely to be reclaimed.

Under the Dormant Accounts (Amendment) Act 2012, the statutory functions of the former Dormant Accounts Board transferred to the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government. That Department prepares and oversees a three-year Disbursement Scheme under the Act.

The Department of Education and Skills continues to act as lead department in relation to *'the educational development of persons who are educationally disadvantaged'*, which is one of three categories of disadvantage to receive funding from the Dormant Accounts Fund. CPU

(Dublin and Navan offices) co-ordinates the DES input to the Dormant Account Disbursement Scheme and to the annual Action Plans drafted in accordance with the Scheme.

Current Position

The most recent Dormant Account Fund Disbursement Scheme, 2013-2015, was approved by Government in December 2013. The legislation provides that, once the scheme has received Government approval, the Minister for ECLG must then, at least once in each year of the plan, prepare an Action Plan in consultation with other relevant Department's including the DES to give effect to the scheme. An allocation of €500,000 was subsequently provided under the Dormant Accounts Action Plan 2014 to develop a proposal on inclusive early year's education for children with Special Needs. The proposal involves the provision of accredited programmes in inclusive early year's education. The Minister for Education and Skills issued a call for proposals for Further and Higher Education Institutions to apply for funding to build the capacity of early years practitioners to provide inclusive early years education in November 2015. It is anticipated that the funding approved for this proposal will be drawn down in full in early 2016.

2016 Action Plan

The Minister for ECLG in developing the 2015/2016 Action Plan issued a call for proposals/priorities in November 2015. Having consulted with all units within the Department two proposals (the integration of newcomers and an 'Arts in Education' initiative) were submitted to the DECLG in December 2015 for consideration for inclusion in the Plan. The 2015/2016 Action Plan has recently been approved and included the two Department of Education and Skills proposals.

Next Steps

Now that the Action Plan has been approved, the Department will progress the initiatives and monitor the drawdown of funds having regard to the overall allocation for educational disadvantage.

4. Other significant Issues

4.1 Implementation of the Action Plan on Bullying

The Action Plan on Bullying was launched in January 2013. It was produced by a Working Group established by the Minister to consider steps to tackle bullying in schools. A budget line of €500,000 was set aside to support the implementation of the twelve recommended actions in the Plan which focus on support to schools, education and training, research and awareness raising. Good progress has been made in implementing all of the recommended actions in the Plan.

Current Position:

- New National Procedures on Anti-Bullying were launched in September 2013. These are currently being implemented by all 4,000 primary and post primary schools in the country.
- An Anti-Bullying Parent Training Programme is being run jointly by the National Parents Councils (primary and post primary).
- A phased programme of continuing professional development (CPD) has been developed to support teachers and schools in relation to the Action Plan and the Anti-Bullying Procedures.
- A new national anti-bullying website, www.tacklebullying.ie, was launched in November 2015. The website will provide a single point of information and support for young people, parents and teachers affected by bullying.
- The Department has supported anti-bullying initiatives aimed at young people such as, the Stand Up! Against Homophobic and Transphobic bullying campaign, organised by BeLoNG To, the National Youth Service for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender young people in Ireland and the Europe-wide initiative, Safer Internet Day.
- New resources to tackle cyberbullying “UP2US” and “My Selfie and the wider world” were launched through the internet safety initiative, Webwise and an UP2US social media roadshow was run in collaboration with Beat 102-103.
- The production of guidelines for school staff relation to homophobic bullying is also being supported.
- Two pieces of research suggested in the Plan around social media and children with special needs were commissioned in 2013. “The Prevalence and Impact of Bullying Linked to Social Media on the Mental Health and Suicidal Behaviour Among Young People” commissioned by the Department of Education and Skills and the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention was published in May 2014. “Preventing school bullying of children with Special Educational Needs or Disability”, was published by the National Disability Authority in May 2015.

Next Steps:

The main focus will be in the relevant sections overseeing implementation of the ongoing actions in the Plan.

4.2 Developing economic and evaluation capacity through IGEES and complying with the Public Spending Code’s requirements on evaluation.

Background

The Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) is an integrated cross-Government service to enhance the role of economics and value for money analysis in public

policy making. Established in 2012, the Service represents a commitment to a high and consistent standard of policy evaluation and economic analysis throughout the Irish Civil Service.

The Department of Education and Skills is a member of IGEES and is represented on the Management Board of IGEES. A key deliverable of IGEES members is the delivery of the Value for Money Programme as set out in Part C of the Public Spending Code. Analysis carried out under the Public Spending Code is published on the IGEES website.

Current Position

An Assistant Principal Economist has been seconded to the Department, for a period of 3 years, to carry out evaluations required under the Public Spending Code and to act as a shared service throughout the Department assisting with economic analysis (e.g. cost benefit analysis) and analytical work packages. Under the agreed Value for Money programme (2015-2017) evaluations in the form of Focused Policy Assessments⁸ (FPAs) are being carried out under the following headings:

- Special Needs Assistants data; and
- Identifying the economic impact of international students in Higher Education Institutions in Ireland in 2010 and 2014.

A further two pieces of analysis on the DEIS programme and Prefab Replacement Initiative are required by 2017 but have yet to commence.

Next Steps

The Focused Policy Assessment on Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) Data, which aims to improve understanding of the drivers of the increase in demand for SNAs and improve the estimate for future SNA numbers is currently at an advanced stage. Once the group has signed off on the report, it will then be submitted to the Management Board for approval for publication.

The Terms of Reference for the FPA on International students are in draft stage and will be agreed with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in the coming weeks.

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

None reporting to CPU.

⁸ A Focused Policy Assessment is an evaluation of a discrete expenditure programme, to answer specific questions of programme design and delivery, by reference to one or more evaluation criteria

Legal Services

1. Unit / Section Overview

The main responsibilities of the Legal Services Unit are as follows:

- Provision of legal advice to line divisions on specific policy and other issues;
- Provision of advice on litigation, employment law cases and equality cases;
- Reporting to the Management Board on current litigation to which the Department is a party;
- Responding to general employment law advisory queries;
- Coordination of Department's Legislation Programme;
- Coordination of the Department's input to Memoranda for Government on legal matters not covered by individual line sections and
- Responding to PQs and other queries in relation to legal matters involving the Department

Staffing: the section is staffed as follows (WTEs): 1 Principal Officer (shared with Central Policy Unit); 2 Advisory Counsel (AP); 1 Deputy Assistant Chief State Solicitor (AP); 1 Higher Executive Officer (currently vacant).

Legal Services is currently staffed by two Advisory Counsel (Kathryn Keane and Claire O'Regan) on secondment from the Office of the Attorney General (AGO), a Deputy Assistant Chief State Solicitor (Edmund Kent) on secondment from the Office of the Chief State Solicitor (CSSO) and a Higher Executive Officer of the Department. The function of the secondees is to provide legal advice to line divisions on specific issues which have been identified by individual policy areas as requiring a legal opinion.

The State Solicitor on secondment from the CSSO advises on litigation, employment law cases and equality cases and with general employment law advisory queries.

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

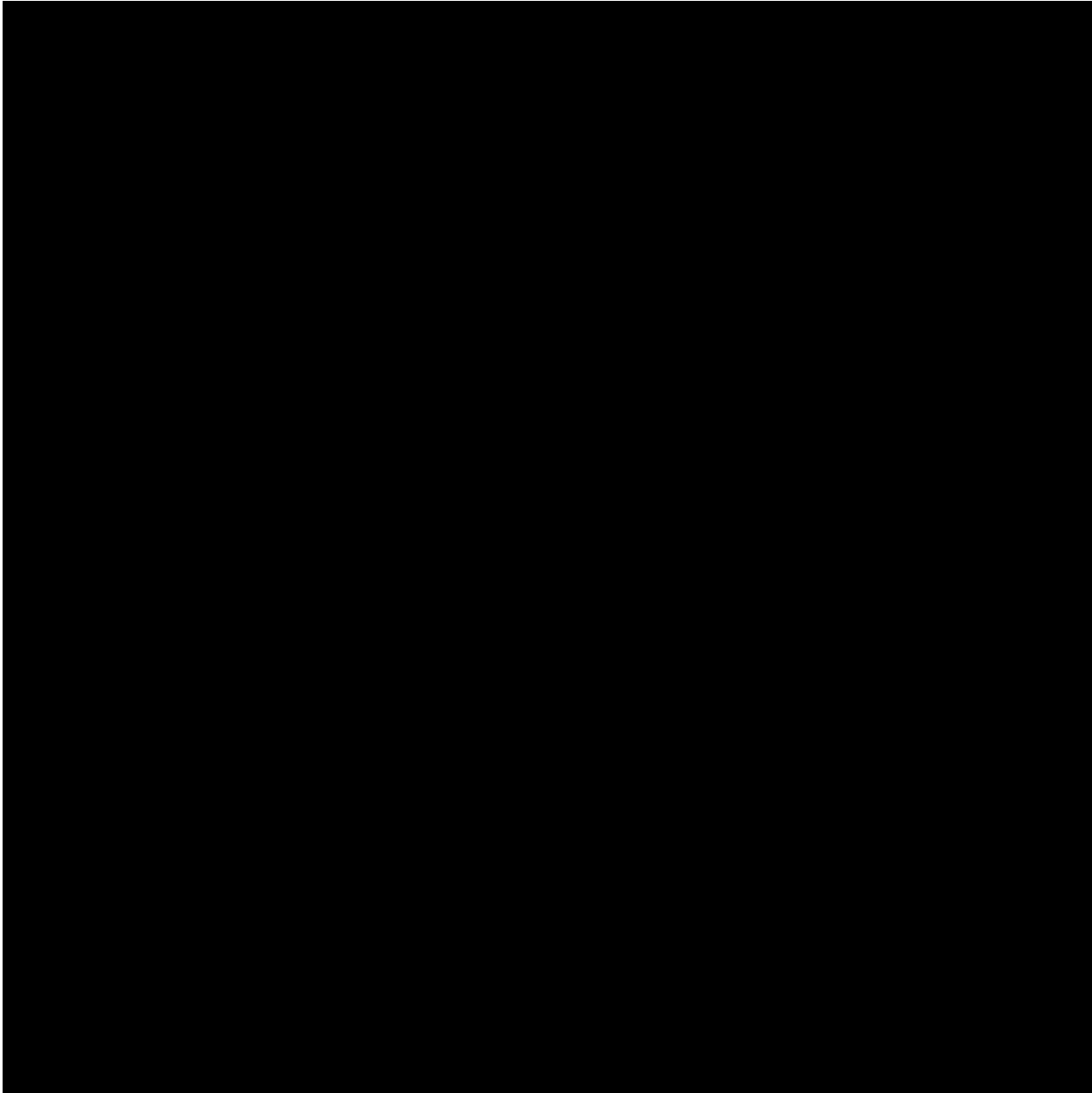
No subhead allocated. Legal fees, costs etc. incurred by the Department are paid directly from the subheads of the relevant line section.

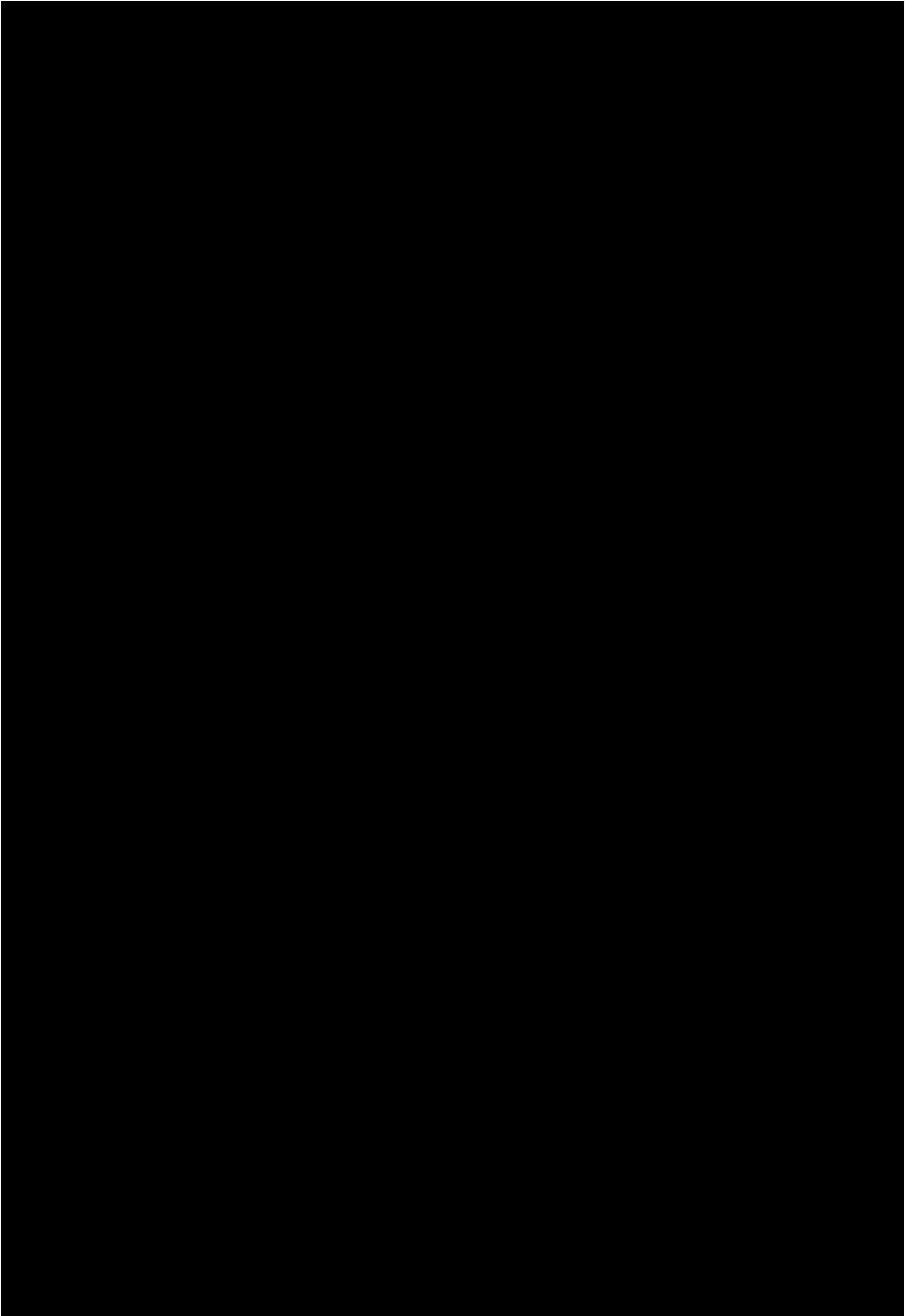
3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.1 ISSUE: Litigation

BACKGROUND:

Significant legal issues currently arising within the Department are described in the material supplied by individual line sections. The Department works with the Attorney General's Office and the Chief State Solicitor's Office (CSSO) in relation to cases of particular sensitivity and/or with general implications and reports on these to government on a regular basis.





4. OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

4.1 ISSUE: Legislation

BACKGROUND:

The section coordinates the Department's legislation programme. However, it should be noted that the legal advisors on secondment to the Department act in an advisory capacity only and do not have a role in relation to the drafting of legislation. Individual business units manage the drafting of primary and secondary legislation in conjunction with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel to the Government (OPC).

Before the beginning of each Dáil term, the Government publishes the legislation programme for that session. The programme sets out the Government's legislative priorities. The Office of the Chief Whip coordinates the programme during the Dáil term.

The Government Legislation Committee (GLC) is chaired by the Government Chief Whip and its members include the Attorney General, the Chief Parliamentary Counsel, [the Programme Managers of the main parties in Government], the Leader of Seanad Éireann and representatives of the Department of the Taoiseach and the OPC.

The OPC works closely with the GLC in ensuring that the Government Legislation Programme is implemented. The function of the GLC is to assist the Government in fixing legislative priorities for the forthcoming parliamentary session and to oversee the implementation of the Government legislation programme. It does this by making recommendations to the Government in relation to the level of priority that should be accorded to the drafting of each Bill (the drafting of which has been authorised by Government) and by anticipating blockages that might occur in the system and recommending appropriate action to avoid delays in the drafting process.

The legislative programme includes:

Section A Bills that are expected to be published within that particular Dáil Session.

Section B Bills that have had Heads approved but are unlikely to be published in the current Dáil session.

Section C Bills that have yet to have Heads approved.

It should be noted however that classification as an A or B Bill does not prevent the Bill from being published in the current Dáil session if sufficient progress is made in drafting it.

The Department is not required to report to the Whip's Office on legislation currently before the Houses.

Since November 2013, all legislative proposals must be submitted to the relevant Oireachtas Committee for pre-legislative scrutiny. It takes up to two months from the time of reference to the Committee to receipt of its report.

CURRENT POSITION:

There are two Bills which had been published but had not completed their passage through the Houses of the Oireachtas before the dissolution of the Dáil in February.

[Education \(Admission to Schools\) Bill](#)

The objective of the Bill is to ensure that the processes for enrolling students by schools are more open, equitable and consistent. The Bill was published on 8 April 2015. It was introduced in the Dáil and circulated to members (First Stage). A date for second stage was never finalised.

[Technological Universities Bill](#)

The purpose of the Bill is to provide for the establishment of Technological Universities and the amendment of the IOT/DIT and HEA Acts. The bill passed Third Stage in the Dáil on 14 January 2016. Report Stage commenced at the end of January but had not been completed when the Dáil was dissolved.

Drafting is under way in the Department on a further two Bills, as follows:

[Universities \(Amendment\) Bill](#)

The main purpose of this Bill is to allow the Minister for Education and Skills to give a direction to a university requiring it to comply with policy decisions made by the Government relating to the remuneration or numbers of public servants employed in that university. The OPC is well advanced on drafting the text of the bill and a final draft is awaited.

[Retention of Certain Records Bill](#)

The Bill is to allow for the retention of the records of the Commission into Child Abuse, the Redress Board and the Residential Institutions Review Committee in the National Archives and sealed for a period of at least 75 years.

The Bill was referred to the OPC in early August 2015 for drafting. A drafter has been assigned to work on the Bill and has been in consultation with officials in the Department on the Bill.

Work is under way in the Department on the preparation of general schemes for two further pieces of legislation.

Higher Education Authority Bill

The purpose of the Bill is to replace the HEA Act 1971 and amend other relevant legislation. Work on the general scheme is under way.

Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill

The purpose of the Bill will be to amend the 2012 Act to address some issues that have arisen regarding the scope of QQI's responsibilities in relation to recognition of awards and regulation of private and voluntary providers; to ensure adequate protection of enrolled learners where providers discontinue a programme; and to give greater authority to Institutes of Technology to award Level 9 qualifications. Work on the general scheme is under way.

NEXT STEPS:

A Memo for Government detailing a proposed legislative programme for the Spring/Summer session will be prepared by the Chief Whip's Office. Subject to the Minister's approval, the existing bills will be submitted for approval, along with any new legislative proposals arising from the Programme for Government and approved by the Minister.

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department NA

Public Service Reform (PSR) Programme Office

1. Unit / Section Overview

An extensive programme of reform is being planned and implemented across the education and training sector. This involves the implementation of a range of system wide strategies including the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, the Further Education and Training Strategy and the Higher Education Strategy. In addition to sector based reform the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has published a Public Service Reform Plan (2014 to 2016) which outlines key commitments and actions for change across the civil and public service.

To coordinate and manage the implementation of the education and training reform programme a Public Service Reform (PSR) Programme Office has been established in the Department.

The role of this office is to:

- Drive Public Service Reform and accountability across the Education and Training Sector
- Build an understanding of the breadth and complexity of the education and training reform programme internally and externally
- Provide a central reference point for education and training reform initiatives through co-ordinated planning, review and reporting on key programmes and projects
- Provide a strategic overview of timetabling and sequencing of work strands, that are highly inter-connected and support the Department in managing dependencies within the project informing prioritisation decisions on the use of scarce resources
- Co-ordinate development and implementation of the Integrated Reform Plan (annual 2014 to 2016)
- Co-ordinate development and implementation of the Shared Services Plan (2014 to 2016)
- Co-ordinate the Procurement Programme for the sector
- Manage the development and delivery of the External Service Delivery Plan for the Department
- Provide information, support and advice to the Department and the Sector on Shared Services, Procurement and External Service Delivery
- Introduce Programme and Project Management structures, governance and methodologies across the Department and the Sector to ensure planning, monitoring

and control that are fit for purpose and which support the Department in delivering on its reform agenda

- Communicate programme information to key stakeholders and consolidate reporting on the reform programme across the Department
- Manage key communication documents including “Ireland’s Education and Training Sector – Overview of Service Delivery and Reform” ensuring its continued relevance
- Support cross-department and cross sector teams managing programme level, stakeholder engagement and communications, benefits management, risk and issues management, quality assurance etc.

Staffing: One Programme Manager and one Shared Services Advisor (both Principal Officer level), one Assistant-Principal Officer, one Higher Executive Office (Higher), one Higher Executive Officer, and one Clerical Officer

2. Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
Public Service Reform	83,014.67	2,005,622.38	8,000,000.00

The Transforming Public Services Programme was initiated by the Government in 2010 arising out of an OECD Study of the Irish Public Service. The initial focus of this programme was to support and coordinate Public Service Reform initiatives within the VEC, now ETB, sector through supporting a Public Service Reform Coordinator post in the IVEA (Irish Vocational Education Association), now ETBI (Education and Training Boards Ireland). Figures for 2014 above reflect this initiatives.

The figures for 2015 relate to the ETB/SOLAS Project Management Office and the initial work of the PSR Programme Office. The ETB/SOLAS PMO has responsibility for managing the reform programme for the ETB/SOLAS sector. Detailed information on the ETB/SOLAS Project Management Office is included elsewhere in this document.

The increase in the financial allocation associated with the PSR Programme Office for 2016 is required to meet the costs that will be incurred in the implementation of the Public Service Reform Programme particularly in relation to the implementation of the Shared Services Plan and associated projects as they move from approved Business Case to design and implementation.

3. Key priority issues

3.1 Integrated Reform Delivery Plan

Background

The Public Service Reform Plan 2014 – 2016 <http://reformplan.per.gov.ie/> was published in 2014. Building on the progress made on the original 2011 to 2013 plan, the new plan maintains the emphasis on reducing costs and increasing efficiency but with a stronger focus on the delivery of positive outcomes for citizens, businesses and public servants themselves.

Four key themes run through the 2014 to 2016 Reform Plan:

- **delivery of improved outcomes for service users** - based on using alternative models of service delivery and improvements in service delivery at sectoral and organisational levels;
- **achieving and utilising the “reform dividend”** - freeing up resources by making existing processes more cost effective and efficient, and using the savings to invest in improved services;
- **greater digitalisation and use of open data** - to deliver services and information in innovative ways; and
- **more openness, transparency and accountability** - to strengthen trust in government and public services, and to enhance public governance.

In response, the Department of Education and Skills develops an annual Integrated Reform Delivery Plan (IRDP) which sets out the Departmental and sectoral reforms alongside implementation of the key cross-cutting elements of the new Public Service Reform Plan and the Civil Service Renewal Plan.

The IRDP collates the various key reform initiatives from across the Department, its agencies and the sector as a whole. It provides a strategic overview of the reform programme and identifies key milestones for the year. Progress reports are provided to the Management Board, the Minister and DPER every quarter and are used to monitor progress against plan, prioritise reform initiatives and manage the related allocation of resources.

The IRDP has four sections:

- The governance arrangements in place to oversee the reform programme
- The comprehensive reform programme within the Department and the Education and Training Sector
- Cross Cutting reforms including improved service delivery, digitalisation, shared services etc.
- Reforms relating to the implementation of the Civil Service Renewal Plan

To oversee the implementation of the IRDP the Department has established comprehensive governance arrangements including the establishment of an Education and Training Reform Board, ETB/SOLAS Programme Board, Higher Education Programme Board and various project steering groups.

Current position

Following approval and publication of IRDP 2016 the Department is progressing work in all key areas. As part of the monitoring process of the PSR Programme Office progress against plan is reported quarterly. The report for October to December 2015 was submitted to DPER in January 2016. Information gathered as part of this process is used for planning and review purposes by the Education and Training Reform Board (Management Board).

A key area of reform, in addition to the cross cutting reforms outlined below, is the reconfiguration of the vocational education committees and the establishment of SOLAS to replace FAS. To manage this reform programme the Department established an ETB/SOLAS project office and has put in place specific governance arrangements to oversee this comprehensive programme of reform. The work of the ETB/SOLAS Project Management Office is dealt with in more detail in the next sub-section dealing with the work of this Division.

Next Steps

The Department will continue to monitor and report progress against plans in key reform areas and will adjust and revise plans accordingly.

3.2 Shared Services

Background

The Government's Public Service Reform Plan, published in November 2011, gave a strong mandate for the increased use of shared services across the public sector. This mandate has been reiterated in the most recent Public Service Reform Plan for 2014-16 which was published in January 2014. In addition, Government mandated that a Shared Service plan be

prepared by each of the four main sectoral Departments (Education, Health, Local Government and Justice) for the period 2014 - 2016.

Current Position

This Department's Shared Services Plan for 2014 to 2016 was approved by Government in February 2014. The Plan proposes to actively participate in the roll out of traditional shared services in areas such as HR, Payroll, Pensions, Finance, IT and Corporate Services within the Department of Education and Skills and across the entire education and training sector. In addition, it is planned to investigate the current diverse range of shared services which exist within the education and training sector and, should a strong business case exist, these services may be rolled out to wider groups within the sector. These opportunities will be individually evaluated using a standard methodology and should there prove to be a sound business case, the initiatives will be rolled out for the relevant areas of the sector.

The Department's Shared Services plan 2014-16 includes projects that have been scheduled and prioritised based on the business needs of the sector. The programme of work has commenced based on the model which has been employed by the Civil Service in its shared services initiatives to date:

- Scoping, Planning, Baseline, Business Case, Approval, Detailed Design, Build, Test, Implement, Optimise.

Business Cases have been approved for Finance and Payroll shared services for the ETB/SOLAS sector and both projects are progressing through the design and implementation stage. A Business Case for Higher Education Payroll Shared Service has been developed and is being progressed through the appropriate governance channels.

The Department also plans to look at pension shared services for the whole sector, and a expanding education payroll shared services to include the Department's Athlone payroll operation. These large projects are balanced by other smaller undertakings which will see the development of centres of excellence in certain areas within the sector. Work has commenced on some of the initiatives already and others have been scheduled over the course of the plan in order to allow the sector implement the changes within its current resource constraints.

Next Steps

Invest to save

Putting in place the structures, processes and business cases to support the delivery of reform requires initial investment. As projects move into implementation stage there will be significant benefits realised. Shared service initiatives achieve the most efficiency and greatest payback where one technology platform can be scaled up to cater for greater and greater customer volumes. These initiatives also thrive where a single location brings consistent standardised processes, service management and knowledge transfer between staff. In effect they become experts in the provision of the service, eg payroll, finance, HR, etc.

Multi-functional shared service sites allow the opportunity for staff to develop multi-disciplined skills and can provide for varied career paths. Bringing all shared service initiatives under the management of a single shared services management would overcome some of the limitations experienced by the Departments existing shared services such as HEAnet, An Cheim, SUSI, CAO, etc. allowing these existing initiatives to expand their services sector wide.

The Department's funding has already been reduced significantly through the recent period of austerity and front line services are under pressure. The Department is fully committed to the shared services initiatives and the Public Service Reform Programme Office will continue to work with the Department's Finance Unit and with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to find a way that these significant projects can be funded upfront thereby securing the essential benefits to the sector and the exchequer.

3.2 Procurement

Background

The Office of Government Procurement was set up by the Government in early 2013 as part of an overall public service reform programme to reach national deficit reduction targets. The Government decided on a centre-led procurement model. The mission and vision of the Office of Government Procurement is to deliver sustainable procurement savings for the tax payer by optimising value for money across the public service. The aim is to provide a high quality procurement service accessible to all parts of the public service including schools.

Common goods and services will be sourced from one office, formed from resources coming together from across the civil and public service. Health, Local Government, Defence and Education will each have a sector lead procurement function.

Current Position

In the Education sector, the Education Procurement Service (EPS) is the designated sector lead for procurement function. It was a Higher Education sector initiative but in 2013 its role was expanded and its remit now covers the entire education and training sector. The EPS has

redesigned and reorganised of its structures in order to take on the role of the education sourcing hub within the centralised procurement model. Its function is to source goods and services for all public sector bodies with specific responsibility for laboratory equipment and diagnostics, veterinary and agriculture and research equipment and library supplies, and education specific requirements.

The EPS are progressing a number of significant projects under two key category councils (Laboratory equipment and Diagnostics, Veterinary and Agriculture) as well as supporting education critical sourcing projects. The Director of EPS is a member of the Executive Committee of the Office of Government Procurement and represents the interests of the education sector at that forum.

As part of the overall government procurement reform programme, a Schools Procurement Unit (SPU) was established by the Department in 2014, within the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) Secretariat. The SPU acts as the central coordinating function for procurement for schools in the primary, secondary and community and comprehensive sector (including special schools and excluding schools under the remit of ETBs). The SPU has a central role in communicating procurement requirements and opportunities to schools, driving and measuring compliance to central contracts and managing procurement data across the school sectors. The SPU is funded by the DES.

The Schools Procurement Unit Manager has been appointed and is in-situ since the 19th May 2014. The team, in place since 1st September 2014, also comprises of two Procurement Officers, with a Clerical Officer providing administrative support.

A Schools Procurement Advisory Committee (SPAC) has been set up to advise and support the operation of the SPU. The Advisory Committee comprises eight members in total representing the Department of Education and Skills (2 members), the OGP (1 member), the JMB (1 member), the ACCS (1 member), the CPSMA (1 member) and other Primary Management Bodies (2 members). The Department oversees the operation of the SPU through a Department chaired Governance committee, which meets twice a year.

Procurement in the ETB sector is being coordinated through the Public Service Reform (PSR) Coordinator located in Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). The PSR Coordinator facilities work in the following areas:

- Coordination of procurement initiatives and acting as liaison officer to facilitate maximum ETB participation in centralised procurement competitions and national procurement frameworks
- The ongoing professionalisation of procurement practice in the ETB sector

- Input to the coordination and implementation of Public Sector Reform initiatives in the ETB sector
- Procurement Forums and regular meetings

Next Steps

The Public Service Reform Programme Office will continue to work with the Department's Finance Unit and with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to find a way to ensure that priority procurement projects can be funded, to expand the take-up of centralised procurement throughout the education sector, and to continue to develop relationships between all procurement-related stakeholders, particularly with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP)

3.3 External Service Delivery

Background

In July 2012, Government approved a memorandum setting out proposals for a strategic and integrated approach to sourcing public services from external providers. All proposed new services across the public service must now be first tested for external service delivery (ESD) before any approval to provide the service internally will be granted. In addition, Government has mandated that an external service delivery plan be prepared by each of the four main sectoral Departments (Education, Health, Local Government and Justice) for the period 2014 – 2016.

Current Position

The External Service Delivery Plan 2014 – 2016 for the Education and Training Sector was approved by Government in February 2014.

A number of areas have been included in the plan for further consideration. Projects are currently progressing in the areas of facilities management services, payments in schools and the administration and processing of Inspectorate questionnaires.

Next Steps

The Public Service Reform Programme Office will continue to progress External Service Delivery projects on the basis of the proposals identified in the Business Cases for each project.

ETB/SOLAS Project Management Office

1. Office Overview

Through a series of decisions the Government decided to reduce 33 vocational education committees (VECs) to 16 new entities, to be known as Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and to establish a new body to be known as SOLAS to replace FÁS.

The proposals in relation to SOLAS as agreed by the Government envisage a key role for the ETBs in relation to the future delivery of further education and training in an integrated manner.

The scale of change underway, and its multi-faceted character, gives rise to many challenges and has demanded a different way of working. In recognising the need for a sector-wide strategic approach, where there is close engagement with the education sector, the Department has established the ETB/SOLAS Programme Board which is chaired by the Secretary General and is composed of members of the Department's senior management team and representatives from the sector. A Project Management Office (PMO) has also been established to manage and coordinate the associated reform programme.

Significant developments have already taken place with the establishment of education and training boards on 1 July 2013, the establishment of SOLAS on 27 October 2013 and the transfer of 19 SOLAS training centres and their staffs to 11 ETBs during 2014.

During 2015, the PMO has prepared a new functional model for the ETB sector and has obtained DPER sanction for its proposal for a senior management structure on the basis of 3 streams of functions in the sector – Schools, FET and Organisation Design & Support. It has also completed projects to standardise and reform existing mainstream payroll system for a number of ETBs, It has agreed a plan for the future management and delivery of identified transitional supports being provided by SOLAS to ETBs over a specified period, it has determined an approach for the delivery of training functions by all ETBs, including those to which training centres had not been transferred during 2014 and it has published a communications plan which articulates the communications requirements on the PMO and ETB senior management teams.

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

The budget associated with the ETB/SOLAS PMO is managed through the PSR Programme Office details of which are included elsewhere in this document.

Staffing for the ETB/SOLAS PMO is one PO, two APs, one HEO and one CO. Projects associated with the programme have project teams include two POs, three APs and one HEO.

3. SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

3.1 Recruitment of Senior Management Posts

Background:

The ETB/SOLAS Programme Plan includes a project to devise a future organisational design for ETBs in order to reflect their new role. As part of this project a number of meetings took place with a Consultative Team which included representation from ETBs, ETBI and SOLAS. On foot of the resulting new design, the Department received sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (D/PER) to have 44 senior managers appointed across the sector. This will be a significant strengthening of the existing senior management team from the former VECs. The salary scale for the posts will begin at €65,000 and the maximum point will be €98,238.

The sanction provides for the following breakdown of allocated posts

- 5 posts – CDETB
- 4 posts – Cork ETB, DDLETB
- 3 posts – GRETB, KWETB, LCETB, LMETB, WWETB
- 2 posts – CMETB, Donegal ETB, Kerry ETB, KCETB, LOETB, LWETB, MSLETB, Tipperary ETB

Given that the organisational design involves a three pillar structure (Schools, Further Education and Training and Organisational Support and Design) further engagement with D/PER is planned with a view to the 8 smaller ETBs having 3 Director posts.

The D/PER sanction is subject to organisations adhering to pay ceilings and to the new posts being filled by open competition which would be run by the Public Appointments Service (PAS).

Recruitment Process

The recruitment campaign will involve the following 3 role types

- Director of Organisation Support and Development
- Director of Schools
- Director of Further Education and Training

Present indications are that the PAS will be in a position to

Discussions with Management and Staff Sides

The PMO is engaged with both ETBI and the Staff side in relation to the senior management posts.

3.2 Transfer of Training Centre Functions from SOLAS to ETBs (including transfer of functions to ETBs without a Training Centre in its geographical area)

Background:

The Education and Training Boards Act 2013 provides for a key role for the ETBs in relation to the future delivery of further education and training in an integrated manner.

While each of the 16 ETBs, has training functions under the 2013 Act, 5 ETBs did not have a training centre transferred to them because there had been no such centres within their geographic areas. Following consultation with the sector, the ETB/SOLAS Programme Board decided in October 2014 that each ETB without a training centre should be allocated staffing and resources to deliver Contracted/Community Training and manage the Apprenticeship Employers in its area.

The Department accepts that those ETBs from which functions are or have transferred (Giving ETBs) to ETBs which heretofore did not have training functions (Receiving ETBs) are not in a position to provide the receiving ETB all of the staff which will be required for its training structure without putting their own training provision at risk.

In February 2015 the Department decided on an approach which involves the transfer of some staff from the giving ETB(s) to the receiving ETB(s) which allowed the ETBs concerned to progress to an implementation phase with the transferring staff being augmented by staff from within the receiving ETB. Subsequently, having regard to the staffing positions of the receiving ETBs, the Department sanctioned additional resources to these ETBs.

Transfer of training functions

Training functions have transferred to Cavan and Monaghan ETB with effect from 28 September 2015 and to Kildare and Wicklow ETB on 2 November 2015. The Educational Training Facility for the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) programme located at Mount Lucas transferred to Laois and Offaly ETB on 1 January last and transfer of the balance of training functions to Laois and Offaly ETB took place on 23 February 2016 and transfers to Kilkenny and Carlow ETB and to Tipperary ETB are scheduled for end of March 2016

Engagement with Staff Side

The Department is engaged on an ongoing basis with the Staff side in relation to the transfer of these training functions.

4. Projects to Improve the System

The ETB/SOLAS Programme oversees a range of significant reform projects associated with the restructuring of the sector including:

Shared Services for Payroll and Finance (outlined below)

Development of an ETB ICT strategy to document a single ICT strategy for the sector which will identify a model that will lead to a standardization of infrastructure, systems and telecommunications, across the sector in line with the Government's public service reform plan and mandate for the use of sector wide services and procurement reform.

The Legal Services Strategy: to support a cohesive approach to the provision of legal services for the ETB sector.

Manser Out-Centre Portal to reduce the instances of the ESI/Manser systems within the merged ETBs in advance of the introduction of payroll shared services.

Core Upgrade Phase II to migrate some systems to a managed payroll solution offered by Core International to mitigate risks and challenges associated with the age of applications, databases, operational systems and hardware being used in some ETBs in advance of the introduction of payroll shared services.

ETB Finance Interim Steps to improve finance processes, procedures and systems in the ETBs in advance of the introduction of finance shared services. Work includes the introduction on a phased basis of e-invoicing and to facilitate further adoption of the public services purchasing cards in the sector. This work will also form part of the data gathering phase of the shared services project.

Development of a property register for the ETB sector to develop a real estate property register. Data gathering is ongoing for this project.

Improving connectivity for ETBs to connect all ETB Head Offices to Government Networks to meet the growing needs of the newly formed ETBs and the sector. Next phase of this project will provide a Government Network connection to the ETB Training Centres.

4.1 Education Shared Business Services – ETB Payroll, Development, Design and Implementation Project

Background:

The Government's Public Service Reform Plans of 2011-2014 and 2014 – 2016 provide a strong mandate for the increased use of shared services across the public sector. A key element of the Department of Education and Skills' (DES) Shared Services Plan 2014 – 2016 is to reform, standardise and move certain ETB back office functions to a shared service model, in line with the whole of Government approach in this area.

In 2014 a Payroll Shared Services business case recommended that a Payroll Shared Services Centre be established, operating from a single location in the south/west Dublin region, with a single governance structure, common standard design and SLAs with client ETBs for the delivery of payroll processing to the satisfaction of Accountable Officers. Payroll shared services will be underpinned by improved and standardised processes, a performance driven culture and the potential for on-going service improvements.

In 2015 the development, design and implementation of the Payroll Shared Services project commenced and is led by a Department based project team reporting into the Department's Shared Services Advisor and the ETB/SOLAS Programme Board.

Current Position:

The project has been branded as Education Shared Business Services - Payroll.

The project's implementation commenced in December 2014. As part of the project design phase, internal and external consultations relating to process and system design were completed. This included analysis of "As Is" payroll processes and "To Be" processes based on a shared service approach. Market Soundings for a system solution have been completed and a vision for the system solution developed and agreed with the Project Steering Group. The project team are working closely with both the OGCI and the OGP in developing a Request for Tender (RFT) for the provision of a system solution for the future payroll shared services centre. In parallel with this activity, an independent Peer Review process has been initiated for the project, in line with Government policy, under the auspices of DPER ICT Control.

The sourcing of the future location for the shared services center is underway with the project team working closely with the Department's Corporate Services and the OPW to evaluate suitable sites. It has been agreed that a Multi-functional Shared Service Centre will be established with potential to accommodate Shared Services from across the sector. The Education Shared Business Services Center location will be in the South West Dublin area, based on recommendations of the individual business cases for these projects and criteria that has been agreed by the Department and the project steering boards.

As part of the development of the Target Operating Model for payroll shared services ICT, Recruitment and Training strategies have been developed. The position of Head of Shared Services Payroll is currently being advertised via the Public Appointments Service.

Next Steps:

- Conclude and publish an RFT for the system solution for the payroll shared services centre.
- Conduct lease negotiation on a suitable building for the shared services centre.
- Work with Peer Review Group through the project lifecycle.
- Appoint Head of Payroll and continue to implement the recruitment strategy.
- Develop Target Operating Model and ICT Infrastructure.
- Select a system solution for payroll.
- Plan implementation and transition.

4.2 Education Shared Business Services – ETB Finance, Development, Design and Implementation Project

Background:

The ETB/SOLAS Project Management Office (PMO) in the DES established a project team to carry out baseline and business case reports for finance shared services. The team was also tasked with developing an implementation roadmap outlining the key steps and indicative

timeframe for the design and implementation of a new finance operating model. The Business Case examined potential future state operating models.

The conclusion of the Business Case Report was that the recommended option for finance in the ETB sector is a Multifunction Shared Service Centre.

Current Position:

Work is progressing to develop a Finance Shared Services Centre to support the delivery of finance processing along with the re-modelled retained finance function in ETBs. Development of a project charter and detailed project plan is nearing completion and initial “As is” mapping prepared as part of data gathering has been completed.

Next Steps:

Next Steps for 2016:

- Project charter and plan approval.
- Review resources required and recruit initial project team
- Complete “as is” and develop initial “to be” process maps
- Work with stakeholders such as OGP, OGCIO, C&AG, CSSO, etc.
- Develop detailed requirements and target operating model
- Develop RFT(s) for application(s) necessary to operate the Financial Shared Service
- Issue RFT for expert assistance

Data and Knowledge Management Unit

1. Unit / Section Overview

This is a newly established Unit (November 2015) with an initial primary focus on developing a Data Strategy. It came into existence as a consequence of a scoping exercise examining how the Department might enhance its capacity to manage data and knowledge, to increase its level of in-depth data analysis and to extend its use of research and evaluation.

Arising from that exercise it was considered necessary to develop a Data Strategy, to define and develop a Corporate Data Management function and to put a mechanism in place to oversee work in the inter-related areas of data, research and evaluation. As a consequence, a **Data, Evaluation & Research MAC sub-Committee (DERMS)** was established and, more recently, a new **Data & Knowledge Management Unit (DKMU)**

Staffing:

0.6 Principal Officer

1 Assistant Principal.

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Service	Outturn 2013	Outturn 2014	Provision 2015
Consultancy	N/A	N/A	10,000

3. KEY PRIORITY PROJECTS

Data Strategy

The priority for the DKMU is to develop a **Data Strategy 2017–2019** to provide strategic direction to enable the Department to,

- ▶ gather, manage, govern and analyse the data it requires and shares with its agencies and other government bodies as appropriate,
- ▶ develop the capacity to use data to provide evidence and insights to support the development and evaluation of services and policies in accordance with the Department's four main strategic themes/goals, and in so doing,
- ▶ direct resources efficiently and effectively for the betterment of education outcomes

CURRENT POSITION:

The DKMU have commenced a pilot stakeholder engagement process which will inform a full stakeholder engagement with all Department sections, its agencies, other Government bodies and interested parties.

NEXT STEPS:

The analysis of the information gathered through this process together with relevant research around specific topics will be completed by the end of Q2 2016. We will then develop a draft strategy with a view to having an approved strategy completed in Q4 2016.

Corporate data and knowledge management

Through the process of developing a data strategy, the **corporate data and knowledge management** function envisaged for the DKMU will be defined. This function will then be developed to support business units in a range of areas from maximising their use of data to meeting their obligations with regard to data governance and data management.

CURRENT POSITION:

Information gleaned via the stakeholder engagement exercise as part of the development of the data strategy will be used to identify functions appropriate to the role of corporate data and knowledge management. The procurement of specialist expertise to assist in our understanding of the various elements of data governance and to identify areas requiring priority focus is being considered.

NEXT STEPS:

Once the information gathering stage has been completed, the most appropriate role to manage the Department's corporate data and knowledge will be defined and specific projects to deliver that role will be identified. When the data strategy is completed, this role will be the key focus for the DKMU. It is envisaged that the DKMU will produce a comprehensive set of data policies, protocols and guidelines which will formalise and standardise all data activities across the Department.

Supporting the management of the DERMS Programme of Work

The DKMU will also support DERMS in developing, prioritising and monitoring a programme of work incorporating a range of specific projects to be delivered primarily by the DKMU, Statistics section and the Central Policy Unit.

CURRENT POSITION:

A Phase 1 Programme of Work together with associated reporting processes is being developed and will be operational by early Q2 2016.

NEXT STEPS:

A Phase 2 Programme of work will be developed on completion of the Data Strategy (Q3/Q4 2016)

3.1 ISSUE:

No issues at this point.

4. OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

4.1 ISSUE:

Statistics

1. Unit / Section Overview

The Statistics Section is the main centre in this Department for disseminating statistics on education and providing data to various national and international bodies using education statistics. The Section manages the collection of statistics from primary schools as well as dissemination of education statistics for all levels at both national and international level. Separately, data on student achievement in mathematics, science, reading and civic skills are produced by the Educational Research Centre which works closely with this Department through the Inspectorate and other business areas.

Staffing: the section comprises (WTEs): 1 Senior Statistician (PO); 2 Statisticians (APO); 1 HEO; 3.2 EOs, and 2.1 COs.

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Service	Outturn 2013	Outturn 2014	Provision 2015
Consultancy	N/A	N/A	N/A

3. KEY PRIORITY PROJECTS

Primary Online Database (POD)

The new online database for primary school data (POD) has been developed to monitor the education progress of learners in primary school (in DES aided schools) throughout the primary system and onwards to post primary level to facilitate and support learners to develop their full educational potential. POD provides information for schools and the Department to inform policy through statistical analysis and evaluation. POD is a live database of individual learners at primary level education, it is different from the point in time aggregate collection of data that it is replacing (National School Annual Census). POD collects data from all 3,200 National Schools (including Special Schools) in which over half a million pupils are enrolled with a reference date in September each year. The data collected in POD will provide vital statistical information for administrative and planning purposes as well as

statistical reporting. For example, information individual class and school information will be of use in forward planning where this data is used in conjunction with demographic data on births and child benefit to assess requirement for class rooms (and schools). From September 2016 POD will be used as the basis for capitation grant allocation, including the ancillary services capitation payments and primary teacher allocations including top-up allocations as part of the DEIS programme

School Censuses

The main Census (National School Annual Census) undertaken by the Section involves the transmission of an annual electronic Questionnaire to 3,200 National Schools (including Special Schools) in which over half a million pupils are enrolled with a reference date in September each year. The last year of the National School Annual Census is the current academic year (2015/2016) as the Census is being replaced by POD. The results of the Census have provided and for this year continue to provide vital statistical information for administrative and planning purposes as well as statistical reporting.

In addition to the Census of National Schools, the Section also undertakes a number of other data collections:

Enrolment in private (non-aided) schools at primary and second level (e.g. commercial schools providing courses at Levels 3-6;

Part-time enrolment in VEC, Community and Comprehensive schools

Responsibility for collecting full-time enrolment data at second level rests with the Parent, Learner Database Section in School Division. Data are collected by that Section on an individualised basis as part of the annual return for the Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD).

Data on enrolment and staffing in Adult Education as well as Youthreach are collected by the Further Education Section, while the Higher Education Authority is responsible for the compilation and publication of statistics on third level. However, summary enrolment data in higher education are included in this Department's statistical publications (see below).

Dissemination of Statistics

This occurs mainly through the Department's external website where key data are available in tabular form for a number of years up to 2014/15. The Section works closely with the Central Statistics Office in ensuring a consistent approach to reporting and classification of data.

The [Statistics web page of the Department](#) enables users to extract information in various areas including:

[Key statistics \(summary trends and topics\)](#) for 2014/2015: This gives information on enrolments at all levels of education, the number of schools and number of teachers.

Projections of Enrolment at first and second level (2015-2033) (last update July 2015, new report due July 2016)

Projections of Enrolment at third level (2015-2029) (last update July 2015, new report due July 2016)

Retention Rates of Pupils in Second Level Schools, the most recent report is for the 2008 entry cohort (those who sat their leaving cert in either 2013 or 2014)

[Education Statistics Database](#)

Statistical Reports up to 2014/2015

Data on class size by individual primary school up to 2014/2015 (next update is due end March/early April provisional 2015/2016 data).

Both end March/early April and the end of June are important date in our statistical calendars as provisional final and comprehensive statistical information for primary and second level for the school-year just ended is released. Data on higher education is updated to the previous school-year six months later (spring of the following year) once the HEA has finalised its reporting for that year.

[International data](#)

Participation in international educational statistics is of high value for policy-makers in assessing comparative strengths and weaknesses and in planning for the future of education and training in Ireland.

The Department is actively involved in various exchanges of data and statistical development at international level – OECD, Eurostat, UNESCO. Data are provided on expenditure, staffing, enrolment, graduates and other aspects of the education system. Separately, data on student achievement such as the results of national or international assessments of reading and mathematics are prepared by the Educational Research Centre and supplied to the Inspectorate or international bodies as appropriate.

[Education at a Glance OECD Indicators](#) (EAG) is the main reference point for international comparisons. This Report appears, typically, on the first Tuesday of September every year. It attracts considerable public attention and provides a large range of data on investment in education, outcomes, participation and system-level information about schools and educational pathways. The data reported by the OECD in September 2016 will be based on the 2013/2014 academic year and 2013 fiscal year. EAG also provides data on labour market and social outcomes of education using data from various Household Surveys, these surveys are conducted by the Central Statistics Office.

There is a huge range of comparative data available in EAG. Here are just a few highlights from the last edition:

- 90% of 25-34 year olds in Ireland had completed education to Leaving Certificate level (or the equivalent abroad) compared to 83% across the OECD.
- Completion of third level was particularly high among 25-34 year olds in Ireland where, at 51%, Ireland was above the OECD average of 41% (4th highest out of 34).
- Total expenditure (including private) on education was 5.6% of GDP in Ireland in 2012 – down from 6.4% in 2010 but the same proportion as 2008 (around the period that GDP began to decline). This was slightly above the OECD average of 5.3%, and reflects Ireland's continuing maintenance of higher levels of expenditure on education as the economy contracted.
- Between 2005 and 2012, in real terms, expenditure on education in Ireland increased by 39% at levels below Higher Education (primary to post-secondary non-tertiary), and by 25% in Higher Education. This compares to the OECD average increase of 14% and 27% respectively over the same period.
- The pupil-teacher ratio at primary level declined gradually in Ireland from 21.5 in 1999/00 (when the OECD average was 17.7) to 15.7 in 2010/2011, increased to 16.2 in 2011/2012 and was 16 (16.4) in 2012/2013. The average class size at primary level was 25. The OECD average was 21 (the 5th highest of 29 countries). At second level, the PTR in Ireland was 14.

[Eurostat](#) is also an important source of information on education at EU and Member State level with particular areas of additional information such as the teaching of languages. Working in association with the European Commission, Eurydice provides a wealth of qualitative and quantitative information about education in European countries. For example, [Eurybase](#) is a comprehensive source of information on education systems in 31 European countries. A number of thematic studies and key data series (e.g. [Key Data on Education in Europe](#)) reports are issued throughout the year. Responsibility for coordinating input is with the National Eurydice Unit in International Section of this Department.

[Exploitation of administrative data using data matching](#)

In 2013 statistics section published the first in a series of reports that track school leavers a year after they leave school. The reports are based on a detailed analysis of the records held in the Department. The reports are based on a detailed analysis of the records held in the Department on students who were enrolled in DES-aided post-primary schools (on the Post-Primary Pupils Database), focusing on those pupils who were enrolled in post-primary schools in one academic year but not enrolled in one of these schools one year later. These pupils, using a unique personal identifier (a protected identifier key based on the Personal Public Service Number (PPSN)), were tracked to other data sources that were available at the time.

The cohort of pupils dealt with in this report was enrolled in the final year of senior cycle in the 2009/2010 academic year and are termed 'School Completers'. The cohort of pupils who were enrolled in years prior to the final year of senior cycle in the 2009/2010 academic year and who were not enrolled in the 2010/2011 academic year form the subject of the companion report.

Future analysis will explore the tracking of this cohort into the future, as well as tracking more recent school leavers after they leave school. A separate analysis exploring the tracking of students on PLC courses is also planned.

Below is a link to the two published reports on the Department's website.

[School Completers-What Next?](#)

[Early Leavers- What Next?](#)

[Statistics section is also contributes to a number of cross divisional projects](#)

Improving the data availability and predictability of Special Need Assistant (SNA) allocation needs, this project is looking to predict the future demand for Special Needs Assistants. Special Education unit are the lead on this project.

Developing a teacher supply demand model for primary and post primary education. Statistics section provides technical advice to the Teacher Education section and the teaching council, looking at the factors that influence both the demand and supply variables that influence the future supply and demand of primary and post-primary teachers.

Contribute to the technical group tasked with responsibility for the development of a new DEIS allocation Model. Social inclusion unit is the lead on this project, this project is looking at the most equitable way of allocating resources to disadvantaged schools.

The Department has two pupil databases, one at Primary level (POD) and one at Post-Primary level (P-POD), Statistics section is working on developing an anonymisation protocol for pupil data in the Department.

Contribute to the work of the DERMS subgroup in developing, prioritising and monitoring a programme of work incorporating a range of specific projects to be delivered primarily by the DKMU, Statistics section and the Central Policy Unit.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION
(INCLUDING
LITIGATION), SOCIAL
INCLUSION, NEPS AND
REDRESS DIVISION:
DALTON TATTAN,
ASSISTANT
SECRETARY**

Structure of the Division

This Division is responsible for overseeing the development of policy for children of school-going age with special educational needs as well as managing a range of initiatives aimed at supporting such children including Special Schools (such as those providing for children with autism), the Home Tuition Scheme, the July Provision Scheme, the Assistive Technology Scheme as well as supporting the work of the National Council for Special Education and managing the annual provision for Resource Teachers and Special Needs Assistants. It also manages the Minister's response in cases where litigation is threatened or initiated on behalf of children or adults with special educational needs.

The Division is also responsible for developing and promoting a co-ordinated Department response to tackling educational disadvantage including overseeing the implementation of DEIS, the Action Plan for Educational inclusion; for coordinating the Department's actions in the area of integration, including the implementation of the Intercultural Education Strategy; for co-ordination of the educational component of Limerick Regeneration; and for provision of education to pupils in the Youth Encounter Projects, in the High Support and Special Care Units operated by the Child and Family Agency, and in the Children Detention Schools operated by the IYJS.

The Division incorporates the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) which is responsible for the provision of an educational psychological service to schools in Ireland. NEPS supports the development of the academic, social and emotional competence and well-being of all children and contributes to Departmental policy in these areas.

It oversees the Government response to residential institutional child abuse including implementing the 2002 Indemnity Agreement and pursuing the realisation of additional contributions towards the costs of redress; supporting the work of the Residential Institutions Redress Board, the Review Committee and the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse and addressing the retention of these bodies' records; supporting Caranua, the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund established to provide approved services to former residents and pursuing relevant Ryan Report recommendations, particularly the Memorial to victims. It also deals with historic residential school and day school abuse litigation, specifically the European Court of Human Rights judgment in the Louise O'Keeffe case.

The Division is broken down into the following 4 sections, each of which is headed by a principal officer or, in the case of NEPS, the Director.

- Special Education Section – Jim Mulkerrins

- Residential Institutions Redress Unit (RIRU) – Catherine Hynes
- Social Inclusion Unit – Caitriona O’Brien
- National Educational and Psychological Service (NEPS) – Anne Tansey

This Division is split between the Department’s offices in Dublin (NEPS and part of RIRU), Athlone (Special Education section, SEN Litigation section, Social Inclusion Unit and majority of RIRU), and Limerick (part of Social Inclusion Unit).

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

1. UNIT / SECTION OVERVIEW

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) was established in 1999 to support the personal, social and educational development of all children in Primary and Post-Primary schools through the application of psychological theory and practice, having particular regard for children with special educational needs. It is a constituent Section of the DES.

NEPS provides a range of services to schools through the assignment of a NEPS psychologist and in some cases, through access to a panel of private practitioners, for assessment services under the Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments (SCPA) organised and paid for by NEPS.

NEPS psychologists are assigned schools based on a weighting process which takes into account school size, DEIS status, gender mix and geographical spread and equating roughly to a 5,000:1 pupil to psychologist ratio. Depending on demographics, the number of schools an individual psychologist may be allocated can be within a range of 12 to 40.

NEPS is structured upon 8 regional divisions, with 22 local offices each catering for schools in the immediate locale. The Head Office is situated in the DES complex in Marlborough St. Dublin.

Model of Service

NEPS is a school-based educational psychological service. The NEPS mission is to support the personal, social and educational development of all children through the application of psychological theory and practice in education, having particular regard for children with special educational needs (SEN). NEPS understanding of SEN and inclusion encompasses a broad definition that includes not only those with significant and enduring learning needs arising from a disability, but also those with diverse learning needs, ranging from mild/transient to severe/enduring and those groups of children at risk of marginalisation, targeted by governmental policy – social-economically disadvantaged groups, immigrant/migrant and Traveller populations and populations whose first language is Irish. NEPS also has particular regard for children and young people with well-being/mental health difficulties. The scope of the NEPS service is broad and requires NEPS to work in a cross-cutting, collaborative manner with different sections of the DES and its agencies, and with service providers external to the DES.

NEPS delivers a consultative, tiered service delivery model to schools, in line with international best practice for the effective and efficient delivery of educational psychological services that best meet the needs of all pupils/students in schools. This service delivery model allows NEPS psychologists to support schools to provide an effective continuum of support to meet the needs of pupils/students. At a whole-school level the focus of NEPS is on promoting inclusive

practice in schools, ensuring appropriate support structures are in place and building capacity to provide universal, evidence-based approaches and early intervention to promote academic and social/emotional competence and well-being for all. This is a crucial element of the support that NEPS provides, leading to increased capacity within the system to provide high-quality early intervention and prevention in an effective manner. At individual pupil/student level, the focus of the service is on empowering teachers to intervene effectively with pupils/students whose needs range from mild to severe and transient to enduring and to provide support incrementally in line with pupil/student level of need. Psychologists engage in a problem-solving, solution-oriented process of consultation (including assessment) and collaboration, working with teachers, parents and when necessary directly with the pupils/students themselves, to maximise positive outcomes.

The framework NEPS uses to problem solve with schools is designed to support schools in dealing with problems on a continuum of complexity. Schools are encouraged to engage in initial assessment, educational planning and remedial intervention for pupils with learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Teachers may consult their NEPS psychologist should they need to at this stage in the process. Only in the event of a failure to make reasonable progress, in spite of the school's best efforts in consultation with NEPS, will the psychologist become involved with an individual child for intensive support. This system allows psychologists to give early attention to urgent cases and also to help many more children indirectly than could be seen individually. It also ensures that children are not referred unnecessarily for psychological intervention. This process was first introduced to primary schools by NEPS psychologists in 2008 and to post-primary schools in 2010 supported by departmental guidelines and resource materials as follows:

Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support: Guidelines for Teachers & Resource Pack for Teachers (Primary Schools)

A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Teachers & Resource Pack for Teachers

The process continues to be promoted and incorporated into daily practice within the school system and has been further supported by supplemental departmental publications that include:

Behavioural, Emotional & Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support – Guidelines for Teachers (Primary Schools) (2010)

Student Support File (2013)

Well-Being in Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (2015)

Well-Being in Primary Schools: Resources for Mental Health Promotion (2015)

Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers: Good Practice Guide (2012)

Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers: Resource Pack (2012)

A Balanced Approach to Literacy Development in the Early Years (2015)

Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (2013)

Student Support File (2013)

Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014)

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

1. The Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programme (TCM) is a classroom-based prevention and early-intervention programme designed to reduce conduct problems and promote children's pro-social behaviour. NEPS has 140 psychologists who are accredited trainers with an annual roll-out of up to 25 programmes nationally.
2. The Friends programmes are school-based, anxiety prevention and resilience-building programmes that enable children to learn effective strategies to cope with and manage all kinds of emotional distress – worry/stress/change/anxiety. NEPS now has 80 psychologists certified to train and support teachers in the delivery of the extended range of FRIENDS programmes at all levels from primary to post primary with an annual roll-out of up to 50 programmes nationally.

Other Services

NEPS psychologists also support schools in the event of Critical Incidents (such as bereavement or death by suicide) and guidelines and resource documentation have been distributed to all schools as part of that work. These guidelines have been updated with current version scheduled for publication in 2016.

NEPS responds to queries in relation to individual children from other sections of the Department and from specialist agencies. NEPS processes applications for Reasonable Accommodation in Certificate Examinations (RACE) for the State Examinations Commission. This involves assessment of students in sixth year who apply for accommodations in the Leaving Certificate such as a reader or a waiver from assessment of spelling and grammar on the grounds of a Specific Learning Disability.

School Coverage

In September 2013 NEPS extended service to all mainstream primary and post primary schools with a view to providing direct access to a NEPS psychologist to more evenly support the application of the NEPS Continuum process described previously. The additional individual workload was, to a point, enabled by the provision of SCPA assessments to be used in conjunction with the NEPS psychologists input rather than the traditional assessment-only service.

NEPS currently allocates psychologists to all schools with the exception of special schools who traditionally received service from other sources. NEPS psychologists were therefore available to 98% of schools, or 99 % of pupils, in 2014/15.

Special schools which currently receive psychological service from HSE agencies (73 Schools, 3,930 pupils) will continue as previously i.e. access to SCPA. Where a school's allocated

psychologist is unavailable through maternity or parental leave, the school is given access to SCPA for priority assessments and has access to NEPS for emergency or complex cases.

Scheme for Commission Psychological Assessments (SCPA)

The SCPA was established in 2001 to provide psychological service (assessments) to schools in advance of the recruitment of sufficient NEPS psychologists. A panel of private practitioners is maintained by NEPS and is accessed by schools as necessary and upon successful completion of the assessment a fee of €304 is paid by NEPS to the psychologist involved. At its height in 2007/8 some 4,445 assessments were commissioned under the scheme, in 2015 the figure was 1,634 (at a cost of €0.497m) reflecting the growth in NEPS psychologist numbers. As stated previously the scheme is now used generally in conjunction with the assignment of a NEPS psychologist rather than as originally as a replacement thereof. It is envisaged that the scheme will reduce further as NEPS recruits up to its allowed limits, but will remain in use to fill gaps in service from losses due to, for example, staff maternity or long-term sick leave.

NEPS service outputs during the 2014/15 school year

NEPS psychologists were involved with referrals (casework) in relation to individual named students in respect of some 8,064 pupils. Details of these interventions are maintained on the NEPS client tracking system – Casetrack. The nature or reason for these referrals broke down as follows:

Referral Reason	Percentage of Overall
Learning Difficulties	63%
Social/Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties	20%
Review	8%
Irish Exemption/Poor Attendance/School Exclusion/ Other	7%
Placement Advice	2%

Such referrals will normally involve the application of psychometric testing and the production of a report setting out findings and remedial recommendations to the educational need identified.

In addition NEPS psychologists made recommendations to the SEC in relation to over 5,101 applicants for RACE.

Under the SCPA process private psychologists provided assessments to schools not assigned a NEPS psychologists for 1,711 pupils in 2014/15.

During this period therefore the NEPS service catered for some 14,875 named pupils.

As described within the Model of Service above, in addition to assessment and interventions with individual named pupils NEPS psychologists also offer advice and guidance on un-named pupils which are not recorded on the Casetrack System. It is estimated (extrapolated on service wide survey data) that NEPS psychologists had input into an additional 25,000(*) pupils per annum.

(*) Based on survey of all service activity across a one-week period in 2012/13 measuring significant intervention (20+ minute's duration) i.r.o un-named individual pupils.

NEPS psychologists delivered 20 Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programmes in 2014/15 to 400 teachers, and impacting on up to 10,000 pupils.

NEPS psychologists delivered 50 Friends Programme in 2014/2015 to 1,250 teachers, impacting on 55,000 pupils.

In 2014/15 NEPS psychologists supported schools in over 127 Critical Incidents and made recommendations in over 5,000 RACE cases.

Psychologist Staffing Numbers / Recruitment

NEPS psychologist numbers currently stand at 174 equating with a whole-time equivalent (WTE) of 164 when short-term working arrangements are factored in. Two additional Temporary Psychologist position are also provided to partially negate the loss of staff due to parental leave. Similarly there are 29 Administrative Staff (25.5 WTE) providing support in local and regional offices, and in Head office.

The Renewed Programme for Government 2009 undertook to expand the number of NEPS psychologists to 210 but in the Budget of the following year staffing levels were capped at 178 WTE. The previous Government's Programme for Government (PfG) undertook to rescind this cut although a decision was subsequently made to further cap Psychologist numbers at 173 WTE as an interim measure in the context of ongoing E.C.F. stringencies. In the period of the current PfG NEPS psychologist numbers have remained relatively static with recruitment gain being negated by losses due to retirement/resignations but increased recruitment processes are currently in train to increase this to 173 WTE in the current year.

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015(Prov)	Provision 2016
NEPS	€17.037m	€17,112	€18.250

This provision covers all costs of the service pay and non-pay and includes all office support and provisioning, Travel & Subsistence, Test materials, staff training and IT infrastructure and support.

3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.1 ISSUE: PROGRESSING THE PROVISION OF COORDINATED SERVICES TO SUPPORT THE WELL-BEING & MENTAL HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE.

BACKGROUND:

NEPS psychologists support schools to promote the wellbeing and mental health of all students. In line with best practice, NEPS encourages schools to adopt a whole-school approach and has facilitated a cross departmental publication of Well-being Guidelines for post-primary and primary schools resulting from an action included in Reach Out (2004 – 2014), the first strategy for suicide prevention. NEPS have developed additional resources for schools and collaborates with other DES and HSE services in supporting implementation of the Guidelines. As well as advising schools in dealing with individual students with mental health difficulties NEPS provides training for teachers in the delivery of the evidence-based FRIENDS programmes, to counter anxiety and build resilience in primary and post-primary students. NEPS also provides support to school communities in preparing for and attending to critical incidents that challenges the coping mechanisms of schools. The number of cases NEPS psychologists have supported has increased in recent years. NEPS revised the Critical Incidents Guidelines in 2015 and will provide training for schools in 2016.

CURRENT POSITION:

Work in relation supporting cross agency and department collaboration and coordination in mental health promotion in schools is ongoing. Recent developments include:

- Coordination of work related to supporting schools in implementation of the Wellbeing Guidelines including progressing a series of actions relating to mental health promotion and suicide prevention, as part of DES commitments in the *Connecting for Life Strategy for Suicide Prevention (2015-2020)*
- Leading a DES, Cross Division Audit Group to report on activities that relate to the promotion of wellbeing and mental health in the Education System. A draft report was provided in 2015 which has identified issues for further consideration by the Managerial Board. (This work was in response to the Department of Health (DOH) request to the Senior Officials Group (SOG) on social policy in March 2015 that a formal cross departmental process be initiated, for provision of outcome focused work plans related to mental health promotion/suicide prevention).
- Work of a national inter-agency group between NEPS and CAMHS Services seeking to progress agreements re protocols and liaison between both services.

NEXT STEPS:

- Continue NEPS work in providing a continuum of services to schools including supporting implementation of the Wellbeing Guidelines, delivery of evidence-based programmes such as Friends and supporting schools around Critical Incidents
- Present the report of the Cross Division Audit Group for consideration to the Managerial Board
- Progress work related to actions agreed by DES in the *Connecting for Life Strategy (2015-2020)*
- Cooperate with a recent proposal for high-level talks between NEPS, HSE Primary Care, HSE Network Disability Teams and CAMHS to agree coordinated service delivery to children and young people with mental health/well-being difficulties needs to be progressed.

3.2 ISSUE: SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW MODEL OF RESOURCE ALLOCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED.

BACKGROUND:

The Department's Special Education Section is currently considering the introduction a new model for allocating additional teaching resources to schools to support pupils/students with special educational needs. As part of this process, in September 2015, the Department commenced a pilot of the model in a small number of primary and post-primary schools. NEPS is providing a high level of support to this project and is represented on the Pilot's Steering Group by the Director of NEPS and the Pilot's Working Group by a Regional Director. NEPS psychologists are also providing direct inputs at national training days, and through the provision of regional consultation workshops to the pilot project schools. In addition, psychologists are actively supporting the project on the ground in schools.

CURRENT POSITION:

A number of key elements in the development of the new model remain to be considered and agreed.

1. Criteria for the identification of pupils/students with complex special educational need, to be included as a weighted element of school profiles for the purpose of resource allocation
2. Agreement with regard to optimal coordination arrangements for service delivery to schools between NEPS and the NCSE's Inclusion Support Service (ISS) and the Department's TES/PDST.
3. Guidelines to support schools in meeting the needs of students with SEN, to include advice on the effective deployment of resources.
4. Systems to ensure quality assurance and the effective deployment of resources (Inspectorate, NEPS, SENOs).

NEXT STEPS:

With regard to the identification of pupils/students with complex special educational need NEPS will play a key advisory role. It will be necessary to convene a working group comprising NEPS, NCSE, HSE and ERC to consider this issue.

The New Model Steering Group and Working Groups, of which NEPS is a part, will drive the progression of items 2-4 above.

3.3 ISSUE: NEPS CAPACITY TO DELIVER AN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE TO ALL SCHOOLS

Background:

There was a 1998 commitment to develop a NEPS service with a 1:5000 psychologist to pupil ratio. Psychologist numbers, however, were capped at 173 under the Employment Control Framework (ECF) implemented in 2012. The commitment of the previous Programme for Government to reverse an earlier 2010 cap of 178 and provide 210 psychologists was, therefore, never realised.

Extensive internal reform has been undertaken within NEPS since 2012/13, with a revision of the NEPS model of service delivery, which has led to increased efficiencies in terms of service provision, allowing NEPS to roll out service, for the first time to all mainstream primary and post-primary schools in Ireland.

Notwithstanding this, NEPS continues to experience challenges providing a comprehensive Educational Psychological service to schools. The school-going population is increasing year on year, and with it the numbers of children being identified with Special Educational Needs. Thus demand for NEPS service increases annually. In addition, the provision of coverage to the growing numbers of special classes, and the extension of coverage to the remaining special schools, in the context of an ongoing withdrawal of HSE services to those classes and schools, requires an expansion in NEPS staffing numbers.

CURRENT POSITION:

Since 2012 the school-going population which is provided a service by NEPS has increased by c. 68,000, with increases expected to reach c. 80,000 in the year 2016/17.

Since 2013, when NEPS agreed to provide a minimal service to special classes in mainstream primary and post-primary schools, the number of special classes in the system has increased by 395 with an expected additional total increase by 495 for the year 2016/'17. This represents a 79% increase in special class numbers since 2013.

NEXT STEPS:

NEPS will continue to manage its existing resources to ensure that they are prioritised most appropriately. Consideration will be given to different medium-term options to ensure the service can best meet the demands placed on it.

3.4 ISSUE: ENSURING ADEQUATE SUPPORT TO CHILDREN PLACED IN SPECIAL CLASSES

BACKGROUND:

The number of special classes being established in mainstream primary and post-primary schools – particularly special classes to support children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) – has increased at a rapid rate over the past number of years. Traditionally the majority of special classes for children with disabilities were supported within our system by local HSE/HSE-funded services. With the roll-out of the Network Disability Teams nationally there has been a consequent reconfiguration of such traditional services to special classes. In this regard, designated services that were provided for children in special classes will no longer be available. While, children with complex need who are placed in special classes will be supported by the Network Disability Team, but there will not be a designated school-based element to this support. This has left a gap in psychological service provision which NEPS has sought to fill through the provision of a minimal, dedicated service to special classes since 2013. This service falls short, however, of what might be expected from an effective, educational psychological service for children in such settings.

Having an adequate NEPS service to special classes will help meet a number of priorities set out by the DES and NCSE:

- NCSE (2014) noted that placement in special classes is relatively permanent and that schools require clear information and guidance on the role and function of the special class. NEPS psychologists are well-placed to support reviews of the placement of individual and to provide guidance and support to schools.
- NCSE (2013) proposed that NEPS psychologists should be part of admissions committees in special classes.
- NCSE (2009) noted that school principals commented on the lack of psychological services for special classes and recommended that such services be made available to all those who need them.

CURRENT POSITION:

The numbers of special classes being established year on year is increasing. Figures indicate an increase from c. 625 special classes in 2012/'13 to an expected c. 1120 in 2016/'17.

There is an urgent need to attend to the service needs of these special classes if quality provision is to be supported and maintained. In relation to educational psychology services the following is proposed as key elements of an effective quality service to a special classes:

- Annual Planning meeting
- Assessment and intervention
- Placement advice/review
- IEP planning, including consultation with teachers and parents (multidisciplinary approach as required)
- Transition planning and work arising (multidisciplinary approach as required)

- In-service Support and development work

NEXT STEPS:

NEPS to cost the provision of such a service, given current predictions of special class numbers, with a view to progressing capacity over the next number of years.

NEPS to progress the proposal for a working group between NEPS and Progressing Disability Service to agree collaborative practices for the provision of support to children placed in special classes in mainstream schools.

The need for interagency guidelines from amongst service providers within the DES and its agencies including the NCSE is advised to cover such issues as effective interventions, placement criteria, inclusion, monitoring outcomes, transition, appropriate curricula and parental involvement.

Residential Institutions Redress Unit

1. Unit Overview

The main functions of the Unit are to manage the State's response to residential institutional child abuse and to deal with historical day school abuse litigation. Specifically the Unit

- oversees the operation of the Redress Scheme, liaising with the Residential Institutions Redress Board and Review Committee and managing the financial arrangements, paying individual awards and related legal costs as instructed by the Redress Board;
- liaises with the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, which reported in 2009;
- supports Caranua, the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund set up in 2013 to provide support and assistance to certain former residents and provides administrative support for the associated appeals system;
- pursues the implementation of the 2002 Indemnity Agreement between the State and 18 religious congregations and the subsequent call for further contributions towards the costs of redress;
- deals with the aftermath of the Louise O'Keeffe ECHR decision and supports the State Claims Agency in its management of child abuse cases taken against the State by former residents of residential institutions and former pupils of ordinary day schools; and
- pursues the implementation of relevant recommendations of the Ryan Report, such as the provision of a Memorial and the provision of family tracing services via Barnardos.

Staffing: The Unit comprises 1PO, 2 APs, 2 HEOs, 5 EOs and 2 COs and is split across Dublin and Athlone, with the PO and 1AP based in Dublin and the remaining staff based in Athlone.

2. Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse	€ 7.168m	€ 1.290m	€2.000m
Residential Institutions Redress Board	€ 47.845m	€ 13.103m	€ 1.300m

Services for Victims of Institutional Abuse (incl €500k for Memorial)	€ 0.130m	€ 0.146m	€ 0.750m
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3. Key Priority Issues

3.1 ISSUE: Winding Up of Residential Institutions Redress Bodies and the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse

Background:

The Residential Institutions Redress Board was established in 2002 under the terms of the Residential Institutions Redress Act, 2002, to make fair and reasonable payments to those who, as children, were abused whilst resident in scheduled institutions. In accordance with the governing legislation, the Board is an independent body headed by Justice Esmond Smyth, who was appointed Chairperson of the Board in January 2008. There are 10 other Board members who were appointed by the Minister and these are drawn from the legal and medical professions. The ordinary members have most recently been re-appointed in November 2015 until 31st May 2016 or until such time as the Board has completed its work, whichever is the earlier. The Review Committee, which was also established in 2002, hears appeals from applicants dissatisfied with Redress Board decisions. It is chaired by retired Mr Justice Frank Murphy and has 5 other members who are appointed on the same basis as the Redress Board members.

The original closing date for receipt of applications under the Redress Scheme was 15th December, 2005 but late applications in exceptional circumstances were allowed up until 17th September, 2011. Overall expenditure on the Redress Scheme and associated litigation was €1.246bn at end 2015.

The Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (the Ryan Report) was published in May 2009. Since reporting, the Commission has been dealing with the payment of 3rd Party legal costs pursuant to section 20A of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse Acts and the cataloguing of its records in advance of it being dissolved. Total expenditure on the Commission to end 2015 was €79.9m.

Current Position

As of mid April 2016, the Redress Board had finalised 16,649 applications resulting in 15,580 awards plus 1,069 cases not entitled. There are also 10 applications for legal costs for applications to the Board and 1 set of Judicial Review costs. There is 1 new Judicial Review

served on the Board in March 2016 and one application with the Review Committee which is the subject of an application for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court.

At end 2015, the Commission still had a number of religious order respondent third party costs to finalise.

Next Steps:

There is regular engagement with the bodies regarding their remaining work and there may potentially be a role for the State Claims Agency to deal with any outstanding legal costs issues.

When the Minister is satisfied, after consultation with the various Chairs, that the bodies have completed the performance of their functions, he can dissolve them by Order, subject to positive motions of both Houses of the Oireachtas. The enactment of the Retention of Records Bill may also have an impact on the dissolution of the bodies.

3.2 ISSUE: RETAINING THE RECORD OF THE REDRESS BODIES AND THE COMMISSION TO INQUIRE INTO CHILD ABUSE

Background:

Dáil Éireann adopted a motion on the Ryan Report on 12 June 2009 which noted inter alia, *“the desirability that, in so far as possible, all of the documentation received by and in the possession of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse is preserved for posterity and not destroyed”*. In 2013 the Government agreed, in principle, to the Minister bringing forward legislative proposals to allow for the retention of the records of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, the Residential Institutions Redress Board and the Residential Institutions Review Committee. These proposals will include amendments to existing legislation where necessary. Concerned that the destruction of the records would represent a very significant loss while, at the same time, conscious of the sensitivity attaching to the records, the proposed retention will be subject to appropriate safeguards. It is intended that the records will be retained in the National Archives and completely sealed for a period of at least 75 years following which access would be subject to strict safeguards.

Under the existing legislation it is a matter for the Commission to make such arrangements as it considers appropriate for the making of as complete a record as is practicable of its proceedings in relation to the custody and disposal of its records. Similarly, the 2002 Redress Act provides that it is a matter for the Redress Board and the Review Committee to determine the disposal of the documents concerning applications made to them. Both the Commission and the Redress Board operated under stringent confidentiality and privacy requirements enshrined in legislation, which allowed the victims of abuse to tell their story in a safe environment. Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information by the relevant bodies constitutes a criminal offence.

It is estimated that the bodies have in excess of 2 million records.

Current Position:

In March 2015, the Government approved the General Scheme of the Retention of Records Bill. The General Scheme was subsequently published and was referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Social Protection for pre-legislative scrutiny. The Joint Committee, having considered the General Scheme, provided its comments and recommendations to the Minister. A number of changes were subsequently made to the General Scheme which was then submitted to the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel to the Government (OPC). A preliminary draft of the Bill was provided by the OPC on 29 September.

The Department has had useful discussions with the National Archives (NAI) in relation to the policy issues underpinning the General Scheme particularly in relation to control of the records once archived and future management of access arrangements (i.e. after the 75 year period has elapsed). The General Scheme reflected the views of the National Archives. .

Next Steps:

The text of the Bill needs to be finalized in consultation with the OPC so as to ensure early publication and enactment. Further consultation will take place with the NAI and other stakeholders as required.

3.3 ISSUE: SUPPORTING CARANUA TO MEET THE DEMAND FOR SERVICES FROM FORMER RESIDENTS

Background:

The Residential Institutions Statutory Fund (RISF) Act was enacted in July 2012 and provided for the establishment of a Statutory Fund to support the needs of victims of residential institutional abuse. The Act also provided for the dissolution of the Education Finance Board which was established in 2006 and financed by a €12.7m contribution under the terms of the 2002 Indemnity Agreement⁹.

The RISF was established on 25 March 2013 and a 9 member board appointed, which is currently chaired by Mr David O’Callaghan, former Secretary General of the Department of Defence. The Fund’s role is to use the contributions of up to €110m to fund approved services to support survivors’ needs. These services can include health and personal social services,

⁹In 2002, the Irish Ministers for Finance and Education entered into a binding [Congregational Indemnity Agreement](#) with the Conference of Religious in Ireland, which was then representing 18 religious orders. Under this agreement, the congregations agreed to contribute €128 million in cash, property and counselling services. In exchange, the State agreed to indemnify the orders against any legal actions which former residents might bring against them during the lifetime of the Residential Institutions Redress Board.

educational services and housing services. It is intended that the services provided will be complementary to survivors' statutory entitlements.

Eligibility for assistance from the Fund is confined to those former residents who received awards from the Residential Institutions Redress Board or similar awards or settlements in court proceedings and who would otherwise have received an award from the Redress Board. Approximately 15,000 survivors are eligible, some of whom live overseas. In response to calls for the eligibility to be widened during the passage of the legislation through the Houses of Oireachtas, an undertaking was given to review the operation of the Fund two years after its establishment. That review has yet to take place.

Current position:

The Board adopted the service name **Caranua** in October 2013 and set up a website www.caranua.ie. Having published its approved services and guidelines, Caranua began accepting applications on 6th January 2014. The applications process involves a number of stages and the numbers at each stage at end February 2016 are set out as follows:

Total Applications Received	5,180
Stage 1 – Confirm Eligibility (i.e. is an eligible former resident)	4,957
Stage 2 - Confirm Identity (applicant supplies proof of identity)	4,509
Stage 3 - Call from Application Adviser – initial assessment	3,564
Stage 4 - Application Submission and Decision leading to awards	2,927

Over 21,000 payments had issued in respect of the 2,927 approved applicants at end February. At end February total payments amounting to €42.98m had been made (£6.23m of this being paid on behalf of 569 UK based applicants). This expenditure is broken down under the following categories:

Health:	€10.86m (26%)
Housing:	€31m (72%)
Education:	€1m (2%).

Since it was established, Caranua has incurred administration expenses of some €4m.

Staffing and Contracts

A staffing complement of 10 posts was approved for Caranua and all of these posts were filled by mid-2014. By mid-2014, Caranua were trying to deal with a growing backlog of applications and were heavily reliant on the use of agency staff. Its current staffing consists of 24 people (23.8 WTE) made up of 6 core employees and 17.8 agency staff.

Appeals Officer

The 2012 RISF Act provides for an independent Appeals Officer to consider appeals against individual decisions on applications to Caranua. Mr Pat Whelan, former Director of the Office of the Ombudsman is the current Appeals Officer. having been reappointed on 31 March 2016. He is due to submit his second annual report shortly. The Redress Unit provides administrative support for the Appeals Officer and 190 appeals had been received by mid April 2016.

How Caranua is funded through contributions from Congregations

Contributions from congregations are deposited in the special investment account opened by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) in accordance with section 29 of the 2012 Act. Some €84.9m comprising contributions and associated interest have been lodged to this account to date. In accordance with section 30 of the Act, expenditure incurred by Caranua in the performance of its functions is met from the investment account. Caranua requests the NTMA to forward sums as required to meet its expenditure. Expenditure incurred in relation to the independent appeals officer is also met from the investment account (to date some €15,200 has been paid to Mr Patrick Whelan)

Next Steps:

Caranua intends to review the services available for survivors to see if they are meeting the needs of survivors. It is also proposed to reduce the reliance on agency staff by recruiting staff on a fixed purpose contract basis.

Other issues arising in the next 12 months include the appointment of a new Board (the term of office of the current Board expires in March 2017) and the need to begin considering the issues involved in the organisation's dissolution (legislation will be required).

3.4 ISSUE: Pursuing the full implementation of the 2002 Indemnity Agreement between the State and 18 religious congregations

Background:

Under the 2002 Indemnity Agreement, 18 congregations are providing a contribution of €128m comprising cash, property and counselling services. The cash and counselling portions of the Indemnity have been paid in full. The transfer of 45 of the 61 agreed property transfers has been fully completed. The total value of these properties is €42,650,075, which represents 67% of the total monetary value of all the properties transferring under this aspect of the Indemnity Agreement.

The State indemnified the congregations involved in respect of awards under the Redress Scheme and any court awards, settlements and costs relating to child abuse in residential institutions, which would have been eligible for consideration under the Redress Scheme. Up to the end of 2015, a total of €10.2m was expended pursuant to this indemnity

Current Position:

Work is continuing to complete the legal requirements to finalise the transfer process of the remaining 15 properties under the terms of the Indemnity Agreement. This has proved to be a complex process but the Department expects that a number of properties will be fully transferred under the Agreement shortly. It is likely that, a number of the remaining properties which are transferring either to this Department or to the Health Service Executive, will not meet the standard of good and marketable title required by the 2002 Agreement. In July 2013, the Government agreed that the Minister for Education and Skill may accept properties pursuant to the Indemnity Agreement that may not fully meet the standard of good and marketable title. In October 2015, the Minister agreed to accept 7 such properties where the qualification is technical and does not materially affect the valuation of the property. Their transfer is being proceeded with.

Next steps:

The Department is continuing to actively engage with the Chief State Solicitor's Office who liaise with the solicitors for the congregations and the solicitors acting on behalf of the HSE.

As the Redress Scheme nears completion, there is ongoing engagement with the State Claims Agency in relation to any potential litigation outstanding which comes within the scope of the Indemnity Agreement.

3.5 ISSUE: Pursuing further contributions towards the costs of redress

Background:

Successive Governments have adopted the position that the costs of the response to residential institutional abuse should be shared on a 50:50 basis between the State and those who managed the institutions. This position has broad support across Dáil Éireann and it has been argued that there is a strong moral obligation on those involved, to deliver on their responsibilities. The final costs of the redress response are expected to reach some €1.5billion with the bulk of these costs of some €1.25billion relating to the Redress Scheme. A 50:50 sharing of the costs would therefore require a €725 million contribution from those responsible for managing the institutions. However, the contributions offered to date fall well short of this figure and Governments have expressed disappointment that the congregations have not agreed to a 50:50 sharing of the costs. The combination of all contributions offered by congregations to date, both under the 2002 Indemnity Agreement and subsequent to the Ryan Report, amount to €480 million. The shortfall on the target 50% share now stands at €245 million.

Current position:

In addition to the €128m under the Indemnity Agreement, in the aftermath of the Ryan Report the congregations individually committed to contribute some €110 million to help former residents – this funding is being made available to Caranua. Some €84.9m comprising contributions of €83.54m and associated interest have been lodged to the NTMA account to date. Further contributions of €12m are expected in 2016 and 2017 with a further €2m expected in 2018 by which time virtually the full €110m will have been received.

The congregations have also offered properties, which they valued at a further €235.5m to various State agencies and voluntary organisations. The bulk of the property offers comprise Christian Brothers' school playing fields valued at €127 million and 48 Sisters of Mercy properties valued at €107.5 million.

Ministerial approval to formally accept 3 properties under the 2012 RISF Act was given in late 2015 and the final steps are now been taken to complete the transfer of these properties. A number of other properties will be submitted for ministerial approval in the near future.

Apart from one congregation that believes its contribution represents its 50% share, the remaining congregations have either declined to comment on the appropriateness of, or disagree with the 50:50 principle.

Next Steps:

Engagement with the congregations is continuing in relation to property transfers.

3.6 ISSUE: ECHR Judgment in the Louise O'Keeffe Case

Background:

Ms O'Keeffe is a former pupil of Dunderrow National School, Co Cork where she was sexually assaulted by the school Principal, Leo Hickey, in 1973. She was awarded €53,962.24 from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal and then subsequently awarded damages of €305,000 against Mr Hickey in the High Court. The Court held that the Department was not vicariously liable and Ms O'Keeffe appealed the decision to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ruled in December 2008 that the State was not vicariously liable for Mr Hickey's actions.

Ms O'Keeffe complained to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) that the State failed under Article 3 to protect her from abuse and under Article 13 to provide her with an effective remedy. Other claims were made under Article 8 (right to respect for private life) and Article 2 of Protocol No 1 (right to education), alone and in conjunction with Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination).

The ECHR delivered a Grand Chamber judgment in the case on 28th January 2014. It found, by a 11:6 majority decision, that there was a violation of the substantive aspect of Article 3 of

the Convention as regards the State's failure to fulfil its obligation to protect the applicant and that there has been a violation of Article 13, taken together with the substantive aspect of Article 3 of the Convention, on account of the lack of an effective remedy as regards the State's failure to fulfil its obligation to protect the applicant. The ECHR held that Ms O'Keeffe should be paid €30,000 damages and €85,000 in respect of the costs and expenses of the domestic and Convention proceedings. The ECHR held unanimously that there has been no violation of the procedural aspect of Article 3 of the Convention and that it is not necessary to examine separately the complaints under Article 8 or under Article 2 of Protocol No. 1, whether alone or in conjunction with Article 14 of the Convention.

The damages and costs have been paid.

Current Position:

The State is obliged to abide by the judgment and it is the responsibility of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers to supervise implementation of Court judgments. Implementation of a judgment requires publication and dissemination of a judgment by a state and may involve the adoption of individual and general measures.

Individual measures are those required to put an end to the violation and remedy, as far as possible, its negative consequences for the applicant e.g. the payment of any sum awarded by the Court. General measures are those required to prevent violations similar to those found by the Court coming before it again. As regards the latter, states retain a certain amount of discretion as to how they implement a judgment.

Enhanced Procedure

In its role of supervising states' implementation of Judgments, the Committee of Ministers may decide to examine a judgment under the enhanced procedure (as opposed to the standard procedure). The enhanced procedure is for judgments considered to raise complex or structural problems within a State. The difference between the two procedures is that, in relation to the enhanced procedure, the Secretariat (who advise the Committee of Ministers) are more proactive in their contacts with a state. Supervision of Ireland's implementation of the O'Keeffe judgment is being done under the enhanced method of supervision.

States are required to keep the Committee of Ministers informed of all developments as regards implementation of a judgment by way of lodging Action Plans, initially within six months of a judgment, and as necessary thereafter. When a state has taken all the necessary steps to implement a judgment it lodges an Action Report and requests that that the Committee of Ministers terminate its consideration of the case. Once lodged, the Action Plans (and Action Reports) are publicly available.

Ireland's implementation of the O'Keeffe v Ireland Judgment

To date, Ireland has lodged 4 Action Plans with the Council of Europe (July 2014, January 2015 and July 2015 and January 2016) setting out the steps being taken to implement the judgment (see below). The last Action Plan was filed with the Council of Europe on 28th January.

Next Steps:

An Action Plan setting out the steps taken or to be taken to implement the judgement must be lodged with the Council of Europe every 6 months since the judgement was delivered. These steps include both individual measures to put an end to the violation and remedy, as far as possible, its negative consequences for the applicant and general measures to prevent violations similar to those found by the Court coming before it again. The next Action Plan is due to be lodged with the Council of Europe on 28th July 2016.

3.7 Issue: Provision of a Memorial to Victims of Residential Institutional Abuse

Background:

In recommending the provision of a Memorial, the Ryan Report noted the importance of the State's formal recognition of the abuse that occurred and the suffering of victims being preserved in a permanent place. A Memorial Committee (chaired by Mr Seán Benton former Chairman of the OPW) was appointed in October 2009, to oversee the design and commissioning of a Memorial and a budget of €500,000 was allocated. The OPW agreed to make a site adjacent to the Garden of Remembrance available should the winner take the form of a physical artefact. However, entrants were not limited to this site and could make a submission for other state owned sites.

The Competition Jury unanimously decided to award the commission to Studio Negri and Hennessy & Associates, for the *Journey of Light*. The Jury felt that the manner in which the proposed memorial integrated with the Garden of Remembrance would provide an enduring symbol of lost innocence to inspire future generations to ensure the protection of all children.

With the announcement of the competition winner in July 2012, the OPW applied for and received planning permission from Dublin City Council in May 2013. Following an appeal, An Bord Pleanála refused planning permission for the Memorial in November 2013 on the grounds that it would have an adverse impact on the setting, character and function of the Garden of Remembrance.

Current Position:

The Memorial Committee recommended that, while any new competition should be open to conceptual and site specific proposals, a central Dublin location be identified on a cost neutral basis with appropriate zoning. Department officials have consulted with Dublin City Council which has identified several potential sites for the proposed Memorial.

However, the winning design uses the physical features of the Garden of Remembrance site and the design cannot be created on a different site.

Next Steps:

The Department is considering how best to progress the project.

3.8 ISSUE: Implementing other relevant recommendations of the Ryan Report

Background:

The Ryan Report contained 20 formal recommendations and an Implementation Plan, with 99 specific actions, was adopted to deal with their implementation. These actions are designed to: address the effects of past abuse; reform service provision, and, ensure that children and young people have a stronger voice. Some of the 99 actions have a specific target date for completion, while other actions are noted as ‘ongoing’. The overall aim of the Plan is to make a difference to children’s lives by addressing past failings and putting measures in place to achieve better outcomes in the delivery of services to children and families. Implementation of the Plan has been overseen by a High Level Group chaired by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The Fourth and Final Report on the Implementation Plans has been published by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

In terms of recommendations to “*alleviate or otherwise address the effects of the abuse on those who suffered*”, the Report recommends the provision of the Memorial (outlined earlier); that counselling and educational services should be available (these are provided via the HSE National Counselling Service and via Caranua (previously the Education Finance Board) and that Family Tracing Services should be continued.

The Unit funds Barnardos to provide the *Origins Family Tracing Service* which is a dedicated service for former residents wishing to trace family members with whom they have lost contact. Barnardos operates the service pursuant to a Service Agreement with the Department. Access to the confidential service is on a self-referral basis and the overall numbers accessing the service to end 2015 are set out in following table:

To end Year	Total Requests Received	Total Requests Processed	Cases to be processed
2015	1,392	1,350	42

The service arranges contacts between a client and any family members identified subject to necessary consents being obtained and it mediates between the client and family members as required. Over 50% of completed cases led to either a reunion or information about the family of origin being traced.

Current Position:

Barnardos continues to provide the *Origins Family Tracing Service* and Department officials meet with them at least once every six months as part of the agreed monitoring arrangements.

Next Steps:

The Department will continue to fund the service and its requirements will be monitored to ensure a continued quality service to those seeking assistance.

4. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Name of Body: **The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse**

Established and operating under the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse Acts, 2000 and 2005.

Main responsibilities: Having published its report in May 2009, the Commission continues to deal with claims for the payment of 3rd party legal costs and with the cataloguing its records.

Allocation 2016: €1.3 million

Staff numbers: 6 staff (5.4 WTEs) – 2 seconded civil servants and 4 contracted staff.

Name of Body: **Residential Institutions Redress Board/Review Committee**

Established and operating under the Residential Institutions Redress Acts 2002 to 2011.

Main responsibilities: To make awards to persons who, as children, suffered abuse whilst resident in specific institutions

Allocation 2016: €2 million

Staff numbers: 7 staff (6.8 WTEs) – the 7 staff are civil servants and there is one contract staff member (0.2WTEs) in the Review Committee.

Name of Body: **Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (Caranua)**

Established and operating under the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Act 2012.

Main responsibilities: To use the contributions pledged by the congregations, of up to €110m, to fund services to support former residents' needs. Caranua approves services across three general areas – Health and General Wellbeing; Housing Support and Education, Learning and Development.

Allocation 2014: ***There is no Exchequer funding to this body.***

Staff numbers: 6 staff – including 1 public servant and 5 fixed-term employees.
17.8 agency staff to deal with applications and to provide additional administrative support

Special Education

1. Unit / Section Overview

The Special Education Section is responsible for overseeing the development of Departmental policy for children with special educational needs as well as managing a range of initiatives aimed at supporting children with special educational needs and to develop comprehensive, efficient and effective services for such children.

Funding for special education provision in 2016 will amount to some €1.5 billion, which is equivalent to 18% of the gross overall current allocation for education and training.

2. Special Education Financial Provision

Special Education Section directly funds the services listed in the following table:

Service	Outturn 2013	Outturn 2014	Provision 2015
Special Education Miscellaneous	507,612	1,000,000	1,000,000
National Braille Production Centre	1,280,000	1,280,000	1,280,000
National Council For Special Education	8,020,000	8,011,000	8,075,000
Special Education Initiatives incl. VT Services & Equipment	4,709,000	5,175,000	5,810,000

The Section also manages the following services which are funded through subheads controlled by other sections including teacher and SNA payroll:

- 12,040* Special Needs Assistant (SNA) posts
- Over 11,800* Learning Support/Resource Teacher posts
- Over 1,100* teachers in special schools
- Over 1,000 special classes; 150+ new classes opened for the 2015/16 school year
- €1.304m for assistive technology for pupils in Primary schools (2015)
- €68.8m for special school transport arrangements (2014)
- A visiting teacher service for children who are Blind/Visually Impaired or Deaf/Hard of Hearing**
- Teacher training and continuing professional development in the area of special education through the Special Education Support Service (SESS).
- Enhanced capitation levels for special schools and special classes
- Modification of school buildings
 - (* whole-time-equivalent posts)
 - (** currently managed by the Inspectorate)

3. Key priority issues

3.1 New Model for Allocating Teaching Resources to Schools to Support Children with Special Educational Needs

Background

In May 2013, the NCSE published its Policy Advice on *‘Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Schools.’*

This paper found that the current model for allocating over 11,000 additional learning support and resource teacher posts to mainstream schools was potentially inequitable and required improvement, because -

- A substantial component of the current model is based on the availability of a diagnosis of special educational need, but access to professionals who can make this diagnosis is not readily available to all students.
- There is a risk that children are being diagnosed as having a special educational need for resource allocation purposes rather than for health reasons.
- There is a spectrum of ability and disability within every category of special educational need whereas the current system allocates the same level of support for students within certain categories of special educational needs
- Additional learning support resources are allocated to schools on the basis of enrolment and are not linked to the level of need for such support in schools.

The NCSE set up a Working Group to develop a proposal for a better way to allocate these supports.

In June 2014, the NCSE Working Group Report, led by Mr. Eamon Stack, recommended that a new model for allocating resource teaching support to schools, based on the profiled needs of each school, rather than on the diagnosed disability of individual children.

It proposed that the allocation of additional teaching supports to schools be in future based on two components:

- A school educational profile component; and
- Baseline component provided to every mainstream school to support inclusion, prevention of learning difficulties and early intervention.

It is intended that the new model would replace the existing system of General Allocation Model or Learning Support Allocations, combined with NCSE allocations, with a single profiled allocation model for schools.

In February 2015, the Minister for Education and Skills announced that she was not proposing to change the way that teachers are allocated to schools for children with Special Educational Needs for the 2015/16 school year.

In taking this decision, the Minister was guided by the advice of the NCSE Working Group report, which recommended that sufficient time be allowed for consultation before the new model is implemented.

Through a consultation process there was a broad welcome for the proposed new model from Parents, Disability Groups, Schools and Education Partners. However, there was not sufficient time to address all of the concerns which had been raised in advance of the 2015 school year.

In order to address a number of the concerns raised, the Minister established a pilot of the new allocation model, to take place in the 2015/16 school year, and which is currently underway.

Following a selection and invitation process, 47 schools mainstream schools, including 28 primary schools and 19 post primary schools are participating in the pilot.

Schools from various parts of the country and schools of different types and sizes are participating in the pilot in order to provide for the broadest possible representation.

This pilot has been developed in order to test the model in a number of schools and to allow for the practical effect of the application of the new model in pilot schools to be gauged.

It will also allow us to take into account the learning experiences of schools, principals, pupils and the views of parents over the course of the pilot, prior to the full implementation of the new allocation model.

Work is currently underway to develop the new allocation model in time to allow the model to be introduced, subject to Government Approval, from September 2017 and for profiled allocations to be made to schools sufficiently in advance of September 2017 to allow for recruitment and redeployment.

Next steps

On conclusion of the pilot, a review of the pilot will be considered and the new model will be finalised with a view to its introduction from the start of the 2017/20018 school year.

3.2 Inclusion Support Service

Background

In February 2014 the Minister for Education and Skills announced the establishment within the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) of a new Inclusion Support Service (ISS) to assist schools in supporting children with special educational needs.

This service will include the Special Education Support Service (SESS), which provides training for schools in how to assist pupils with special educational needs, the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS), which provides guidance and support to schools in dealing with behavioural issues, and the Visiting Teacher Service for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and for children who are blind or visually impaired.

Until now these support services have been managed separately by the Department of Education and Skills.

The new Inclusion Support service will bring these services together and they will be integrated within the NCSE.

The decision to establish an Inclusion Support Service within the NCSE has been taken in the light of recommendations contained in the NCSE Working Group Report on a Proposed New Model for Allocating Teaching Resources for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (2013).

This report noted that the existing advisory and intervention supports which are currently available to schools are provided by a number of different bodies and organisations.

The report also highlighted the need to ensure cohesion across service provision and recommended that the existing support services for students with special educational needs should be combined into one unified support service for schools.

The NCSE Working Group therefore recommended that a national Inclusion Support Service for schools should be established, under the management of the NCSE, in order to provide a coherent service for schools.

The development of this new Inclusion Support Service within the NCSE will mean that schools will receive better and more integrated support in the future. The service will have a close relationship with NCSE Special Educational Needs Organisers who will be able to indicate where supports are most needed for schools.

The service is therefore anticipated to be able to provide targeted interventions or assistance to schools, where necessary, and to upskill and support schools in providing for pupils with special educational needs.

Current Position

Work is ongoing to transfer the existing services to the NCSE.

The NCSE has established three working groups, in conjunction with the existing management bodies for the three services, the Special Education Support Service, the National Behaviour Support Service and the Visiting Teacher Services.

The working groups are meeting regularly to identify all of the requirements which will be required to be put in place to support the transfer of the services to the NCSE under the Inclusion Support

Service, including the establishment of a management and administrative capacity within the NCSE to allow the services to transfer to that body

It is intended that the Inclusion Support Service will become operational over the course of the current school year.

It is also intended that the existing services will continue as normal as the new arrangements are put in place, with as little disruption as possible to service users, as progress is made to transfer these existing services to the NCSE.

Next steps

Work on transferring the Visiting Teacher Services is expected to be concluded by the end of March. This is expected to include the advertisement and appointment of two new manager positions in the NCSE to accommodate the transfer

Further discussions with DPER will take place in February on the remaining staff implications for the NCSE.

3.3(a) Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Scheme

Background:

In June 2011, the Department published its Value for Money (VFM) and Policy Analysis review of the Special Needs Assistant scheme. The Review showed that the SNA Scheme is supporting schools in meeting the needs of students with disabilities who also have significant care needs. However, it was also clear that the allocation process is generally not well understood within schools and by parents nor is the purpose of the Scheme fully understood. The meaning of the term 'care needs' has been stretched beyond what was intended by the Scheme and this has meant that both parents and schools had come to expect that the role of the SNA is to carry out a much broader range of duties than originally envisaged.

The Review identified that the role of the SNA in schools has expanded far beyond the Scheme's objectives. There was evidence to suggest that SNAs engage in duties related to behaviour management, administrative duties, pedagogical and therapeutic activities. There was some evidence of over-allocation of SNA posts in the hundred schools reviewed by the Inspectorate. This contributed to the increase in the number of SNAs and the associated costs involved.

Current position:

On foot of the publication of the review, the Department issued Circular 30/2014 which clarifies and restates the purpose of the SNA scheme, which is to provide schools with additional adult support staff who can assist children with special educational needs who also have additional and significant care needs.

The Circular clarifies the role of the Classroom Teacher and Resource/Learning Support Teachers to provide for the education of a child, and the role of an SNA to support those teachers in assisting with care needs.

The Circular provides details of the NCSE allocation process, which is designed to allocate a quantum of SNA support to schools annually to cater for the care needs of qualifying children.

Following the issue of the Circular, the Department consulted widely with parent representative groups and subsequently asked the NCSE to develop an Information booklet for parents in relation to the SNA scheme. The booklet set out the principles of the SNA scheme which have been articulated for schools in Circular 0030/2014, in a manner which is both clear and understandable for parents.

3.3(b) Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) Numbers

Background:

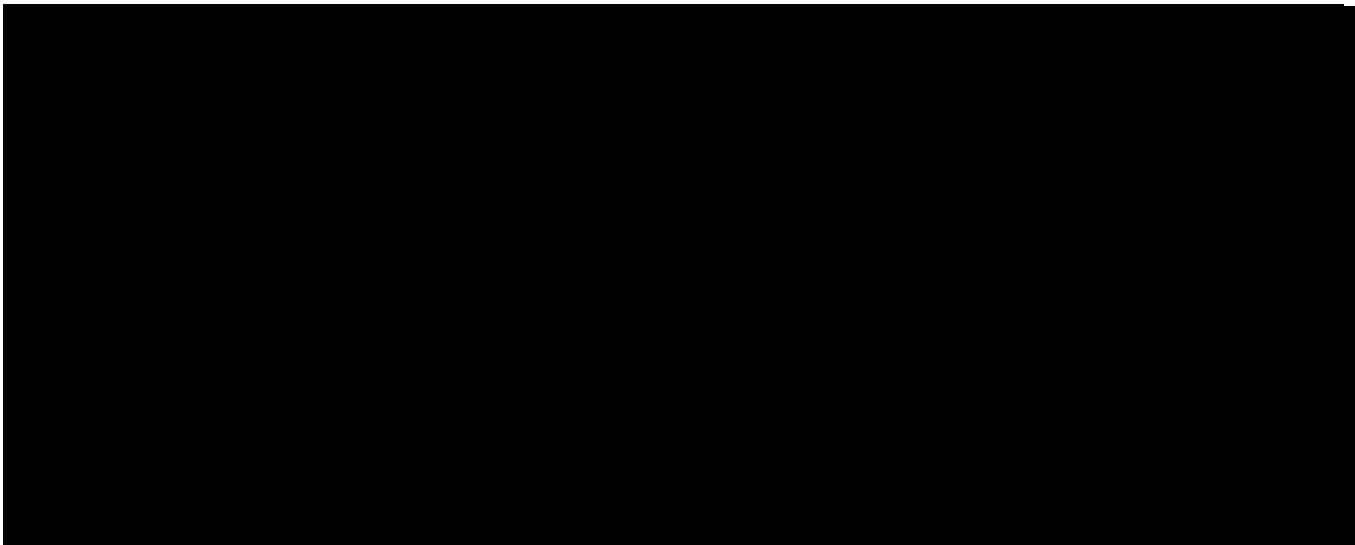
The NCSE make allocations to schools in June each year in respect of all qualifying applications for SNA support for the following school year. In addition to a demographic increase in overall pupil numbers of circa 2% per annum more children with special educational needs enter or are maintained in schools, leading to a continued increase in demand for special educational supports.

Recent years have seen an increase in the number of SNAs from 10,575 posts in 2011 to 12,040 to June 2016.

Current position

Budget 2016 provided an additional 100 posts to meet additional demand arising from January to June 2016, bringing the total number to 12,040

This is a higher level of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support than ever before, which will ensure that children with special educational needs can continue to participate in education and be supported in a manner appropriate to their needs.



SNA Review

A Focussed Policy Assessment (FPA) of the SNA scheme is currently underway. The FPA is designed to review the extent to which the scheme continues to meet its objectives and the extent to which resources are being utilised effectively and efficiently, in line with the guidelines. The assessment report will be completed before the end of March 2016.

The FPA was commenced in response to a Government decision of 7th July *‘that a review of the SNA Scheme will be carried out to ensure that the scheme continues to meet its objectives and that resources are being utilised effectively and efficiently, in line with the guidelines and that the terms of reference of this review will be agreed between the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the National Council for Special Education’*.

The Terms of Reference for the FPA have been agreed between DPER, the NCSE and Special Education Section. A Steering Group has been established to implement the review. The group includes representatives from the NCSE, DPER, the NDA and the Department. The Focused Policy Assessment comprises a data review involving the identification, analysis and evaluation of relevant data. The Department considers that the FPA is likely to be a pre-cursor to an NCSE led review which will, if considered necessary, consider the model of allocating SNAs and make recommendations on whether an alternative model might provide for better outcomes for children. At their December 2015 meeting, the NCSE Council recommended that the NCSE should conduct a more comprehensive review of the SNA scheme.

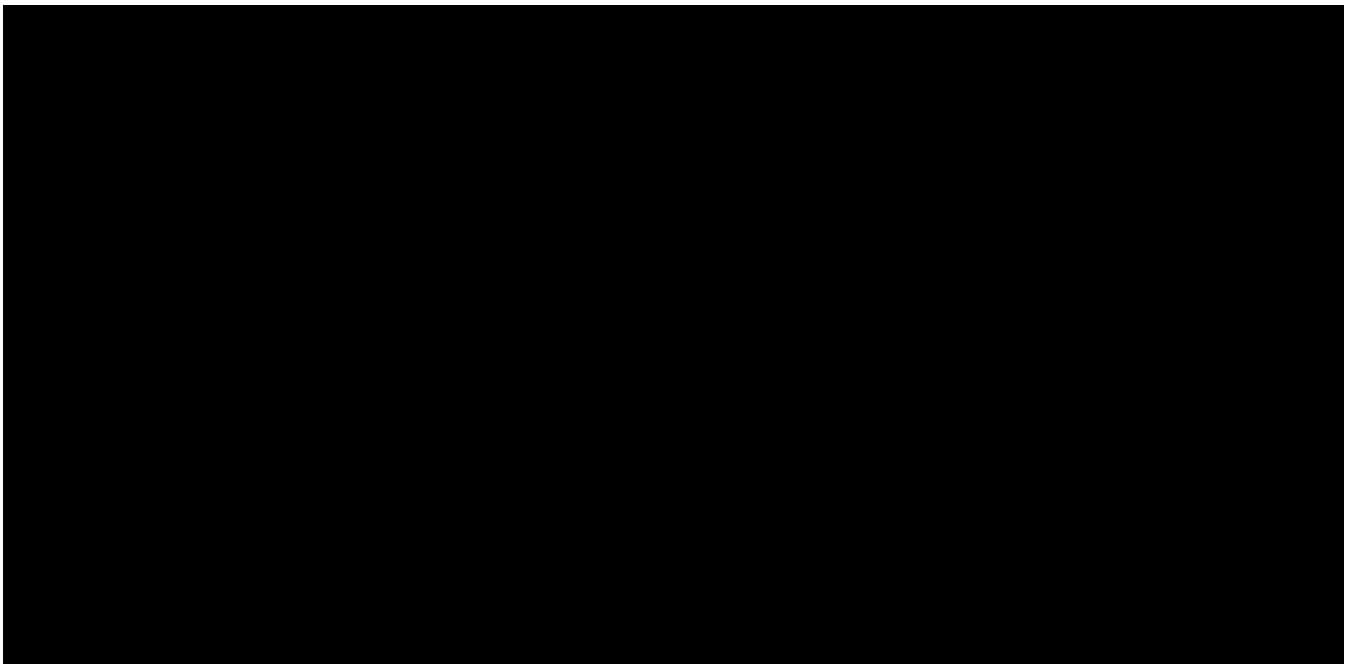
The aims of the Focused Policy Assessment are to identify the data needed to report on the performance indicators set out in the 2011 VFM and to review any emerging trends. These additional data can then be used to inform the development of a model to estimate likely future demand and costing that demand for SNAs.

The Objectives of the FPA are as follows:

1. Identify, collate and evaluate all available data underpinning the scheme in relation to performance indicators for the SNA scheme as set out in the 2011 Value for Money Review.
2. Identify what is required to develop the forecasting capacity of the Department and the NCSE in order to anticipate the level of demand and cost of future SNA requirements.
3. Provision of this data to be aligned with the planning needs of the Department, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the NCSE with specific reference to the annual budgetary process.

The Department will know the outcome of the FPA and will also have an indication of the number of applications for SNA support received by the NCSE by the middle of March. While this will not

provide a precise number of SNAs required from September it will provide a very strong indication of the numbers likely to be required. It is therefore likely that the Department will be in a position to advance a memorandum for Government by the middle of April.



3.4 Policy Advice on Autism

Background

In October 2013, the Minister requested the NCSE to prepare policy advice on the Educational Provision for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, in line with the NCSE's role under the EPSEN Act.

The following terms of reference apply:

- To review current national and international research literature on evidence-based practices and interventions for the education of children with autism/ASD with a particular focus on other EU countries
- To review, and provide an overview of, current state-funded educational provision for children with autism/ASD, to include early intervention and the extended school year scheme, identifying the roles of the various agencies and State as well as the strengths and gaps in the educational and wider framework of supports that significantly impact on the education of children with autism/ASD.
- To review, with particular reference to educational and social outcomes, the effectiveness of the range of evidence-based practices and interventions for the education of children with autism/ASD.

- To identify the nature and extent of educational intervention/s, teaching practices and other supports which should be provided to enable children with autism/ASD achieve educational outcomes appropriate to their needs and abilities.
- To make recommendations on future arrangements that should be in place, where necessary, to improve the nature, extent, planning and delivery of education to children with autism/ASD, with specific reference to the roles of agencies and the nature and extent of supports that should be in place, taking into account the need for flexibility given constrained resources

The Minister specifically requested that the NCSE would consult widely with parents, professionals, other stakeholders and interested parties in the preparation of this policy advice.

Current Position

The Minister has received the NCSE's policy advice 'Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders'. The report reflects the findings of the consultative process, the commissioned research and the extensive review of literature in the field. The structure of the report is consistent with the NCSE approach to the preparation of the advice and it contains a number of separate sections including:

- Early Years Education
- Continuum of provision
- Extended School Year
- Professional Development for Teachers
- Educational Interventions for students with ASD
- Educational Supports for students with ASD
- Time Out Rooms
- Health Supports
- Transition of students with ASD
- Supports for families of children with ASD

Each section outlines:

- Supports currently in place
- The strengths and weaknesses of the system as identified through the consultation process
- What the literature tells us
- Recommendations

Special Education Section are currently convening a working group with representatives of the NCSE, NEPS, the Inspectorate and external representatives, to develop an implementation plan to ensure that the Report's recommendations are fully and appropriately considered and that a timetable for implementation can be prepared.

Next steps

The report is due to be formally considered by the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy at its next available meeting.

The report will then be published by the NCSE.

Proposals to implement the recommendations of the Report will be developed and an implementation Report will be forwarded to the Minister for approval.

4. Other significant Issues

4.1 Resource Teaching Allocations 2016/17 School Year

Background

Each year the NCSE allocates resource teacher posts to schools to support children with a diagnosis of disability and an assessed level of need. The allocations are guided by Report of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC Report), 1993 which lists the disabilities and the ranges in severity in respect of which resource teaching hours are allocated.

In recent years the NCSE has reported very significant increases in the levels of diagnosed disability which is driving the allocation of resources at levels significantly in advance of the demographic growth. There is approximately a 10% increase in demand each year as more children are being assessed as having special educational needs.

In 2010 the Government capped the number of Resource Teachers at 5265. To address the increases in demand in 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 it was decided to adjust the levels of allocations to all children equally from 100% of the SERC recommended levels to 85% of the SERC recommended levels. This decision ensured that, although there were considerably more children receiving assessments of special educational need, provision could be made for all qualifying children on an equitable basis. This rate of allocation remains in place today.

Current position

The resource teacher allocation which has been made to date has ensured that the level of resource teaching supports to children with special needs in primary and post-primary schools are maintained at existing allocation levels.

Budget 2016 made additional provision for 2016 increasing the number from 6705 at the end of 2015 to 6852 at the end of June 2016 and to 7452 Posts to end 2016. The NCSE are currently processing applications received for the 2016/2017 school year. At this stage it is unclear whether the number of posts available will be sufficient to meet the demands for the coming school year. The position will become clear in early May.

As mentioned earlier, a new Resource Teaching allocation model for schools is currently being piloted and it is expected that the new model will be fully developed in advance of the start of the 2017/2018 school year.

4.2 Home Tuition Scheme

Background

The purpose of the Home Tuition Scheme is to provide a compensatory educational service for children who, for a number of reasons such as chronic illness, are unable to attend school. The scheme also provides a compensatory educational service for children with special educational needs seeking an educational placement. Provision is also made for early educational intervention for children with autism.

Current position

1,311 children availed of home tuition under this scheme in 2014/2015.

Next Steps

A New Circular to announce provision for the next school year is due to issue in March/April. In advance of the issue of the circular a working group including representation from the NCSE is being established to examine issues arising from last year's scheme and also to identify school placement issues arising as evidenced by demand for Home Tuition.

4.3 New Schools for Children with Autism

Background

13 centres were funded through an ABA pilot scheme funded by this Department for the period 1999-2011. All centres applied for and were granted provisional recognition as special schools for children with autism in 2010 and are currently being supported by the section under a transitional agreement which is scheduled to conclude in 2017.

Current position

All 13 schools have applied to the Department for permanent recognition. 6 of the schools have been granted permanent recognition, one in September 2014 and 5 from September 2015. 3 further schools are currently under evaluation.

Next Steps

The Department of Education and Skills will continue to support the relevant patron bodies for the transitional period which expires in 2017 at which point all of the school will continue to operate as special schools and be subject to regulation as such.

4.4 Middletown Centre for Autism

Background

The Middletown Centre for Autism project is a jointly funded initiative between the Department of Education in Northern Ireland and the Department of Education and Skills 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 project is funded on a 50:50 basis with the Department of Education, Northern Ireland.

Current position

The Centre is currently in the process of development including the expansion of services and the evaluation of the Centre. The end of March 2015 marked the completion of the two year phased expansion of services at the Middletown Centre for Autism agreed by the council at the NSMC Education sectoral meeting on 15 June 2012. 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 next step in the development process will be the review of the phased expansion and plans for this evaluation are at an advanced stage.

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

Next Steps

The main focus of expansion in the north is on further provision, on an outreach basis, of intensive educational assessment and learning support to children and young people with complex autism. The Centre is currently providing this support, which is termed "advice and guidance," to children in the North.

The main focus of expansion in the south is on providing, on a pilot basis, the level of support which is currently delivered in the north only, to children in the South. The expansion in the South will also include improvements in the area of parental training/support and the delivery of commissioned research projects.

The quality of the provision for educational assessment, training and research at the Middletown Centre for Autism was evaluated as "outstanding" by a joint inspectorate report in 2012. A further joint inspection of Middletown is planned for 2016 and this will be used to help identify both the positive aspects of the support delivered to children, parents and professionals and also assess areas for further development/improvement.

The Board of the Centre was due to be renewed in March 2016, with 5 representatives to be nominated from each Department North and South. Current nominees from the South are eligible

to be reappointed. As the Centre is currently in a phase of development it will not be proposed to alter the current membership of the Board. The process of renewing the nominations from the South has been suspended temporarily and the Centre and the Department of Education have been notified accordingly.

The Centre's Training and Advisory Service continues to deliver a high volume of training to professionals and parents, totaling over 42,000 delegates to date, either onsite or in venues across the island.

The Research and Information Service has completed work on the Centre's eighteenth research bulletin entitled "Parent and Professional Partnerships". These research bulletins are developed to meet the needs of professionals working in education with children and young people with autism. The summaries are structured to provide teachers with easy access to the key points from the research and implications for practice which they can consider integrating into their daily work.

The Centre continues to expand the availability of its online information and training resources for parents and professionals.

4.5 Extended School Year (July Provision)

Background

The July Education Programme more commonly known as 'July Provision' is available to all special schools and mainstream primary schools with special classes catering for children with autism that choose to extend their education services through the month of July. The Department also provides July Provision for pupils with a severe/profound general learning disability. Where school based provision is not feasible or where a school chooses not to extend their services for July, eligible children in the school will be granted home based July Provision, on application.

Current position

In 2015, 7893 children, 4758 home based and 3135 school based, availed of the programme.

Next steps

The scheme will be reviewed as part of the NCSE policy advice on Autism which has been submitted to the Department by the NCSE and which is currently under consideration. The recommendations from the NCSE Report will inform the development of policy in this area in future years.

4.6 Implementation of the EPSEN Act

Background

The EPSEN Act was passed by the Oireachtas in 2004. It was a very significant piece of legislation, providing a framework for the delivery of future special education services. Amongst other issues, it provides for:

- Inclusive education
- The right to an individual education plan
- In certain circumstances, the assessment of a pupil's special needs
- The designation of a school placement by the NCSE
- The establishment of the Special Education Appeals Board

It also provided a statutory underpinning of the work of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

Current position

A significant number of sections of the EPSEN Act have been commenced, principally those formally establishing the National Council for Special Education and those promoting an inclusive approach to the education of children with special educational needs.

In light of the very difficult economic situation and the significant costs involved, the full implementation of EPSEN was deferred. In 2012, the Department requested the NCSE to provide policy advice on how the education system can best support children with special educational needs. The NCSE Report on Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs in Schools has been published. While the Report recommends that the EPSEN Act be fully implemented as soon as possible, the report also states that the NCSE recognises that the current economic climate makes it unlikely that the Government will be able to implement this recommendation in the short to medium term.

Next Steps

While awaiting full implementation of the EPSEN Act, the NCSE has made a number of recommendations to improve special educational services contained in a number of policy advice papers. These recommendations, which are currently being implemented on a phased basis, aim to both improve existing services and to implement many of the principles contained in the EPSEN Act.

The recommendations which have been made by the NCSE are contained in the policy advice papers:

- (i) Report of the NCSE Working Group on a Proposed New Model for Allocating Teachers for Students with Special Educational Needs (June 2014)
- (ii) NCSE Report on Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs in Schools (May 2013)
- (iii) The Education of Students with Challenging behaviour arising from Severe Emotional Disturbance/Behavioural Disorders (August 2012)

- (iv) Report on the Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Pupils in Ireland (November 2011)
- (v) The Future of Special Schools and Classes (February 2011)

While the introduction of the EPSEN Act has been deferred, significant work has been continuing to improve special educational services through the implementation of policy advice recommendations and through the allocation of additional resource teaching and SNA resources for schools.

4.7 Deaf Education

Background

The NCSE published its policy advice on The Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children in Ireland in 2012. This paper provides a comprehensive blueprint for the future development of deaf and hearing impaired educational services.

Separately, an independent review of the Visiting Teacher service for children with Visual and Hearing Impairment was undertaken. This service provides assistance for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and children who are blind or visually impaired.

Current Position

A number of the recommendations contained in the policy advice on the Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children have been, or are currently in the process of being implemented. This includes recommendations in relation to the rolling out of a Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Programme; the provision of information to parents in relation to services available to children with hearing impairment; the provision of Irish Sign Language support for children and their families; and, the establishment of new special classes for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The review of the Visiting Teacher service was recently concluded by two independent reviewers who consulted with members of the Visiting Teacher service and with a broad range of individuals as well as statutory and non-statutory organisations who are involved in the education of children who are blind or visually impaired and children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Parents, children, teachers and other interested parties have had the opportunity to contribute to the review by making a submission and/or by answering a questionnaire.

Next Steps:

The Department will continue to implement the recommendations of the NCSE policy advice on The Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children, in conjunction with other Departments and agencies where necessary, subject to the availability of resources.

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Name of Body: **National Council for Special Education**

The NCSE is a statutory body established under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.

Main responsibilities

The NCSE is responsible for the provision of a range of educational services at local and national level for students with special educational needs. In particular, its network of Special Education Needs Organisers (SENOs) co-ordinate special needs education provision at local level and sanction the allocation of additional resource teaching and SNA supports to schools which have enrolled pupils with special educational needs. They act as single points of contact for schools and parents of students with special educational needs.

SENOs also support the operation of the Department’s Home Tuition scheme; the provision for school transport for children with Special Educational Needs and the operation of the Department’s Assistive Technology scheme.

The NCSE also conducts research and provides policy advice to the Department on issues regarding educational provision for children with special educational needs.

Funding

The NCSE’s total allocation for 2016 is €8.125m; €6.425m for pay and €1.7m for Non Pay.

Staff numbers

In addition to Ms. Teresa Griffin CEO, there are currently 70 Special Educational Needs Organisers, 9 Senior SENO posts and 20 administrative posts. Approval was given in May 2014 to establish a new Senior SENO Manager post from within existing ECF limits. An Assistant Principal post is due to be filled in 2016. There is one supernumerary position in respect of an AP with extended sick leave on a redeployment panel awaiting an alternative position.

NCSE Board

The term of the NCSE Board expired on 31 December 2015. The Board is currently being reconstituted in line with the provisions of the EPSEN Act, which sets out arrangements for appointments including nominations from scheduled bodies and Ministers and makes provision for gender balance, and also the provisions of the Government’s guidelines on Appointments to State Boards. The Public Appointments Service considered applications for positions on the Board on 22 January. A final list of applicants and nominees has been prepared. The appointments process has been temporarily suspended.

Mr Eamon Stack, the outgoing Chair, has been reappointed by the Minister for a second term.

Social Inclusion Unit

1. Unit / Section Overview

The Social Inclusion Unit (SIU) is responsible for the development and coordination of overall policy to promote social inclusion and address educational disadvantage across the formal and non-formal education sectors. The Unit provides representation for the Department in a range of interdepartmental and other fora dealing with broader social inclusion issues related to educational disadvantage. SIU also has responsibility for liaising with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Child and Family Agency, Tusla on matters relating to educational welfare and in particular relating to educational welfare services deployed in DEIS schools

SIU manages the ongoing delivery of the current DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Programme and is also responsible for the current review of the DEIS Programme and related measures to tackle educational disadvantage.

The Unit co-ordinates the Department's response to the education actions of national agreements and action plans aimed at combating social exclusion including the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 - 2016. The Unit also assists in and provides briefing on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020). Under the ET2020 strategy Ireland has adopted a headline target to reduce the percentage of 18-24 year-olds, with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training, to below 8%. A number of measures under the DEIS Action Plan (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) support the achievement of this target and DES Retention Reports show a consistent improvement of retention rates in DEIS schools in recent years.

The Unit also has responsibility for education provision in a range of provision including Special Schools, attached to High Support/Special Care Units operated by the Child and Family Agency (Tusla), education provision in the Children Detention Schools in Lusk, Co Dublin and in five Youth Encounter Projects. It also provides funding to a small number of centres providing education for young people not in mainstream school.

The Staffing for this section currently consists of:

Principal Officer	1
Assistant Principal	3
Administrative Officer	0.6
Higher Executive Officer	4.4
Executive Officer	3.4
Clerical Officer	2

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

SIU has an overall financial allocation of €15.6million, the majority of which is assigned to the DEIS programme.

Service	Outturn 2014	Provision 2015	Provision 2016
Expenditure on DEIS by SIU	€10.8m	€10.9m	€11.1m
Youth Encounter Projects	€1.14m	€1.16m	€1.17m
Social Inclusion Miscellaneous	€350,000	€352,000	€400,000

(Overall DES expenditure on the DEIS Programme is in the region of €95million, the bulk of which provides for additional teaching resources which are met from the Primary and Post Primary Teacher payrolls.)

3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.1 Review of DEIS (Delivering equality of Opportunity in Schools) Programme

Background:

A process for a review of the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Programme commenced in September 2015. The overall scope of the Review is to assess the existing DEIS Programme in the context of evaluations to date and any relevant policy and other developments in order to inform future policy on educational disadvantage.

This process is now underway with the majority of the work programme scheduled to take place during the course of the current school year – 2015/16. It is envisaged that proposals for a revised framework of supports will be made in the context of Budget 2017.

[The Review process is being undertaken within the following structure:](#)

A **Project Steering Group** has been established and will remain in operation until Project Close. Given the broad range of activities and responsibilities involved in this project membership of this group includes Management Board members with key responsibilities in

relevant areas of provision. The group has a governance and approval role to ensure delivery of the project.

A **Technical Working Group** – is considering appropriate eligibility criteria to identify the level of need in schools and, having examined available data sources, will determine an appropriate methodology for the development of a new assessment framework. The Technical Group will undertake the development of a new identification process and make recommendations to the Project Steering Group for approval of same.

A **DEIS Advisory Group** – has responsibility for reviewing the current School Support Programme (SSP) and drawing together the outcome from the consultation process with stakeholders, proposals made by the Interdepartmental Group and proposals from the Advisory Group to inform a future framework of supports in schools. The Group will put forward recommendations for supports under a new programme for tackling educational disadvantage to the Project Steering Group for approval.

An **Interdepartmental Working Group** – has responsibility for engaging with external Departments and Agencies to consider current and future inputs to DEIS and to develop a framework for interdepartmental and inter-agency links to ensure greater cohesion and cross-sectoral cooperation for future delivery of initiatives catering for those at risk of educational disadvantage. The IDG will make recommendations on appropriate interventions and report these to the Advisory Group for incorporation into the final recommendations to the Project Steering Group.

Stakeholder consultation

Education Partners were invited to make submissions as part of the consultation process initiated by the Minister in April 2015 and submissions received are available on the Department's website. Further engagement with education partners and other key stakeholders is planned through a DEIS Consultative Forum which will take place in Spring 2016.

Next Steps:

- Progress the work of each of the DEIS Review working groups to feed into a Spring 2016 stakeholder consultation;
- Develop overall proposals for a revised Identification Process and School Support Programme in the context of Budget 2017.

3.2 Implementation of DEIS Programme

BACKGROUND:

DEIS, the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion, launched in 2005, is the Department's main policy initiative to tackle educational disadvantage. The aim of DEIS is to ensure that the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities are

prioritised and effectively addressed. Its core elements include a standardised system for identifying schools' level of disadvantage and an integrated School Support Programme (SSP) for schools and school cluster/communities with a concentrated level of disadvantage.

All primary and post-primary schools participating in DEIS receive a range of additional resources including additional staffing for the most disadvantaged, funding, access to literacy and numeracy programmes and assistance with activities such as school planning. As part of the SSP, interventions such as the Home School Community Liaison Scheme and the School Completion Programme are available to DEIS urban primary schools and to DEIS post-primary schools.

In the current, 2015/16, school year there are 836 schools participating in the DEIS Programme. This total comprises of 646 primary schools (330 Urban Band 1 and Band 2 primary schools and 316 rural primary schools) and 190 post-primary schools. A key element of the programme is the allocation of additional teachers to provide for preferential pupil teacher ratio in DEIS Band 1 schools.

SIU is responsible for the administration of the key DEIS support of Home School Community Liaison, which is a school-based intervention to address the needs of pupils/families in disadvantaged areas through acknowledging and developing the role of the parent as prime educator. This is achieved through targeting the families of pupils at risk of educational failure and putting in place a range of appropriate support interventions.

In the current (2015/16) school year there are 520 DEIS Urban Primary and DEIS Post-Primary schools included in the HSCL Scheme availing of the services of 400 HSCL Coordinators at a cost of € 25 million. Teachers are assigned to these HSCL Coordinator posts for a limited tenure to carry out full-time liaison duties.

In 2011, certain functions under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, including operational responsibility for two key DEIS school support services, HSCL and the School Completion Programme, transferred from the Minister for Education and Skills to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. On 1 January, 2014 these functions were in turn transferred to the newly established Child and Family Agency (*Tusla*). The reason for the inclusion of these two DEIS supports in this transfer of functions was to ensure the continued integration of these supports with other educational welfare services operated by the former National Educational Welfare Board – to achieve an integrated service delivery model to address educational disadvantage.

While operational responsibility for the HSCL scheme rests with Tusla, the Department of Education and Skills remains responsible for the allocation and funding of teachers assigned to the HSCL Coordinator role.

CURRENT POSITION / NEXT STEPS:

- *Tusla*, has recently developed a new comprehensive Annual Planning Template which will greatly assist schools and HSCL Coordinators in identifying appropriate targets and activities that relate to each school's DEIS Plan.
- Since 2015 an Annual HSCL Expenditure Form issues to schools requesting information on their use of the HSCL Grant.
- Continue to liaise with *Tusla*, to improve outcomes for pupils in schools participating in the HSCL Scheme.

Evaluation of the programme is a critical aspect of DEIS. The Educational Research Centre (ERC) and the DES Inspectorate have conducted a series of evaluations on aspects of the DEIS programme and findings of this work are contained in a series of reports published since 2009.

Evidence from this research demonstrates that the DEIS programme is having a positive effect on tackling educational disadvantage. Longitudinal research carried out by the ERC in DEIS urban primary schools in 2007, 2010 and 2013 show consistent improvement in both literacy and numeracy levels of pupils. While findings of ERC research of DEIS implementation at Post-Primary level also show encouraging trends in terms of attainment levels and of pupil retention rates. There is a significant upward trend from 2009 onwards in attainment levels in both English and Mathematics at Junior Cert level.

Research carried out by the DES Inspectorate shows that the majority of schools are now engaging in effective planning for improvement. The findings indicate that where schools have taken a whole-school, evidence-based approach to improving literacy, especially at primary level, they report improvements in pupil attainment levels.

The DES Retention Rates of Pupils in Second Level Schools 2008 Entry Cohort (Feb 2015) shows that the improvement in DEIS schools' retention rates in recent years has been significantly higher than the overall improvement nationally. For pupils who entered post-primary in 2008, there is approximately a 3% difference in the Junior Certificate rate between DEIS and non-DEIS schools. The Leaving Certificate retention rate of the 2008 entry cohort in DEIS schools is 82.1%, which is 8.5% below the national average rate of 90.6% but shows a significant retention increase from 78.4% for the 2005 entry cohort in DEIS schools.

Ongoing Evaluation

A further phase of testing for the longitudinal study in Urban Primary schools will be conducted by the ERC towards the end of the current school year.

In addition, a survey of a random sample of 125 DEIS schools is being carried out in early 2016 to establish how schools utilise the DEIS Grant. The objective is to appraise the effectiveness of supports deployed by schools under the DEIS Grants provision. The findings of the survey will assist in providing feedback to both the Department and to schools on the effectiveness of a range of interventions under DEIS and to inform future policy in this area.

CURRENT POSITION:

In April 2015, *'Learning from DEIS'* – a Report by the ESRI on the implementation over 10 years of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools was published. The Report brings together learning from evaluations of DEIS conducted to date by the Educational Research Centre and the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills as well as related Irish and International research on educational disadvantage together with examples of best practice. The Report assesses the main findings of this research and provides advice to inform future policy direction in relation to educational disadvantage including DEIS.

Some of the findings from the Report in relation to the performance of schools catering for the highest concentrations of educational disadvantage:

- A change in approach within DEIS schools is evident, with a significant improvement in planning for teaching and learning and in setting targets for achievement
- There has been a significant improvement over time in literacy test scores among students in designated disadvantages primary schools
- Levels of non-attendance between Urban Band 1 primary schools and non-DEIS urban schools appears to have narrowed

CURRENT POSITION / NEXT STEPS

Continue to work with the ERC and DES Inspectorate for the ongoing evaluation of DEIS and to publish further DEIS Reports.

3.4 Developing a life-course approach to social inclusion in education

Background

Work has commenced on the development of a more strategic approach to social inclusion measures delivered across the continuum of education. Phase I of the project – a mapping exercise to establish the range, nature and cost of DES activity in this area has been completed and is being used to inform the work of the DEIS review. Phase II of the project, involves the development of a policy paper to inform the design of a life-course approach to social inclusion in education. This work will be progressed during 2016 in the context of the DEIS Review Process where the potential for streamlining of both policy and service delivery to tackle educational disadvantage is being explored.

CURRENT POSITION / NEXT STEPS

Proposals on a life-course approach to tackling educational disadvantage and promoting social inclusion to be developed in the context of the DEIS Review process.

Policy paper to be produced in Q4 2016.

3.5 Children Detention Schools (CDS)

BACKGROUND

In 2005, the Government approved youth justice reforms and established on a non-statutory basis, the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) as an executive office for the DJELR under the strategic direction of the Office of the Minister for Children. The IYJS assumed responsibility with effect from 01 March 2007 for all detention services for children under the age of 18. This necessitated the transfer of legal and administrative responsibilities for the detention of young offenders from the DES to the IYJS in respect of four of the five children detention schools (three schools in Lusk and the Finglas Child and Adolescent Centre). Responsibility for a further facility, St Joseph's, Clonmel, transferred to the HSE. The relevant Education and Training Board assumed responsibility for the education provision within the schools. (The Finglas Child and Adolescent Centre was closed in 2010).

Responsibility for these detention schools transferred from the Minister for Justice and Equality to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs with effect from 01 January 2012. The detention schools are funded by the Irish Youth Justice Service, which is an office within the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

The Department of Education and Skills retains overall responsibility for education provision in the CDS, while responsibility for the day-to-day delivery of education services transferred to the Dublin Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB).

The *Education Strategy for the Children Detention School Service September 2010-2013* constitutes the Department's overarching strategy on educational services for children placed in children detention schools, provides an outline of the Department's role in this sector and provides the broad parameters which inform educational provision in the education facilities attached to these detention schools. It seeks to promote a whole child/whole system approach to meeting the needs of this particular group of children and provide a focus on better outcomes for these children and their families. A review of this strategy is pending on the completion of the amalgamation of the Detentions Schools.

The Children (Amendment) Act 2015 provides for the amalgamation of three existing Detention Schools in Trinity House, Oberstown Boys and Oberstown Girls into a single National Children Detention Facility. The relevant Section of the Act has not yet been commenced but this is expected in early 2016.

CURRENT POSITION / NEXT STEPS

- The Education Strategy is to be reviewed following the amalgamation of the three detention schools and the provision of the new National Children Detention Facility at Oberstown.
- DES will continue to work with DDLETB and the IYJS on matters relating to education provision in Oberstown.

3.6 High Support Special Care Schools

BACKGROUND:

Social Inclusion Unit is responsible for the provision for education in 5 Special Schools attached to High Support and Special Care Units owned and managed by the Child and Family Agency, TUSLA. These Units provide residential care for children who are legally “out of control” at risk and in need of care and protection. The DES is responsible for the provision of education in these Units. The Department is in the process of transferring responsibility for the provision for education in these schools to the relevant ETB, as a follow-on to the process undertaken in relation to the Children Detention Schools.

Current position / Next Steps

- Arrangements for the transfer of education provision in the Special Care Special Schools to the ETB sector are underway.

3.7 NON MAINSTREAM EDUCATION PROVISION

Background:

Social Inclusion Unit also provides funding to a small number of centres which provide education for young people not in mainstream school:

YOUTH ENCOUNTER PROJECTS (YEPs)

Youth Encounter Projects are recognised Special Schools which provide educational facilities for children who have either become involved in minor delinquency, or are at risk, and have become alienated from the mainstream school system. There are five such schools, three in Dublin, one in Cork and one in Limerick. They are non-residential and each caters for up to 25 pupils aged between 10 to 16 years. A pupil may be referred to one of these schools by a number of agencies or by the Courts system. The schools have additional resources to provide a comprehensive life-skills programme in addition to the normal curriculum. The schools receive a pay grant to cover the cost of ancillary staff and a non-pay grant to cover non-pay expenditure items such as light, heat, classroom materials and pupil meals etc. The 2016 allocation for YEPS, is € 1.165 million.

LINE PROJECTS DUBLIN - CARLINE PROJECT AND CITY MOTOR SPORTS

The Line Projects were established to bring together the community, parents, state agencies and relevant Government Departments in order to respond to the needs of young people who have dropped out of mainstream education. The Department funds two projects, Carline, Lucan and City Motor Sports, Dublin 8 catering for young people aged 14 to 18 years, through teacher cooperation hours and a non-pay grant.

THE LIFE CENTRES

Two Life Centres were established by the Christian Brothers in 1996, one each in Dublin and Cork, to cater for young people between the ages of 12 and 16 who are out of the mainstream school system. Following the announcement in recent years by the Edmund Rice Schools Trust of its proposed withdrawal from the Life Centres, the DES has worked with the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST) and the Centres to secure an appropriate model to meet the future educational needs of the pupil cohort. The Department currently supports one Life Centre in Cork through the provision of a grant towards running costs of € 47,500 per annum and the provision of teaching hours under the ETB Co-operation Hours Scheme.

ASPIRE

The Department provides funding of € 20,000 and 3,270 ETB Co-operation hours per annum to City of Dublin ETB towards the Aspire Pilot project. This project commenced in 2015 following the closure of the Dublin Life Centre and assists children who are experiencing difficulties attending mainstream post-primary school and are at risk of leaving school early to remain engaged in education.

TALBOT CENTRE

The Talbot Centre is run by North Inner City Drugs Task Force, Dublin 1. The Centre is committed to developing supportive relationships with children, young people and their families whose lives have been affected by drug and/or alcohol use in the North Inner City. The Department funds 15 part time hours per week for an education worker.

Current position / Next Steps

- In the context of the DEIS review, assess all non-standard provision with a view to alignment with mainstream services.

Social Inclusion – Travellers and Migrants

1. Unit Overview

While the DEIS review is being conducted, the PO in RIRU has responsibility for the Traveller brief and for co-ordinating the DES response to Government decisions on refugee programmes and on migrant integration.

The responsibilities include:

- Liaison with the Department of Justice and Equality (D/JE) on a task force for the Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme.
- Work with D/JE on the development of a new National Traveller/Roma Integration Strategy.
- Oversee the work of the Department's Traveller Education Strategy Implementation Group
- Oversee the work of the Limerick regional office with responsibility for integration.

Staffing: The Unit comprises 1 part-time PO, 1 AP and 2 HEOs. 1 AP and 1 HEO are based in the Limerick Regional Office and 1 HEO is based in Athlone.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Travellers' Educational Attainment

Background:

The Department's policy is set out in the 2006 *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy* which was drawn up following extensive consultation with Traveller representative groups and other relevant stake-holders.

The principle of inclusion is at the core of the Strategy. The focus of current provision is on the development of a more inclusive school environment through the whole school planning process, teaching practice, admissions policies, codes of behaviour and whole school evaluation.

In keeping with this principle, additional resources provided in the education system are allocated on the basis of identified individual educational need rather than that of ethnic or cultural background.

Mainstreaming:

A key objective of the Strategy is the phasing out of segregated Traveller provision and the inclusion of Traveller children and young people in mainstream education. Since 2006, a

range of segregated provision including Senior and Junior Traveller Education Centres; and Traveller-only Special Schools and School Transport and Early Years Education has been phased out, with student places being incorporated in mainstream provision. (Two remaining Traveller only Special Schools are in the process of being phased out by their patron, the Dublin Archdiocese.) Related supports, including the Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers and Resource Teachers for Travellers have been withdrawn and incorporated into mainstream provision.

Traveller-specific supports which have been retained to assist with the transfer to mainstream provision include additional pupil capitation for the 11,000 approx. Traveller pupils in primary and post-primary education.

Impact of mainstreaming:

Traveller groups, including the ITM (Irish Traveller Movement) maintain that cutbacks in mainstream provision impact disproportionately on Travellers given their special educational needs which were heretofore supported in segregated provision. While financial constraints have been an issue across the education system in recent years, it is also the case that some resources, previously allocated to Traveller-specific programmes, have been reallocated to mainstream provision in keeping with the recommendations of the *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy*.

These include almost 400 additional posts, including alleviation posts, which have been allocated across the primary and post-primary sectors to compensate for the 700 **Resource Teachers for Travellers** withdrawn from the system in 2011. Traveller children are now included in the valid enrolment for the purposes of allocating additional teaching resources in DEIS schools (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) and for the purposes of allocating additional teaching resources under the General Allocation Model (GAM) for high incidence special educational needs.

In addition, the **Visiting Teachers for Travellers Service** which was withdrawn in 2011 has been absorbed into the educational welfare services for all children, including members of the Traveller community which are now delivered by Tusla through its 'One Child' integrated service delivery model. Key supports under this integrated service model include the Home School Community Liaison Scheme and the School Completion Programme which are of particular value to Traveller children and their families. The disbanding of the Visiting Teacher Service represented the removal of segregated Traveller provision in accordance with policy.

Data on school attendance:

A particular issue raised by Traveller Representative Groups including ITM is the level of poor school attendance among Traveller pupils. While statutory responsibility for School Attendance, Participation and Retention in School now lies with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, the DES continues to have a role in the collection of school-based data in

relation to Traveller pupils. Data is not available from TUSLA on school attendance rates by Traveller, Roma or other groups at risk of educational disadvantage.

Traveller Participation in Education:

At Primary and Post Primary level, Traveller participation remains steady.

Percentage Traveller Pupils in schools 2007-2014

Percentage of Pupils who are Travellers in schools 2007-2014								
	2007	2008	2009	2010 ¹⁰	2011	2012	2013	2014
Primary	1.6	1.7	1.6	No Stats	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.5
Post Primary	0.9	0.9	1.0	No Stats	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.8
Total	2.5	2.6	2.6	No Stats	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.3

Further Education:

In 2014, 402 Travellers were enrolled on the ETB Youthreach programme. In 2013 (2014 statistic not available yet), 460 Travellers participated in the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI).

33 Travellers are also recorded as taking part in Post Leaving Certificate Course during 2014/2015.

Higher Education:

While there has been progress, participation by young Irish Travellers in higher education (estimated at 5 percent of the overall national population in the relevant age cohort) is very low, compared to overall national participation rates (estimated at 60 percent of the relevant age cohort).

Traveller Ethnicity:

In January 2016, Ireland submitted its third and fourth consolidated report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. In its concluding observations, the Committee urged the State party to undertake concrete and comprehensive measures to address the structural discrimination against Traveller and Roma children, particularly with regards to access to education, health and an adequate standard of living. In this light, the Committee further recommends that the State party:

¹⁰ Date collection changed from the Visiting Teachers service and data is not available for 2010

(a) Consider legally recognising the Traveller and Roma as ethnic groups in the State party; and, in doing so, implement disaggregated data collection on these communities to facilitate the provision of targeted support programmes and measures;

The Department's policy has been one of inclusion and of mainstreaming provision. The UN favour targeted support programmes and measures.

Next Steps:

The Department of Justice and Equality have set up an inter-Departmental group to develop a new National Traveller and Roma integration Strategy (NTRIS). The broad goals for the Education sector are:

1. That access, participation and outcomes for Travellers and Roma in education should be on a par with those for the majority community.
2. There should be a positive culture of respect and protection for the cultural identity of Travellers and Roma within the education system.

The development of the NTRIS will set out the broad education goals for Travellers and Roma for 2016-2020.

2.2 Migrants and Irish Refugee Programmes

Background:

In 2015, the Government agreed to increase Ireland's resettlement quota for Programme Refugees from 220 to 520. The Programme Refugees, when they arrive, are initially accommodated in two reception centres in Monasterevin and in Clonea. Following an orientation programme, the families are resettled in other parts of the country - this makes room for more Programme Refugees to be accommodated in the reception centres. The local ETBs are providing for orientation and language training for the parents and are providing an initial induction/schooling programme for children.

For 2016, the Office for the Promotion of Migrant are on target to admit 520 refugees from the Middle East. The Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme (IRRP) is to admit 2,622 eligible asylum seekers from Italy and Greece by the end of 2017 and a further 858 people may be re-settled in Ireland. Under family re-unification, it is projected that up to an additional 20,000 may be re-settled in Ireland. So far, only 1 family of Syrians with 10 children have re-settled in Ireland under the IRRP.

The refugee programme has the potential to impact on all aspects of the Irish Education system.

Supports within schools

The priority is for children to gain proficiency in the host language. At both primary and post-primary levels, additional language support is provided for students who do not speak English

as their first language. English as an Additional Language (EAL) resource are designed to allow individual students to participate in mainstream education on a par with their peers. The unique position of students in examination years and at senior cycle in post-primary school is recognised by the additional weighting afforded to them when applying for ongoing EAL support. This is to meet the additional requirements for proficiency in academic, as well as more basic or conversational, English, which is necessary at that stage in education. The provision of EAL supports serves as a targeted response to potential early school leaving amongst migrant students.

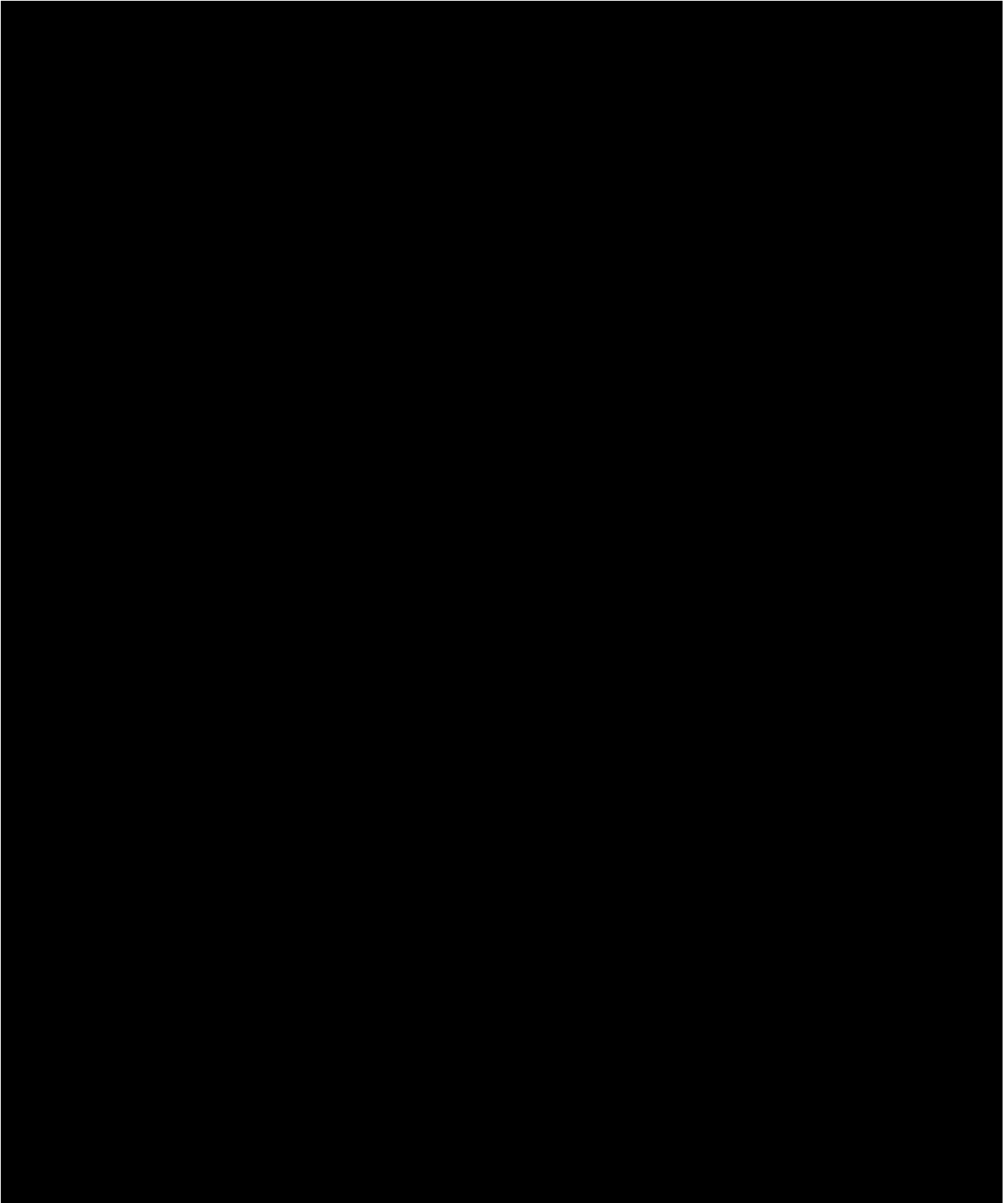
The English as an Additional Language Support Team from the Department's Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) offer a range of supports to teachers. The work of the PDST is complemented by the work of the English Language Support Teachers Association. The EAL Assessment Toolkit which provides teachers with tests of English language proficiency for use with pupils for whom English is a second language requires some modification to make it more efficient and user-friendly and this work is currently being undertaken by DES in conjunction with relevant education partners.

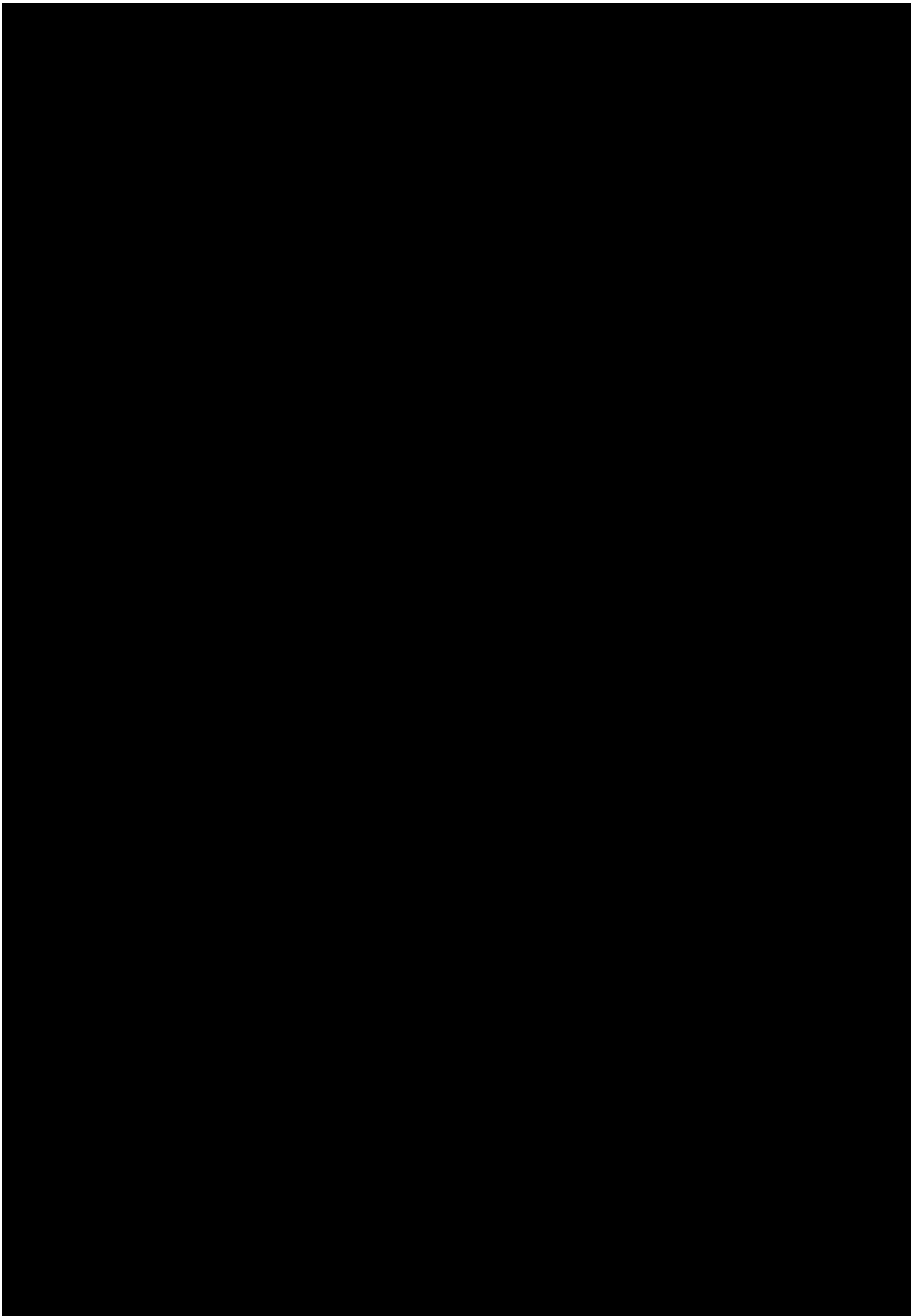
Support for mother tongue: There are over 160 nationalities represented in our second level schools. To provide opportunities to promote teaching of mother tongue for all would be very resource intensive. Instead, students are able to take the following subjects in the terminal school examination (Leaving Certificate): English, Irish, Ancient Greek, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Japanese and Arabic. To cater for the particular needs of EU migrants they can also present for a non-curricular examination in any of the other EU languages. These non-curricular languages do not appear as part of the normal school curriculum but students may opt to be examined in them if they are from a member state of the EU, speak the language as a mother tongue, are presenting for the Leaving Certificate examination and for Leaving Certificate English. This non-curricular language initiative contributes to encouraging students to maintain proficiency in their heritage language. Under the reformed Junior Cycle, schools will be able to develop short courses for study in a range of topics, including new languages and cultures. At both primary and post-primary school levels there are many initiatives in individual schools to promote the many languages and cultures now present in the education system.

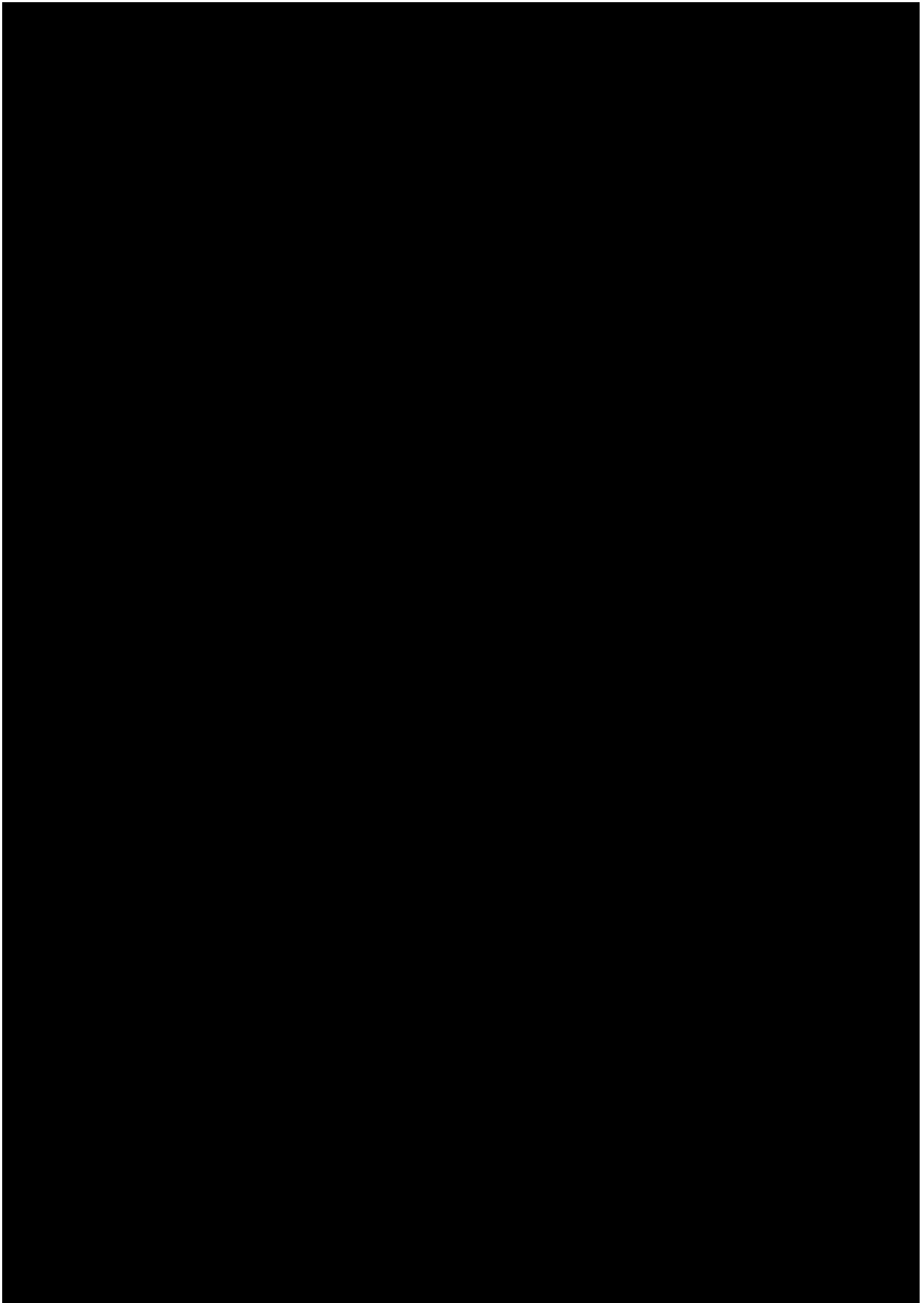
Next Steps

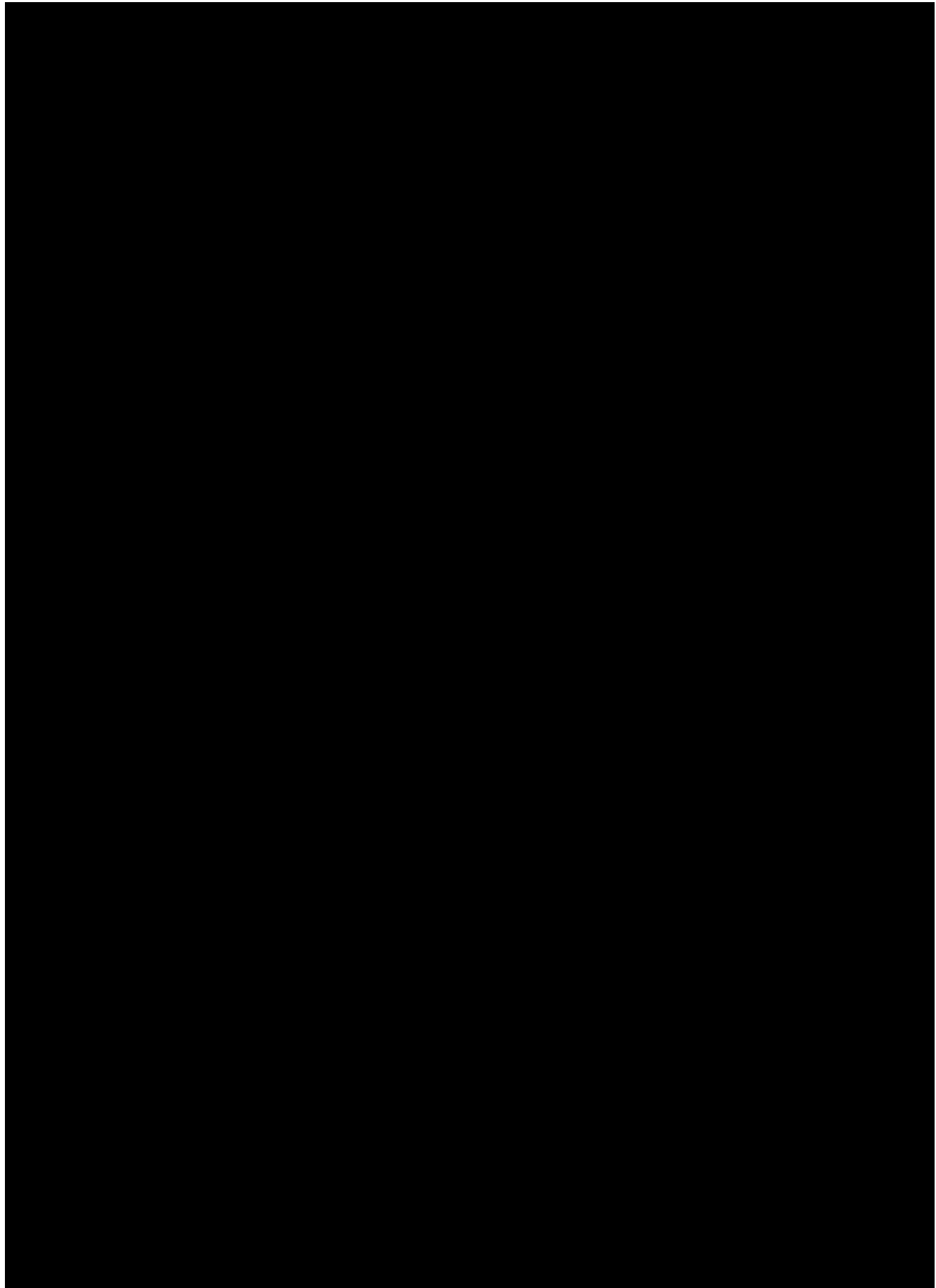
Carry out a full impact assessment of how the resettlement programme will affect all aspects of the Education system.

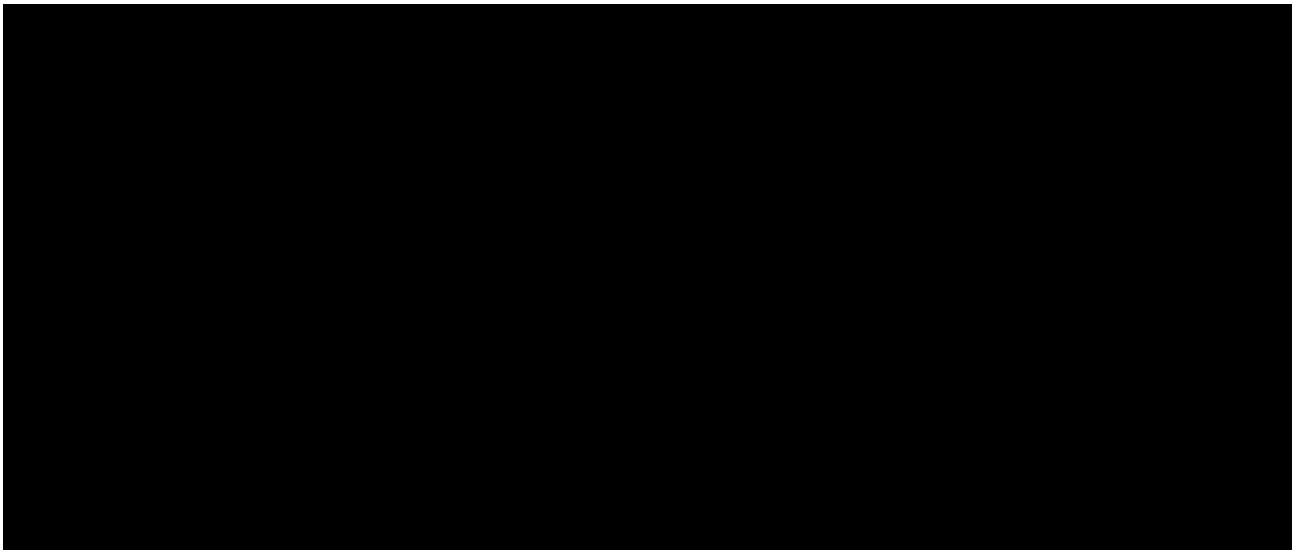
Special Education Litigation











EDUCATION SECTOR
INDUSTRIAL
RELATIONS, PENSIONS,
SCHOOL TRANSPORT
AND TEACHERS TERMS
AND CONDITIONS
DIVISION: KEVIN
MCCARTHY, ASSISTANT
SECRETARY

Structure of the Division

This division deals with Industrial Relations, School Transport and Teachers SNA's Terms and Conditions.

There are four Principal Officers working in the area:

- Philip Crosby, External Staff Relations
- School Transport, Patricia O Connor
- Teachers SNA's Terms and Conditions, Alfie Barrett.

The Division has staff in more than one location. Teachers SNA's Terms and Conditions Unit is located in Athlone. School Transport is located in Tullamore. External Staff Relation is located in Dublin.

External Staff Relations

1. Unit / Section Overview

The External Staff Relations Section provides and operates an industrial relations framework and service at national level to manage the processing of industrial relations issues relating to the education and training sector outside the Department of Education and Skills.

The functions of the section include the promotion of compliance with Government pay policy throughout the wider education and training sector and provision of advice to line sections within the Department (and the educational institutions) on the application of employment law.

WTE Staff Numbers by Grade:

Principal Officer = 1

Assistant Principal Officer = 3

Higher Executive Officer = 2

Executive Officer = 1

2. Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
Teachers Adjudicator	€0	€0	€2,000
Teachers Arbitration Board	€0	€0	€6,000
Teachers Fixed Term Adjudicator	€35,355	€25,598	€45,000
SNA Supplementary Assignment Manager?	€0	€2,500	€5,000
Chairperson of Expert Group on Fixed-Term/Part-Time issues in Lecturing	€0	€0	€25,000
Total	€35,355	€28,098	€83,000

3. Key priority issues

3.1 Haddington Road Agreement/Lansdowne Road Agreement (Public Service Stability Agreement 2013 – 2018)

Background:

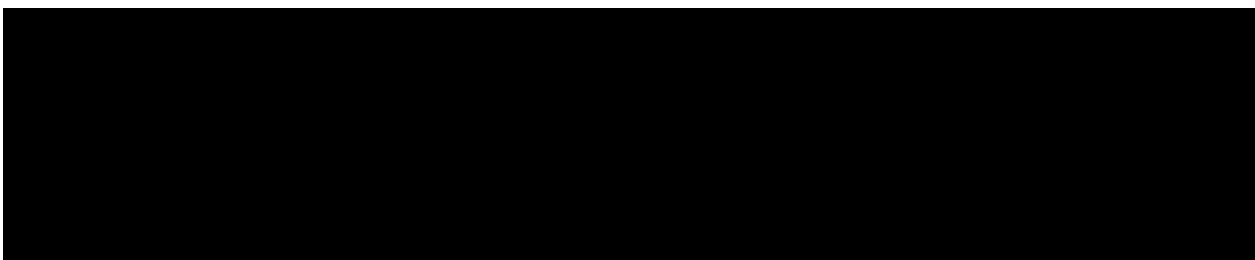
The Haddington Road Agreement (HRA) was agreed between the Government and the Public Services Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in 2013. All of the unions in the education and training sector accepted the HRA and the Agreement is being implemented throughout the sector with effect from 1 July 2013.

The HRA was originally due to expire on 30 June 2016. Agreement in relation to a two year extension of the HRA, known as the Lansdowne Road Agreement (LRA), was reached with the public service trade unions in May 2015. In essence the HRA will now continue until September 2018.

Current Position of the Unions:

INTO, SIPTU, IMPACT and IFUT have accepted the LRA. The Public Services Committee of ICTU has approved the LRA. UNITE rejected the Agreement and are now considering their position in respect of the aggregate result of ICTU. ASTI and TUI have also rejected the Agreement and have stated that they will not be bound by the aggregate result of ICTU. Both unions have essentially stated that they will continue to cooperate with the HRA until its original expiry date of 30 June 2016 once the Government side continues its cooperation with that Agreement.

The LRA begins the process of restoring the cuts to public service pay which were implemented in recent years. Some of these measures (such as the 1 January 2016 pay increase for those earning up to €31,000 and reductions in the Pension-Related Deduction) are being implemented through legislation – the FEMPI Act 2015. It was determined that ASTI and TUI members could not be excluded from the legislation and they will therefore benefit from any pay improvements which are brought about through legislation.





A summary of the key reform measures under the HRA/LRA is set out below:

(a) Pay and related measures:

The HRA provides for salary reductions for public servants earning more than €65,000 and for pauses or freezes in the payment of increments for all public servants. The LRA provides for pay increases for those earning under €65,000 (and for all teachers) and reductions in the Pension-Related Deduction for all public servants. Pay increases and minimum hourly rates for grant-funded School Secretaries and Caretakers were also agreed.

(b) Additional Working Hours:

The HRA introduced additional working hours for public servants, which are utilised in different ways in each part of the sector.

(c) Fixed term/part time employment in teaching/lecturing:

Following an Expert Group report, measures were introduced to reduce the level of fixed-term and part-time employment in teaching. A second Expert Group is currently examining the level of such employment in third level lecturing and is due to report shortly.

(d) Other reform measures:

Other reform measures introduced under the HRA include enhanced redeployment arrangements, revisions to annual leave and sick leave arrangements and changes to the usage of the additional hours provided by teachers under the Croke Park Agreement.

3.2 Current/Potential Industrial Action in the Sector

(a) Schools and Further Education centres - TUI

TUI stated that second level and Further Education teachers represented by them would hold a one day work stoppage before the date of the general election. TUI stated that the action was being taken in relation to the precarious employment status, income poverty and exploitation of many staff (i.e. the level of fixed-term and part-time employment in teaching and the lower pay scale for post-1 February 2012 entrants to teaching), the collapse of the student support, internal management and staff promotional systems and increased bureaucratisation of work. Following the union's decision to call off the planned strike, the

Department agreed to meet with the TUI to discuss issues of mutual concern in the context of their continuing cooperation with collective agreements. Progress on any of these issues can only ultimately be possible where the question of the TUI's position on the LRA from September is resolved.

(b) School middle management - INTO

INTO balloted members in February on industrial action in response to the continued ban on promotion in schools and increasing workload for teachers. Following the ballot, the union issued a directive advising members that they should not engage with School Self-Evaluation from 4 April 2016. The union is seeking an end to the moratorium on promotions to middle management posts in primary schools and the re-instatement of promoted posts lost.

(c) Institutes of Technology - TUI

Lecturing staff in Institutes of Technology who are represented by TUI held a one day strike on 3 February. TUI stated that the action was being taken in relation to funding and staffing cuts in the sector in the context of rising student numbers.

4. Other significant Issues

4.1 Pay matters in Universities

Background:

Under the Universities Act 1997, all forms of remuneration payable in each university must be approved by the Minister for Education and Skills with the consent of the Minister for Finance. The Act, however, contains no practical and proportionate remedies in the event that a university acts in contravention of Government pay or numbers policy. In the period since 2005 a number of pay compliance issues have arisen in universities, including the payment of unauthorised allowances, payment of unapproved overtime and non-implementation of binding Labour Court decisions. Unlike other areas of the Public Service, for all practical purposes the Minister is relying on persuasion rather than law in ensuring compliance with Government policy. This prompted the Government to strengthen the legislation.

Current Position:

In 2012 the Government agreed to the drafting of an amendment to the Universities Act 1997. This amendment will give the Minister the power to require universities to comply with Government guidelines on remuneration, allowances, pensions and staffing numbers in the University sector. The amendment will address a significant deficiency in the current legislation which has had and continues to have serious consequences for Government pay and numbers policy.

Work on the publication of the Universities (Amendment) Bill is continuing with assistance from the Attorney General's office and the aim is for the Bill to be published during the new Dáil Term.

In tandem with this proposed legislative change, the Department is working closely with the Irish Universities Association (IUA) and the Universities themselves in the development of a Human Resources Management Toolkit which will assist the universities in dealing with a number of HR related matters such as remuneration, appointment and performance management. The Department is also working to devise a framework which will allow Universities to make payments to academic staff for additional work in circumstances where this enables Universities to more readily exploit revenue-generating opportunities.

Next Steps:



[4.2 IR issues arising from the Technological Universities Bill](#)

Most of the Unions involved in the Institute of Technology sector have engaged positively in relation to proposals for mergers of Institutes and changes to Technological University status. However the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI), which represents over 4,000 lecturing and research staff in the sector, has adopted a more negative stance. The emerging changes are likely to continue to be a matter of concern for the TUI with industrial relations friction arising as a consequence.

School Transport

The main responsibilities of School Transport Section are

- To oversee the delivery of a safe and efficient school transport service, operated by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department, within available resources and to ensure a coordinated Departmental approach in delivering school transport services
- To ensure timely payment of grants to assist eligible families with school transportation costs, in circumstances where it is not feasible or economic to provide school transport services.

These responsibilities support Goal 1 of the Department's strategy viz. "Learning for Life - We want an education and training system that provides all learners with the knowledge and skills they needs to participate fully in society and the economy"

Staffing: The Section has a current staffing level of 10.1 (WTEs) as follows: 1 Principal Officer (PO); 0.7 Assistant Principal Officer (APO); 1 Higher Executive Officer (HEO); 5.4 Executive Officers (EO); 2. Clerical Officers (CO)

Summary of School Transport Scheme

School transport is a significant daily operation, which directly supported almost 113,000 children in the 2015/2016 school year. School children make about 42 million journeys every school year, travelling over 93 million kilometres on over 6,500 routes to and from schools.

Between 2008 and 2014 expenditure on the school transport scheme reduced from €185.725m to €172.2m (-7.3%) This reduction was as a consequence of policy changes implemented in the 2011 and 2012 school years and derived from recommendations contained in the Value for Money Review of the Scheme, coupled with other efficiencies such as retendering of services and a rebate of an element of the Bus Éireann transport management charge.

School Transport provision has evolved considerably since the school transport scheme was established in 1967. However, the purpose of the Scheme has remained the same which is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote i.e. 3.2 kilometres (primary) and 4.8 kilometres (post primary) or more from their nearest school / education centre.

In particular, transport provision for children with special educational needs (sen) has expanded significantly since the 1970's to the current scheme introduced in November 2011.

The purpose of the SEN transport scheme is to provide a reasonable level of transport service for children with a diagnosed disability and/or special educational need who because of the nature of their disability may not be in a position to avail of a school bus service. While only 9% of children transported have special educational needs transport provision for these children accounts for approximately 40% of all school transport scheme expenditure.

Delivery of Service

The school transport scheme is delivered using a mix of Bus Éireann vehicles (427 operating daily/total fleet 499) and private contractor vehicles (3638) or some 4065 vehicles (@November 2015). Of the private contractor vehicles, 832 are taxis.

Payments to contractors are the single largest area of expenditure in the school transport scheme, amounting to approximately €111m, or almost 68% of the BE element of the scheme, in 2014.

The level of BE direct provision has been consistently reducing since 2008. The latest figures available show that there has been a 20% reduction in the Bus Éireann school transport fleet during this period viz. from 537 to 427 large buses operational on a daily basis or 10.5% of the total fleet.

Grants are payable for both eligible mainstream and special educational needs children in cases where there is no suitable school transport service. These grants are processed directly by Department's School Transport Section staff. Approximately 2,000 families are in receipt of school transport grants.

Charges

Current Annual Rate:

Primary:	Eligible / Concessionary	€100
	Family maximum	€220
Post Primary:	Eligible / Concessionary	€350
	Family maximum	€650

School transport charges have remained the same since the 2012/13 school year.

Eligible children holding valid medical cards and eligible children with special educational needs are exempt from paying the charge.

In 2014, receipts from school transport charges amounted to some €13m or 7.9% of the total cost of the scheme provided by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Service	Outturn 2013	Outturn 2014	Provisional Outturn 2015
School Transport	€170,749 m	€172,080 m	€173,000 m

Note: 2016 Allocation €175,000 m

3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.1 ISSUE: High Court (Commercial) Case: Supreme Court Appeal on the High Court Judgement delivered 23rd October 2012

Background:

A judicial review challenging the School Transport Scheme was admitted to the High Court (Commercial) list on 21st November 2011 in the case of Student Transport Scheme Limited vs. Department of Education and Skills with Bus Éireann named as a Notice Party at the direction of Court.

This case challenged the long standing accounting arrangements since 1968, amended in 1975, in relation to the school transport scheme between this Department and Bus Éireann under EU procurement and remedies directives.

The case was heard over 6 days in July 2012.

The Judgment was delivered by Mr. Justice McGovern on 23rd October 2012.

Existence of a contract:

The Judge concluded that;

“The operation of the Scheme does not establish the existence of a contract. I am satisfied, on the evidence, that there was no contract within the meaning of the Directive or the Regulations. Accordingly, the provisions of the Remedies Directive and the Remedies Regulations do not apply and the applicant is not entitled to the declaration of ineffectiveness which it seeks”.

CURRENT POSITION

Appeal to the Supreme Court/Court of Appeal

A motion appealing the decision was submitted to the Supreme Court by the Applicant on 22nd November 2012. Security for State costs and for the Notice Party, Bus Éireann, was granted on 15th February 2013. On 20th June 2014, the Supreme Court directed that the applicant be given two weeks to set out the documents they require to bring a motion seeking to adduce further evidence in the case. The State was given one week to respond to same. The case was transferred to the Court of Appeal established in late 2014, which heard this application on 1 December 2015. In the judgement of 18th December the applicant's application to admit into evidence additional documents was refused.

The substantive appeal was heard by the Court of Appeal in early February 2016 over 3 days. A judgement is awaited in this regard.

Given that the case is still active, any matters raised relating to any aspect of the proceedings namely matters raised on procurement or the arrangements between this Department and BE are considered to be sub-judice.

Other significant Issues

4.1 ISSUE: Upward pressures on the school transport budget

Background:

The school transport scheme is a "demand led" service. Increased expenditure in recent years can be attributed to two main factors:

- Increasing demand for school transport primarily for children with special educational needs
- The number of children who are exempt from paying the transport charge because they hold medical cards.

Over the past number of years the increased cost in expenditure arising from increased sanctions of services for special needs children has been offset by savings achieved in the school transport scheme generally.

Current Position:

To put the demands in context:

- Since 2008, Bus Éireann has introduced 1582 new school transport services and some 13700 other service improvements at a cost of over €47m – but managed over the same period to actually reduce the cost of the School Transport Scheme 4 years in a row.
- Despite adding 1582 new services operated by Contractors, the number of Contractors vehicles has only been increased by 370 since Spring 2009, underlining

the value of Bus Éireann network planning expertise and a coordinated approach nationally.

However, the same level of savings are unlikely to be achieved into the future as:-

- budgetary measures are now fully implemented and
- the annual tendering process undertaken by Bus Éireann is entering year 6 of the initial cycle while the five year contracts entered into in 2011 will now be subject to retendering; this process has now garnered the initial significant savings.

The projected costs reflect a no change policy for the past 4 school years on the level of school transport charges and medical card exemptions, combined with the annual rebates from Bus Éireann on the transport management charge.

Children with special educational needs

Approximately 40% of expenditure relates to children with special educational needs. To put this in context, in 2013/14 alone for example there was an increase of some 1,000 children with special educational needs availing of transport. Thus, children with special educational needs represented almost 9% of the total number of children transported (some *10,000 of a total of some 113,000 in 2015/2016) at a cost of some €68.5 million (2014 figure the latest currently available).

(*Note: This figure does not include some 750 children with special educational needs who were in receipt of the Special Transport Grant (STG) in 2014).

Given the transition of these children with special educational needs into post primary settings and the provision of school transport for autistic pre-school children the cost of transporting this cohort of children is a significant contributing factor in the increasing cost of school transport provision generally.

The cost of providing a dedicated tailored service for one special needs child can be the same as the cost of a minibus for up to fourteen mainstream children. Thus, the number of vehicles required, and as a consequence costs rise to meet demand, despite a reduction in the overall number of mainstream children transported.

In relation to wheelchair bound children, it is noteworthy that in 2003 there were 167 wheelchair accessible vehicles under contract transporting children under the scheme. By 2007, this number had increased to 263 and today this figure has reached over 500 vehicles.

Children holding Medical Cards:

In 2015, some 10,400 **(36%)** primary children held valid medical cards (GMS Scheme) while a post primary level some 27,500 **(502%)** children held valid medical cards. This compares with 27% of post primary children in 2008 and 39% of post primary children in 2009 (primary statistics were not routinely collected at that time as all eligible children transported free of charge; primary charges for eligible children were introduced for the first time in 2011).

Children with special educational needs and children holding valid medical cards (GMS scheme), are exempt from paying school transport charges.

4.2 **ISSUE: EU Investigation (C31/2007) – State Aid to Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus**

What is State Aid?

This is set out in Article 107 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Article 107.1 contains the basic definition of State aid and the meaning of State aid is derived from the interpretation of Article 107.1 in the rulings of the EU Courts and the decisions of the EU Commission.

There are key phrases in Article 107.1, all of which must apply if a measure is to be State aid namely:

- Must be "granted by a Member State or through State resources".
- Must be aid which "distorts or threatens to distort competition".
- Must favour "certain undertakings or the production of certain goods".
- Must be aid which "affects trade between Member States".

Aid can be in any form whatsoever e.g. grants, loans or guarantees awarded by the State. A measure fulfilling all of the four characteristics set out above is considered incompatible with the common market, and is therefore prohibited. There are exceptions to the prohibition - measures or schemes approved by the Commission as meeting certain criteria or which come within certain types of exemption provided for by the Commission or the Council are not prohibited.

Status of Commission State Aid investigations and rulings

The procedure involved in investigations has been clarified over the years. In practice a Member State is expected to use its powers to comply with a Commission decision if the Commission decides that the aid is illegal.

The Commission commenced an investigation on state aid to Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus in 2007. The State's response was co-ordinated by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department supplied any information to that Department as required by the Commission.

The State has maintained that the operation and administration of public service obligation transport services and the school transport scheme respectively are in accordance with the provisions of EU law.

The Commission's Decision was issued on 16th October 2014 and published on 21st November. It found the School Transport Scheme was existing aid since it is based on a 1975 agreement. For this reason it was not unlawful at the time the complaint was made.

The Commission Decision was not a ruling on the tendering arrangements in place between the Department of Education and Skills and Bus Éireann for the School Transport Scheme.

The Commission indicated that it would initiate dialogue with Ireland to agree on appropriate measures to ensure that the School Transport Scheme is compatible with the internal market in the future. The Department commenced an informal dialogue with the Commission in this regard, which is a prelude to a formal dialogue process covered by Article 17 (2) of Regulation 659/1999.

The next steps are governed by Articles 17 to 19 of Regulation 659/1999 viz:

- Under Article 17, Ireland informed of the Commission preliminary view and given an opportunity to submit its comments within a period of one month. (In duly justified cases the Commission may extend this period).
- Under Article 18, the Commission having considered the information will issue a recommendation proposing appropriate measures.
- Article 19 sets out the legal consequences of a proposal for appropriate measures.

A letter under Article 17 was received from the Commission on 4th June 2015 and with the agreement of the Commission a response was provided in late July. As part of the Article 17 process a further letter was received from the Commission on 25 November 2015 which sought some clarifications on the details of the proposals and a response within one month. Given the time of year, the Commission extended the response date to 11 February 2016.

The release of documents pertaining to the investigation is a matter for the relevant European Commission Directorate.

4.3 Increase in the number of “concessionary” children availing of school transport services as a consequence of the 2011 budgetary changes

Changes to the school transport scheme (primary and post primary) were announced in Budget 2011, derived from recommendations in the Value for Money Review of the School Transport Scheme (published March 2011). One of the changes at primary was the cessation of the long standing “closed school rule” and at post primary the cessation of the long standing catchment boundary area system (CB) to determine eligibility. These changes, introduced in 2011 and 2012 respectively, will take a full school cycle of 8/6 years respectively to implement viz. completion by June 2019/June 2018.

Existing children at that time who were eligible for school transport, and met the distance criteria of 3.2kms/4.8 kms respectively, retain their transport eligibility for the duration of their schooling, provided their circumstances do not change.

This approach complements the overall Department policy which is to ensure that specific school accommodation needs for defined geographical areas are addressed in an orderly fashion.

Transport on a “concessionary” basis is available to children who are not eligible for school transport, because they are not attending their nearest school or because they reside less than the requisite distance. Transport on a concessionary basis is subject to a number of conditions which are detailed in the School Transport Scheme such as the existence of spare seats on the bus after all eligible children have been catered for and payment of the school transport charge regardless of whether the child holds a valid medical card.

As a consequence of these changes, the evidence is that a growing number of children are availing of school transport on a concessionary basis since 2011 as follows:

Year	Primary Total (excl. SEN)	Of which C*	% C*	Post Primary Total	Of which C*	% *C on transport	Total on transport (excl SEN)	C* on Transport	Overall % C*
2011/2	41186	4312	10.5	63546	542	0.9	104732	4854	4.7
2012/3	40490	6026	14.9	63656	2923	4.6	104146	8949	8.6
2013/4	40711	7267	17.9	64113	5103	8.0	104824	12370	11.8
2014/5	39893	9699	24.3	62893	8989	14.3	102786	18688	18.2

*C denotes concessionary

Given this trend, the Department is working in cooperation with Bus Éireann with a view to downsizing the buses required to transport eligible children which will commence on a phased basis from the coming school year 2016/2017.

Teachers, SNA's Terms and Conditions

1. Unit / Section Overview

Teacher/Special Needs Assistants Terms and Conditions Section develops policy in relation to Terms and Conditions of employment of Teachers and Special Needs Assistants.

The Section participates in discussions and negotiations with Unions and School Management bodies on various issues that arise including:-

- The regulation and monitoring of teacher and SNA employment terms and conditions
- The Occupational Health Strategy for teachers and Special Needs Assistants
- The regulation and monitoring of the incremental credit scheme for teachers and processing of applications
- Processing applications for allowances for Teachers who were in employment prior to the 1 February 2012
- Processing applications for secondment to outside organisations
- Co-ordinating and administering the Foreign Language and Teacher Exchange Schemes
- Updating circulars governing the employment terms and conditions of primary and post-primary teachers/SNA's in order to ensure greater consistency and efficiency
- Facilitating the disciplinary process for teachers arising under section 24 of the Education Act 1998.

WTE Staff Numbers by Grade:

Principal Officer = 1

Assistant Principal Officer = 2

Higher Executive Officer = 4

Executive Officer = 10

Staff Officer = 1

Clerical Officer = 16

2. Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
Occupational Health for Teachers/SNA's	€1,400,000	€1,400,000	€1,700,000
Cultural Agreements/ Language Teacher Exchange	€805,000	€801,451	€805,000
Total	€2,205,000	€2,201,451	€2,505,000

3. Key priority issues

3.1 Public Service wide sick leave scheme

Background:

A new public service wide sick leave scheme which came into operation on 31 March 2014. However, following a Labour Court recommendation and as the changes were more significant in the Education Sector it was agreed that the new scheme would be operational in this sector from 01 September 2014.

A number of new features were introduced into the Education Sector including half pay, Temporary Rehabilitation Remuneration and Critical illness provisions as well as transitional arrangements for both pregnancy related sick leave and serious illness occurring prior to the introduction of the scheme.

Current Position:

A review of the operation of the scheme which is chaired by Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is ongoing. The objective is to evaluate the scheme's effectiveness and address any operational issues.

3.2 Occupational Health Services – Employee Assistance Service

Background:

An Occupational Health Strategy was put in place as a supportive resource for teachers/SNA's to promote their health in the workplace. The focus is primarily on prevention rather than cure. The Occupational Health Strategy comprises of the Employee Assistance and Occupational Health Services (OHS). The OHS which is contracted to an external provider (currently Medmark), provides services including but not limited to pre-employment assessments, ill health retirement assessments as well as sickness absence management and medical assessments of fitness for work. Current contract with Medmark Ltd is due for renewal at the end of 2017.

The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is to provide Teachers/SNA's and their immediate family members with easy access to confidential counselling and to assist in coping with the effect of personal and work-related issues. The service which is free and confidential is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to over 74,000 Teachers/SNA's serving in 4,000 Primary and Post-Primary schools. Current contract with Carecall Ltd ends on September 30, 2016.

Current Position:

In accordance with Public Procurement Guidelines, the Office of Government Procurement has advertised for a Single Supplier Framework Contracts for the Provision of Employee Assistance Services to the Public Sector. This Section will be involved in the evaluation process to select a suitable supplier.

3.3 Integration and consolidation of terms and conditions

The conditions of employment of teachers employed in Primary and Post Primary schools have evolved in the past on a sectoral basis.

Work has been ongoing on integrating and consolidating the terms and conditions applicable to all teachers regardless of the sector they work in.

This work is intended to:

- bring greater clarity for teachers in relation to entitlements and the rules applicable in any instance;
- enable employers (Boards of Management or ETBs) to make decisions at school level without excessive scrutiny by the Department;
- ensure a consistency of approach for all registered teachers (except where separate arrangements for primary and post-primary teachers are clearly warranted);
- Bring about more timely decision making in relation to any applications made by teachers under the terms of the circulars;

The ultimate aim is to produce a book of the terms and conditions of employment of teachers in Primary and Post Primary schools (available for reference and use by all stakeholders) which will be maintained and updated on the web as the conditions change from time to time.

**CURRICULUM AND
ASSESSMENT POLICY
UNIT, TEACHER
EDUCATION, ICT
POLICY, EARLY YEARS
EDUCATION: GARY Ó
DONNCHADHA**

Structure of the Division

This division deals with Curriculum and Assessment, Teacher Education and ICT policy and Early Years Education

There are three Principal Officers working in the area:

- Curriculum and Assessment Unit, Breda Naughton
- Teacher Education and ICT Policy, Eddie Ward
- Early Years Education Policy Unit, Aoife Conduit

The Division has staff in more than one location. Teacher Education and ICT Policy are located in Athlone. Curriculum and Assessment Unit is located in Marlboro Street, Dublin. Early Years Education Policy Unit is co- located in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in Mespil Road.

Curriculum and Assessment Unit

1. Unit / Section Overview

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit is responsible for

- Maintaining the integrity and momentum of curricular reforms in collaboration with the Inspectorate, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the State Examinations Commission (SEC) and other stakeholders.
- The governance, staffing, funding and monitoring of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the State Examinations Commission (SEC), the National Centre for Guidance in Education, An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscoilaíochta (COGG) and the Educational Research Centre (ERC), Music Generation and PPLI.
- Coordinating and leading on a number of policy issues that relate to aspects of the primary and post primary curriculum but that also involve other sections within the Department and across departments, especially Department of Health, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeilge and the Department of Justice and Law Reform on topics such as physical activity, preventing obesity, education for sustainable development, the Irish language, early years education and many others.
- The Withholding and Appeals processes for candidates sitting the State Examinations who do not comply with the Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools

Staffing: The Unit comprises (WTEs): 1 PO, 1.6 . APOs (equivalents), .9 Senior Inspector, 2 HEOs, 2.6 EOs and 1 AO.

2. Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2013	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
Standardised Testing	€3,251,545	€3,310,000	€3,384,305	€4,300,000
NCCA	€4,162,461	€4,139,000	€4,341,312	€5,042,000
NCGE	€506,000	€506,000	€506,000	€506,000
SEC	€52,881,000	€52,531,000	€64,431,000	€54,031,000
COGG	€1,318,450	€1,350,000	€1,350,000	€1,375,000
Post Primary Language Initiative	€675,000	€675,000	€675,000	€685,000
Music Generation	0	€300,000	€1,400,000	€2,545,000
ERC	0	0	0	€900,000

3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.1 Implementation of Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life

Background:

The Programme for Government made literacy and numeracy a national priority. *The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020* was launched in July 2011 following extensive consultation. The Strategy sets ambitious targets and describes the actions needed to improve the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy.

Current position:

Test results published in January 2015 show that the 2020 targets, set in the Strategy, have already been achieved.¹¹ From academic year 2014/2015, schools must use the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's Education Passport for the dual purpose of reporting to parents and of transferring information of pupils transitioning from primary school to post-primary school once enrolment has been confirmed.¹²

An interim review of the Strategy, scheduled for 2016, was brought forward to 2015. This involved written feedback from and meetings with the relevant sections of the Department, and the external agencies which were assigned responsibility for aspects of the original Strategy, and consultation with as many new agencies (i.e. those formed since 2011, or those who had no identified roles in the 2011 Strategy), in order to ensure as wide a consultation as possible between August and December 2015.

The Department of Education and Skills held a forum of internal and external stakeholders on 14th January 2016 to present the main findings and some provisional future directions arising from the collation of the review inputs. The forum gave stakeholders an opportunity to discuss the outcomes and the views of this forum will contribute to a re-refresh of the Strategy. The interim review is currently being drafted and is expected to provide an overview of both the successes of the Strategy as well as the remaining challenges. It will highlight priorities that need to be addressed during the second half of the Strategy's lifespan.

¹¹ Education Research Centre, 'Improved Performance among Primary School Pupils in National Assessments of English Reading and Mathematics' [press release], 12 January 2015, http://www.erc.ie/documents/na14perf_pressrelease.pdf [accessed 15 January 2015]. Department of Education and Skills, 'Minister O'Sullivan welcomes publication of national assessments in primary schools' [press release] 12 January 2015, <http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2015-Press-Releases/PR2015-per-cent2001per-cent20-12.html> [accessed 15 January 2015]. The 2014 National Assessments carried out by the Educational Research Centre showed an improvement in literacy and numeracy skills for the first time since 1980 among second and sixth class pupils. The results also show a reduction in the proportion of low achieving pupils which suggests that the *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* (DEIS) Programme is yielding results.

¹² See section 2.3 of this report for more details. Department of Education and Skills, Circular Letter 27/2015 Information relation to Actions under the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Standardised Testing, Reporting, Library Support and Other Matters.

A brief summary of progress under some of the relevant headings is given below.

Enabling parents and communities to support children's literacy and numeracy development

The Department has worked with NALA (the National Adult Literacy Agency) on reaching parents and communities. For example two series of "The family project" have been aired on RTE.

Improving the Curriculum and Learning Experience

(i) Primary (further information contained in the primary reform section)

- the language curriculum for infants to second class will be introduced to schools in September 2016
- a review of the primary mathematics curriculum is underway. A background paper should be completed in early 2016.
- a general review of primary curriculum began in autumn 2014
- Circular 56/2011 issued to all primary schools asking them to, inter alia:
 - Increase the time spent on mathematics by 70 minutes per week;
 - Increase the time spent on literacy by one hour per week.

(ii) Post-primary

- the roll out of the new specifications for Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Maths was complete as of September 2012. 2014 is the first year that all Leaving Certificate students sat all 5 strands of the new specification. There has been a very significant increase in the proportion of candidates taking Higher Level Maths from 2011 to 2015 (15.8% to 27.4%) This is thought to be largely attributable to the award of the additional 25 points for CAO purposes. the new Junior Cycle Framework PA is being rolled out to schools since September 2014. English is the first subject to be changed. A number of short courses are also available to schools since September 2014, including one in digital media literacy. All subjects and short courses will have the skills of literacy and numeracy embedded as they are developed (see below for further information on the implementation of Junior Cycle).

Improving assessment and evaluation to support better learning in literacy and numeracy

- Transfer of standardised testing data from primary to post-primary has been obligatory for all schools since 2012. New Education Passport material to transfer information from primary to post-primary is obligatory for use in all schools from 2014/15 academic year.
- School self-evaluation requires schools to focus on literacy and numeracy
- Standardised tests in English and Mathematics and Irish (in Irish medium schools) are compulsory for primary students in 2nd, 4th and 6th class to enable schools to plan their literacy and numeracy interventions. Results are reported to parents, schools boards of management and the Department.
- Ireland continues to participate in
 - TIMSS (**Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study**). This study was last carried out in 2015 and results will be available in 2016.
 - PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) This study was last carried out in 2015 and results will be available in December 2016.
 - PIRLS (**Progress in International Reading Literacy Study**) This study will be carried out in 2016
 - Testing for National Assessments of Mathematics and English reading 2014 are complete. Reports to be published in 2016.

Next Steps:

The work on curriculum reform at post-primary continues with the rollout of Junior Cycle. At primary, the focus will be on the completion and thereafter the implementation of the language curriculum (see below).

A High Level Group on Literacy and Numeracy chaired by the Secretary General oversees implementation of the Strategy.

3.2 Reform of Primary School Curriculum

Background:

The current Primary School Curriculum was introduced in 1999. Since that time, curriculum reviews, research and work with schools have highlighted teachers' successes with the current primary curriculum and also their calls for improvement. Developments in the sectors in early years and after primary have focused on improving the quality of the learning and teaching environments and experiences of pupils through a more relevant and engaging curriculum.

Work is currently underway on revising the Language Curriculum and the Mathematics Curriculum at primary level as well as developing a new curriculum on Education about Religions, Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics. Parallel to developments in these specific curricular areas,

the NCCA is also developing proposals for the future reform of the overall structure of the primary curriculum.

Current position

Primary Curriculum

A consultation process will be launched in the course of 2016 which will invite views from teachers, parents, education professionals and others on the entire curriculum. This will provide stakeholders with an opportunity to outline their views on the existing curriculum and how it needs to change to meet current and future children's needs.

Revisions to the overall Primary School Curriculum will incorporate the developments already underway in relation to revising the Language and Mathematics curricula and the new ERB and Ethics curriculum(see below).

Integrated Primary Language Curriculum

An integrated primary language curriculum for all children from Junior Infants to Second Class in English-medium and Irish-medium schools has been developed and will be implemented in schools over a number of years beginning in September 2016. It is based on detailed research which was commissioned by the NCCA and extensive consultation

The Primary Language Curriculum is an integrated curriculum. This means that it has the same structure and strands for English and Irish — Oral Language/Teanga ó Bhéal, Reading/Léitheoireacht and Writing/Scríbhneoireacht. This integration between languages can help primary teachers to plan for and support children's progression in the two languages.

The curriculum has four interconnected parts:

- **Learning Outcomes** replace content objectives in the 1999 curriculum and describe the expected language learning and development for children at the end of a two-year period.
- **Progression Continua** describe, in broad terms, milestones and steps in a child's journey in his/her language learning and development.
- **Support Material** replaces the Teacher Guidelines in the 1999 curriculum and includes practical advice illustrated with online digital resources, videos and photos, to inform teachers' work in the school's first and second languages. Such advice will relate to different aspects - oral language, reading and writing. Additional guidance regarding implementation of the new language curriculum in the SEN context will be included in the support material in due course.
- **Examples** developed by teachers and children, show children's language learning and development across the three strands and across a range of school contexts. These

examples are linked to Learning Outcomes and Progression Continua, and are presented as short videos.

The curriculum reflects the principles, practice guidelines, and focus on integration in *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (NCCA, 2009) and supports continuity between children's learning and development in early childhood settings and in infant classes.

The new curriculum differs from the 1999 curriculum for English and Gaeilge in the following ways:

- It is integrated – it has the same curriculum structure for both languages
- It has fewer outcomes than the 1999 curriculum
- It includes a continuum of significant milestones for children's language learning and development for each strand: oral language, reading and writing
- It includes practical examples of children's work

Note that although the new curriculum is designed as an online curriculum. In this initial phase hard copy documents are also being made available to teachers.

Work on the "senior" language curriculum in the primary sector is ongoing and it is expected that it will begin to be rolled out to schools from the academic year 2019/2020.

Primary Mathematics Curriculum

The process of revising the Mathematics Curriculum has also begun.

As part of the consultation the NCCA has held a number of focus group meetings. A background paper to inform the thinking on development of the new curriculum is due in 2016.

As is the case in relation to language, and in line with the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, initial work will focus on a revised mathematics curriculum for children in the first four years of primary school. Timelines have not been finalised but it is expected that this will be ready in 2018.

Religious Education in Primary Schools

The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary sector (2012) recommended that the State has a responsibility to ensure that all children have the right to experience *Education about Religious Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics*.

The NCCA is developing a curriculum for *ERB and Ethics* for all primary schools. Initial work has begun and a consultation began in late 2015 and is continuing to this Spring. There has been a very significant response to the consultation to date. The development of a curriculum for *ERB and Ethics* for all children was part of the Government's commitment to supporting greater inclusion and diversity in our schools.

Teaching and learning about different religions and beliefs, and ethics may already be taking place in many primary schools but not in all. The new curriculum will provide consistency, structure, support and a curricular space to allow for learning and for discussion of the issues in this area.

The development of a curriculum for *ERB and Ethics* is taking place within the broader changes being considered for the Primary School Curriculum.

Regulation of the Primary School Curriculum and immersion education in Irish Medium primary schools

- The policy on Gaeltacht education is in at the final stage of development and will be forwarded to the Minister upon finalisation in 2016. This policy has been informed by extensive research, consultation and debate with stakeholders.
- In light of the sociolinguistic challenges facing Gaeltacht schools, including the the increasing use of English in Gaeltacht areas and the fragile status of Irish as the language of Gaeltacht communities, the Department initiated a review of Gaeltacht education in 2014.
- An overarching purpose of the Gaeltacht education policy is to strengthen Irish-medium education in the Gaeltacht as part of the 20-Year Strategy for Irish.
- A comprehensive Gaeltacht education review was carried out to identify policy options to enhance Irish-medium educational provision across early-years settings, and primary and post-primary schools in Gaeltacht areas. This coincided with the introduction of statutory language planning processes in Gaeltacht areas prescribed in the Gaeltacht Act 2012.
- A review of national and international research, case-studies on primary and post-primary Gaeltacht schools, and supply and demand, informed the preparation of the Gaeltacht education policy proposals. This review showed that Gaeltacht schools face considerable challenges to cope with students who come from homes with very varied levels of Irish-language skill. Children raised through Irish are now a minority within Gaeltacht schools. There is increasing use of English in Gaeltacht communities and pressure on schools to move to English-medium instruction.

- A comprehensive six-month consultation process on the Gaeltacht policy proposals was launched in May 2015 to inform the policy on Gaeltacht education. As part of the Civil Service Open Policy Debates, the Department also organised a forum on the policy for Gaeltacht education in October 2015 to explore the major themes and issues emerging from the consultation.

Next Steps:

Begin roll out of primary language curriculum for classes from junior infants to second class inclusive from September 2016

Initiate consultation on future of overall primary school curriculum, beginning with infant classes

Continue work on the development of the new mathematics curriculum

Consider the outcomes of the ERB and Ethics consultation

Draft the regulatory instrument to prescribe the primary curriculum.

Finalise Gaeltacht education policy

3.3 Framework for Junior Cycle 2015

Background:

In July 2015 the Minister for Education and Skills published the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015. Since then intense discussions have taken place not only with teacher unions but also with the education partners.

Key Features of the Framework for Junior Cycle

Implementation of the new Junior Cycle commenced in September 2014 with the introduction of English, for first year students. Subjects are being introduced on a phased basis up to 2019 and are being supported by a comprehensive CPD programme for teachers provided by the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) support service.

The new Junior Cycle incorporates a modernised curriculum across all subjects and a balanced range of assessment modes that will help to deliver a learner experience appropriate to the needs of the 21st century.

The new Junior Cycle gives schools greater flexibility to design programmes that are suited to the needs of their Junior Cycle students and to the particular context of the school. Each school's programme:

- will have at its core Principles ,Statements of Learning, and Key Skills that will guide schools in planning their Junior Cycle programme to reflect the needs of their learners
- will encompass learning in subjects or a combination of subjects and short courses
- will include an area of learning entitled ‘Wellbeing’ from September 2017
- may include Priority Learning Units (PLUs) at L2 and L1that will help to provide a junior cycle programme is appropriate to the needs of a small number of students with significant special educational needs.
- will provide a range of other learning experiences

Schools will have the flexibility and discretion to decide what combination of subjects, short courses, PLUs or other learning experiences will be provided in their three year programme.

Assessment in the Junior Cycle

The Junior Cycle involves a dual approach to assessment that supports student learning through regular classroom-based assessment conducted by teachers and through a State examination at the end of the three-year cycle. This dual approach reduces the focus on one terminal examination and increases the prominence given to classroom-based assessment. This change of emphasis will enable teachers to provide really meaningful feedback that helps students to understand how their learning can be improved.

Two structured Classroom-Based Assessments will be introduced in each subject. One of these Classroom-Based Assessments will take place in second year, and the other during third year. Each assessment will be drawn from a variety of types of assessment, which might include project tasks, oral language tasks, investigations, practical or designing and making tasks, field studies and artistic performance. These Classroom-Based Assessments will be assessed and reported upon to students and parents by the students’ teachers.

Current Position

A comprehensive professional development programme to support Junior Cycle is being rolled out. This includes whole-school CPD, subject-specific seminars, seminars for school leaders, teacher-led CPD and school visits. This will be led by the specialist JCT team.

A circular setting out the main provisions of the Junior Cycle Framework 2015 will issue to schools in February 2016.

The TUI has agreed to the implementation of the new Framework and is co-operating with the new arrangements for this. The ASTI has not yet accepted the Framework and has a directive of non-cooperation in place for its members.

Next Steps:

The NCCA will continue with the development of subject specifications in line with the timetable outlined in the *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015*
Additional resources/time will be given to teachers and school management to support the phased implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle.
CPD will continue to be rolled out.
Circular to issue to schools clarifying key aspects relating to implementation.

3.4 Mathematics (post primary)

Background:

A new Maths curriculum, colloquially known as “project” “maths”, has been designed to transform teaching and learning of Mathematics at second level, so that students will develop instrumental understanding (knowing how), relational understanding (knowing why), the ability to apply their knowledge and skills in familiar and unfamiliar contexts, and analytical and creative powers in mathematics. A key objective is to improve attainment levels in Math’s and to encourage more students to take the subject at higher level both at Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate.

Current Position:

There has been a significant increase in the numbers of candidates taking Higher Level Mathematics in recent years. The table below shows the sits for Leaving Certificate Mathematics from 2011 to 2015.

	Sits Higher Level	Sits Ordinary Level	Sits Foundation Level
2015	14,691	33,266	5,613
2014	14,326	32,428	5,628
2013	13,014	32,165	5,677
2012	11,131	33,917	5,395
2011	8,235	37,506	6,249

Bonus Points

The seven universities, together with DIT and RCSI, and the Institutes of Technology collectively decided to operate a bonus points scheme for Higher Level Mathematics for a four year trial period from 2012 to 2015 inclusive. A bonus of 25 points is allocated to students who achieve a grade D3 or above in LC Higher Level mathematics. This pilot scheme was specifically designed with the objective of maximising the numbers of Leaving Certificate students who study for and sit the HL Maths exams, and in particular of reducing the numbers of students who might drop down from Higher to Ordinary Level during the LC senior cycle. The uptake figures indicate that the bonus points scheme has been successful. Bonus points are continuing to operate for Leaving Certificate maths candidates.

The introduction of the new Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Maths specifications, alongside the availability of Bonus Points have led to an increase of students studying Higher Level Maths.

Next Steps:

The implementation of Project Maths will continue to be closely monitored by the Implementation Support Group

3.5 Optional oral Irish test in the Junior Certificate.

Background:

A circular issued in 2007 to post primary schools notifying them of the decision to increase the marks for Oral Irish to 40% in the examinations for all new entrants to post primary school in September 2007. The changes came into effect in the Junior Certificate examination in 2010 and in the Leaving Certificate in 2012.

Current Position:

The changes did not result in syllabus change at junior certificate level. However, the format of the optional oral test has been changed to allow for the increased emphasis on oral assessment. Candidates who do not sit the optional oral are marked on their aural and written examinations only.

Optional oral examinations at junior certificate level in language subjects have been available for a considerable time. The SEC issues a specification and marking scheme, and the optional tests are marked locally by the school, notified to SEC and included in the Junior Certificate results. No fee is paid for marking the tests, and the organisational arrangements are made locally. Teacher unions have directives in place urging that teachers should not undertake this work unless it is properly remunerated and supported. The ASTI's policy is that teachers should not assess their own students for certification purposes.

However, the increase to 40% for marks for oral Irish at Leaving Certificate has resulted in pressure being exerted on schools by parents to have their students also assessed at junior certificate level. Parents see this as an important dry run for the high stakes Leaving Certificate.

In 2007 just 16 schools offered the optional oral at Junior Certificate, and 339 candidates availed of this option. In 2015 a total of 16,529 candidates, from 309 schools, took the optional oral test compared to 14,172 in 2014. 2015 stats to go here.

A new specification for Junior Cycle Irish is currently being prepared by the NCCA for implementation from September 2017. There will be two specifications. In general one will be for native speakers and the other for learners of the language.

Next Steps:

The NCCA is carrying out a review of the impact of oral Irish at Senior Cycle. This will indicate the success of the measure.

3.6 Senior Cycle Developments

Current position

Sciences: The Minister has approved the three new Leaving Certificate specifications for Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. These were approved on a provisional basis pending the implementation of a trial of the assessment arrangements outlined in the specifications. The new specifications make provision for a practical assessment which will have resource and logistical implications. The trial of the terminal practical assessment will be carried out by NCCA working with the SEC and the Department during 2016/2017.

Gaeilge: A review is currently underway of the oral component of Irish in the Leaving Certificate, and it is expected that a report will be published on this in the first half of 2016.

Politics and Society: A new specification for Politics and Society will be introduced in September 2016 to a selected cohort of over 40 schools who have been selected from almost 120, following an open invitation to introduce this as an optional Leaving Certificate subject. Politics and Society aims to develop the student's ability to be a reflective and active citizen, in a way that is informed by the insights and skills of social and political science. The introduction of the specification is part of the Department of Education and Skills commemoration of 1916 and its commitment to education for sustainable development.

The subject will be a full Leaving Certificate subject, of 180 hours duration over two years (c.4-5 periods per week) and therefore similar to most other State Examination subjects.

The new subject has four main strands of study:

- Power and decision-making
- Active citizenship
- Human rights and responsibilities
- Globalisation and localisation

Art: Revision to Assessment Arrangements for Leaving Certificate Art (for first examination in 2018) are being put in place for students entering Leaving Certificate Year 1 in September 2016 and taking their examinations in 2018 and thereafter.

Physical Education: At senior cycle, there are two developments are underway. Leaving Certificate P.E. is being developed by the NCCA as a full subject that can be assessed as a Leaving Certificate Subject in a manner similar to other subjects such as Maths and Irish. Senior Cycle P.E. is being designed to provide schools with a framework within which they can design a P.E. programme for those students who do not choose to take P.E. as part of their Leaving Certificate examination.

Other specification developments:

Work is currently underway on revising Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science, Applied Mathematics and Economics.

Next Steps:

Trialing of the practical assessment examination of the specifications for Biology, Chemistry and Physics

NCCA to complete review of assessment arrangements for Irish in the Leaving Certificate

Politics and Society to be introduced in a number of schools from September 2016

Work on developing specifications for Leaving Certificate Applied Maths, Economics, and Agricultural Science to continue

Assessment arrangements for Leaving Certificate Art to be implemented

In the short to medium term the Department will consider the existing Senior Cycle programmes to ensure that our young people have the skills and knowledge to transition from mainstream post primary education either into further studies or work. For example, the NCCA has been requested to review the Leaving Certificate Applied.

3.7 Supporting the Transition from Second-Level to Higher Education

Considered in isolation, the Leaving Certificate is an examination of medium stakes, marking the end of second-level education for students. However, its additional role in selecting school leavers for admission to higher education institutions has increased the stakes and pressure on students. This has had a negative effect on teaching and learning practices as well as educational outcomes at second level.

A Transitions Reform Steering Group is chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills and has membership from Department of Education and Skills, the National Centre for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the State Examinations Commission (SEC), the Irish Universities Association (IUA) and Institute of Technology Ireland (IOTI), as well as Professor Áine Hyland as an independent expert.

The Group has, since 2012, been working collaboratively to develop and agree proposals to improve the transition experience of young people moving from second-level to higher education.

Three key underlying and unifying principles of the approach taken by the partners have been identified as follows:

- A recognition that good learning outcomes and key competences developed through a high quality student experience at second level provide a firm foundation for successful learning in higher education;
- A simplified, coherent and streamlined approach to system architecture and processes helps to build a bridge for students at the interface between different levels of education;

- Our national examination and our higher education admissions systems must have reliability, validity, integrity, equity, fairness and transparency as their hallmarks. It is essential that full public confidence in both systems is maintained.

The partners involved initially made:

- A commitment to address any problematic predictability identified in an analysis of predictability in the Leaving Certificate examination:
- A commitment to reduce the number of grading bands used in the Leaving Certificate examination;
- A commitment to significantly reduce the number of programme offerings for a broader undergraduate entry to level 8 honours bachelor degree programmes in the universities and to review level 8 programme provision in the institutes of technology to ensure a mixed portfolio of programmes with denominated and generic entry

In April 2015 the Minister for Education and Skills published a report entitled “Supporting a Better Transition from Second Level to Higher Education – Implementation and Next Steps”, which set out a package of reforms developed by the stakeholders involved and which are designed to support students in the transition from second level to higher education.

Those reforms are as follows –

- To introduce a new grading scheme for the Leaving Certificate, which will reduce the number of grade bands from 14 to 8 at each level.
- Related to the new grading scheme, a revised Common Points Scale is also to be introduced. Developed by the universities and institutes of technology, the revised scale -
- preserves the relative value of achievement at Ordinary level in relation to achievement at Higher level that applies in the current common points scale,
- minimises the use of random selection that may result from too many students achieving the same points score, particularly at Higher level, and
- encourages the take-up of Higher level subjects at Leaving Certificate by awarding points to the new H7 grade (30-40%).

Given these developments and developments at Junior cycle, there is now a need to consider a broad review of senior cycle education.

3.8 20 Year Irish Language Strategy

Background:

The 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language was published in December 2010. The key measures in the Strategy relating to education are

- Strengthening of Irish in initial teacher training and extended Gaeltacht placement for teachers as part of this
- Up to 20% of places in Colleges of Education to be retained for students educated through Irish in Gaeltacht schools and Gaelscoileanna with students in English medium schools also being eligible subject to a high performance threshold in Irish in the Leaving Certificate
- Post graduate programmes in Irish language teaching for teachers at primary and post primary level
- Strengthened investment in in-service training, and in the production of materials
- Piloting of language acquisition units in the three main Gaeltacht areas at primary level
- Intensive evening /immersion courses for post primary students in the Gaeltacht needing additional support
- Building limited partial immersion approaches in pre-schools (nursery rhymes, DVDs etc) and providing naíonraí in areas where there are all Irish primary schools and in other areas of demand – (for Office of Minister for Children)
- Implementing partial immersion approaches over time in the primary system
- An earmarked fund for expanded Irish provision in higher education and initiatives to ensure that Irish is a vibrant part of the social life of the colleges
- A Gaeltacht scholarship scheme for serving teachers
- Continued enhancement of adult education provision
- Implementing the Ballyvourney initiative
- A National Centre for Irish medium Teacher Professional Development in an existing educational institution (probably a teacher education institution)

Current position:

Specific progress relevant to aspects of the Twenty Year Strategy is covered elsewhere in this document. A summary of progress in key areas is outlined below:

Language curriculum at primary level

See earlier material on primary curriculum reform

Digitisation of Séideán Sí

The reading materials currently available in hard copy for Séideán Sí, an integrated Irish language programme that has been especially designed to support the teaching of Irish in

Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht primary schools have been digitised. A dedicated website has been provided which gives teachers and learners access to the digitised materials (<http://www.seideansi.ie/>). This initiative is a collaborative partnership involving Foras na Gaeilge and CCEA in Northern Ireland as key partners and assisted by DES, COGG, NCCA and others.

Prescription of the Primary Curriculum

See earlier material on primary curriculum reform relating to immersion education in Irish medium primary schools.

New Junior Cycle- full specification

A new specification for Junior Cycle Irish is currently being prepared by the NCCA for implementation from September 2017. There will be two specifications. In general one will be for native speakers and the other for learners of the language.

Oral Irish – current Junior Certificate

See earlier material on Optional oral Irish test in the Junior Certificate

Oral Irish-Senior Cycle

In 2012, changed assessment arrangements at LC increased the weighting of marks allocated to the oral assessment from 25% to 40%.

Teacher Education and the Irish Language

The Professional Development Service for Teachers continues to support teachers in the delivery of Irish curricula at both primary and post-primary levels with a particular emphasis on in-school support and provision of materials online. A range of relevant CPD events (seminars and workshops) are offered based on national education priorities.

Gaeltacht Education

The Department is to finalise its review of education in the Gaeltacht to identify options for educational provision in primary and post-primary schools in Gaeltacht areas of varying linguistic profiles. The review looked at the impact of pre-school provision on primary

education in Gaeltacht areas. Furthermore, the review has identified support measures for teachers' practice that would be required to improve teaching through Irish in Gaeltacht schools. The report will complement the implementation of the Gaeltacht Act 2013. A final report is expected to be available for consideration by the Minister shortly.

Exemptions from Irish

The Department is finalizing a review of exemptions from Irish. The review involved a number of strands, namely the analysis of data held by the Department, consideration of the findings of relevant external research, and case studies in a small sample of schools. Information from these strands will inform the provision of a report on current exemption arrangements and recommendations on future arrangements. Arising from the report, a new circular will be prepared for schools and the guidelines for parents updated. These will be issued for consultation with a meeting of the key partners to determine the best way forward. A report will be provided for consideration by the Minister in the next few months.

The Department reports, on a regular basis, to a Cabinet sub-committee on Irish on progress relating to the 20 year Strategy.

3.9 Pisa 2012 Results For Ireland

Background

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a project of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that aims to measure how well students, at age 15, are prepared to meet the challenges they may encounter in future life, including education. PISA takes place every three years and assesses students in the three domains of reading, mathematics and science¹³. The first PISA assessments took place in 2000. The results from the 2015 assessments are expected late in 2016.

Current Position

Mathematics – PISA 2012

In print mathematics, Ireland ranks 13th of the 34 OECD countries and 20th overall of the 65 countries. For the first time in PISA, Irish students performed significantly above the OECD average on print mathematics.

¹³ Throughout the PISA report, the terms reading, mathematics and science are used as shorthand for reading literacy, mathematical literacy, and scientific literacy

In computer-based mathematics, Ireland ranks 15th of the 22 participating OECD countries and 20th among all 32 participating countries. Ireland's score was not significantly different from the OECD average.

Compared to their performance on the print mathematics assessment, Irish students did significantly less well on the computer-based assessment of mathematics. However, it is difficult to draw satisfactory conclusions from the outcomes of this element of the assessment as there were wide differences in the performance of many countries across the two modes of assessment. 2012 is the first year of the assessment of computer-based mathematics.

It is important to note that there was no improvement in the average scores achieved by Irish students, when compared to 2003, when mathematics was last the major domain. The enhanced performance relative to the OECD average can be attributed to a decline in the OECD average, rather than an improvement in performance in Ireland since 2003.

Print and digital reading

In print reading Ireland ranks 4th out the 34 OECD countries and 7th of all 65 participating countries.

In digital reading, Ireland ranks 5th amongst the 23 participating OECD countries and 9th among all 32 participating countries

The results for print and digital reading are very good, with the scores of Irish students at either end of the performance scale exceeding the corresponding OECD averages.

Nevertheless, Ireland's score in print reading has not increased since the tests were first carried out in 2000.

Science

Ireland ranks 9th among the 34 OECD countries and 15th of the 65 participating countries.

The performance of Irish students in science is welcome. Achievements in science have increased significantly. Ireland scored well above the OECD average with very little difference in the performance of boys and girls.

Computer Based Problem Solving

Ireland also took part in this aspect of PISA the results of which were made available in April 2014. In 2012, problem solving was included as an optional assessment in PISA. It was a 40

minute computer-based assessment of problem solving. In Ireland, 1,303 15 year olds in 183 schools participated.

The report shows that Irish 15 year olds performed at the average level of the participating countries. Ireland ranked 17th of the 28 OECD countries who took part in the study, and 22nd out of all 44 participating countries.

Next Steps

Publication of the results of PISA 2015 in December 2016.

3.10 Other national and international assessments

Background

In addition to PISA, Ireland participates in a range of national and international testing as one of a range of measure to monitor performance among Irish students.

Current Issues

2014 National Assessment in English reading and Mathematics

In 2014, the Educational Research Centre carried out National Assessments of mathematics and English reading on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills. The 2014 National Assessments are the eighth in a series which began in 1972. These, and the 2009 assessments involve the parallel testing of mathematics and English reading achievement of Second and Sixth Class pupils from a probability sample of 150 primary schools. The tests are based on the Primary School English and Mathematics Curricula. Achievement data are complemented by contextual data obtained from questionnaires completed by school principals, teachers, parents and pupils.

The 2014 National Assessments represented a first opportunity to examine trends in performance in English reading and mathematics in primary schools since 2004. Whereas earlier national assessments involved a range of class levels, in 2009, it was decided to include pupils in Second and Sixth classes only, and to focus on both English reading and mathematics for the same participating pupils.

The ERC report outlining the findings was published in January 2015.

Key Findings

The following are the key findings reported in the performance report:

Performance on Reading

Overall performance on reading in Second class was significantly higher in NA '14 than in NA '09, by 14 score points.

Overall performance on English reading in Sixth class was significantly higher in NA 14 than in NA '09, by 13 score points.

Performance on Mathematics

Overall performance on mathematics in Second and Sixth classes was significantly higher in NA '14 than in NA '09, by 14 score points and 12 score points, respectively.

Gender Differences in Performance

In NA '14, girls in Second class significantly outperformed boys on the overall reading scale by 7 score points.

TIMSS and PIRLS

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) test primary school pupils in the equivalent of fourth class in reading, mathematics and science in over sixty countries. The pupils who take part are on average, just over 10 years old.

The PIRLS report shows that in reading, Irish students were ranked 10th out of 45 participating countries.

The TIMSS 2011 test covered mathematics and science. Irish students scored above the international average in mathematics. Ireland was placed 17th out of 50 participating countries.

In science, Irish students again scored significantly above the international average and were placed 22nd out of the 50 participating countries.

Ireland participated in TIMSS 2015. This study looked at performance of students not only in 4th class but also for 2nd year of post-primary. Ireland will also be participating in PIRLS 2016 which will look at the performance of 4th class pupils. The results of TIMSS 2015 will be available from December 2016.

Next Steps

Preparations are underway for participation PIRLS 2016.
Work is continuing on PISA 2015 and TIMSS 2015 for publication in December 2016.

3.11 Lifeskills Survey, 2015

Background

The Department of Education and Skills conducted a 'Lifeskills' survey of primary and post primary schools in 2009, 2012 and in 2015.

The survey provides data on a number of 'lifeskills' related issues, including physical activity and healthy eating within schools. The survey also provides information on other important areas such as the implementation of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), anti-bullying, substance use, and road safety. The 2015 survey also included questions for the first time on the links between primary schools and early years settings, schools' engagement with Education for Sustainable Development, and their links with local enterprise. At post primary level, the survey is also being used in 2015 to support an evaluation of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) by the HSE Sexual Health Crisis Pregnancy Programme/HSE. This Department liaises with and receives advice from the Department of Health in relating to this initiative.

Current position

The last Lifeskills survey (2012) highlighted a number of positive findings e.g. healthy eating initiatives are a priority in the majority of primary schools; primary and post primary schools supporting pupils in physical activity outside of school hours; strong implementation of Relationship and Sexuality Education at both primary and post primary levels; and a high rate of compliance in relation to child protection requirements etc. Analysis to date of the 2015 data indicates that progress continues in these areas.

In response to findings from the 2012 survey, the Department developed guidance for schools on promoting healthy lifestyles which includes healthy eating through the appropriate use of vending machines, physical activity. The process involved consultation with relevant stakeholders in the Department of Health, HSE and the school management bodies.

Next Steps:

Complete analysis of the third Lifeskills survey in 2016
Publish report 2016

3.12 Foreign Languages Strategy

Background:

In the context of the Action Plan for Jobs, this Department is developing a foreign languages strategy. The strategy will:-

- outline the Department's policy position regarding foreign languages in post-primary, further and higher education and will reference primary education, as appropriate
- outline a rationale to convince the education stakeholders and the general public of the importance of foreign languages in formal education and life-long learning
- set out a course of action for the short and medium term, establishing definite priorities and targets
- commit appropriate resources to achieving short term outcomes by means of targeted interventions.

Next Steps

Publication of the Foreign Languages Strategy in 2016

3.13 Post Primary Languages Initiative

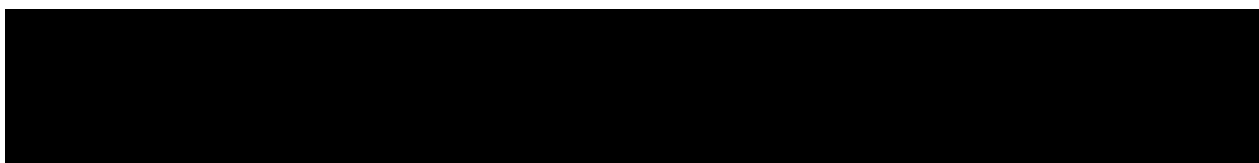
The Post Primary Languages Initiative was established in 2000 as part of the National Development Plan with a view to diversifying, enhancing and expanding the teaching of languages in second-level schools.

The Initiative is managed by a Steering Committee which is chaired by a Department of Education and Skills Inspector. A National Coordinator (NCO) and a half time Administrative Officer, based in the Marino Institute of Education, provide support for participating schools. Two language officers were also been assigned to the scheme in 2013. The service also employs 22 Japanese Development Officers (10.5 WTE) and 10 part time Russian Development Officers. (Less than 2 WTE).

Current activities include:

- Creation of short courses in new foreign languages for Junior Cycle Framework.
- The development of a set of generic specifications which can be adapted for the introduction of any new language as a short course in Junior Cycle. Features of quality for all areas of the course to be assessed, a Learning Journal (both reflection and evidence), a Final Assessment and a set of rubrics designed to assist teachers to assess the different strands in the course have all been completed and are available at <http://languagesinitiative.ie/resources/junior-cycle-short-courses>
- Specific short courses in Irish Sign Language, Japanese, and Russian. A short course in Polish as a heritage language is currently in progress.
- Delivery of CPD for Modern Foreign Language teachers
- School based CPD where groups of teachers are given assistance with developing subject plans, implementing appropriate methodologies, and introducing a more communicative based approach in line with international best practice
- CPD for subject associations on agreed themes of relevance to the classroom
- Provision of professional expertise to other stakeholders providing CPD to MFL teachers including the PDST and the PDST Technology in Education
- Development of online tutorials for MFL teachers in appropriate methodologies and tools for delivery of effective MFL teaching and learning

Next Steps



3.14 National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development

The Department published the first National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in July 2014. The development of this strategy arises from both national and international commitments. At international level, the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), which ran from 2005 to 2014, committed every Member State to develop and implement a National Strategy for ESD.

The ESD is even more relevant in view of the fact that on September 25th 2015, countries adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years.

The development of the ESD strategy was informed by a public consultation process, relevant research and international strategies, and by previous work that was undertaken in this area by the DES, supported by ECO-UNESCO, in 2007.

The ESD strategy is intended to provide a framework to support the contribution that the education sector is making and will continue to make towards a more sustainable future at a number of levels: individual, community, local, national and international.

Next Steps:

Implement the recommendations in the National Strategy on ESD

3.15 Healthy Ireland Agenda

The Department is involved in a number of measures to promote the overall government 'Healthy Ireland' agenda that is being led by the Department of Health. The Department works very closely with the Department of Health in relation to the overall 'Healthy Ireland' agenda. The Department is cooperating with the Department of Health in a number of 'Healthy Ireland' issues including:

- Healthy Lifestyle Guidance for schools. This guidance encourages schools to promote physical activity, healthy eating, and encourage schools' participation in the Health Promoting Schools Initiative, which is supported by the Department of Health and the HSE.
- The Department is also represented on a number of key 'Healthy Ireland' structures. These include the Special Advisory Group on Obesity (SAGO).
- Actions under the Sexual Health Strategy
- Actions under National Physical Activity Plan (see below)
- Cooperation on the content of the 2015 Lifeskills survey (analysis currently underway),

Promotion of Resources developed by the Alcohol Industry

The Department of Education and Skills does not have the authority to dictate to schools regarding what resources they will use to complement the formal curriculum. Schools are generally privately managed institutions which, although largely funded by the State, are relatively autonomous.

However, the Department has taken the position that it does not intend to engage with or promote any resources for schools that may be developed by the alcohol industry. The Department is seeking to ensure that this also applies to all national agencies of the Department and it is planned to advise schools not to do so.

The circular relating to Healthy Lifestyles in Primary Schools which issued in February 2016 advises primary schools to avoid using resources developed by the alcohol industry. Similar advice will issue to post primary schools shortly.

Substance Misuse

At present, the education sector is supporting national policy on substance misuse. In particular, schools are equipping their students with the key skills and knowledge to enable them to make informed choices when faced with a range of difficult situations. This includes providing students with age appropriate information on the issue of alcohol abuse through aspects of the curriculum such as the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme.

National Physical Activity Plan

This Department has participated in the cross Departmental group that was responsible for developing the National Physical Activity Plan. This group, as co-chaired by the Department of Health and the Department of Transport. The Plan, which was published in January 2016 contains a range of measures to promote physical activity across society, including in the education sector. These include:

- Increased CPD for teachers in PE
- Promotion of schools' participation in Active Schools Flag
- Promotion of schools' participation in Health Promoting Schools Initiative (D/Health programme)
- Development of action-focused walking and cycling strategies in each local authority area (an issue in first instance for D/Environment and D/Transport).

Next Steps:

Continue to work with the Department of Health to implement Healthy Ireland actions

3.16 Music Generation

In July 2009 the then Minister for Education and Skills announced a major initiative to expand music education. A partnership between U2, Music Network, the International Funds for Ireland and the education sector has enabled a series of music network partnerships to be established around the country on a phased basis to provide vocal and instrumental music tuition for young people. The initiative was made possible by a donation of €5m from U2, and a commitment from the Ireland Funds to raise €2m. The intention was that the philanthropic contributions would fund 50% of the initiative in the early years of development with local Music Education Partners (VECs (now ETBs) and local authorities) providing the other 50%, and that programmes would be continued into the future with Exchequer funding when the philanthropic donations cease.

Philanthropic funding has been phased out and the Department has taken over 50% funding of Music Generation between 2014 and 2016. In 2016 all funding will come from the Department and the partnerships without, current philanthropic support.

Music Generation's 2014 allocation from the Department is €0.3m. This level of funding is due to increase from €0.3m in 2014 to €1.585m in 2015 and €2.485 in 2016 and subsequent years.

Music Generation currently employ their own staff who are paid using philanthropic funds. Staff employed by the ETBs as co-ordinators and administrators in the 11 Music Education Partnerships (MEPs) in counties across the country will, once the Partnership becomes fully funded from public monies, become public service employees. There are currently 9 Co-ordinators and 8.5 administrators.

Approval has been given for phase two of Music Generation to proceed. Funded initially by philanthropic donations it will involve launching 3 New Music Education Partnerships (2016 - 2019), average €200k per partnership starting in 2016 and launching 6 New Music Education Partnerships (2017 - 2020), average €200k per partnership starting in 2017. This will eventually result in a commitment of a further €2.1m from the Departments vote by 2020.

Grants under newly established Non-mainstream Music Education Bursary Scheme 2016

The Department has invited applications for grants under the newly established Non-mainstream Music Education Bursary Scheme 2016. The purpose of the scheme is to provide support by way of a cash grant, to established, smaller-scale, non-mainstream music education/community music initiatives with limited or no access to other forms of public funding. Grants are not intended for use on capital expenditure such as structural/building costs, but can be used for instruments. The total budget available in 2016 is €50,000.

Next Steps:

Secure agreed funding for Music Generation in 2016 and funding for phase two, an additional €750k in 2020 rising to an additional €2.1m annually from 2021 onwards bringing Music Generations total grant €4.585m.

3.17 Update on Education programme for Ireland 2016 – Commemoration of 1916

In general, initiatives/education priorities are progressing well, most recently with the launch of a major component of the DES 2016 legacy programme with the launch of Politics and Society in Limerick by Minister O’Sullivan on February 1.

In the main, the DES role in 2016 commemoration has been a support role, but a significant one nevertheless. The main departments orchestrating the events and programmes are the Dept of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht and the Dept of the Taoiseach. An Ireland 2016 team, derived in the main from these departments, takes responsibility for all major events, including some which involve schools.

The Defence Forces’ delivery of flags to primary and special schools is almost complete (c.3,200 school visits done). This Department is currently endeavouring to ensure with the Defence Forces that no school or special school may have been omitted.

Schools, teacher and management bodies have now all received an advice note on Proclamation Day, containing ideas on what might be done on that date, March 15th, and guidance on where to locate the resources put in place by the DES, especially the 70 or more items related to 1916 on Scoilnet.

Evidence from Scoilnet ‘hits’ to date suggests that the interest levels in the 2016 commemorative programme are significantly higher in primary schools than in post-primary schools. We continue to use every vehicle to promote awareness of the programme, using letters to schools, websites, Twitter, links with Ireland 2016 events and website, and links with the education centres, teachers unions and management bodies. It is not likely that post-primary interest levels will reach those of primary schools in the coming months as pre-exams, holidays and then State examinations kick in.

DES is currently advising DAHG on the organisation of the Thomas Francis Meagher Foundation ceremony in Croke Park, offering flags and/or commemorative material to all post-primary schools. DES has advised schools to consult Circular 50/2014 regarding substitution issues that may arise.

3.17 Entrepreneurship Education

A report on Guidelines for Entrepreneurship in Education is being finalised in next few months by the DES. The paper will cover the totality of Education from primary schools right through to further education and higher education.

Consultative forums on the theme of 'Entrepreneurship Education in Schools' were held in September 2014 and September 2015. Following on from these, a paper is being prepared jointly by Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit and Higher Education – Policy and Skills to articulate the Department of Education and Skills vision for entrepreneurship education in schools. It is hoped to present this paper shortly and to advance on the approach proposed during 2016.

Entrepreneurial education is already a part of all strands of our education system. The paper will propose the issuing of guidelines for schools on the 'repositioning of entrepreneurship education in Irish schools' encouraging and enabling the embedding of entrepreneurship across all of school life a transversal and cross curricular manner.

The discussion on Entrepreneurship Education in Schools is taking place against a backdrop of a number of recent publications:

- Europe 2020 Strategy for Lifelong Learning
- National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship
- Action Plan for Jobs
- Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation
- The recently published IBEC Policy Recommendations on Entrepreneurial Education

The recently published National Skills Strategy 2016 includes an action to complete a Entrepreneurship Education Policy Statement and to issue guidelines to schools to support the delivery of Entrepreneurial Education and experiential learning opportunities. This will ensure a coordinated approach with relevant linkages to other national policy initiatives to support entrepreneurship in Ireland, including the Action Plan for Jobs and the National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship

The introduction of a National Entrepreneurial Award for the education sector – both primary and post-primary - to encourage and motivate our students and teachers to realise that entrepreneurial skills are essential key skills required to prosper socially, culturally, environmentally and economically is currently under consideration.

3.19 Withholding Results of Examinations

This procedure relates to cases where there are irregularities in the State examinations.

Rule 76 of the Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools gives the Minister the power to withhold the result of an examination or of marks in cases where there has been a violation of the rules for the conduct of candidates undertaking the State certificate examinations.

The role of the SEC

The role of the State Examinations Commission (SEC), in any case where a breach of regulations is suspected, is to gather evidence of the breach of regulations: investigate the breach through correspondence with the candidate and/or their school; and arrive at a

decision either a) not to pursue the matter or b) that there has been a violation of the rules requiring the application of a sanction.

The role of the DES

SEC advises CAP of the cases which they deem to have not complied with the Rules and Programmes, the background to the case and the rationale for the recommendation to withhold the result. A joint determination is made by administrative staff from CAP and an inspector having reviewed the file prepared by the SEC. The decision makers revert to the SEC who in turn write to the candidates indicating the decision of the Minister and that a written appeal can be made to the Minister.

Written appeals are considered jointly by the Principal Officer in CAP and a senior inspector. The two Officials involved in the appeal formally write to the candidate indicating the outcome of the written appeal.

Candidates who are unhappy with any aspect of the process have access to the Ombudsman or Ombudsman for Children depending on the age of the candidate.

4. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

4.1 State Examinations Commission (SEC)

Main responsibilities: The SEC, which was established in 2003, has operational responsibility for the Leaving and Junior Certificate examinations, in accordance with policy determinations of the Minister. The NCCA is responsible for advising on curriculum and assessment, and the SEC then takes this advice when approved by the Minister and develops appropriate assessment instruments, commencing with sample examination papers which are published early in the year of first examination of the new/revised subject specification.

Allocation 2016: SEC's allocation from DES for 2016 is €54,031m which comprises €44.668m for pay and €9,363m for non-pay activities.

Their allocation is net of income from fees which were in the region of €8.9m in 2015. The fees for 2016 are €109 for the Junior Certificate and €116 for the Leaving Certificate.

Staff numbers: SEC had 152 WTE at end of December 2015.

Reasonable Accommodation in State Examinations

The RACE scheme is designed to assist candidates with special needs at the certificate examinations. Within the context of the RACE Scheme the term 'special need' applies to

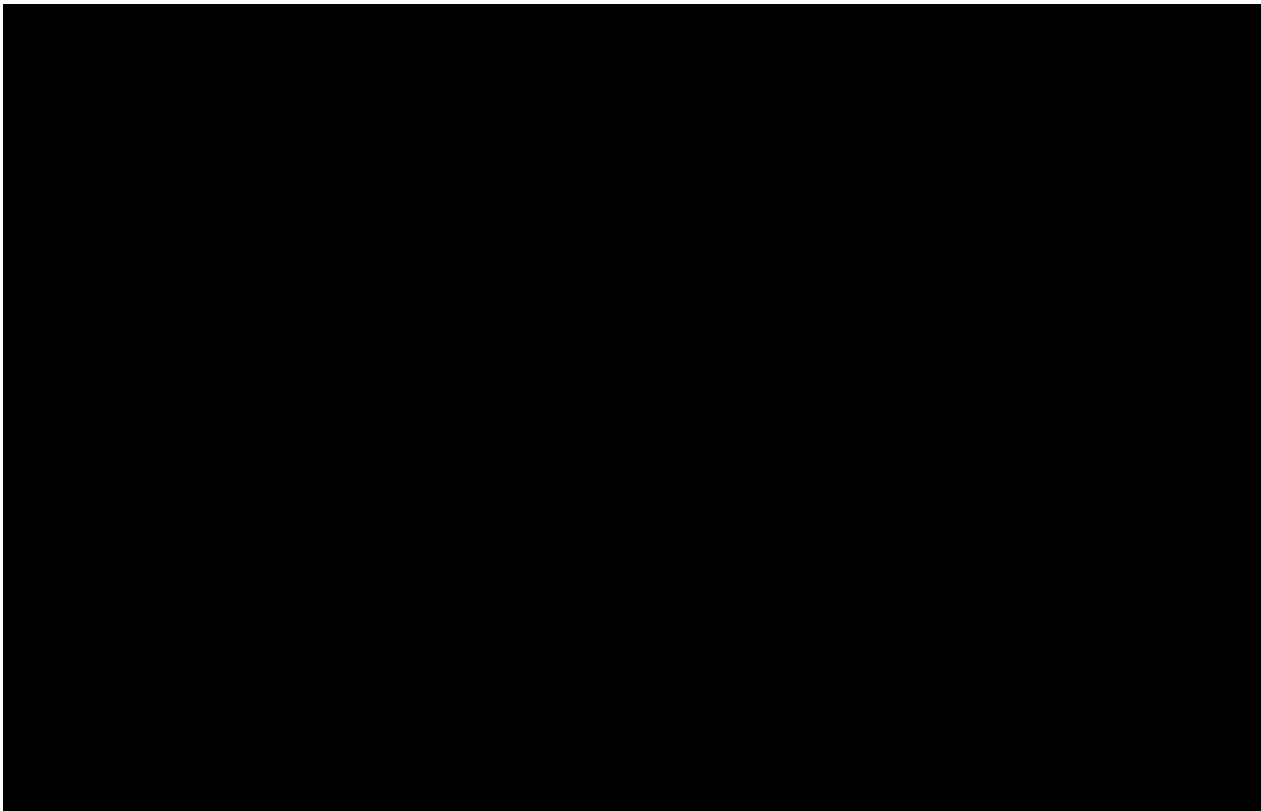
candidates who have a physical disability, including visual and hearing impairments, or a specific learning difficulty (SLD). Reasonable accommodations are intended to:-

(a) Remove, as far as possible, the impact of the disability on the candidate's performance and thus enable the candidate to demonstrate his or her level of attainment and

(b) Ensure that, whilst giving candidates every opportunity to demonstrate their level of attainment, the special arrangements will not give the candidate an unfair advantage over other candidates in the same examination.

These two principles encapsulate the fundamental challenge of, on the one hand, attempting to provide access for candidates with particular needs to demonstrate their level of attainment, while on the other, attempting to ensure that the principle of inter-candidate equity is not compromised in the measures taken to provide access.

Reasonable accommodations are not intended to compensate for a possible lack of achievement arising from a disability or to compensate for difficulties arising from a candidate's general intellectual functioning. A student whose general intellectual ability is below the average range can be accommodated only if there exists a specific learning difficulty not attributable to the student's general intellectual ability.



4.2 The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

Main responsibilities: The Council was set up in 1987. It is responsible for advising on curriculum and assessment issues in early childhood, primary and post primary settings. It participates in international networks, engages in research, prepares discussion papers and consultation papers, engages in development work with schools, provides policy advice, and prepares specifications for approval by the Department. Consultation with stakeholders is a key part of its work.

Allocation 2016: Their allocation from DES is €5.042m which comprises €3m for pay and €2.042m for non-pay activities.

Staff numbers: The NCCA has a full-time executive staff, who are assisted by a number of part-time Education Officers, who are appointed on a secondment or commission basis to the NCCA. The NCCA had 31. WTE staff at 31st December 2015(Head Count 34). This figure does not include unfilled vacancies. Under the Employment Control Framework their target for 2015 is 33.

4.3 An Comhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)

Main responsibilities: The functions that are currently performed by An Chomhairle um Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) are provided for in Section 31 of the Education Act 1998:

- to plan and co-ordinate the provision of textbooks and aids to learning and teaching of Irish and through Irish,

- to advise the Minister on policy and to provide support services to schools through the medium of Irish, for recognized schools generally and for Gaeltacht and Irish medium schools
- to conduct research, and
- to plan and co-ordinate the provision of textbooks and aids to the learning and teaching of Irish and to conduct research into and to advise the Minister on strategies which have as their objective the enhancement of the effectiveness in the teaching of Irish in recognised schools and centres for education.

Allocation 2016: An Chomhairle's 2016 allocation is €1.375m.

Staff numbers: The staff of the Council in 2015 consisted of a CEO, a Research Assistant and a HEO. A new Council with twelve members was appointed in June 2015 its term runs until December 2018. COGG have sanction to appoint two new Education Officers. One will work in parallel with the NCCA to develop resources to complement the new primary curriculum with a particular focus on Irish in English medium schools. A Post Primary Education Officer will work in parallel with the NCCA's Education Officer at Junior Cycle – especially in relation to the development of the new short course for Irish. In addition, the COGG Post-Primary Education Officer would oversee contractors responsible for work on the translation into Irish of resources for each subject.

4.4 National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)

Main responsibilities: The role of the NCGE is to develop and support quality guidance provision in the education sector as part of lifelong learning in accordance with national and international best practice

NCGE develops guidance materials, provides advice on good practice, supports innovation and pilot projects, disseminates information to practitioners, organises continuing professional development, carries out a range of surveys and related research on guidance practice and needs, and advises the Department of Education and Skills on policy development. NCGE co-ordinates the developments and supports for the Adult Educational Guidance Services nationally.

NCGE is the designated representative for the DES at the EU Commission funded European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) . NCGE hosts the Euroguidance Centre for Ireland, as part of the Euroguidance network of National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance (NRCVG) under the Erasmus+ programme. The network aims to support guidance practitioners in promoting European mobility and the European dimension within education and training.

Allocation 2016: The allocation for 2016 is €0.506m. SOLAS also provides funding to NCGE for the co-ordination of adult education guidance services which amounted to €0.189m in 2016. Other funding (EU funding etc.) amounts to €141,713.

Staff numbers: NCGE had 6 WTE staff at 31st December 2015. (One WTE staff member on career break 2013-2016)

4.5 Educational Research Centre

The Educational Research Centre ('the Centre') was established in the 1960s. A proposal to establish the Educational Research Centre as a new agency under section 54 of the Education Act, 1998 was approved by Government in mid-2014. The draft Establishment Order was laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas on 11 June 2015. The Educational Research Centre was established as a body corporate under Section 54 of the Education Act 1998 on September 9, 2015.

The Centre is currently located on the campus of St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. It will remain in its current location for a minimum of 2 years.

A Transition Arrangement spanning the 2 years after establishment has been signed between the ERC, SPD and the Department. Part of the arrangement involves the continuation by SPD of administrative functions for the ERC during the transition period until such time as the ERC is in a position to handle its own administration independently.

Main responsibilities: Following its establishment on a statutory footing, the core functions of the Centre continue to relate to research, assessment and evaluation in education. In particular, the Centre continues to develop assessment and test instruments and undertake major national surveys and international comparative studies, such as PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS and others. The Centre also continues to contribute to the development of Irish educational policy and practice.

In overall terms, the main responsibilities of the Centre are to (within the overall policy direction set by the Minister for Education and Skills):

- provide an assessment support service to schools and centres for education that will enable them to fulfil their obligations under Section 9 of the Education Act, 1998;
- conduct independent research on all aspects of education and at all levels of the education system including educational research that will inform policy making and the improvement of educational standards.

Allocation 2016: ERC's allocation for 2016 is 900k

A new board for the ERC must be appointed. Nominations have been provided to the Minister for consideration by Cabinet.

Staff Numbers: ERC had 23.85 WTE staff at 31st December 2015. *

*The Centre was founded on the initiative of the Department of Education and St Patrick's College (SPD) in the 1960s. On establishment, the staff working in the Educational Research Centre transferred from the Employment Control Framework (ECF) of St Patrick's College to a separate ECF for the Centre and the ECF for the College was decreased by a similar number.

Teacher Education

1. Unit / Section Overview

The Department views teacher education as a continuum from initial teacher education to induction and continuing professional development (CPD). TES promotes the quality of teaching and learning through the provision of quality Teacher Training programmes, Continuing Professional Development and supports for Principals and Teachers in their work. This is done through the Teacher Education Programmes, Education Centres and Support Services for teachers at Primary and Post-Primary Level. The management of this process is supported by engagement through various steering committees, the provision of policy support as well as liaison with the Teaching Council, the Inspectorate and other sections of the Department on a range of issues.

The Section is responsible for devising and implementing effective policies and measures to ensure the adequate supply of suitably qualified primary school teachers, principally through the five Colleges of Education.

A national network of Education Centres is supported and appropriate groups, bodies and institutions are empowered to design, develop and deliver CPD programmes.

The professional development needs of serving teachers in recent years have been addressed through the provision of an induction programme for newly qualified teachers, national in-service for new/amended curriculum areas and ongoing support for the curriculum generally with a particular focus on priority areas - literacy and numeracy, support for school leaders and for teachers to meet the needs of children with special educational needs.

The Section also liaises with the Teaching Council, the professional body for teachers.

Staffing: The Section comprises: 0.8 PO, 3 APOs, 4.5 HEOS, 4.5 EOs and 4.8 COs. There are also 2 part time and 1 full time inspectors (1.6) assigned to the Section.

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
In Career Development	23.404	23100	27900
Teacher Training Colleges	7.165	7.984	8444
Total	30.569	31.084	36.344

Overall Statistics on CPD Units provided*

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Attendance	163,180	146,862	122,385	130,679	129,702	167,939	170,719

Programme	2014 CPD units provided*	2013 CPD units provided*
NBSS	3,213	4,393
PDST	76,081	64,875
PMDT	11,106	11,765
SPHE		3,670
CPG	Included in PDST figures	546
RSE	for 2014	591
Guidance	620	623
Induction/Droichead	33,079	30,887
Junior Cycle	5,476	1,401
Summer Courses	25,309	30,278
SESS	15,835	18,910
Total	170,719	167,939

* CPD units provided are the number of interactions a teacher support service has with teachers. Interactions range from a 2 hour session in a local education centre to a suite of sessions on a particular issue or in the case of college based events a full post graduate course. The actual number of teachers is not recorded in these figures.

3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.1 ISSUE: Centre for School Leadership

BACKGROUND:

The new Centre for School Leadership (CSL), located in Clare Education Centre, involving the Department, IPPN and NAPD, has been established on a partnership basis for an initial 3 year pilot period. DES has committed to an investment of €3m for this pilot.

The Centre is staffed by three experienced school principals who are on secondment from their schools. The CSL will become a centre of excellence for school leaders, and the partnership will have many benefits for the profession in terms of the quality of training programmes, coordination of provision, and increased accessibility.

The Centre's responsibilities will cover the continuum of professional development for school leaders, from pre-appointment training and induction of newly appointed principals, to continuing professional development throughout careers.

CURRENT POSITION:

Priorities for the Centre include:-

- a new post graduate qualification for aspiring school leaders, drawing on best international practice and research in the professional development of school leaders
- a mentoring programme for newly appointed school principals
- coaching support for serving principals who experience professional difficulty
- a review and alignment of leadership programmes with Department standards and the continuum and
- the development a quality assurance framework for leadership provision.

NEXT STEPS:

In consultation with the Office of Government Procurement, tenders are being prepared for the post graduate provision, coaching support and an evaluation of the outcomes of the impact of the Centre for School Leadership. Competitions will be run in 2016 to identify suitable suppliers.

CSL has recruited and commenced training for Principals to mentor newly appointed principals. The mentoring programme will commence in the 2016/2017 school year.

DES Inspectorate is currently developing a set of standards for school leadership. CSL has begun the process of integrating these key principles into the design of future provision in the area of school leadership.

CSL is liaising with the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), as the main provider of DES funded leadership programmes, on a review of existing provision in line with these principles. Misneach, the current programme for newly appointed principals, will be the first area of focus as the new mentoring programme will be incorporated into the Misneach programme for the 2016/17 school-year.

CSL has also begun the process of mapping out all DES funded leadership provision with a view to quality assuring this support, initially using existing QA mechanisms and protocols involving DES Inspectorate, while moving to the development of a CSL Quality Assurance Framework.

At the end of the 3 year pilot phase, DES will review the progress that has been made, and seek to explore how school leaders can be further supported.

3.2 ISSUE: Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) supporting key priority areas

BACKGROUND:

The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) is a cross-sectoral support service which offers professional development support to primary and post-primary teachers and school leaders. The work of the PDST contributes to school improvement by providing high quality CPD on curricular and educational issues, fostering reflective practice and ongoing development among teachers and school leaders.

CURRENT POSITION:

PDST comprises the following teams to support teachers in line with DES strategies and ongoing curricular reform.

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Leadership
- Health and Well-Being
- Languages
- Technology in Education
- Post Primary STEM, Business and Enterprise, Transition Year and LCVP
- Post Primary Literacy, LCA, JCSP, Cultural and Environmental

Currently, the main priority areas for support for these teams are:

- School Self Evaluation

- Literacy and Numeracy Strategy
- Health and Well-Being in the context of the curriculum and also the overarching framework of Healthy Ireland
- Revised Primary Language Curriculum
- Gaeilge
- Introduction of Politics and Society at senior cycle
- Child Protection, revised Stay Safe and Walk Tall programmes
- Digital Strategy

Next Steps:

CPD programmes will continue to be rolled out for schools in these key areas. Capacity to support reform continues to be a challenge for PDST and additional personnel have been sought to cater for the demands of the Primary Language Curriculum and Gaeilge in particular.

KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.3 ISSUE: Continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers in the area of special educational needs

BACKGROUND:

The Department provides for a comprehensive system of CPD for teachers in the area of special educational needs. Central to this is the Special Education Support Service (SESS). Since its establishment in 2003, SESS has been providing CPD for teachers working with students with special educational needs, including ASDs. Since 2007 the support for teachers working with students with ASDs has been developed into a planned cohesive, co-ordinated programme of CPD and this plan also formed the basis for provision of support for teachers in the 12 newly established special schools that were formerly Centres for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs), where applied behaviour analysis was the primary approach adopted to meeting students' needs. This SESS co-ordinated programme provides the basis for a post graduate qualification in learning and teaching of students with ASDs in partnership with St. Angela's College and accredited by NUIG.

In addition, the Department funds a number of third level courses on special educational needs and Learning Support in teacher training colleges and universities.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has finalised and published several policy advice papers in relation to special educational needs, with implications for Teacher Education Section, both for Initial Teacher Education and continuing professional development (CPD). In 2012 the NCSE published policy advice 'Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Schools'. While the report recommends that the EPSEN Act be fully implemented as soon as possible, the report also states that the NCSE recognises that the current economic climate makes it unlikely to be implemented in the short to medium term.

While awaiting the full implementation of the EPSEN Act, the NCSE has made a number of recommendations aimed at developing a better or more effective alternative to the current resource allocation model, which aims to move the system towards ultimate implementation of the EPSEN Act. It also recommends that under a proposed new allocation model, all children should be allocated additional resources in line with their level of need, rather than by disability category. A working group was established to develop proposals for a new resource allocation model, and one of the group's recommendations is that a national Inclusion Support Service (ISS) for schools be established under the management of the NCSE to provide a coherent service to schools. Work on the establishment of this new service is ongoing.

This service will include the Special Education Support Service (SESS), the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) and the Visiting Teacher Service for children who are deaf/hard of hearing and for children who are blind/visually impaired (VTSVHI) which until now have been managed by the Department. This change is consistent with recommendations of NCSE reports and with the review of the VTSVHI.

CURRENT POSITION:

SESS co-ordinates, develops and delivers a range of professional development initiatives and support structures for school personnel working with students with special educational needs in a variety of educational settings. These settings include mainstream primary and post-primary schools, special schools and special classes.

The CPD provided by the SESS covers a range of specialties, including inter alia:

- Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs)
- Hearing Impairment
- Visual Impairment
- Mental Health (now working in this area in conjunction with NEPS)
- Individual Education Planning
- Dyslexia
- Challenging Behaviour
- Post-primary issues in special educational needs
- Specialist training for teachers in Autism Units attached to schools

Next Steps:

Maintain the current level of support while continuing to facilitate the transition of the SESS into the new ISS.

3.4. Continuing Professional Development for Junior Cycle Reform

Background

A dedicated Junior Cycle CPD team was established in July 2013 by the Department called Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT). Its main function is to provide effective support to schools in the context of their implementation of the new Framework for Junior Cycle. This support service is being hosted by Monaghan Education Centre. The team has 27 full-time education professionals at present. Team numbers will increase as further phases come on stream.

In general, CPD will commence for each subject the year before the new subject specification is introduced into schools. This means that teachers are being provided with all the resources and supports necessary to ensure that their students have a successful experience with the new Junior Cycle.

A variety of CPD delivery methods is being employed, including in-school visits and off-site workshops delivered by JCT. There will also be and on-line professional development opportunities provided. This provision takes cognisance of the needs identified by the education partners.

Key commitments include:

- CPD will be offered to school leaders over the course of the phased implementation period.
- Approval has been granted for all schools to close, with Board of Management or ETB approval, as appropriate, for a day, facilitated by JCT, of whole-school planning and self-evaluation for Junior Cycle implementation for each year of implementation up to 2021/22.
- A minimum of 4.5 days subject specific CPD will be available to all teachers of English and a minimum of 4 days subject specific CPD will be available to teachers of other subjects.
- CPD in a range of other areas of learning (e.g. short courses, Level 2 Learning Programme, particular areas of subject specifications) will be made available over time.
- Substitution, where required, will be available in addition to existing provision to facilitate teacher attendance at both CPD and professional time.

School Closures

- It is recognised that the scale of CPD being delivered in 2016/17 is significant. For schools, there is an inherent challenge in facilitating this level of CPD activity while ensuring continuity in teaching and learning in the school. In addition schools will be required to release teachers of English, Science and Business Studies not only for CPD but also for the additional professional time.
- To facilitate participation in CPD and professional activities relating to Junior Cycle implementation in 2016/17, approval has been granted for two school closure days (in addition to the whole school planning day referred to above), subject to the approval of the board of management or ETB, as appropriate. Accordingly, schools may close for a total of 3 days in 2016/17.
- The first of these closure days will be used for whole school planning purposes (as set out above). The second closure day will be used to facilitate CPD activities, including

subject specific CPD, being delivered by the JCT. On this second school closure day a comprehensive CPD programme will be provided for Junior Cycle teachers whose subject specifications are scheduled for implementation, as well as for teachers whose subjects are not yet in activation phase and teachers not involved in the delivery of Junior Cycle.

- The third closure day may be used, at the discretion of the board of management or ETB, as appropriate, to facilitate agreed professional time related to planning for and delivery of the junior cycle programme. The activities to be undertaken by Junior Cycle teachers whose subject specifications are not yet scheduled as well as for teachers not involved in the delivery of Junior Cycle on this third closure day have yet to be finalised.

Current Position and next steps

The Department's support service, Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), is currently providing teachers in ETB schools with Whole School CPD on the Junior Cycle and English CPD for teachers of English and Science. School Leaders in these schools are also being offered CPD on the junior cycle. Teachers of Business Studies will be afforded the opportunity to engage in CPD from early March this school year.

Community and Comprehensive schools have been invited to register for CPD and it is planned to commence this CPD in early March.

The following table outlines the planned CPD programme for 2015/16 and 2016/17:

School year	Subject Specific CPD						Other CPD		
	English	Business Studies	Science	Gaeilge	Art, Craft and Design	Modern European Languages (x4)	Whole school	Short courses (for selected teachers)	L2LPs (for selected teachers)
2015/16	1 day	1 day	1 day				1 day	1 day	1 day
2016/17	1 day	1 day	1 day	1 day	1 day	1 day	1 day	1 day	1 day

JCT will also provide:

- Subject specific electives
- Ongoing online support, webinars, etc.
- Consultations with partners.

3.5. DROICHEAD

Background:

The work of the Teaching Council, on behalf of the profession of teaching, in the interests of the public, is grounded in the values of professionally-led regulation, shared professional responsibility and collective professional confidence. Informed by these values, the Council has introduced a new model of induction and probation for primary and post-primary teachers called *Droichead*.

Droichead is a period of post-qualification professional practice for both primary and post primary teachers. *Droichead* is designed to reflect the importance of induction for new teachers when they are formally welcomed into the profession. It is grounded in the belief that the people best placed to conduct that formal welcome are experienced colleagues who know what is involved in teaching and learning in their school. These fellow professionals are themselves supported through the provision of a range of structures and resources provided by NIPT.

Key to this support is a Professional Support Team (PST) which consists of the NQTs Principal and mentor teacher in the school.

Current position:

As of February 2016 there are 332 schools (180 Primary and 152 Post Primary) participating in the project.

All NQTs are required by the Teaching Council to complete a 20 hour Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshop programme.

NQTs who are in schools which are participating in *Droichead* in 2015-2016 may avail of up to 6 hours of *Droichead* based activities in school with their mentor or PST, as well as up to 6 additional hours by attending three *Droichead* cluster evening meetings, to fulfil part of the Teaching Council's 20-hour workshop programme requirement. NQTs who avail of this option must also attend a minimum of 8 hours of the workshop programme at local Education Centre level to fulfil the Teaching Council's 20-hour workshop programme requirement.

NQTs who are in schools that are not participating in *Droichead* must attend at least 10 of these workshops to fulfil the Teaching Council's 20-hour workshop programme.

Programme Support Team (PST)

The PST is a team of experienced and fully registered teachers, including a principal and a mentor, who work collaboratively to support the NQT during the *Droichead* process, and who support his or her entry into both the school and the profession. Each member of the PST receives 4 Days training with substitute cover (2 blocks of 2 days). In the case of Admin Principals there is no substitution required. Each *Droichead* School also gets 4 release days to use at their discretion.

NEXT STEPS:

The pilot commenced in September 2013 and is due to finish in August 2016. In September 2016 a “growth” phase of two years will commence. The ESRI publication “Review of the Droichead programme” which is available for publication will inform further planning of the “growth phase”. In September 2018 it is expected that Droichead will be confirmed as the sole route of induction for all NQTs. This would mark a five year period of development from the date of the commencement of the pilot.

Feedback from all participating teachers, based on their experience of the pilot, will inform the model which will ultimately emerge. In this way, the aim will be to establish a system for the profession that meets the highest standards, addresses the needs of both pupils and teachers and reflects the realities of the daily life of schools. This will facilitate professionally-led regulation in the interests of the profession and of the public. It will also be a major step in building the continuum of teacher education in Ireland.

3.6 National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS)

BACKGROUND:

The National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) was established in 2006 as a result of *School Matters: The Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools*.

The NBSS teams are working intensively with over 70 post primary schools initially selected for inclusion in this development. This is in addition to 37 Behaviour Support Classrooms (BSC) which provide an individualised intensive intervention programme with the underlying premise that each student will continue with their ongoing curricular work. To that end qualified teaching staff have been employed to work in the BSC's with the support of additional staff appropriate to the needs of the students in each particular school.

Current position:

In February 2015 the Minister for Education and Skills announced the establishment within the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) of a new Inclusion Support Service (ISS) to assist schools in supporting children with special educational needs.

This service includes the Special Education Support Service (SESS), the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) and the Visiting Teacher Service for children who are deaf/hard of hearing and for children who are blind/visually impaired (VTSVHI) which up until February 2015 have been managed by the Department. This change took immediate effect and is consistent with recommendations of NCSE reports and with the review of the VTSVHI

This change means that schools will receive a better and more integrated service from this new Inclusion Support Service. The Inclusion Support Service is building on the existing good work and support which NBSS, SESS and VTSVHI provide to children and their families as well as to teachers and schools and which will continue as normal as the new arrangements are put in place.

NEXT STEPS:

Arrangements are currently being put in place to subsume the NBSS and SESS into the NCSE and discussions are taking place between the Department and the NCSE to implement this process.

3.7 Initial Teacher Education – Reconfiguration of Courses

Background:

There are five state-funded providers of primary initial teacher education (ITE) and 14 state funded providers of post primary ITE. There is one private provider of primary and post primary ITE programmes.

Initial Teacher Education programmes for primary and post-primary teachers are facilitated through a range of concurrent (undergraduate) and consecutive (postgraduate) programmes. Minimum entry requirements for programmes of initial teacher education are set by the Minister for Education and Skills, in consultation with the Teaching Council.

All initial teacher education programmes in Ireland that lead to registration with the Teaching Council must have professional accreditation from the Teaching Council.

Funding

Teacher Education Section fund two of the Primary ITE providers directly (Marino Institute of

Education and Church of Ireland College of Education). The remaining three primary providers (Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, NUI Maynooth, DCU Institute of Education, DCU St Patrick's Campus, and Mary Immaculate College, Limerick) are funded via the Higher Education Authority (HEA) as are the Post Primary Providers with the exception of St Patrick's College, Thurles.

Intake to Primary ITE courses

The level of intake of students to the Bachelor of Education in Primary Teaching and the Professional Masters in Education (PME) in Primary Teaching is controlled by the Department, following review of teacher supply and demand issues, and in the light of available resources. The intake to the Bachelor of Education has remained at 1,000 places per year and has not changed since 1999. The intake to the post graduate course has been adjusted to meet the demand for teachers and 200 places have been sanctioned for the 2016 course.

Reconfiguration of ITE Courses

The reconfiguration of the content and duration of ITE courses, first proposed in the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020, were incorporated into the Teaching Council's Policy Paper on the Continuum of Teacher Education and Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers, both of which were published in 2011.

Current Position:

The reconfigured Bachelor of Education (Primary) programme which is now of four years duration commenced in September 2012. The reconfigured and extended 2 year Primary and post primary post graduate programmes commenced in September 2014. The majority of these post graduate programmes including the post primary "H.Dip" have now moved to Masters level. The majority of the reconfigured extended post primary concurrent degree programmes commenced in September 2013.

In 2015, ITE providers received an increase in funding to facilitate the changes made to the programmes as outlined above. The overall amount allocated under the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy for this purpose in 2015 was €5.9m. The majority of this funding was disbursed by the HEA.

Private Provision

Hibernia College is a privately owned entity which delivers post graduate initial teacher education courses leading to a Masters qualification for primary and post primary teaching. The College is Ireland's largest provider of newly qualified teachers. The College receives no funding from the Department of Education & Skills.

Next Steps:

The Teaching Council will conduct a review of the Criteria and Guidelines for Programme providers. Funding of €8.9m under the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy has been allocated for the reconfigured ITE programmes in 2016.

3.8. Primary and Post Primary Teacher Supply

Background:

It is essential that there be an adequate supply of teachers with the required qualifications at both primary and post-primary levels. Forecasting mechanisms need to be developed to predict and cater for future demands and trends, while attempting not to oversupply to the extent that there are large numbers of trained teachers without jobs and unable to complete probation and who put pressure on the school system and induction programme. The 2012 Report of the International Review Panel on the Structure of Initial Teacher Education (headed by Pasi Sahlberg) also highlighted the issue of supply as a concern.

The Teaching Council were been asked, in line with their statutory remit, to advise on this issue. A Technical Working Group (TWG) on Teacher Supply was set up following an agreement between the Department and the Teaching Council that an analysis of arrangements for the planning of the teacher workforce in Ireland should be undertaken. The Teaching Council also established a Consultative Forum for all stakeholders with an interest in the issue to offer advice and feedback on proposals developed by the Technical Working Group

Current Position:

The TWG, in December 2014, provided an interim report to the Minister, which was published in June 2015. A final report has now been produced and was submitted to the Minister in late December 2015. .

Next Steps:

The report will be considered by the Department and its recommendations progressed as appropriate.

3.9. Structural Reform of Initial Teacher Education Provision

Background:

In 2012 Minister Quinn requested the Higher Education Authority to advise on the structure of initial teacher education provision in the State. An International Review panel was established chaired by Professor Pasi Sahlberg. ,

The report proposed fundamental change to shift provision of initial teacher education from 19 institutions to six new “centres for teacher education”. The new collaborations recommended by the international panel will mean that a smaller number of centres for ITE exist, but that they offer education across multiple sectors from early childhood to primary, to post primary to adult education.

These centres for teacher education will also possess a critical mass in terms of research capacity which is not always possible in smaller institutions. The new configurations will mean strong research bases will be cemented in each centre.

These changes complement other changes to the content and length of teacher education, with a greater emphasis on literacy, numeracy and pedagogical skills.

Current Position:

Significant progress in addressing the recommendations made in the Sahlberg report of 2012. One merger is complete (Froebel and NUIM) with two more scheduled for completion later in 2016 (DCU - St Patricks' College, Drumcondra - Mater Dei - Church of Ireland College of Education and NUI Galway - St Angela's College, Sligo)

The remaining 3 groupings do not propose to merge but are required to come together as part of a collaborative regional clusters and agree a programme of work designed initially to achieve greater co-ordination and sharing of academic planning and co-ordinated student pathways into and through the cluster of institutions.

Next Steps

The HEA will continue to oversee the mergers due for completion in 2016 and the progress of the remaining 3 groupings in working collaboratively.

3.10. Review of the minimum standards of educational qualifications for entry to programmes of initial teacher education

Background:

The Teaching Council has statutory functions to “advise the Minister in relation to ... the minimum standards of educational qualifications required for entry into programmes of initial teacher education” and to “determine... the education and training and qualifications required for a person to be registered.”

In this context, the Council engaged in a series of consultations with education stakeholders, including with the Department and commissioned a research report from the ESRI on the Leaving Certificate grades required for entry to primary ITE programmes and concurrent post-primary ITE programmes.

Current Position:

In April 2015 Minister O’Sullivan announced a new grading scheme for the Leaving Certificate from 2017. The new grading scheme will apply to students commencing the Senior Cycle in September 2015 and will reduce the current number of grade levels. The new system impacts on the current minimum grades required for entry to primary ITE courses as when the grades are mapped over, it lowers the entry requirements for English and Irish.

The Teaching Council provided advice on Leaving Certificate grades for entry to ITE and on the Gaeltacht entry scheme to primary ITE in late 2015.

Next Steps:

Following consideration by the Department of the advice received from the Teaching Council, a submission will be made to the Minister for decision on the Leaving Certificate grades required for entry to programmes of initial teacher education.

4. OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

4.1 Board of Management Training

In recognition of the responsibility which the Education Act has imposed on Boards of Management and the increasingly complex environment in which they must operate, the Teacher Education Section has developed a scheme for the provision of support to school management bodies for the purpose of training and development of boards of management in the discharge of their duties and consistent with national and DES priorities. This scheme is administered through Drumcondra Education Centre.

Since 2007 the essential core areas covered in the BoM training which have been delivered have been in Child Protection Guidelines, Financial Management, The Board as Corporate Entity, Appointment Procedures and School Plan; and Legal issues – Policies, Procedures and Practice.

4.2 Summer Course Programme

The principal objective of the Summer Course Programme is the advancement of teachers pedagogic and management skills in the context of the work of the primary school. The summer course programme is administered by Drumcondra Education Centre. The courses are provided by Education Centres, Colleges of Education, NCTE and local providers. Primary teachers are granted extra personal vacation days (EPV) following attendance at an approved course.

Schools and course providers have been requested to prioritise literacy and numeracy since 2011. Since 2012 there are courses included for post primary teachers as well as primary teachers. The granting of the EPV days is to primary teachers only.

4.3 Teacher Fee Refund Scheme

Based in Marino Institute of Education the purpose of the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme is to provide funding towards the cost of course and examination fees incurred by Primary and Post-Primary teachers on successful completion of in-career development courses relevant to the teaching profession and approved by the Department and school authorities. TES provides over €500,000 annually for this scheme.

4.4 Active School Flag

The Active School Flag is a non-competitive initiative which highlights the importance of Physical Education, physical activity and sport in schools and communities in which they are based. This initiative aims to empower schools at both primary and post primary levels to commit to a process of internal self-evaluation as part of a whole school process aimed at improving provision of physical activity in their school. It encourages a partnership approach and allows for schools to become more proactive in approaching groups like the HSE, Local Sports Partnerships and Education Centres in assisting them in the promotion of physical activity in their schools.

Active School Flag is a key feature of the National Physical Activity Plan which was launched by Government in January 2016. Under the Plan the Active School Flag will be extended to an additional 500 schools.

4.5 Secondments

The Teacher Education Section funded National Programmes and Education Centres are staffed by teachers who are seconded from their schools. These secondments may be extended in accordance with Department of Education and Skills teacher secondment regulations up to a maximum of five years. They are reviewed on an annual basis and are subject to school authority/Board of Management and Department of Education and Skills approval.

Having teachers with relevant and recent teaching experience and expertise is a key requirement for the roles in teacher professional development of our Support Services and Education Centres. Therefore the maximum length of time that a teacher may be on secondment is five years, following which they return to their teaching roles in their schools. In this way, their expertise and knowledge is not lost to the system. This also brings about long term benefits to the education system.

Teacher Education Section collaborates with and supports the Support Services and Education Centres in the process of succession planning and recruitment.

4.6 Continued roll out of Project Maths

Background:

As part of the roll out of Project Maths (see material in Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Policy section), teacher professional development is being provided by the Project Maths Development Team (PMDT) working in collaboration with the officers of the NCCA; from September 2014 the service is staffed by a National Coordinator, and a team of 4 Regional Development Officers.

Current Position:

The National roll-out of the project began in September 2009 and PMDT commenced provision of in-service in advance of implementation of the revised syllabi. Ten workshops have been offered to all teachers of mathematics (almost 6,000) in since 2008. Two national conferences have been held and a third is planned for April 2016. The work continues, based on a revised more effective and cost effective model, drawing on experience in Asia, of peer led reflections on practice.

4.7 Post Graduate Programme for teachers of Mathematics

Background:

One finding of the report of the Project Maths Implementation Support Group was that teachers must have sufficient mathematical knowledge to develop and support good mathematics teaching for every pupil. Given that "teaching for understanding" is a major objective in Project Maths, it is important that intensive courses for teachers are made available to up-skill the profession.

The report advised that the course should provide teachers with content knowledge of second level mathematics along with appropriate pedagogical strategies in line with the new Project Maths initiative which help teachers in identifying learning needs, responding to pupils' questions, choosing useful examples, planning lessons, choosing textbooks, and assessing pupils' learning.

Current Position:

The Department reviewed these requirements and following a tendering process a consortium led by University of Limerick currently provides a two-year blended post graduate programme available countrywide to enable out of field maths teachers to have mathematics added to the subject/s they are registered with the Teaching Council to teach. Some 525 teachers have graduated from the programme, 380 are currently participating and funding has been made available for a further 150 teacher students to begin in 2016.

4.8 STEM Education Review Group Report

Former Minister Sherlock convened a group of third level and industry partners to consider the issue of STEM education in Ireland. The group was chaired by Prof. Brian McCraith, president of DCU. Its terms of reference were:

- The preparation of teachers (at 1st and 2nd Level) for STEM education in Ireland
- Means of supporting/enhancing the current cohort of STEM Teachers within the system (consider innovative means of supporting targeted CPD for STEM teachers by Private Sector leveraging of current state resources)
- The use of inquiry-based and problem-based learning approaches and the impact of different assessment modalities for STEM subjects in the context of, but not limited to, the developing Junior Cycle reforms
- The use of technology to enhance learning (especially on-line approaches) and the way in which the private sector could provide support
- Increasing the engagement in and understanding of STEM subjects for students

The group submitted its draft report to the Department in May 2015. Final observations on the report are being prepared by the Department and it is expected that the report will be finalised shortly.

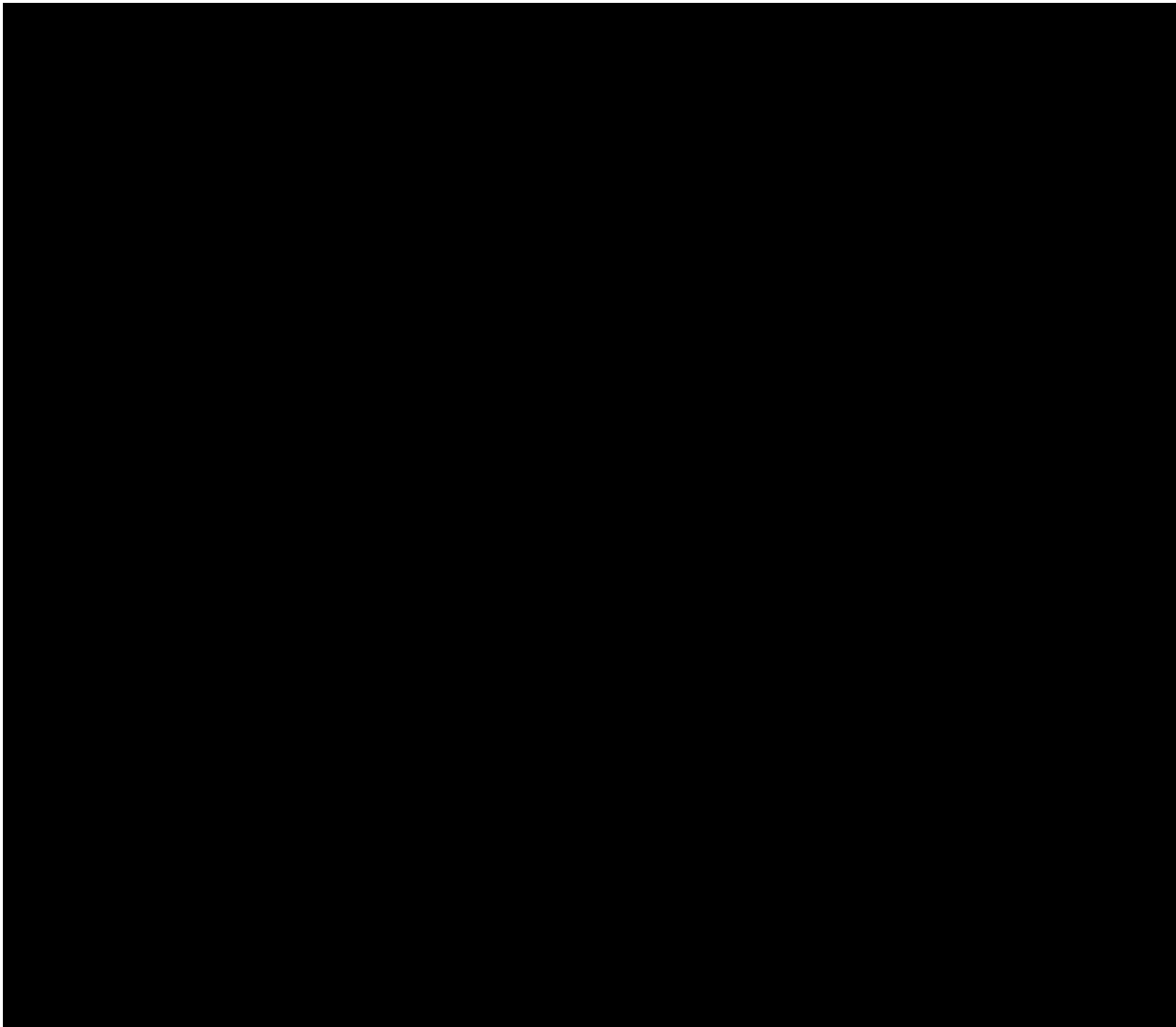
5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Education Support Centres

The Teacher Education Section is responsible for the administration of funding to a Network of 21 full-time and 9 part-time Education Support Centres which are located throughout the Country. Education Centres are an integral part in the delivery of CPD for teachers and host our in-service programmes. The Centres provide continuous professional development (CPD) and support for teachers and the wider education community through meeting locally researched and identified teacher and school community needs. They also provide this continuous professional development and support through involvement in national in-service programmes, involving either curricular reform or support on specific issues such as special needs. In addition to this they also run local courses.

Administrative and local course funding for the centres is provided through funding from TES but Centres also receive income raised through their provision of CPD courses.

Each Centre is headed by a Director who is a teacher on secondment from a primary or a post primary school. Selection is through open competition. The Director receives their teacher salary plus an allowance. Other staff employed by the Centres are not public servants. At the beginning of 2016 there are 185 staff employed by Education Centres (72 Full Time and 113 Part Time).



5.2 Teaching Council:

Background:

The Teaching Council was established on a statutory basis in March 2006 under the Teaching Council Act 2001 to promote teaching as a profession; to promote the professional development of teachers; to maintain and improve the quality of teaching in the State; to

provide for the establishment of standards, policies and procedures for the education and training of teachers, to provide for the registration and regulation of teachers and to enhance professional standards and competence.

The Teaching Council is a self-financing body, funded by teacher registration fees. In 2013 the annual registration renewal fee was reduced from €90 to €65.

Current Position:

(See section on Legislation above) Most sections of the 2001 Act were commenced when the Council was established.

Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act 2001 (as amended in the *Education (Amendment) Act 2012* to provide for regulations to be made by the Minister to circumscribe the circumstances in which an unregistered teacher may be paid from public funds) took effect on 28 January 2014. From then, all teachers in recognised schools must be registered with the Teaching Council, the professional standards body for teachers, in order to be paid by the State. At the same time Statutory Instrument 32 of 2014 made regulations to enable a school or ETB, in urgent or unforeseen circumstances e.g. to avoid closure of a school or cancellation of classes, to employ, for up to five consecutive days at a time, a person who is not registered as a teacher with the Teaching Council.

Part 5 of the Teaching Council Act 2001 makes provision for the Council to investigate complaints against a teacher and to conduct inquiries into a teacher's Fitness to Teach. The Department's policy is that Part 5 (Fitness to Teach) of the Teaching Council Act would be commenced after section 30. Government approval was given on 10th December 2013 for drafting a Bill making changes to Part 5, including to provide for a wider range of sanctions such as advice, admonishment and censure, which may be applied by the Council following an inquiry.

Generally speaking, it will be necessary for procedures introduced in 2009 under the Education Act (Section 24) for schools and Education and Training Boards (then VECs), as employers, to address teacher competence issues to be exhausted before investigation by the Teaching Council under Part 5.

Following Government approval on 15 April 2014 to further amendments to the Teaching Council Act, the *Teaching Council (Amendment) Act 2015* was enacted last July. The purpose of the Act of 2015 is to underpin, in statute, the central role of the Teaching Council in the vetting of teachers and to allow, on a statutory basis, the Teaching Council to implement fitness to teach provisions. It is intended to commence these provisions as soon as possible. Certain provisions of the Act are designed to act in tandem with the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 so these provisions will be commenced when that Act, which passed all stages in the Oireachtas at dissolution of the Dáil, is commenced. It is intended that other sections of the Teaching Council Act, such as those which amended the

sections on registration of teachers and renewal of registration will be commenced as soon as practicable, thereby enabling the Council to update their regulations to take account of improvements in recent years in teacher education.

Section 7(2)(f) and (g):

Section 7(2)(f) and (g) which concern the establishment of procedures in relation to the induction and probation of teachers into the teaching profession were commenced on 1 September 2012 (SI 328 of 2012).

Section 39:

Section 39 relates to the Continuing Professional Development of teachers and will be commenced as soon as practicable after Part 5. The Teaching Council is developing, in consultation with stakeholders, its policy on continuing professional development/teacher learning, “Cosán”.

Capacity to Implement:

The ECF of the Teaching Council is 44, improvements having been agreed to allow the Council meet its statutory commitments.

Initial and continuing Teacher Education

The Council completed reviews of the reconfigured programmes of initial teacher education in 2014. The process is a rigorous one undertaken by an independent panel of experts appointed by the Council. As part of the process, programme providers are asked to demonstrate that the programme is designed and delivered so as to enable its graduates to meet a range of learning outcomes.

Professional accreditation is essential for ensuring that this important foundation stage provides the initial competence for the new teacher. But as the demands and complexity of the teacher’s role increases, there is increasing recognition that learning to teach cannot happen through initial teacher education alone. Rather it is a career long journey. The Council has developed its policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education which brings together Initial Teacher Education, induction and early and continuing professional development (CPD).

Legislation

Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act 2001 was amended in the *Education (Amendment) Act 2012* to provide for regulations to be made by the Minister to circumscribe the circumstances in which an unregistered teacher may be paid from public funds.

Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act was commenced on 1 November 2013 and took effect on 28 January 2014. From then, all teachers in recognised schools must be registered with the Teaching Council, the professional standards body for teachers, in order to be paid by the State.

This is in the best interests of our children and our education system as a whole. The role of the Teaching Council is strengthened through this move which is a further step towards full regulation of the teaching profession. At the same time Statutory Instrument 32 of 2014 made regulations to enable a school or ETB, in urgent or unforeseen circumstances e.g. to avoid closure of a school or cancellation of classes, to employ, for up to five consecutive days at a time, a person who is not registered as a teacher with the Teaching Council.

Part 5 of the Teaching Council Act 2001 makes provision for the Council to investigate complaints against a teacher and to conduct inquiries into a teacher's Fitness to Teach. The Department's policy is that Part 5 (Fitness to Teach) of the Teaching Council Act would be commenced after section 30. Government approval was given on 10th December 2013 for drafting a Bill making changes to Part 5, including to provide for a wider range of sanctions such as advice, admonishment and censure, which may be applied by the Council following an inquiry.

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Staffing and Budget Allocation

Allocation 2016: Nil

Staff numbers: 44

ICT Policy

1. Unit / Section Overview

The ICT Policy Unit is responsible for the implementation of the ICT in Schools Programme. The Unit is staffed as follows:

- 1 Principal Officer
- 2 Assistant Principal Officers
- 2 Higher Executive Officer (1 vacancy)
- 2 Executive Officers (1 four day week)

The ICT in Schools Programme commenced in 1998 following the publication of Schools IT2000, A Policy Framework for the New Millennium. At that time, that policy document stated that Ireland lagged significantly behind our European partners in the integration of ICT into first and second level education and the need for ICT integration into teaching and learning right across the curriculum was seen as a major national challenge, which needed to be addressed in order to safeguard Ireland's future economic wellbeing.

The ICT in Schools Programme addresses four key areas:

- The provision of essential ICT Infrastructure within schools
- The provision of access to broadband connectivity to schools
- Continuous professional development for teachers in ICT
- Providing curriculum relevant digital content

Strategies are pursued through the work of the ICT Policy Unit in collaboration with other agencies, support services and representative bodies as appropriate. Certain key programme elements are managed by the Professional Development Service for Teachers – Technology in Education (former National Centre for Technology in Education), including the national CPD programme, the national digital content portal (Scoilnet) and the schools broadband helpdesk.

2. Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
Current Expenditure			
Schools Broadband Providers, Service Desk, Support	€9,140,910.53	€10,187,143.36	€13,544,366.32
PDST – TIE to provide training programmes	€2,611,571.00	€2,411,250.00	€3,409,850 (includes €800,000 staff salaries)
Other Current Expenditure (EU projects, support of Excite Digital Festival, Innovative Projects)	€313,101.49	€535,929.36	€1,130,783.68
Total Current	€12,065,583.02	13,134,322.72	€18,095,000
Capital Expenditure			
Schools Broadband	€102,690.86	€243,289.80	€650,000
Other Capital Expenditure			€300,000
Total Capital	€105,347,66	€674,592.93	€950,000

3. Key priority issues

3.1 ISSUE: Digital Strategy

Background:

The last ICT Strategy for Schools – “Investing Effectively in Information and Communications Technology in Schools, 2008- 2013” was published in July 2008. This report set a clear medium-term agenda for investment in the integration of ICT into teaching and learning.

Following publication of this report, a Joint Advisory Group comprising representatives of Industry and Government Departments was established to identify specific priorities for investment. The report of this group was launched November 2009 under the title Smart Schools = Smart Economy. The use of ICT supports the achievements of some of the reforms outlined in Department policy at a number of levels including the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, the National Skills Strategy (which has improved broadband connectivity as its main aim) and the new Framework for Junior Cycle now being implemented.

A new Digital Strategy was launched in October 2015 and builds on the progress made under the 2008 Strategy. The new Strategy is the result of extensive research and consultation and reflects the views of education stakeholders including young people. Input and development of the strategy occurred as follows:

- Survey of schools – leaders and principals input sought (the output of which was subject to collation and analysis)
- Focus Groups of parents, young people, and teachers
- Commissioned research report on international experience, research and best practice
- Consultation with education partners, relevant agencies and bodies, relevant Government Departments, colleges and higher education providers, and other stakeholders, including industry

Current Position:

The new Strategy titled “***The New Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020, Enhancing Teaching, Learning and Assessment***” which was launched in October 2015, sets out an ambitious programme to further embed technology and digital learning tools in primary and post primary schools. The Strategy is underpinned by five key principles which were identified during the consultation and research phase namely:

- A Constructivist Pedagogical Orientation underpinning the embedding of ICT in schools
- The use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment can enhance the learning experience of all students
- The use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment is embedded in school curricula, Department policies and teacher education
- ICT is used in an ethical and responsible manner
- ICT Planning is required to ensure ICT integration in teaching, learning and assessment.

These principles are designed to ensure that the Department, school authorities, school leaders and all key stakeholders play a proactive role in enhancing our education system by integrating ICT more effectively.

The strategy sets out a clear vision for the role of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment for schools and is focussed on realising the potential of digital technologies to transform the learning experiences of students by helping them become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens who participate fully in society and the economy. The Strategy aligns with, and supports the ICT Skills Action Plan, which aims to ensure our young people have the necessary knowledge and skills to contribute to and participate in modern society

The Strategy has been developed around four main Themes namely:

1. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Using ICT - objectives under this theme include the UNESCO Competency Framework adapted for Irish context and piloted, the E-Learning planning resource for schools updated, provision of advice and guidance for teacher and

schools including examples of good practice on the use of ICT for teaching, learning and assessment, inclusion of clear statements regarding digital skills and learning outcomes in new curriculum specification and high quality digital content available to support learning and teaching.

2. Teacher Professional Learning - objectives under this theme include the use of ICT for teaching learning and assessment to be embedded at each stage of the continuum of teacher education; Department policies on teacher education to recognise the role and potential of ICT to enhance teaching and learning; Department-funded support services and related bodies to embed the use of ICT in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) design, development and delivery and guidance and examples of good practice on the effective, critical and ethical use of ICT for teaching, learning and assessment be provided to and shared by teachers.

3. Leadership, Research and Policy - key actions under this theme include the establishment of Structures to provide oversight of and guidance on the implementation of the Strategy; policies and programmes of the Department and its agencies to promote the role and potential of ICT to enhance teaching, learning and assessment, School Leadership and Planning and research as a driver of policy.

4. ICT Infrastructure – addresses internet connectivity, access to computing devices and other technologies, technical support and maintenance and purchasing and procurement.

The new Digital Strategy recognises that schools require public investment in ICT equipment and accordingly a fund of €210m to support the implementation of this Strategy is available beginning with an investment of €30m in the next school year (2016/2017) rising to €50m a year towards the end of the Strategy. Provision of high speed broadband for primary schools is a priority of the Digital Strategy.

Next Steps:

The implementation of the Strategy will be led and coordinated by the ICT Policy Unit. To assist the Unit a Steering group will be established to oversee this work. The group will include relevant senior officials from the Department and representatives from the agencies/support services that are responsible for the implementation of the strategy deliverables. The Strategy sets out a comprehensive set of actions to be achieved from 2016 to 2020. Each of the Actions in the Strategy has a timeline and clear lead responsibility for delivery. During the lifetime of the strategy the Department will among other tasks:

- Draw up and regularly update an implementation plan covering actions contained in the Digital Strategy
- Monitor progress towards achieving the targets in the strategy and the goals set out in the implementation plan
- Consult regularly with the education partners regarding the implementation and development of the Strategy.
- Advise the Minister on the efficiency of the actions being taken to achieve the targets and suggest improvements and changes to the actions and the targets as necessary in the light of experience
- Develop and implement a communication plan for the Strategy.

- Produce reports for dissemination

An Implementation Plan, to establish oversight and consultative structures to deliver on the overarching objectives set out in the New Digital Strategy and centring on the four themes, is currently underway. A Steering group to implement the strategy will be constituted in 2016.

3.2 ISSUE: Schools Broadband Access Programme

Background:

The Schools Broadband Access Programme comprises three elements

- local connectivity to schools
- a national broadband network and
- a national service desk.

The broadband connectivity is being provided via a dedicated Schools National Broadband Network which has been developed by HEAnet. In addition to connectivity, HEAnet also provide ancillary network services including the provision of content filtering, email and web-hosting services to the National Broadband Network to enhance the educational process.

A National Service Desk was also established and, in relation to schools broadband, provides a single point of contact between schools and the Department of Education and Skills, PDST-TiE, HEAnet and Service Providers.

Under the Schools Broadband Access Programme the Department provides for the supply of internet connectivity for all recognised primary and post primary schools. Some 90% of all primary schools are currently connected under the Schools Broadband Access Programme.

Current Position:

There are currently 14 providers on a Framework of Suppliers of broadband to primary schools.

This Framework of service providers for the broadband programme is due to expire in 2016. A new framework procurement process will be undertaken in 2016.

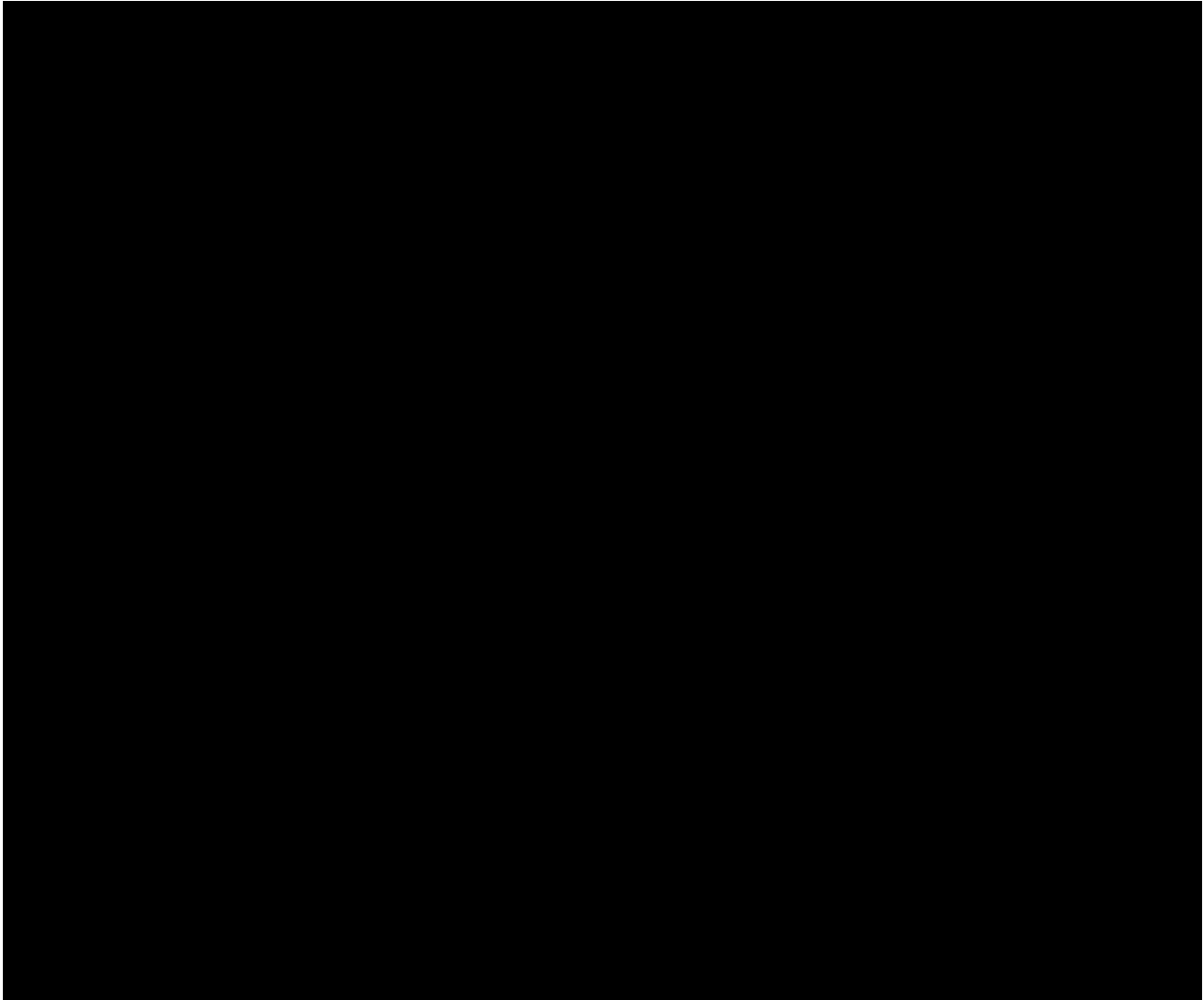
Constant improvements are taking place due to the running of mini competitions focusing on school low bandwidth. Improvements have taken place in many schools bandwidth with a small number of primary schools connected by UPC with 100Mbit/s connections.

The Digital Strategy for Schools commits to providing high speed broadband to primary schools, in collaboration with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, leveraging in part off the National Broadband Implementation Strategy. This

Department will be driving the project, and as such significant resources will be required for this project.

All post-primary schools in the country are now covered by the 100mbps broadband programme. This was a joint venture between the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and the Department of Education, with this Department now responsible for the administration and funding of the programme.

The Digital Strategy for Schools policy also intends to provide expert advice to schools in selecting fit-for-purpose and future-proof wireless networks or WiFi within schools, to facilitate access to online resources. ICT Policy Unit will shortly put in place a Framework of providers of Wireless Networking and Association Services to schools following a procurement process, and the School Planning and Building Unit is also finalizing relevant technical guidance documents for schools.



4. Other significant Issues

4.1 ISSUE: Professional Development Service for Teachers – Technology in Education (PDST-TIE)

Background:

PDST Technology in Education promotes and supports the integration of ICT in teaching and learning in first and second level schools. It is part of the national support service, the Professional Development Service for Teachers. The PDST is managed by the Dublin West Education Centre (DWEC). The staff of the PDST TIE are public servants and are included under the Employment Control Framework.

Current Position:

The PDST-TIE ensures ICT is central to the design and delivery of continuous Professional Development for all teachers. It provides on-line and face to face courses on using technology in teaching and learning including the use of ePortfolios. Workshops, are delivered by tutors nominated by local Education Centers and trained by the PDST-TIE Team. The Team has been instrumental in developing a broad range of educational portals and websites, including Scoilnet, Census at School, Digital Schools, Science unleashed and many more. Best practice Videos exemplars of teachers integrating ICT in classrooms are available on its website. It provides advice to schools on broadband and ICT Infrastructure and promotes Internet Safety through its Webwise Initiative and through the development of other education resources.

Next Steps:

PDST Technology in Education will continue to promote and support the integration of ICT into teaching, learning and assessment for schools. It will continue to provide relevant and up-to-date ICT advice and support schools on a range of technology-related areas. The PDST-TIE are lead partners in the delivery of the new Digital Strategy for Schools.

4.2 ISSUE: Digital Content (Scoilnet)

Background:

Scoilnet is the Department of Education and Skills official portal for Irish education. Originally launched in 1998, the website is managed by the PDST-Technology in Education Team on behalf of the Department. The aim of Scoilnet is to develop digital literacy and confidence in using technology, bring together existing resources and facilitate authenticated 'crowdsourcing' to promote idea and resource sharing amongst the education community. It is a key source of online digital reference content.

Current Position:

Scoilnet is both a “referratory” and a “repository” of in excess of 12000+ resources aligned with the Primary School Curriculum and Post Primary Subject Syllabus.

Examples of education resources contained on the website include curriculum based subject tutorials (Economic/Maths/Science/Business studies etc), Notes, Lesson Plans, Videos/Audios, Games and other multimedia.

The Scoilnet team has also been involved in developing a number of independent websites with specific relevance to the Irish curriculum. This has been done in conjunction with professional development and curriculum support services, and other relevant organisations and include websites such as:

- Scoilnet maps - Interactive mapping tool featuring detailed Ordnance Survey Ireland maps, world maps, GIS data layers. Launched in 2008, revised in 2013
- Science Hooks - is an initiative of NUI Galway and provides science educators with a collection of videos that capture novel and engaging aspects of Chemistry, Physics and Biology. Scoilnet implemented and supports the Science Hooks website. Launched in 2012.
- Webwise: An Internet safety awareness resources for teachers, students and parents
- French.ie - providing support for the French Junior and Senior Cycle curriculum. Launched in 2007, revised in 2012
- CensusAtSchool: An international project promoting statistical literacy, this website facilitates the collecting and disseminating of real data for use by teachers and students in class. Launched in 2009
- Irish Flag - presents 'stories' and a 'timeline' around the historical evolution of the Irish tricolour flag and its acceptance as the flag of the Irish state:

Next Steps:

A key priority in the new Digital Strategy is to continue, through the PDST Technology in Education Team, to promote Scoilnet and associated sites/services as the national reference point for schools for high-quality digital content using.

Continue to provide schools, teachers and students quality assured digital content from educational content providers – licensed content and access to a variety of cultural, scientific and academic research content.

4.3 Internet Safety in Schools

Background:

Awareness on Internet Safety is carried out by the PDST Technology in Education Team - in partnership with the Safety Internet Ireland Project - through a Webwise Initiative (Websise.ie) which was set up in 2005 by the PDST Team.

This Initiative is part of the Safer Internet Ireland Project, coordinated by the Office for Internet Safety, to develop national initiatives promoting the safer use of electronic media and enhance protection of the vulnerable, particularly children, against the downside of the internet, including Cyberbullying. The project is a consortium of industry, education, child welfare and government partners that provide Safer Internet awareness, hotline and helpline functions and activities. Webwise promotes the autonomous, effective, and safer use of the internet by young people through a sustained information and awareness strategy targeting parents, teachers, and children themselves with consistent and relevant messages. It develops and disseminates resources that help teachers integrate internet safety into teaching and learning in their schools. It also provides information, advice, and tools to parents to support their engagement in their children's online lives. With the help of the Webwise Youth Advisory Panel it develops youth oriented awareness raising resources and campaigns that address topics such as cyber bullying.

The Department of Education and Skills also supports Safer Internet Day, the European-wide initiative that addresses internet safety issues, including cyberbullying. New awareness raising resources – “Up2Us” and “My Selfie and the wider world” – were launched by Webwise as part of Safer Internet Day in 2014 and 2015. The 2016 Safer Internet day took place on the 8th February last and a new education resource called “Lockers” was launched by the PDST-TIE Team. This latter resource is aimed at assisting schools to cope with and prevent incidents involving the sharing of explicit self-generated images of minors, more commonly known now as “sexting”. It was produced by the Webwise in collaboration with the Special Education Support Service, the Inspectorate, the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme and an Garda Síochána.

On a broader picture, the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) has assumed the lead role in coordinating Government policy concerning internet safety and the Department is in communication with DCENR, and other Departments, on proposed structural changes regarding the governance of internet safety.

Current Position:

The PDST-Technology in Education is the Irish awareness node and makes schools, teachers and children aware of the potential of the Internet and its drawbacks. Specifically, the PDST-Technology in Education:

- Conduct research into how Irish children use the Internet, monitor emerging trends in internet services targeted at young people, and identify online risk behavior.
- Build tools and resources to meet identified internet safety needs.
- Deliver in collaboration with the National Parents Council Internet safety training for parents.
- Develop in collaboration with the curriculum implementation agencies internet safety awareness learning resources for teachers.

- Runs a website (www.webwise.ie) offering Internet safety information advice and tools to parents and teachers.
- Inputs to continuous professional development programmes relating to Social Personal Health Education (SPHE).

Next Steps:

The PDST-Technology in Education will continue to promote enhanced use of www.webwise.ie, which is the key portal for Safe internet practice by children – to parents and young people. This Department will also work with DCENR and collaborate with all Government/Partners to ensure effective arrangements in internet governance are put in place. It will also continue to support the Safer Internet Day.

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Name of Body: Professional Development Service for Teachers – Technology in Education (former NCTE)

PDST Technology in Education promotes and supports the integration of ICT in teaching and learning in first and second level schools. It is part of the national support service, the Professional Development Service for Teachers. The functions of the PDST Technology in Education were previously the responsibility of the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE). The NCTE was integrated into the PDST in June 2012. The PDST is managed by the Dublin West Education Centre (DWEC). The staff of the PDST TIE are public servants and are included under the Employment Control Framework.

Allocation 2015: €2,411,250

Staff numbers: 10 (current permanent)

Early Years Education

1. Unit / Section Overview

There is a split system of governance in the early years sector with the two lead Departments being the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (D/CYA). Department of Education and Skills has responsibility for:

- Early years education policy
- Early childhood education provision in targeted initiatives for children aged 3-4 considered to be at risk of educational disadvantage (the Early Start programme and the Rutland Street project)
- Infant classes in primary schools catering for children aged 4-6 years.

The Department has funded the development of two practice frameworks, *Síolta*, the national quality framework for early childhood education (2006) developed by the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education¹⁴ and *Aistear*, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (2009) developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). In 2015, the Department, at DCYA's request added a new Early Years education Inspection unit to the DES inspectorate.

The D/CYA funds a diverse range of private, community and voluntary service provision for pre-school children aged 0-6 years. This includes the ECCE programme which provides for a universal free pre-school year for all children within the eligible age range (currently 3 years 2 months – 4 years 7 months). The ECCE Programme, which was introduced in January 2010, will be expanded further from September 2016. All children will be entitled to free pre-school provision from the age of 3 years until they start school, with an increase from 38 weeks of provision to an average of 61 weeks provision, depending on the month of birth and school starting age.

The early years sector is regulated by the 2006 Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations and is inspected by the pre-school inspectorate in Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. New regulations under the 1991 Act are currently being drafted by DCYA for the pre-school inspectorate.

Because of the split system of governance, the Early Years Education Policy Unit is co-located with D/CYA to ensure that policy developments in the early childhood sector are developed coherently and implemented consistently across the different settings. The unit contributes in particular to the quality agenda and to workforce development and qualification issues. The unit plays a key role in contributing to early years educational policy development in both

¹⁴ The Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education, an agency of the Department of Education and Skills, closed in November 2008

DES in its wider educational remit and in DCYA as part of their funding and regulatory remit for the sector.

Staffing in the unit: 1 Principal Officer, 1 Assistant Principal Officer, 1 Early Years Education Specialist and an Executive Officer.

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
Total	€0.52m	€0.47m	€0.52m
Early Start Programme	€0.248m	€0.248m	€0.286m
Rutland Street Project	€0.123m	€0.123m	€0.123m
Salary Costs	€0.077m	€0.079m	€0.08m
Other	€0.072m	€0.02m	€0.031m

3. KEY PRIORITY ISSUES

3.1 Implementation of Síolta and Aistear

Background

Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education was published in 2006. The Framework comprises Principles, Standards and Components of Quality in Early Childhood Education and addresses all dimensions of practice. The Síolta Quality Assurance Programme (QAP) is being implemented by the Voluntary Childcare Organisations¹⁵ working in conjunction with the Unit. Suitably qualified staff, within these organisations, have been trained by the Unit to participate in the Síolta QAP.

Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, is organised around four themes – Well-being, Identity and Belonging, Communication, Exploring and Thinking – and expresses the national vision for good practice in relation to curriculum in early childhood.

- Since publication in 2009, a range of activities have taken place to disseminate the materials and resources of Aistear to all those working with children in the 0-6 age range:
- The online Aistear Toolkit provides a wealth of information and resources such as audio and visual podcasts. This web-based resource will continue to be updated into the future.

CURRENT POSITION:

- The NCCA has published an online Aistear Síolta Practice Guide to help practitioners implement the frameworks in their practice in early years settings;

¹⁵ The Voluntary Child Care Organisations include Early Childhood Ireland, Barnardos and the National Childhood Network.

- A unit has been established as part of the Department of Education Inspectorate to carry out education-focused inspections in early years settings. They are currently piloting the inspection model developed in 2015 with a view to further consultation in early 2016. It is expected that the inspection model will rollout fully in 2016 with an envisaged 500 inspections to take place. The education-focused inspections will complement the existing regulatory and compliance framework which provides for inspections by Tusla and by Pobal.

NEXT STEPS:

Funding for a Síolta/Aistear initiative was sought and secured by DCYA as part of Budget 2016. This will provide funding for a coordinator for the implementation of each framework; the rollout of training for Síolta mentors and for Aistear and the establishment of a registration system for early years settings who wish to undertake the Síolta Quality Assurance Programme for validation (QAP). It is expected that the initiative will commence in early 2016.

3.2 Targeted Early Years Interventions

Background

The Department funds some specific pre-primary services. These include:

- The **Early Start** pre-school project, which was established in 1994/95 in 40 primary schools in designated areas of urban disadvantage. The project involves an educational programme to enhance overall development, help prevent school failure and offset the effects of social disadvantage. The total number of spaces provided by the 40 Early Start centres is 1,650. The system is currently operating under capacity at 1251 enrolments.
- The **Rutland Street Project**, established in 1969, is a pre-school attached to the Rutland Street primary school in Dublin. Although not part of Early Start, it was used to pilot many of the approaches later incorporated in the Early Start project.

Current Position

With the rollout and proposed further expansion of universal free pre-school places under the DCYA funded ECCE Programme, enrolments in the Early Start programme are declining in many centres. Currently children attending Early Start pre-schools are only entitled to one year's provision in either a morning or afternoon session of 2.5 hours per day. Pre-schools funded under the ECCE Programme will now offer up to two years provision for three hours per day.

Next Steps

The EYEP unit, in consultation with the Early Start principals, will keep the programme under review and will further consider some of the recommendations of the Focused Policy Assessment of the programme, published in mid-2014. Consideration of future operation of the programme will also take account of the broader context of the DEIS review underway in 2016.

3.3 Supporting access to ECCE programme for children with a disability

Background:

An interdepartmental group was established in June 2015 by Department of Children and Youth Affairs to agree a model that would support access to the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme (otherwise known as the free pre-school year) for children with a disability. The IDG was established at the agreement of the Secretary Generals of Children and Youth Affairs; Education and Health included senior officials from those departments and their key agencies.

The IDG developed and agreed a fully costed, workable and sustainable model that is child (and parent) centred to support children with a disability to access the ECCE Programme in mainstream pre-school settings so that:

All children, including children with a disability, shall be able to meaningfully participate in the ECCE Programme in mainstream pre-school settings (apart from exceptional situations where specialised provision is valid for reasons unavoidable).

The EYEP unit is a member of the steering and implementation group as well as participating on the project group for implementation of the model.

A key element of building an inclusive culture in ECCE settings recommended in the report, is the need for a new role of Inclusion Coordinator in each ECCE setting; funding being made available to provide training in inclusion for these and other early years practitioners; and a small increase in capitation for settings who meet certain criteria to incentivise fully inclusive practice. The EYEP unit has taken the lead in a call for proposals for a national higher education programme to run for four years, with a capacity of 900 students per year from the existing workforce that will enable them to take up the role of an Inclusion Coordinator in their setting.

Current Position

A call for proposals for the delivery of a national programme to deliver a Level 6 (higher education) special purpose qualification that has been designed to education and train a staff member in up to 80% of ECCE services (3,600 staff members) to perform the role of a designated Inclusion Coordinator, was launched by the Higher Education Authority on 18th November 2015. Single higher education providers or a consortium of providers were invited to apply to roll out the programme nationally. The call for proposals was developed by DES, DCYA, and HEA in consultation with QQI and the National Council for Special Education. The call set out very specific parameters for course content and outcomes. A

consortium led by Mary Immaculate college with partners in Early Childhood Ireland and Froebel Department in Maynooth University were ranked highest by the selection panel.

Next Steps:

The programme will be funded initially by dormant accounts funding secured by the Department of Education and Skills with ongoing costs to be funded by DCYA. The programme will be managed by the Higher Education Authority, who will work closely with DES and DCYA in relation to funding, data collection and evaluation. Consideration will be given to establishing a database which will register members of the workforce with this qualification.

3.4 Review of Education and Training in Early Years for workforce development

Background:

EYEP unit is playing a key role in workforce development in the early years education sector, building on the publication of occupational role profiles in 2002 and a workforce development plan in 2010. In 2015 surveys were carried out by the unit seeking the views of employers; practitioners and an open call for submissions, on the quality of education and training programmes in early years education.

The findings of the survey were presented to the Early Years Advisory Group, which advises the Minister for Education and Skills on key issues relating to early years education.

Current position:

A number of factors are changing the landscape in terms of workforce development in early years education. The new regulatory framework for Tusla inspections will include minimum qualifications requirements for all staff members working in settings to have a Level 5 certificate in early childhood education. Contractual obligations for ECCE also incentivise staff to hold Level 6 and Level 7 qualifications. A database of qualifications acceptable to DCYA for these requirements was published in 2015. EYEP unit has an ongoing role in advising on qualifications for the maintenance of this database.

QQI is to review the common awards standards for further education programmes in early years in 2016.

Next steps:

The work programme for the Early Years Advisory Group will include the steering of a review of occupational profiles for the sector during 2016. On completion, this, as well as the results of the consultation surveys, will inform a review of the higher education programmes in early years education and care and the work of QQI. In the longer term, DCYA is considering their role in establishing a professional body to register early years professionals. Such an initiative would require significant input from DES in their advisory capacity on qualifications and quality of education and training in the sector.

4. Other significant Issues

4.1 Establishment of pre-schools in schools.

Background:

Data from POBAL confirms that more than 350 pre-schools are currently established in or co-located with primary schools. Issues have arisen in relation to the use of infrastructure in schools and competition issues raised by private sector early years settings. There is a range of governance arrangements in these pre-schools, some of which are directly managed by the school board of management, others of which are run by sub-contracted entities.

Current Position:

The new regulatory framework under the Childcare Act 1991 (draft regulations being drafted by DCYA with a view to commencement in 2016) will place a new requirement that all settings will have to register with Tusla in order to offer early years education or care to children aged 0-6, with the exception of children in infant classes in recognised primary schools. The Department of Education and Skills is currently considering the implications of this for schools with pre-schools.

Next Steps:

A circular will be agreed between the relevant sections from building unit, early years education policy unit and school governance unit for issue to schools before June 2016.

4.2 Development of an Early Years Strategy

Background:

As part of the Better Outcomes Brighter Futures, the national policy framework for children & young people 2014 - 2020 the DCYA has committed to develop and implement a National Early Years Strategy for all children aged 0-6 years. The Department of Education and Skills is identified as a partner in developing this Strategy.

Current position:

Drafting work on the Strategy is currently underway in DCYA.

Next steps:

DES will need to input and consult on education issues for the the strategy as appropriate and in line with education priorities for the sector.

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Name of Body:

Main responsibilities:

Allocation 2010:

Staff numbers:

[Please provide details above in respect of each body (if any) in your area]

**INSPECTORATE:
HAROLD HISLOP,
CHIEF INSPECTOR**

Role of the Inspectorate (1)

The Inspectorate of the Department is responsible for the evaluation of primary and post-primary schools and centres for education and for the provision of advice to the education system, the Minister and policy makers. The Inspectorate also has responsibility for evaluating the quality of education provision in early-years settings participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. Essentially, the work of the Inspectorate is concerned with improving learning outcomes for learners in early-years settings, schools and centres for education.

The Inspectorate's annual business plan incorporates objectives from the Strategy Statement of the Department and reflects the functions and responsibilities of the Inspectorate as set out in Section 13 of the Education Act 1998 and in memoranda of understandings agreed with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Teagasc. The business plan is informed by a three-year Strategic Plan covering 2014-16.

Structure of the Inspectorate (2)

2.1 Overall management and structure

Chief Inspector: Harold Hislop

The Inspectorate is headed by Harold Hislop, Chief Inspector. The Chief Inspector, as the head of one of the Divisions of the Department, is a member of the Department's Management Board.

Senior Management Group (SMG)

The Senior Management Group of the Inspectorate comprises the Chief Inspector, the Deputy Chief Inspector and nine Assistant Chief Inspectors (principal officer equivalents).

Business Units

The Inspectorate is currently divided into **nine** business units, each managed by an Assistant Chief Inspector.

- Five regionally-based business units (Business Units 1-5) are responsible for planning and undertaking a programme of inspections and advisory visits in primary and post-primary schools, Youthreach settings and other centres for education. This is the main activity of the Inspectorate and it is designed to make a significant contribution to improving the operation of schools and settings and to the quality of students' learning. The majority of inspectors are assigned full-time or part-time to these units.
- One business unit is responsible for education-focussed inspections in ECCE settings. These inspections are undertaken on behalf of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs under a memorandum of understanding between the two departments. This unit is staffed mainly by early-years inspectors and some primary inspectors. The education-focussed inspections are specifically designed to improve the quality of children's learning in the ECCE settings.
- Two of the Inspectorate's business (Business Units 7 and 8) have specific policy support responsibilities. These units work closely with officials in other divisions of the Department on policy development and implementation regarding matters such as teacher education policy, school improvement, curriculum and assessment policy, and Irish in the school system. In addition, managers in the five regional units and in the early-years unit also carry responsibility for some aspects of the policy-development/advisory work of the Inspectorate: for example, Business Unit 3 has responsibility for Inspectorate input to Department policy on Special Education, while Business Unit 9 contributes to early-years policy work. All inspectors involved in policy

development work closely with the relevant sections/divisions of the Department, such as Teacher Education Section, Special Education Section, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit and International Section.

- One business unit – the Evaluation Support and Research Unit – is responsible for the development of inspection models, research and analysis, and it provides support services for inspectors and the regional business units of the Inspectorate so that they can plan and carry out inspection and advisory work.

Business units are staffed by Early-Years Inspectors, Primary District Inspectors (or Cigirí Ceantair) and Post-Primary Inspectors at recruitment grade, and by Primary Divisional Inspectors (or Roinnchigirí) and Post-Primary Senior Inspectors at the first promotional grade.

The work of inspectors is supported by a small team of administrative staff working in the Secretariat of the Inspectorate.

Details of the overall structure and the areas of responsibility of each individual business unit are shown in the diagram and Table 1 below.

Current overall structure:

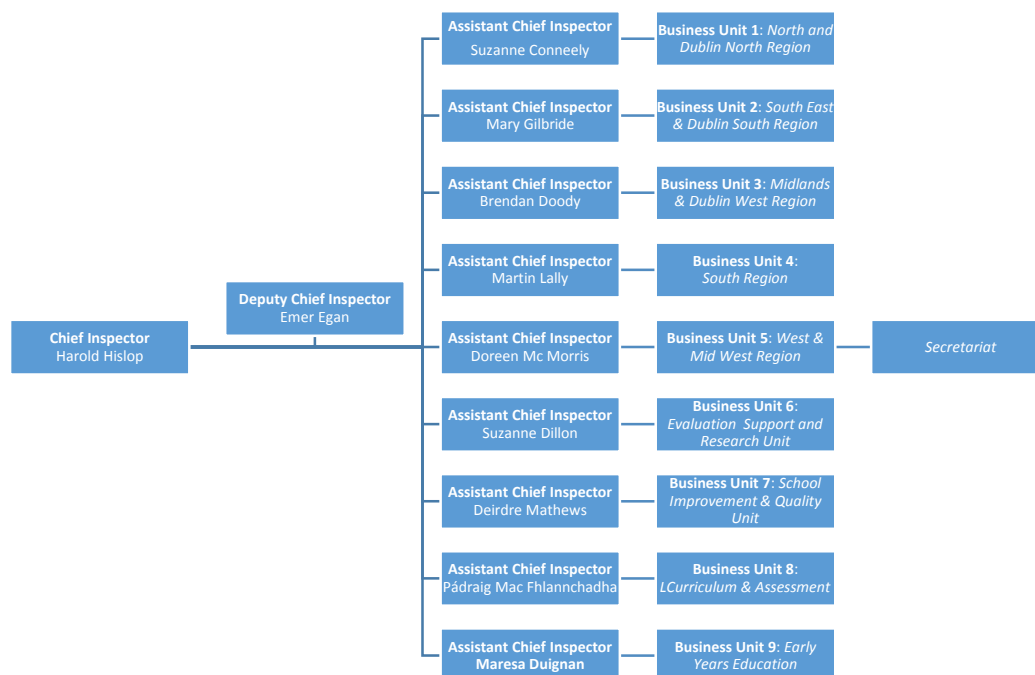


Table 1: Overview of Business Units and Management Responsibilities

Business Unit	Management responsibilities
Business Unit 1: North & Dublin North Region Suzanne Conneely Assistant Chief Inspector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation, advisory and follow-up work in schools, special schools and centres for education in Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Dublin (Fingal), and Dublin city (North) <p><i>Additional responsibilities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of the Freedom of Information (FOI) and Data Protection process and FOI reviews Inspectorate involvement in speeches for the Minister’s office
Business Unit 2: South East & Dublin South Region Mary Gilbride Assistant Chief Inspector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation, advisory and follow-up work in schools, special schools and centres for education in Carlow, Dublin South, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, Kilkenny, Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow <p><i>Additional responsibilities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development programme for the Inspectorate Management of Inspectorate policy advice re North-South and International issues

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaison with Office of the Chief Inspector and the offices of the Minister, Ministers of State and Secretary General re general briefings • Management of involvement of inspectors in Section 29 process
<p>Business Unit 3: Midlands & Dublin West Region</p> <p>Brendan Doody Assistant Chief Inspector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation, advisory and follow-up work in schools, special schools and centres for education in Dublin (West) and South West, Kildare, Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath <p><i>Additional responsibilities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of Inspectorate policy advice/development re Special Education • Inspectorate involvement in NCSE, NEPS, SESS, European Agency for Special Education. • Management of Visiting Teachers for Hearing and Visually Impaired
<p>Business Unit 4: South Region</p> <p>Martin Lally Assistant Chief Inspector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation, advisory and follow-up work in schools, special schools and centres for education in Cork, Kerry, Limerick County, and Tipperary South Riding <p><i>Additional responsibilities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate business planning and reporting, including liaison with the Department's Change Management and Policy Units re general corporate reporting • Development of quality assurance processes for Inspectorate's services
<p>Business Unit 5: West and Mid-West Region</p> <p>Doreen McMorris Assistant Chief Inspector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation, advisory and follow-up work in schools, special schools and centres for education in Clare, Galway, Limerick City, Mayo, Sligo, Roscommon, and Tipperary North Riding <p><i>Additional responsibilities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of Inspectorate Secretariat and publication of School Inspection reports • Management of Inspectorate office accommodation/human resource issues, including liaison with the Department's Personnel Unit and Accommodation and Services Unit

<p>Business Unit 6: Evaluation Support and Research Unit</p> <p>Suzanne Dillon Assistant Chief Inspector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of inspection models • Provision of supports for inspection including inspection districts/divisions, data provision, etc. • Data analysis, publication of thematic composite and summary reports on quality and standards • Inspectorate involvement in research
<p>Business Unit 7: School Improvement and Quality Unit</p> <p>Deirdre Mathews Assistant Chief Inspector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of policy and materials for school self-evaluation, school improvement plans and information on schools • Provision of policy advice regarding the teacher education continuum (including initial teacher education, induction, probation and engagement with the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)) • Inspectorate involvement in school improvement work • Management of Inspectorate policy advice regarding social inclusion issues
<p>Business Unit 8: Curriculum & Assessment Unit</p> <p>Pádraig Mac Fhlannchadha Assistant Chief Inspector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspectorate involvement in policy advice/development regarding the implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategy (2011-2020) • Inspectorate involvement in policy advice/development in curriculum and assessment issues for early childhood, primary and post-primary education and liaison with the NCCA • Inspectorate involvement in policy advice/development regarding Irish and liaison with relevant bodies • National and international surveys of attainment and Inspectorate involvement with ERC
<p>Business Unit 9: Early-Years Education -</p> <p>Maresa Duignan Assistant Chief Inspector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation, advisory and follow-up work in early-years settings participating in the ECCE programme nationally • Development of evaluation and quality assurance processes for the evaluation of early-years settings participating in the ECCE Programme nationally <p><i>Additional responsibilities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspectorate contribution to early-years education policy

Staffing of the Inspectorate as at 3 JULY 2014 (3)

3.1 Current staffing of the Inspectorate

The number of serving inspectors currently stands at 127 as illustrated in Table 2 below. Just over 100 inspectors are assigned to inspection and advisory services in the five regional business units, a further 9 early-years inspectors are devoted to inspections and advisory work in ECCE units, and the remaining Inspectorate staff are assigned to provide research and technical support to the inspection programme, to policy development work, and to working other divisions of the Department.

Nine administrative staff currently support the work of the Inspectorate (Table 2). The administrative staff members are based in four main offices around the country (Dublin, Cork, Sligo and Limerick). They provide essential support to inspectors in the administration of the inspection programme, the publication of school inspection reports and the work of the Inspectorate's Evaluation Support and Research Unit.

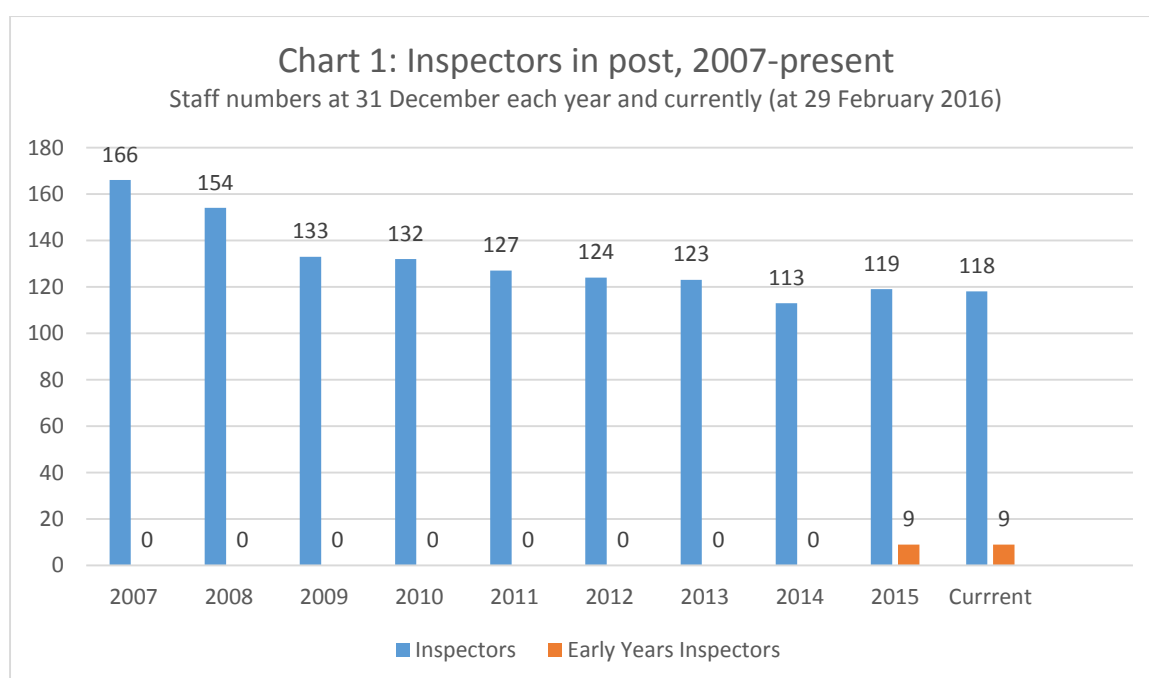
Table 2: Overview of staffing

	Grade	Staff numbers in post	Totals	
Inspectors	Chief Inspector	1		
	Deputy Chief Inspector	1		
	Assistant Chief Inspectors	9		
	Post-primary Senior Inspectors	24		
	Post-primary Inspectors	27		
	Primary Divisional Inspectors	25		
	Primary Inspectors	30		
	Primary/Post-primary inspector	1		
				118*
	Early Years Inspectors	9		
			9	
	TOTAL INSPECTORS		127	
Administrative staff	Higher Executive Officer	1		
	Executive Officers	1.5		
	Clerical Officers	6.4		
	TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF		8.9	

* Because of part-time/work-sharing arrangements, the effective staffing is 116.3

3.2 Recruitment to the Inspectorate

Typically, inspectors are recruited following a considerable number of years of teaching experience in schools or early-years settings. This means that the age profile among inspectors is higher than among civil servants generally and that the Inspectorate was disproportionately affected by the moratorium on recruitment to the public service introduced in 2009 and by a large number of retirements that took place during the financial crisis. This has meant that the numbers of inspectors employed in the Inspectorate fell considerably in the period 2008-2014, as illustrated in Chart 1. Agreement has been reached with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) that 124 staff may be employed as primary and post-primary inspectors (including management grades) and that a further 10 early-years inspectors can be employed to carry out inspections in ECCE settings. Recruitment of primary and post-primary staff took place in the first half of 2015 and the first early-years inspectors were recruited in November 2015. Further recruitment is expected to take place in 2016 to bring staffing up to the levels agreed with DPER.



All new staff complete an induction and training period of approximately five to six months. This means that when staff retire, their replacements (who cannot be recruited until the retirement takes place) do not become fully available for inspection work for a period of time, and this can have an adverse effect on inspection coverage.

3.3 Inspectors assigned to other Divisions or Sections within the Department

A number of inspectors (from among the numbers listed in Table 2 above) are assigned full or part-time to other Divisions of the Department where they provide professional expertise and advice. Such assignments include inspectors working in:

- Teacher Education Section (1.5 inspectors)
- Planning & Building Unit (1.2 inspectors)
- Special Education Section (1 inspector)
- Central Policy Unit (0.25 of an inspector)
- Social Inclusion Unit (0.25 of an inspector)
- Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit (1 inspector)
- Early Years Policy Unit (0.6 of an inspector)

The work of these inspectors is reflected in the relevant sections of this briefing document and is not repeated here.

The Work of the Inspectorate (4)

4.1 Significant programme of change in the work of the Inspectorate

The Inspectorate has implemented significant changes in the way that it inspects schools in recent years and this programme of change is continuing. This programme of change is informed by best international practice, including extensive research on evaluation and assessment in school systems conducted by the OECD and the practices encouraged by the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates of Education in Europe.

In summary, the changes have included:

- Developing and using a wide range of inspection models to ensure:
 - That the inspection model is suited to the circumstances of the school and any specialised provision in the school
 - That the intensity of the inspection can be varied depending on the need to examine aspects of the school's work and the risk that there may be to high quality learning in the school
 - That inspections occur much more frequently in the school system and that overall coverage of schools is improved
 - That specific and priority areas can be monitored and reported upon, such as certain subjects, or programmes
 - That there is an inspection model suited to the evaluation of education provision in early-years settings
 - That available resources are deployed to best effect
- Inspections are more focussed on the key factors that influence the learning experience for students. Primarily, these are the quality of teaching and learning in the school; the quality of leadership and management; and the capacity of the school to drive improvement and change.
- The notice given to schools in advance of inspections has been shortened very considerably and revised inspection guides have been produced in consultation with the education partners. All incidental inspections are unannounced. Other inspections, in which there is engagement with the management of the school (and especially the board of management) and in which parents are interviewed, require some notice to be given to schools. These notice periods have been progressively reduced and are set to be reduced further in September 2016.
- The Inspectorate has ensured parental and student perspectives are taken into account during inspections through the use of confidential questionnaires for parents and students in all whole-school evaluation models. Aggregate data on the outcomes are fed back to the school to assist them with self-evaluation.

- The views of teachers about the running of schools are gathered through interviews that inspection teams have with groups of teachers during whole-school evaluations or through confidential questionnaires in larger schools. The aggregated data is used as one source of evidence by the inspection team.
- The Inspectorate uses other data on schools that is held by the Department (including enrolment information, student assessment and examination data, school attendance data) to help in selecting schools for inspection and in informing inspection teams before they go into the school. This data is gathered and analysed using Business Intelligence software.
- Systematic follow-up processes to inspections have been introduced. A management group within the Inspectorate ensures that where significant weaknesses are found in schools, these schools are monitored – either by requiring reports from the school about the progress of recommendations, or through follow-through inspections, or both.
- Where very serious weaknesses as identified or where a school does not make satisfactory progress in addressing significant recommendations, the school is referred to the Department’s School Improvement Group. The Inspectorate has cooperated closely with the Schools Governance Section of the Department to establish this School Improvement Group to deal with schools in which severe deficiencies in teaching, learning, leadership or management are identified. Often a range of actions are taken to ensure improvement happens, including liaison with the management or patron of the school, requiring progress reports from the board of management, a series of follow-through inspections (from which reports are published), and other actions.
- The Inspectorate collects data from each of the inspections it conducts in systematic ways that allow it to analyse trends and standards in the school system.

4.2 The range of inspections in use

The range of inspections currently in use includes the following:

Short, unannounced “incidental” inspections are carried out in a large number of schools each year. These one-day inspections focus on the quality of classroom work, and they provide an excellent opportunity to provide advice and critical feedback to individual teachers and to the school principal. These inspections are also used to collect information about the school, and the Inspectorate uses this information to plan further and more detailed inspections. For example, if an unannounced inspection in a post-primary school reveals some concerns with regard to the teaching of a particular subject, a subject-specific inspection may be scheduled at a later date.

Subject inspections/Curriculum evaluations are more intensive than unannounced short inspections. Subject inspections focus on the work of a subject department in a second-level

school and provide a detailed evaluation of the work of the department. A pilot of a similar model, called curriculum evaluation, which evaluates teaching and learning of individual subjects in primary schools will end at Easter 2016 and consultations with the education partners are underway with a view to implementing this new model from September 2016.

DEIS evaluations are also more intensive than unannounced short inspections. They are used in DEIS schools and focus on the quality of action planning for improvement in these schools. They are used in both primary and post-primary schools. (DEIS: Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools is the Department's Action Plan for Educational Inclusion)

Programme evaluations are used in second-level schools to examine the quality of programmes such as Transition Year, the Leaving Certificate Applied programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Junior Certificate School Programme.

Specialised HSU/SCU/CDC inspections take place in schools attached to High Support Units, Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres. Because of the higher risk associated with the educational experience and outcomes for these students, these schools have been inspected annually since 2011.

WSE-MLL (Whole-School Evaluation-Management, Leadership and Learning) is an intensive model of inspection used in primary and post-primary schools. It examines not only the quality of teaching and learning but also the quality of the leadership and management in the school, including the work of the board of management. This model uses evidence from the inspectors' observations and examinations of school records, but also from parental, student and teacher questionnaires. Some of the schools selected for inspection with this model are included in the programme of inspections because of a concern that has arisen in an earlier, less intensive inspection.

WSE-Primary and WSE-Post-Primary are even more intensive versions of Whole-School Evaluation. The time spent in the school is increased and a more extensive set of evidence is collected.

Evaluations of Centres for Education are conducted mainly in Youthreach centres that provide "second-chance" educational opportunities for young people who have dropped out of mainstream schooling. The evaluation process is similar to a WSE in mainstream schools.

Inspections of Special Educational Needs (SEN) Provision take place within the inspection programme. These inspections may occur as incidental inspections or dedicated subject inspections, or they may form an element of whole-school evaluations, or they may take place using specialised SEN inspection models such as those mentioned above that take place in schools attached to High Support Units, Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres.

Specialised inspections, such as the evaluations of the work of special schools for autism, are also included in the programme. A focused model for the inspection of SEN provision in mainstream primary schools was piloted in 2015 and consultations with the education partners are underway with a view to implementing this new model from September 2016.

Early-Years Education-focused inspections (EYElS) were trialled in a number of early-years settings in the period November 2015 to January 2016. Early-years education-focused inspections are designed to support the development of the education dimension of provision in early-years settings participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. In such inspections, inspectors affirm good educational practice and offer advice and practical suggestions to early-years practitioners as to how educational experiences for children in a setting can be developed. EYElS focus on four main areas of quality in an early-years setting:

- The context to support children’s learning and development
- The processes to support children’s learning and development
- The children’s learning experiences and achievements
- Management and leadership for learning

EYElS were approved by the Minister in April and inspections have commenced formally since mid-April.

Follow-Through inspections take place in a proportion of schools that have experienced any inspection for which a written report was provided. These inspections, introduced in 2012, seek to establish the extent to which earlier recommendations have been implemented and act as an encouragement to boards and teachers to drive improvement in schools.

Having a range of inspection models means that inspections occur more frequently in schools; schools in which there is a greater risk to the learning of students are identified more quickly; and a proportion of more intensive inspections can be focused where the need for improvement is likely to be greatest. Having follow-through inspections also provide added flexibility that helps to increase the impact of inspection for improvement.

Further details of the numbers of each type of inspections conducted in recent years are provided in the final sections of this Chapter.

4.3 What are inspections designed to do?

Inspections of schools, centres for education and early-years settings make an important contribution to quality assurance of the education system. Inspections of schools, centres for education and early-years settings:

- seek to provide an external perspective on the quality of the work inspected

- affirm good practice in schools, classrooms, centres for education, early-years settings
- enable inspectors (who are experienced practitioners and evaluators) to advise teachers, principals, boards of management, early-years practitioners on how the quality of the educational experience that they offer can be improved
- act as an accountability measure: the inspection report helps to ensure that the management, the patron authority of the school/setting, parents and the Department obtain an independent evaluation of the school's/ setting's work
- provide information about the effectiveness of the school/setting: the publication of an inspection report means that parents, the wider community and the public as a whole receive high quality information about quality and standards in the school/setting
- provide information about trends and the effectiveness of the pre-school and school system: the thousands of inspection visits that occur during the course of a year also provide information on the functioning of the pre-school and school system as a whole, and these findings are published in thematic reports and in the Chief Inspector's Report which is published every three years.

4.4 What happens during an inspection?

Inspectors use different inspection models in different schools and circumstances, but all models share certain characteristics:

- inspectors observe teaching and learning activities for substantial periods
- inspectors interact with learners in classrooms and other settings
- inspectors examine learners' work, including written work, projects, other work on display
- inspectors examine records of learners' tests and examinations
- inspectors interview key staff (such as the principal teacher or the centre leader, members of specific teams (e.g. the special needs team, or the head of department in a post-primary school), teachers and early years professionals).

Whole-school type inspections also involve:

- the scrutiny of school planning/centre planning and self-review documentation
- interviews with the board of management of the school or centre
- interviews with learners and with parents of students
- the use of questionnaire data from questionnaires completed by large samples of parents and students
- the use of questionnaire data from on-line questionnaires completed by teachers.

At the conclusion of inspections:

- Inspectors provide detailed oral feedback to individual teachers, to the principal and the teaching staff and, depending on the model, to the board of management
- In the case of all of the models other than incidental inspections, a written inspection report is also provided to the school or centre which includes detailed recommendations for improvement, where necessary. (This report is published – see further details on publication of school inspection reports below).

Early-years education-focused inspections (EYEIs) involve:

- Observation, from an education-focused perspective, of the quality of the interactions in early-years settings
- Review of available planning documentation
- Interaction with the children in the setting
- Discussion with practitioners about the content and nature of documents relating to the children’s learning and development.

At the conclusion of an EYEI, inspectors provide detailed oral feedback on the findings of the evaluation to the practitioners whose work was observed and the setting owner/manager. A written inspection report is also provided to the setting. The report contains advice on the necessary actions to bring about improvements in the setting. EYEI inspection reports will be published on the websites of the Departments of Education and Skills and Children and Youth Affairs; the first of these are expected to be published in June 2016.

4.5 Dealing with schools experiencing significant difficulties

In a very small number of instances, schools with very serious weaknesses come to the attention of the Department. In these cases, it may be necessary for the Department to engage with the patron, trustees or management of the school to ensure that the need for improvement and change is fully appreciated by the school and those responsible for its management.

This work is overseen by the Department’s School Improvement Group (SIG). This is an internal co-ordinating group of senior officials drawn from the Department’s School Governance Section and the Inspectorate (and involving relevant officials from other sections, as necessary)

Schools in which serious weaknesses are identified require an intervention that is tailored to the particular circumstances and context of the school. Responsibility for the improvement process lies with the board of management of the school but the progress made is monitored by the school improvement group.

Table 4: Outcomes of the school improvement process

	Primary Active	Primary Closed	Total Primary		Post-primary Active	Post-primary Closed	Total Post-primary	Total Schools
Dec 2012	25	16	41		22	5	27	68
June 2013	25	20	45		19	10	29	74
Oct 2013	25	20	45		17	12	29	74
Jan 2014	19	28	47		12	17	29	76
May 2014	17	30	47		11	18	29	76
Dec 2015	15	36	51		4	26	30	81

As of 31 December 2015, 81 schools in total had been referred to SIG since 2012. 62 (76%) made sufficient progress and are no longer supported and monitored by SIG.

A range of supports is available to schools where serious weaknesses have been identified. These include support from patron bodies, management representative bodies, leadership representative bodies, ETBs (where relevant), national support services such as PDST and Special Education Support Service (SESS), and Education Centres. Inspectors are also available to provide advice and support where relevant. Schools are advised to seek support from specific sources depending on the weakness identified.

4.6 Underperforming teachers

Procedures for the Suspension and Dismissal of Teachers under Section 24 of the Education Act 1998 were agreed with the education partners in autumn 2009 and began to be implemented in late 2010. These procedures are designed to enable school boards to take appropriate steps to deal with significant teacher professional competence difficulties that may arise.

The procedures are expressly designed to allow resolution of the under-performance at school level. The process provides adequate and structured means to allow principals and boards, as employers, to point out underperformance to a teacher and to put in place remedial actions. The Department does not hold data on the number of cases that are undertaken by schools in the informal stages, but it understands that most cases tend to be resolved at the early informal and formal stages.

As part of the Section 24 process, where the efforts to address professional competence difficulties are considered by the board of management to have been unsuccessful, the board is required to request the Chief Inspector to arrange an external review of the teacher's performance. To date, six (two post-primary and four primary) requests for reviews of a teacher's performance have come to the Chief Inspector as part of the Section 24 process.

The Teaching Council has responsibility for setting standards and ensuring that teachers adhere to the standards. The enactment of section 30 of the Teaching Council Act requires teachers to be registered with the Council in order to be paid from exchequer funding. The commencement of Part V of the Teaching Council Act 2001 is imminent. This will enable the Council to investigate complaints regarding the professional conduct and medical fitness to practice of registered teachers. If complaints are upheld, the Council will be permitted to impose sanctions such as placing conditions on the teachers' registration or removing them from the register. Teachers who are removed from the register will not be permitted to teach in this or other jurisdictions. Boards of management of schools must follow all procedures under section 24 of the Education Act prior to referring the issue to the Teaching Council. The power to be given to the Teaching Council will mean that it can remove a teacher from the register when all procedures have been correctly and fully completed, thus removing from the teacher the right to be paid from public monies.

4.7 Other inspections and evaluations conducted by the Inspectorate

The Inspectorate conducts a range of other evaluations and inspections on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills and other bodies, including the Teaching Council and other Departments. These include:

Inspections of primary teachers for probationary purposes

The Teaching Council is the body with statutory responsibility for the registration of teachers in Ireland. Under current arrangements, newly-qualified primary teachers are registered with the Teaching Council with conditions which includes the satisfactory completion of a probationary process involving service and professional competence requirements.

Currently, the Inspectorate evaluates the professional competence of newly qualified teachers at primary level each year on behalf of the Teaching Council. Very large numbers of newly-qualified teachers have been entering the primary school system in recent years for a number of reasons, including very significant demographic growth in student numbers generally; the growth in the numbers of additional teachers devoted to support students with special education needs; and the large number of teacher retirements during the financial crisis. This has meant an unprecedented growth in probationary teacher inspections (in the region of 4,000 inspection visits annually, covering more than 2,200 probationary teachers per annum) at a time when the numbers of primary inspectors fell substantially. This means that the growth in the requirement for probationary teacher inspections has eroded significantly the ability of the Inspectorate to provide sufficiently frequent inspections to evaluate the work of primary schools in general.

In most jurisdictions, the monitoring of a newly qualified teacher's probationary period is the responsibility of the employer (exercised by the principal on behalf of the board of management or employer) and the teaching profession (through a registration body such as the Teaching Council). The current arrangement at primary level in Ireland arises for historical reasons.

The Teaching Council has been working on a new process by which newly qualified teachers would be introduced into the profession. The new process, called *Droichead* – will involve an induction process and a period of supported practice under the supervision of a team of experienced teachers in each school. In March 2016, the Council approved the new procedures for introduction on a phased basis, beginning from September 2016, with full implementation from September 2018.

Despite the heavy drain on limited Inspectorate resources, the Inspectorate has agreed to carry out probationary inspections throughout the transition period to full implementation of *Droichead* and into the future in cases where schools are unable to make recommendations regarding the registration of newly qualified teachers. For the 2016/17 school year, the Teaching Council has asked the Inspectorate to conduct inspections of probationary teachers in primary schools where *Droichead* is not operating but NOT in special schools or special education settings in primary schools, where it envisages the *Droichead* process as the only means by which the teacher can complete his/her probationary requirements. If the INTO decides to instruct its members not to cooperate with *Droichead*, this will mean that newly qualified teachers will be unable to complete their registration requirements in special schools and special education settings in mainstream primary schools from 1 September 2016.

In the longer term, a successful implementation of the *Droichead* programme and its introduction as the main means of teacher entry to the profession should enable the Inspectorate to plan a more balanced and effective inspection programme for primary schools.

[Focused/thematic evaluations](#)

In addition to its mainstream evaluation activity, the Inspectorate undertakes a number of in-depth thematic evaluation projects. These evaluations examine the quality of selected subjects, educational programmes or services across a sample of schools. These evaluations usually incorporate a considerable research element and the evidence base, while similar to that for whole-school evaluations, generally incorporates a more extensive set of data relating to resource inputs and measures of student learning outcomes.

An overall report is prepared that sets out the main trends and recommendations for service improvement and policy development. Some of the recommendations provide advice for

teachers, school leaders and management while others are intended for policy makers and relevant agencies. The report is disseminated to schools and key personnel throughout the system.

Inspections of Irish summer colleges

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills conducts inspections of teaching and learning in a sample of Coláistí Samhraidh (summer colleges) annually on behalf of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Inspections of the college premises and of the accommodation provided to students are a matter for the D/AHG.

Inspections following request from other sections of DES

The Inspectorate conducts evaluations of specific types of school or centres for education, frequently at the request of a section of the Department. Currently, the Inspectorate is planning evaluation work to monitor the DES/NCSE pilot project on the allocation of Special Education resources to schools. The Inspectorate also conducts evaluation of schools for the purposes of school recognition at the request of Capital Appraisal Section.

Inspections in conjunction with external agencies/bodies

A small number of specialised inspections are conducted for other bodies. Examples include:

- Joint inspections with the Education and Training Inspectorate, Northern Ireland of specific projects or provision at the request of the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) and the Department of Education and Skills. In recent years evaluations were conducted jointly with the Education and Training Inspectorate to examine the Autism Centre at Middletown, Armagh, and Literacy and Numeracy practices in schools North and South of the border. A further review of the Autism Centre at Middletown, Armagh, will be conducted in the first half of 2016.
- The Inspectorate conducts whole-college evaluations of the agricultural colleges operated by Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority. These inspections occur at the request of Teagasc.
- In 2015, the Inspectorate, at the request of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, embarked on the development of the early-years education-focused inspection (EYEI) model. (See further details above).

Overseeing national and international assessments of student achievement

The Inspectorate, in cooperation with the Educational Research Centre, (ERC) Drumcondra, oversees the implementation in schools of periodic National Assessment of English Reading

(NAER) and the National Assessment of Mathematics Achievement (NAMA) in primary schools. These assessments are conducted in a scientifically constructed sample of schools on behalf of the Department by the ERC. The assessments provide a means of monitoring the achievement of primary school students in these critical areas of literacy and mathematics.

The Inspectorate is also involved in the administration in schools of international assessments such as the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) which measures student achievement in reading, mathematics and science at age 15 years. It also assists with the monitoring of the administration of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) at primary and post-primary level and in the Progress in the International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) at primary level. Inspectorate involvement in the selected schools helps to ensure full cooperation with the testing and quality assurance regarding the collection and return of the data.

School Self-Evaluation (5)

Background

School self-evaluation is designed to work alongside and to complement the external inspections of schools conducted by the Inspectorate. The Inspectorate aims to ensure that all schools will engage in robust self-evaluation with a focus on school improvement and on accountability.

The approach of the Department and the Inspectorate to school self-evaluation has been informed by a large volume of international academic research, including work at the OECD. A pilot project was also organised by the Inspectorate in a number of primary and post-primary schools in the academic year prior to the introduction of school self-evaluation.

The international research shows that having a balanced approach to the evaluation of schools, in which external inspection is complemented by internal school self-evaluation, is highly effective at driving improvement. There is also clear evidence that where schools believe that school self-evaluation is used mainly for external accountability purposes, the process is not effective. Experience has demonstrated that in such situations, schools may not be willing to engage in honest self-review as they understandably feel that the adverse consequences may flow if their weaknesses are in the public domain.

Based on this international research evidence, the Department made school self-evaluation mandatory from 2012 as part of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategy 2011-2020. The Department determined that schools should focus this self-evaluation on aspects of their teaching and learning, and especially (though not exclusively) on the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Requirements for school self-evaluation, covering the period 2012-June 2016 were set out in Circular 0039/2012 for primary schools and Circular 0040/2012 for second-level schools. The Department deliberately made the “initial ask” regarding school self-evaluation a modest one, so as not to overwhelm schools and school leaders in the early stages. It also deliberately emphasised the goal of school improvement over that of accountability. The Inspectorate published comprehensive guidelines for schools and has delivered a range of other supports for school self-evaluation.

The primary purpose of SSE is school improvement. The Inspectorate’s approach to SSE is based on a view that schools are best placed to identify strengths and areas for improvement or development. It is anticipated that schools will build capacity over time to ensure that they will engage in continual evaluation of all aspects of their work and make evidence-based decisions about where improvements are needed.

Schools decide on the area(s) of focus for SSE. They are expected to gather evidence relevant to that area of focus. Such evidence includes assessment and examination data, results of surveys of students and parents, teachers’ reflections and observations and other data. Schools are required to analyse assessment data and use this, along with other evidence, to inform their evaluation and to set targets for improvement.

Supports for SSE from the Inspectorate are provided through the Guidelines, a dedicated website, advisory visits to schools and the publication of a twice yearly newsletter. National and regional seminars have also been held.

Schools are required to prepare SSE reports and school improvement plans and to provide summaries of these to the school community each year. These reports and plans focus on one aspect of teaching and learning. A survey of all schools conducted in 2014/15 indicates that the vast majority of schools have engaged in the SSE process. Almost all primary schools and the majority of post-primary schools reported that they had completed SSE reports and developed school improvement plans. However, compliance with the requirement to report the outcomes of SSE to parents was disappointing. This appears to reflect international research which suggests that where schools are required to make the outcomes of their self-evaluation public, the robustness of the self-evaluation process may be compromised.

Development of SSE

It will be necessary to issue new circulars in 2016 to set out the requirements for school self-evaluation for forthcoming years (possibly covering the period from 2016/17 to 2019/2020). The Inspectorate is leading the development of these circulars. Further details provided in Section (10) below. The Inspectorate is also completing the initial development of a single quality framework for schools. This *Quality Framework* will provide a single comprehensive yet accessible description of the standards to which schools should aspire. The publication of the Quality Framework will support the school self-evaluation process (and indeed the inspection process also). Although the *Framework* will include standards for leadership and management as well as teaching and learning, it is envisaged that the focus for SSE in most schools will remain on improving teaching and learning. A small number of schools will be invited to also use the standards for leadership and management in a pilot trial in 2016/17. (see further details in section (10) below).

Inspection support (6)

6.1 Planning, tracking and reporting software and databases

There are a range of systems in place for the planning and tracking of inspections carried out by inspectors in each of the Inspectorate's regional business units. Planned and completed inspections are recorded on a central database which is used to keep track of all inspection activity. This database is also used to co-ordinate the reporting of inspection activity for the Inspectorate. The electronic databases in which this data is stored relies on very old IT architecture and a major project is underway to replace this IT system. It is expected that a new information management system for the Inspectorate (IMIS) will be available from September 2016.

6.2 Criteria used to choose schools for inspection

The Evaluation, Support and Research Unit (ESRU) of the Inspectorate has developed risk-based analysis tools to support more effective planning for inspection. At primary level the inspection planning process involves risk assessment based on data from the range of inspections conducted in schools, including a significant number of unannounced incidental inspections that will be conducted each year together with other data, including school size, for example.

At post-primary level, data from stand-alone subject inspections, incidental inspections and other school evaluations facilitate risk-based assessment in the selection of schools for WSE or other forms of inspection. Other data available to the Department such as performance in certificate examinations, student attendance and student retention data are considered as part of the risk assessment process.

In general, the criteria used to select schools for evaluation include:

- The inspection history of the school (date of the last inspection visit and the subject(s) inspected)
- Data from previous inspections, including data from short incidental inspections and whole school evaluations
- Nature of the recommendations made during previous inspections
- Size of school (to ensure spread across small, medium and large schools)
- Availability of inspectors with the necessary skills as, for example, subject inspections are conducted by subject specialist inspectors
- Medium of instruction (to ensure that both Irish medium and English medium schools are inspected)

- School management and patronage type to ensure that schools from each sector are well represented

6.3 Access to data

A range of data from various sections of the Department of Education and Skills is used to provide support for inspectors in advance of carrying out an inspection in a school. Such data includes data regarding student attainment in examinations, student attendance, student retention and indicators of social disadvantage among students in a school. This work helps in the development of tools to evaluate student assessment outcomes with reference to school context factors.

In 2010 the Department introduced the Oracle Business Intelligence (BI) tool which provides users in key sections across the Department with direct access to essential data sets regarding primary and post-primary schools. ESRU also works with agencies such as the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and the Child and Family Agency regarding access to data to support school evaluation. The Inspectorate also receives examination results from the State Examinations Commission (SEC) and this is made available to inspectors as part of the data set for post-primary evaluations.

Currently, the Inspectorate cooperates with the work of the Department's Knowledge Management and Research Unit. This cross-Department work is seeking to make available better data through improvements to the capture and analysis of information about students and schools. It is hoped that the advent of the Primary Pupil Online Database (POD) and enhancements to the Post-primary Online Pupil Database (PPOD) will provide a much richer source of information to inform inspection planning and the judgements that inspectors make about the performance of schools.

Publication of School Inspection Reports (7)

7.1 Publication of reports arising from individual inspections

All reports arising from WSE, subject and programme inspections, follow-through inspections and evaluations of centres for education are published on the Department's web site. Reports are published in accordance with the procedures outlined in *Publication of School Inspection Reports – Guidelines*, published in 2015. These procedures are underpinned by a statutory instrument, *Education Act 1998 (Publication of Inspection Reports on Schools and Centres for Education) Regulations 2015*. Publication of the reports means that evidence-based information is available to the whole school community and this ensures that schools, parents and the general public have access to meaningful information on quality and standards in the education system. A total of 8,538 inspection reports have been published in the period from June 2006 (when publication commenced) to the end of December 2015. From September 2016, it is planned that all inspection reports will carry a readily understood scale that will enable readers to understand the strengths and weaker areas of each school's performance across a range of dimensions (e.g., the quality of teaching and learning, the quality of teachers' planning and preparation, etc.)

Following the conclusion of the pilot phase of early years education focussed inspection in February 2016, a finalised version of the inspection model was submitted and approved by the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.. Inspection reports arising from these inspections will also be published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

Table 5: TOTAL REPORTS AVAILABLE on the DES WEBSITE – 31 Dec 2015

Evaluation Type	Primary Schools	Post-Primary Schools	Centres for Education	Total
Whole School Evaluation (WSE)	2,312	605		2,917
Subject inspection -within WSE		968		5,006
-stand-alone		4,038		
Programme evaluation -Within WSE		27		231
-Stand-alone		204		
Evaluation of Centre for Education			83	83
Evaluation of High Support Unit			19	19
Follow Through Evaluations – WSE-MLL	162	52		214

Follow Through Evaluations – Subject Inspections		65		65
Whole-college Evaluations (Teagasc)		3		3
Total	2,474	5,962	102	8,538

Schools and other settings are provided with an opportunity to verify the factual content of inspection reports and to submit school/setting responses that provide observations on the content of the inspection reports and/or describing the plans they have to address the recommendations in the reports. These responses are published along with the inspection reports on the internet web site of the Department of Education and Skills at www.education.ie.

The publication of inspection reports also means that information on quality and standards in schools and other settings is available to other schools, settings, school leaders, those involved in the management of schools and settings, and other professionals. The Inspectorate has encouraged members of teacher professional networks, principals' groups and others to examine these reports so that they may learn lessons about how their own schools or centres could be improved. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the reports are used widely in this way.

A briefing note, giving details of any potentially controversial reports that are likely to attract media attention when published is provided to the Minister's Office and the Press Office. This briefing note may also contains information on the follow-up action that is being undertaken by the school management and, if necessary, the Department.

7.2 Composite national reports

The Inspectorate disseminates general lessons from school inspection reports on individual schools to other schools and the system generally through the publication of composite reports on various aspects of educational provision. In these publications, the findings from a significant number of individual school and centre reports are discussed and the general patterns explored. For example, composite reports on the findings of DEIS evaluations from 2010 to 2014 in primary and post-primary schools were published in 2015. These reports outlined the strengths and areas for development in the process of action planning for improvement in 44 DEIS primary schools and 44 DEIS post-primary schools.

The Chief Inspector also published the *Chief Inspector's Report 2010-2012* which covers the work undertaken by the Inspectorate in the years 2010, 2011 and 2012. It presented an account of many of the major aspects of the work of the Inspectorate over the three-year period and some key findings about standards in schools attended by primary and post-

primary students. Its focus was on the quality of provision in different parts of the education system. The *Chief Inspector's Report 2013-2015* is expected to be published in 2016.

Other Areas of Inspectorate Work (8)

8.1 North-South cooperation

Inspection Exchanges

Inspector exchanges, where members of each Inspectorate participate as observers on inspection teams in the other jurisdiction, have been on-going since 2008. Each of the exchanges has had a particular area of focus, enabling both Inspectorates to provide targeted learning and relevant professional experiences for the participating inspectors.

Joint Inspections of specialised subjects/themes

The Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) have cooperated on a number of joint inspections of specialised provision and/or projects. The North/South Joint Inspectorate Reports on *Best Practice Guidelines in Literacy Provision at Post-Primary Level* and *Best Practice Guidelines in Numeracy Provision at Post-Primary Level* were published in 2015 and a copy of these reports was sent to every school in the country. The Department of Education in Northern Ireland has undertaken to contract Cooperation Ireland to run two seminars publicising the findings in these reports among education practitioners. The first of these seminars will be held in May 2016 in Dublin and a second in Northern Ireland in the autumn.

Arising from joint inspection work and the experience of inspector exchanges, proposals are being considered how inspectors might be trained to work with authority and accountability in each other's jurisdiction, especially where skills shortages exist. To date, inspectors from ETI have successfully participated in a specialised inspections of agricultural colleges carried out by the DES Inspectorate and proposals are being advanced that will see inspectors from the DES Inspectorate participate on inspection teams in Irish-medium schools in Northern Ireland. The management teams in both Inspectorates are committed to giving further detailed consideration to deployment of staff in this way.

ETI contribution to Inspectorate induction and CPD Programme

ETI inspectors have recently contributed in a significant way to the induction and CPD programme for inspectors involved in the early-years education-focused inspections. Some team inspections comprising DES and ETI inspectors have taken place in early-years settings within the context of the exchange programme.

8.2 The Inspectorate's Responsibility Regarding Child Protection

On behalf of the Department, the Inspectorate monitors schools' general compliance with the requirements of *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (2011)* in the course of whole-school type evaluations. School management is required to complete a Child Protection School Self-Report Form. This is in a simple one-page format which requires both the principal and the chairperson to sign off to a "yes" or "no" answer to nine questions which reflect the key requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (2011)*. During the evaluation, inspectors also make at least three confirmatory checks of the school's compliance with specific requirements of the Child Protection Procedures. On the basis of this additional evidence and the School Self-Report Form, the inspectors made a judgement about the school's compliance with the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools ((2011)*. The Inspectorate reports twice annually to Schools Section on the findings of its monitoring procedures.

It should be noted that, in April 2016, the Ombudsman for Children notified the Department that he would conduct an investigation into the Department's oversight of its child protection arrangements, including the inspection arrangements. The Inspectorate and School Governance Section is cooperating with the Ombudsman in this review.

8.3 Monitoring of Bullying

During whole-school type evaluations (WSEs), the Inspectorate gathers information about how schools deal with bullying in a number of ways:

- through review of relevant school documentation, including the school's Code of behaviour and Anti-Bullying policy
- through meetings with parents and pupil representatives at which there is an opportunity for parents and pupils to raise issues where relevant; and
- through the inclusion on parent and pupil questionnaires of items relating to bullying.

Children and parents are asked to respond to questions about how the school deals with bullying and discipline in the school and whether or not the school provides a safe environment for children. Where responses indicate that students and/or parents do not believe that bullying is dealt with effectively, inspectors raise this issue with school management who have ultimate responsibility for anti-bullying policy and procedure.

Analysis of questionnaires returned between September 2010, when they were first introduced to all WSEs, and the end of 2015, indicate that 93% of post-primary parents and 97% of primary parents agree that their children feel safe in school and this is generally borne out by pupil and student responses to similar questions.

84% of primary parents and 78% of post-primary parents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'I am confident that if my child experiences bullying the school will act promptly and effectively'. 95% of primary pupils and 85% of post-primary students agreed that, 'If someone is bullying me I can get help from a teacher or other adult in the school.'

8.4 Involvement in Literacy, Numeracy, Curriculum and Assessment issues

Business Unit 8 is the section of the Inspectorate that focuses on policy work in relation to literacy, numeracy, curriculum and assessment issues. Much of its work is in conjunction with the Curriculum, Assessment Policy (CAP) section of the Department.

The Inspectorate's policy work in relation to reform of the Junior Certificate and syllabus development and implementation (e.g. science curricula at senior cycle) is dealt with in detail in the CAP section of the overall briefing note. The business unit is involved in a range of work in the areas of literacy, numeracy, curriculum and assessment including:

- Assisting in the preparation of the Department's inputs and responses to draft **curriculum and assessment documents**, such as the wide variety of curricula, syllabi, etc. that are under development at the NCCA. Currently, the most pressing issues concern revisions of the primary curricula for English and Irish (3rd to 6th class) and Maths; development of an Education about Religious Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics curriculum at primary level; junior cycle reform generally and subject specifications for Irish, Modern Languages, Art Craft Design, Maths, Home Economics, History, Music and Geography and short course in Philosophy; Leaving Certificate science subjects, Economics, Applied Maths, Agricultural Science, Politics and Society, PE
- Advising on the analysis of **standardised test data** returned by primary schools for the 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years
- Coordinating, with CAP, the Department's actions to support the implementation of the **Government's 20 Year Strategy for Irish**; this has been a major area of involvement for inspectors who provide much of the Irish-language and Irish-teaching expertise required by CAP
- Leading the Department's development of a **Policy on Gaeltacht education** following consultation with stakeholders and research on policy and practice nationally and in minority language contexts internationally. This has involved the Inspectorate in conducting and overseeing the commissioning of extensive background research; the drafting of policy proposals and the organisation of a national consultation on the

proposals; the finalisation of policy proposals for approval by the Minister and Government

- Leading the Department's review of **exemptions from Irish**. The review will inform the provision of a report on current exemption arrangements and recommendations on future arrangements. It is anticipated that the report will be provided for consideration by the Minister during 2016
- Assisting the Educational Research Centre to carry out **national and international surveys** of attainment in literacy, numeracy and science.

8.5 Working with Teacher Education Section to support teacher education reforms and quality assurance

The Inspectorate provides policy advice to the Department's Teacher Education Section (TES) on the teacher education continuum: initial teacher education, induction and continuing professional development. At an operational level, two members of the Inspectorate are assigned, one on a full-time basis and one on a part-time basis, to TES where they provide professional expertise and advice across the range of activities for which this section has responsibility.

A major area of activity for TES is the summer course programme for primary teachers. The Inspectorate undertakes a quality assurance role in the approval and evaluation of the summer course programme and is involved in drawing up criteria for the operation of the programme; in examining proposed courses for approval; in considering appeals; and in monitoring on site and on line courses during the months of July and August.

The link between the Teaching Council and the Department is managed on a day to day basis by the Teacher Education Section. One of the five Ministerial nominees on the Council is an inspector who is currently involved in all of the following major initiatives: policy on the teacher education continuum; the review of the strategy for the review and accreditation of teacher education programmes; the review of registration regulations following the enactment of section 30; preparation for the enactment of Part V of the Teaching Council Acts; the development of policy, procedures and criteria for the induction and probation of newly-qualified teachers at primary and post-primary level; the development of policy on continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers.

The Teaching Council has responsibility for accreditation of teacher education programmes. Since late 2009, the Council has been involved in establishing panels to conduct reviews of teacher education programmes for the purpose of accreditation. All initial teacher

education programmes have been reviewed for the purpose of accreditation by such panels. The Inspectorate has been represented on each of these panels.

8.6 Working with Special Education Section

Inspectors (mainly in Business Unit 3) work closely with the Department's Special Education Section in relation to the development of special education policy and provision. One divisional inspector is assigned full-time to the Special Education Section and other inspectors assist the Section on specific policy committees. Inspectors also provide advice to the National Council for Special Education, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the Special Education Support Service and the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education as members of councils, steering committees and expert groups. Inspectors also provide information and advice to Special Education Litigation Section in relation to legal actions against the Department on behalf of children with special educational needs.

Current priorities include working with Special Education, NEPS and the NCSE in relation to designing and conducting an evaluation of the pilot National Council for Special Education allocation model of support teachers in 20 schools.

8.7 Management of Visiting Teacher Service for children with visual and hearing impairment

Since the closure of the Department's regional offices in 2010, the Inspectorate has temporarily undertaken the management of the Visiting Teacher Service for Children with Visual and Hearing Impairment. This task is assigned on a part-time basis to an assistant chief inspector and a number of senior/divisional inspectors. Administrative support is provided by the Inspectorate secretariat.

The Visiting Teacher Service for Children with Visual and Hearing Impairment is staffed by 45 Teachers (WTEs). These teachers support the children in their schools and homes. The visiting teachers work with infants as young as a few weeks old, and, as required, continue to work with individual children until the end of their second level education. The support provided includes assessment, tuition, and ongoing guidance for the child, parents and schools. Visiting teachers also liaise with and support the NCSE, NEPS, the State Examinations Commission, and HSE professionals and agencies in relation to provision for children with visual and hearing impairment.

It was recognised that the involvement of inspectors in the direct management of teachers whose work may be evaluated by the Inspectorate was not appropriate, and a review of the visiting teacher service by two experts from England was carried out during the 2013-14

school year. A report was provided to the Department in April 2014. As a result of the review, the Department took the decision to include the Visiting Teacher Service for Children with Visual and Hearing Impairment in the new Inclusion Support Service which operates under the direction of the National Council for Special Education. The Inspectorate's current priority is to support the transition of the Visiting Teacher Service for Children with Visual and Hearing Impairment to the Inclusion Support Service. This is anticipated to be completed during the first half of 2016.

8.8 Ongoing evaluations and administration of European Schools (www.eursec.eu)

The European Schools system is a system of nursery, primary and secondary schools established as a result of an intergovernmental protocol and is maintained by the European Union and its Member States. In the main the schools serve the needs of children whose parents are officials of the EU Commission, European Parliament and other official European institutions. At present there are approximately 26,000 students, aged from 4 to 18, in the system and there are 14 schools in various European countries. The European Schools system also accredits other schools to provide a European education in accordance with criteria set by the board of governors of the European Schools. The Centre for European Schooling in Dunshaughlin is an accredited school. Ireland is represented on the Board of Governors by the Deputy Chief Inspector.

Basic instruction is given in the official languages of the European Union. Each school comprises several language sections. There is a strong emphasis on the learning, understanding and use of foreign languages. Irish is provided for Irish nationals throughout nursery, primary and secondary education. It is one of the 'protected' languages i.e. classes can be formed with any number of pupils.

The Department of Education and Skills fulfils its obligations under the intergovernmental Convention defining the Statute of the European Schools by arranging for the secondment of teachers from Ireland to fill teaching positions in the European Schools and by funding replacement teachers in schools in Ireland. In the current school year (2015-2016), there are 61 Irish teachers seconded to the European Schools, 27 primary teachers and 34 post-primary teachers. Two Irish inspectors are assigned on a part-time basis to European Schools work, one primary and one post-primary. The inspectors evaluate the work of Irish teachers seconded to the European Schools on a regular basis and participate as members of teams on Whole School Evaluations. The inspector at post-primary level has significant responsibilities in relation to the operation of the European Baccalaureate.

8.9. Advice and research on a range of policy issues

The Inspectorate contributes to the overall policy making of the Department, drawing on its school-based evidence and its research capabilities. Frequently, members of the Inspectorate cooperate closely with officials in other sections of the Department to provide draft discussion papers or draft policy documents. For example, the Inspectorate contributed to or led teams that drafted documents leading to published policies such as the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and more recently to papers on issues such as school autonomy, information on schools, school self-evaluation, developing leadership in schools, draft policy proposals on Gaeltacht education etc.

8.10 Inspectors representing the Department on national and international bodies

The Department is represented on a number of national and international bodies by members of the Inspectorate including:

- National Council for Special Education: Seán Ó Murchú, Divisional Inspector
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment: Pádraig Mac Fhlannchadha, Assistant Chief Inspector
- Teaching Council (Ministerial Nominee): Deirdre Mathews, Assistant Chief Inspector
- Board of Governors of the European Schools: Emer Egan, Deputy Chief Inspector
- European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education: Liam Walsh, Divisional Inspector
- OECD INES Network for the Collection and Adjudication of System-Level Descriptive Information on Educational Structures, Policies and Practices (NESLI): Pádraig Mac Fhlannchadha, Assistant Chief Inspector
- OECD Governing Board of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), Paris: Harold Hislop, Chief Inspector.

Quality assurance of Inspection (9)

The Inspectorate is committed to carrying out its evaluative and advisory work to the highest professional standards and has put a number of quality assurance processes in place to self-evaluate its work and to drive improvement.

9.1 Code of Practice for the Inspectorate

The *Code of Practice for the Inspectorate* has been revised and updated in 2015 to better reflect the breadth and scope of all the evaluative and advisory work of the Inspectorate and all models of inspection. The revised Code sets out, under four main headings, the general principles in accordance with which the Inspectorate carries out its work. These principles provide a benchmark against which it, and others, can judge the quality of its professional practice. The revised Code came into effect in September 2015.

9.2 Improving the quality assurance of the Inspectorate's work

A number of processes are used to quality assure the work of the Inspectorate. These include

- publication of a revised Code of Practice for the Inspectorate which sets out the general principles in accordance with which we, as members of the Inspectorate, carry out our work.
- an extensive initial training programme for all newly-recruited inspectors
- ongoing mandatory professional development for inspectors
- steps to encourage individual and team reflection following inspections
- as a means of observing practice and procedure, participation by senior managers in a small sample of inspections in schools
- systematic processes for editing and checking all inspection reports, and
- confidential post-evaluation surveys to collect information about how well schools believe inspections were conducted. To date, these surveys have been conducted among teachers and principals in schools which experienced a whole-school evaluation. Similar surveys of chairpersons of boards of management and parents' associations commenced for inspections undertaken from January 2016. The responses received are stored by the Statistics Section of the Department to ensure anonymity for schools and teachers, and aggregated data is supplied to the Inspectorate. This data is analysed by the Inspectorate and the data informs the ongoing development and improvement of Inspectorate practices and procedures.

9.3 Formal reviews of inspections

Occasionally, it is alleged that inspections fall below the standards that the Inspectorate sets out in its *Code of Practice*. The Inspectorate is committed to examining all such incidents thoroughly and to learning lessons from these cases, so that the work of the Inspectorate can be improved in the future. The Inspectorate has informal and formal processes to deal with these cases:

- A board of management or teacher, under Section 13 (9) of the Education Act 1998, may seek a review of the work of an inspector or an inspection report and the procedures for such reviews are published in the document *Procedure for Review of Inspections on Schools and Teachers*.
- A very small number of such requests for review are received: most are resolved in an informal process, without recourse to formal procedures. Just six formal reviews were completed between 2008 and Dec 2015. In four of the cases, the inspection was upheld and in two cases the review found that the inspections were not in keeping with the Inspectorate's *Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting* and the reports were subsequently amended.

Current Priorities and Areas for Development (10)

10.1 Inspectorate Strategic Plan 2014-2016; Strategic Plan 2017-2020

To help achieve its purpose for learners, the Inspectorate set out its strategic plan for the three year period from 2014 to 2016 under three main goals concerned with

- improving inspection and evaluation
- supporting and driving improvement in the school system
- improving the capacity and skills of the Inspectorate to fulfil its role and statutory functions.

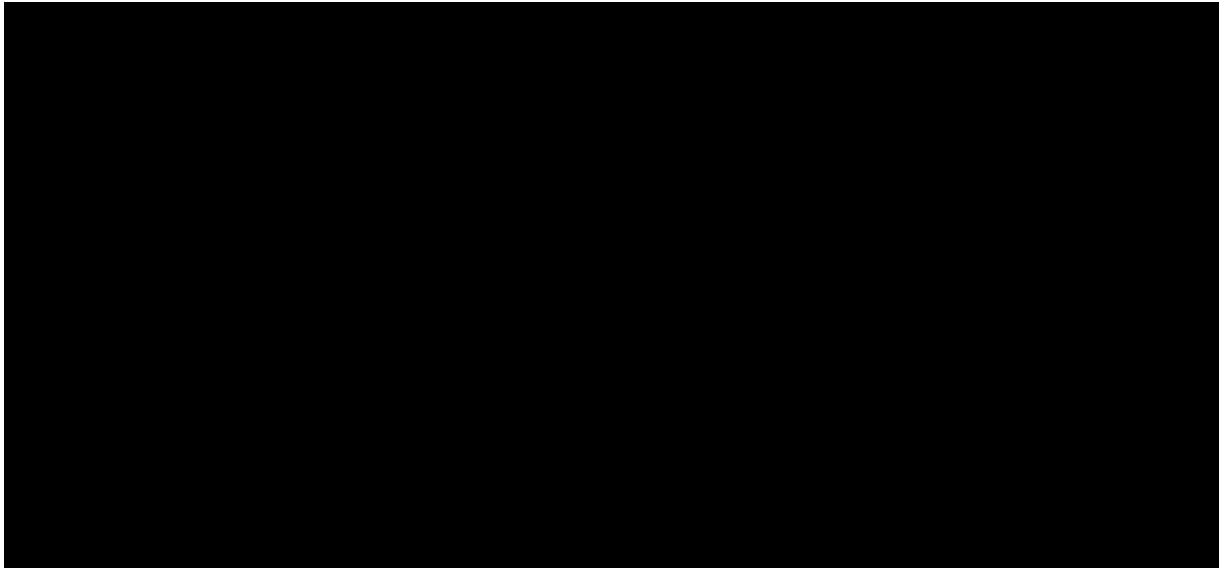
The implementation of this three-year strategic plan will conclude in 2016, and a new three year plan will be drafted.

Some of the current key issues in the work of the Inspectorate, and some of those expected to be included in the next phase of its work include the following:

10.2 Complete and consolidate revision of Inspection Procedures for schools, 2016-2017

- Since 2010, the Inspectorate has changed the way it inspects schools. It has developed a range of models of varying intensity and focus, so that it can target inspection more effectively and efficiently, and improve inspection coverage. The Inspectorate is required, under the provisions of section 13(8) of the Education Act 1998 to consult with the education partners on the development of, or amendments to, inspection procedures. Procedures must be approved by the Minister following this consultation.
- A priority for the Inspectorate in 2016 and 2017 will be to complete a revision of its inspection models and to consolidate their use in schools.
- During 2015, the Inspectorate concluded consultations on revised procedures that underpin the reform of inspections, include a new *Code of Practice* for the Inspectorate, guidelines and a statutory instrument to regulate the publication of inspection reports, and a revised process for the review (appeal) of inspections. All these came into force in September 2015.
- By the end of 2015, the Inspectorate had developed a range of inspection models for primary schools (incidental inspections, curriculum evaluations, SEN evaluations, DEIS evaluations, WSE-MLL, WSE and Follow-Through inspections) and a range for use in post-primary schools (incidental inspections, subject inspections, programme

evaluations, DEIS inspections, WSE-MLL, WSE and Follow-Through inspections). These models are either entirely new models or significantly revised versions of existing models. Draft procedures for most of these models were provided to the education partners in a consultative process in autumn 2015 and procedures for the remaining models (curriculum evaluations in primary schools and SEN evaluations in primary and post-primary schools) were provided to the partners in April 2016. Subject to Ministerial approval, it is anticipated that all of these models will become effective in the school system in September 2016.



- The Inspectorate has also begun development of a model of inspection suited to small primary schools. The particular circumstances of these one-teacher and two-teacher schools require a tailored inspection approach and initial work has been undertaken in two regions of the Inspectorate on this task.



10.3 Development and implementation of a single quality framework for schools

- The Inspectorate is completing the initial development of a single quality framework for schools. Put simply, this Quality Framework will provide a description of what a good school should be, and will set out a single set of standards that will enable school leaders, teachers, the managers of schools, inspectors and others to evaluate how well each school is working and what aspects of its practice require improvement. The Framework will cover the various aspects of teaching and learning, and the leadership and management of schools. The Framework contains standards describing “good

practice” and “excellent practice”, so that it will help schools to identify how they might move their work from “good” to “excellent”.

- Initially, the framework will be used to inform the work of inspectors as they monitor and report on standards in schools. It will help them to ensure consistency in their judgements, and because it will be publicly available, it will help parents and others to understand the evaluation judgements published in inspection reports. The Framework will also be useful for school communities as they engage in self-evaluation. It will simplify the material for the self-evaluation of teaching and learning published in 2012 and will enable boards of management and school leaders to identify their strengths and areas for development.
- The Framework will also support the work of the recently established Centre for School Leadership as it designs professional development programmes for existing and aspiring school leaders and it will be useful to school patrons and boards as they identify criteria for the recruitment of school leaders in the future.
- It is anticipated that the Framework will be published in autumn 2016, following consultation with the relevant education partners. Embedding its use in inspections will then begin and it is anticipated that its use in school self-evaluation will evolve over the period 2016-2020. (It should be noted that it is expected that the focus in school self-evaluation will remain on the teaching and learning aspect of schools in this period; see below).

10.4 Full introduction of education-focussed inspections in early years, 2016-2017

- The Inspectorate has liaised closely with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in relation to the development of the early-years education-focused inspection model currently being trialled in a sample of early-years settings participating in the ECCE Programme. The involvement of the DES Inspectorate in the delivery of early-years education-focused inspections is underpinned by a memorandum of understanding recently agreed by the DES, the DES Inspectorate, and DCYA.
- Work began on the development of these education-focussed early-years inspections in 2015 and the inspection model was used in pilot inspections in ECCE settings in December 2015 and in January-February 2016. An extensive consultation process with the early years sector was undertaken in March-April 2016, and mainstream inspections began in mid-April 2016, following approval from the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and the Minister for Education and Skills.

- As these inspections are introduced formally and the publication of inspection reports on the work of the ECCE settings begins, a key concern for the Inspectorate will be to ensure that the work of the DES Inspectorate (which focusses on educational provision in the centres) and that of the TUSLA Inspectorate (which focusses on regulation of the centres and provision for children under three years of age) are properly integrated. Both inspectorates are committed to working closely together to ensure that their processes complement one another. Both inspectorates are participating alongside Better Start (the support service for early-years settings), Pobal (the agency that holds data for DCYA) and DCYA representatives in an Operational Alignment Group for Early Years Quality established by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to ensure coordination of early-years activities.


The introduction of education-focussed early-years inspections will require the commissioning of a new IT system. This system will have to enable the sharing of data with Pobal (the agency that holds DCYA data on early-years settings), the planning and tracking of inspections, the publication of inspection reports, and the analysis of trends from the data. Approval of the relevant section of the Department of Public Expenditure and reform has been secured for the IT Project, the necessary governance arrangements (with DCYA, DES and Pobal involvement) for oversight of the IT project are being established and it is anticipated that the facility will be available to inspectors later in 2016.

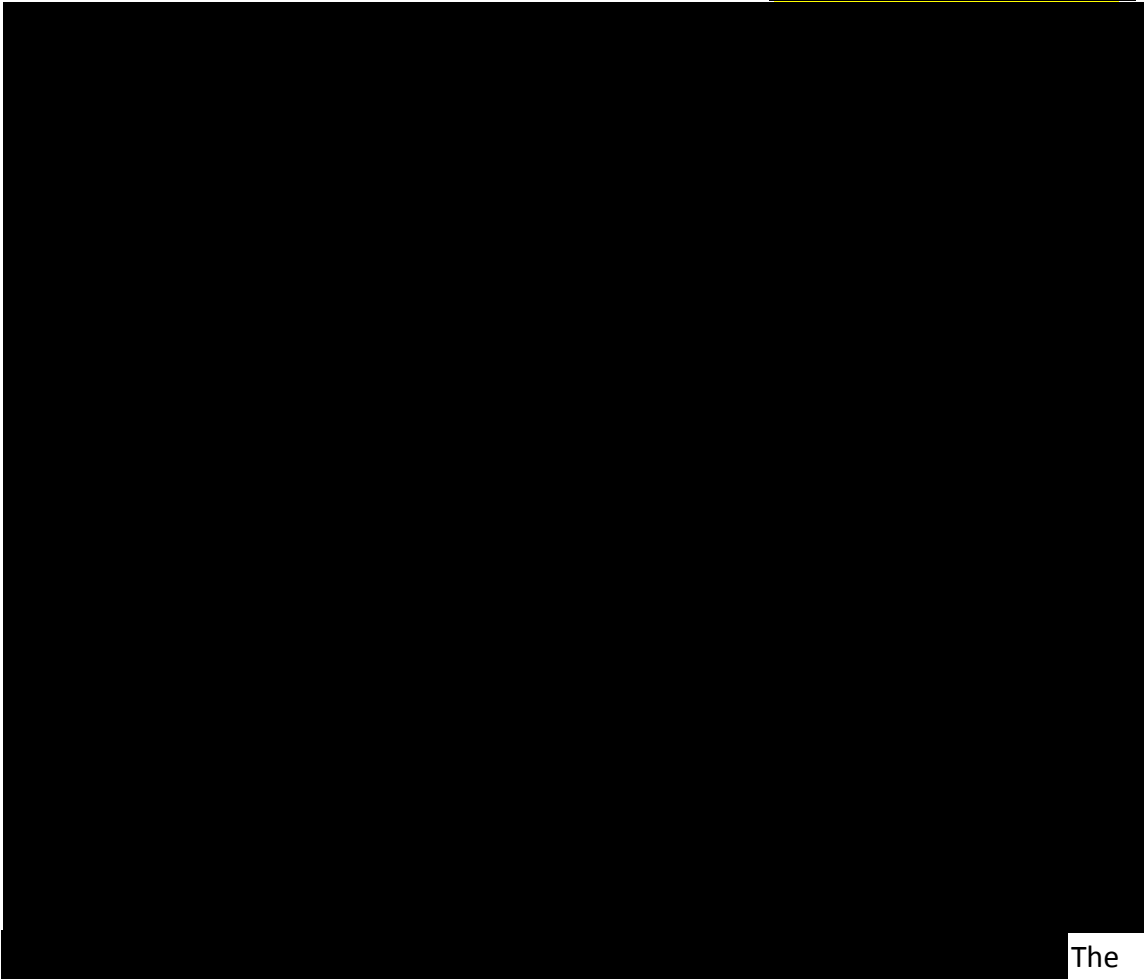
10.5 Inspectorate involvement in the probationary process for primary teachers

- As outlined in section 4.7 above the Teaching Council's responsibility for the induction and probation of newly-qualified teachers was commenced in September 2012 and it had developed a new process (entitled Droichead) for the introduction of newly qualified teachers into the profession.
- As noted above, the phased introduction of Droichead will mean that the current involvement of the Inspectorate in inspections of all newly-qualified primary teachers for the purposes of registration with the Teaching Council will end. The current use of inspectorate resources in the probationary teacher process is undermining efforts to provide adequate inspection of primary schools generally and the full roll-out of Droichead by 2018 should allow the Inspectorate to put a more satisfactory inspection programme in place for primary schools.

10.6 Advancing school self-evaluation

- Promoting school self-evaluation and supporting schools to improve teaching and learning will be a major priority for the Inspectorate. To support this objective, the Inspectorate will

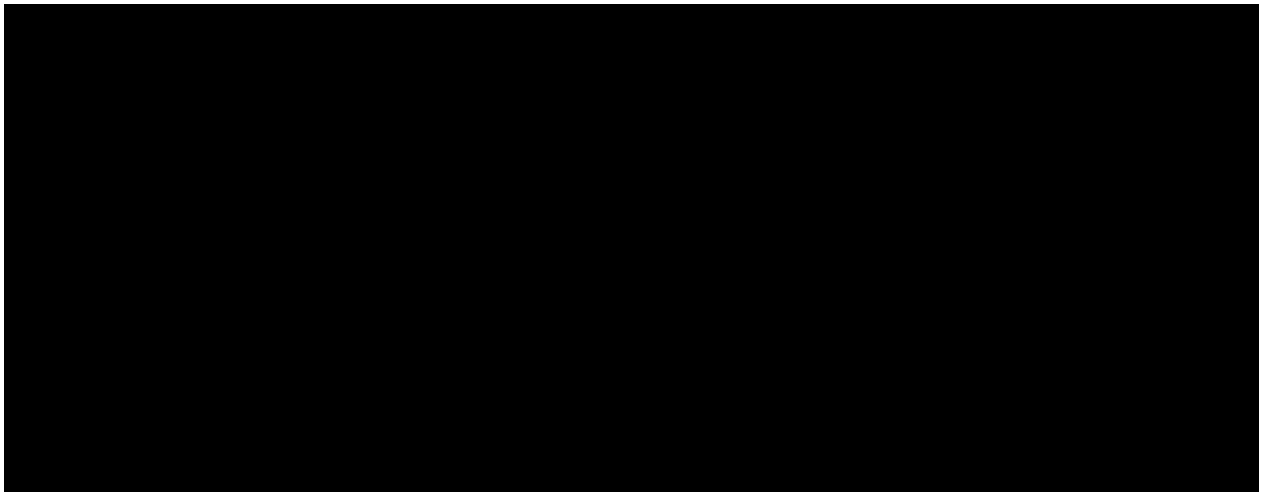
- continue to conduct advisory visits to schools to support SSE (all schools received one advisory visit in the period from autumn 2013 to December 2014, further visits occurred in 2015, and more are planned in 2016 but are not taking place in many primary schools at present due to industrial action by INTO members
 - continue to liaise with national support services to assist them in supporting schools and working with leadership and management bodies
 - disseminate examples of good SSE practice in schools and provide up-to-date materials on its dedicated SSE website
 - monitor schools' engagement with the SSE process, including the level of reporting to parents, through the advisory visits and through conducting surveys.
- In 2016, the Inspectorate led the development of a Departmental circular that will set the requirements for schools regarding SSE in the period 2016-2020. Consultations began on this with the education partners in autumn 2015. 

- 
The circulars will be submitted to the Minister for approval when the consultation is concluded, probably in late May 2016.

- The publication of the Quality Framework for Schools (see 10.3 above) will support the school self-evaluation process. It will simplify the criteria or standards that they may use to evaluate their teaching and learning and will provide suggestions as to how standards in teaching and learning can be improved.

10.7 Achieving coordination between school self-evaluation and inspection

- Extensive evidence from the OECD suggests that a combination of both self-evaluation and external inspection is the best approach to use in monitoring and ensuring the quality of education provision in schools.
- The current priority in Ireland is to make external inspection more effective while also establishing school self-evaluation. As self-evaluation is embedded and developed, it will be necessary to reconsider how both external inspection and self-evaluation should complement each other. This will be a developmental question for the Inspectorate and Department in the period 2017-2020.



10.8 Outsourcing of the processing of student and parental questionnaires

- The use of questionnaires for students and parents is now established practice for all whole-school evaluation of schools and of centres for education. They have given a greater voice to students and parents in the evaluation of schools and the data they provide has been an important part of the evidence base for evaluations.
- Annually, in excess of 50,000 paper-based questionnaires are administered and analysed by the Inspectorate. This represents a significant administrative task which could be delivered much more efficiently by an external service provider. The Inspectorate has submitted a business case to the Department's Reform Unit and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for outsourcing this work to an external

provider. This makes the case that, given the human resource cost, (equivalent to 1.24 WTE inspectors and 1.07 WTE administrative support), this will yield both qualitative and financial benefits to the Department. [REDACTED]

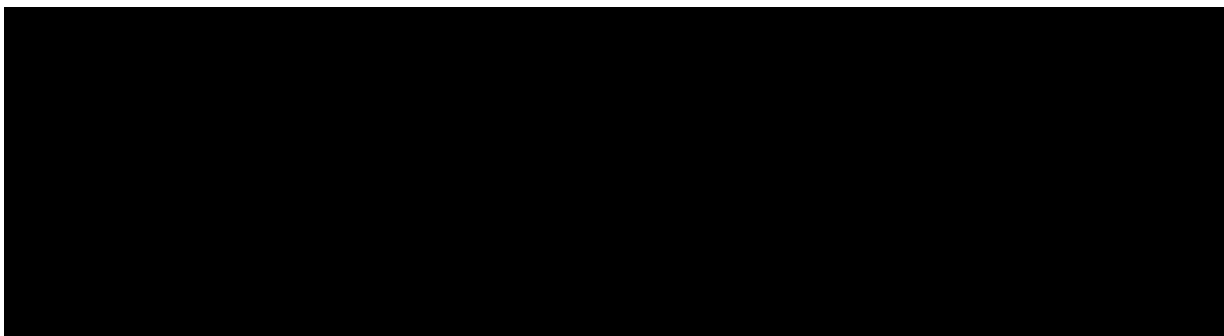
[REDACTED] To be redacted under FOI 20.1

10.11 Commissioning of IT database for tracking and planning, etc.

- Central to the Inspectorate's ability to report on the quality of educational provision across the education system and to provide system-level policy advice is its capacity to record and analyse data resulting from inspections. The Inspectorate operates Access-based database applications to store and manage this data. This requires a significant investment of Inspectorate time, and the system is no longer fit for purpose in terms of data security, stability and integrity.
- Work is currently underway with the IT Unit of the Department to develop a Management Information System for the Inspectorate. The work will proceed in phases, the first of which is focussed on data-entry. The Project Plan prepared by IT Unit indicates a completion date of September 2016.
- The Inspectorate's strategic expectations for this project are that it will deliver inspection planning capability, data analysis and better data security, stability and accessibility. This will enable the Inspectorate to make a greater contribution to making available information on the performance of schools.

10.12 Assessment of Literacy and Numeracy in Primary Schools

- The Inspectorate makes a significant contribution to the development of the Department's policy on assessment in schools. A discussion of a number of current issues regarding student assessment, to which the Inspectorate has contributed, are included elsewhere in the Minister's Summary Briefing document, particularly in the context of the review of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, and is not repeated here.



10.13 National and International surveys

- The Inspectorate cooperates closely with the Educational Research Centre in the carrying out of, and reporting on, a number of national and international surveys of achievement. Table 6 below provides a timetable of publication of reports relating to National Assessments and International Assessments (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS) in the coming years. The publication of each of these will attract considerable publicity.

Table 6: Timetable of publication of reports re Assessments

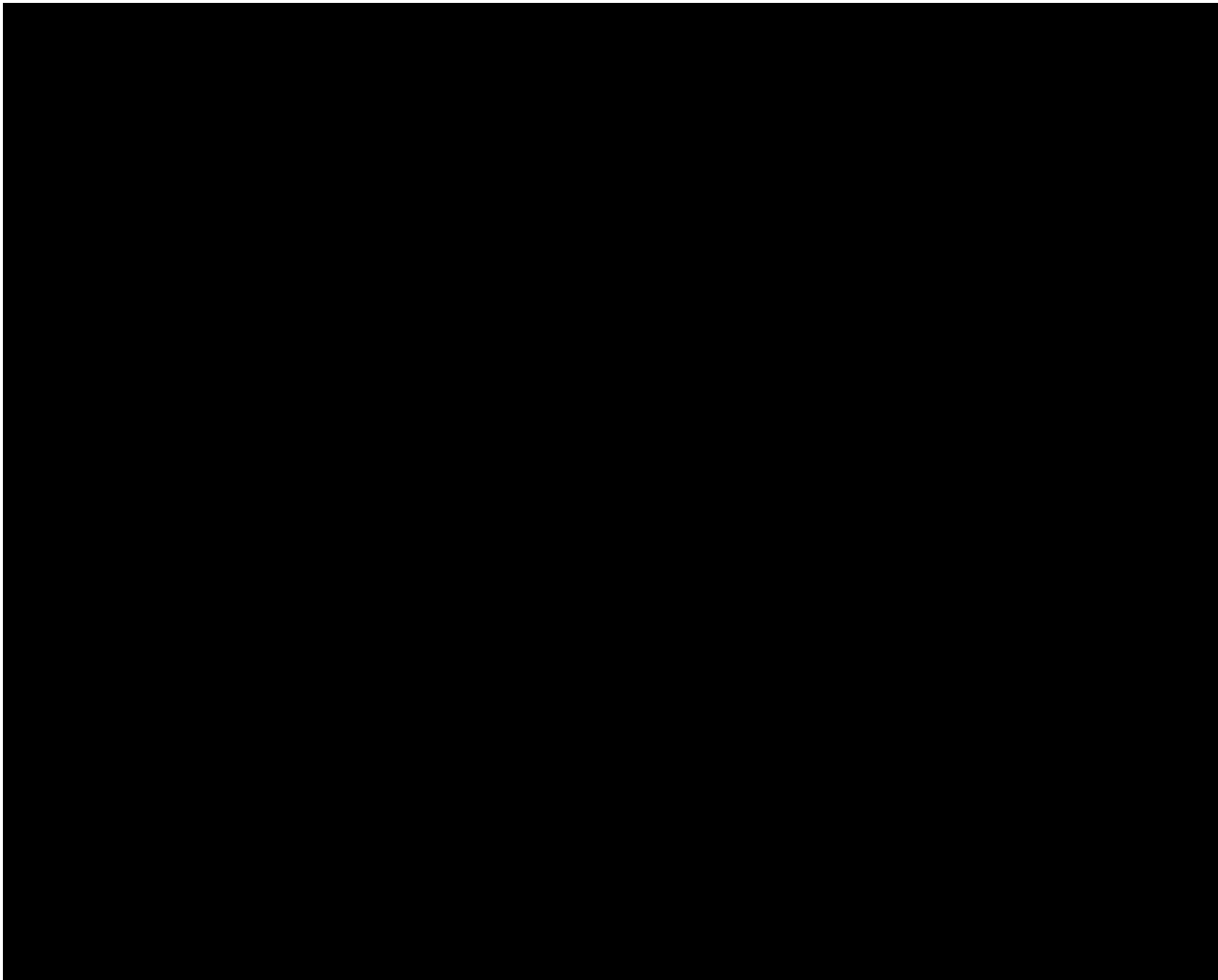
Report	Target Group	Focus	Due for publication
2014 National Assessments	Primary pupils 2nd and 6th classes	English reading Maths	Context Report – Spring/early summer 2016 (Performance report was published in January 2015)
2015 PISA Programme for International Student Assessment	15 year old post- primary students	Main area: Science Also English reading and Maths	Initial International and National Reports – December 2016
2015 TIMSS Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study	Primary pupils 4th class Post-primary students 2nd year	Maths and Science	Main international and summary national reports in November 2016
2015 TIMSS Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study	Primary pupils 4th class Post-primary students 2nd year	Maths and Science	Main national report in autumn 2017
2016 PIRLS Progress in International Reading Literacy Study	Primary pupils 4th class	Print Reading; also Electronic Reading (e-PIRLS)	Main international and summary national reports in December 2017.
2016 DEIS Evaluation	Primary 2 nd , 3 rd , 5 th and 6 th	Maths and Reading	Release date to be decided

2018 PISA Programme for International Student Assessment	15 year old post-primary students	Main area: English reading Also Maths and Science	Initial International and National Reports – December 2019
2019 National Assessments	Primary pupils 2nd and 6th classes	English reading Maths	Release dates to be decided.

10.14 School autonomy

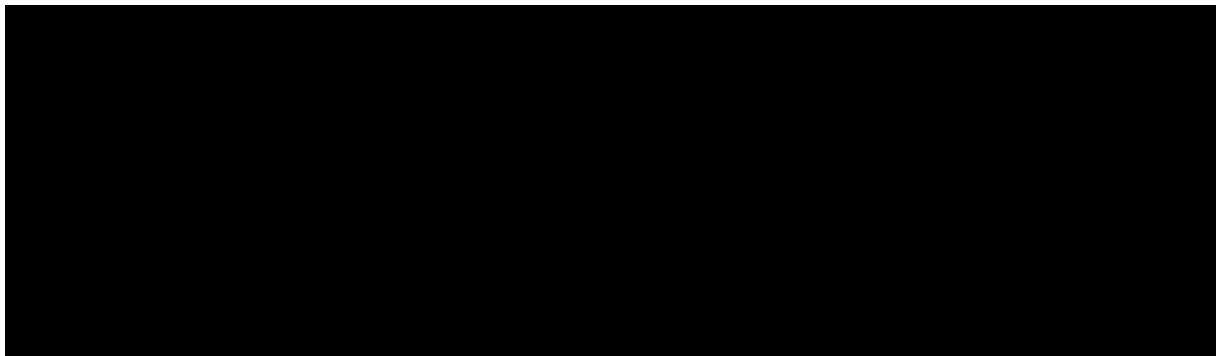
- A research paper and a consultation paper on School Autonomy and how autonomy might be advanced in the Irish school system were prepared by the Inspectorate in cooperation with the Policy Unit of the Department and published in 2015. The consultation phase on the paper remains open.
- The paper identified a number of measures that could be taken to enhance the considerable level of autonomy already enjoyed by schools in the Irish schools system. These included:
 - Enshrining the rights of parents to be consulted about the work of their children’s school (through school self-evaluation, etc.) and about the policies of the school through putting in place a Schools, Parents and Learners Charter. The Charter would also help to address the need for satisfactory complaints’ processes for parents (currently lacking in the system). Further details are included in the Chapter on School Governance)
 - Allow schools some greater flexibility in the deployment of teachers in schools, commencing with SEN-related teaching resources
 - Build on the introduction of a reformed junior cycle programme to provide greater curricular flexibility to schools, especially at post-primary level
 - Maintain schools’ autonomy over small capital works grants and grants for current expenditure, and combine all current expenditure payments to schools into one payment
- The research paper and consultation paper also supported the development and implementation of a number of necessary supporting measures including the need to provide better initial and continuing professional education for school leaders, better middle management resources, and a number of accountability measures, including improvements to inspection and school self-evaluation, and the introduction of teacher and principal appraisal.

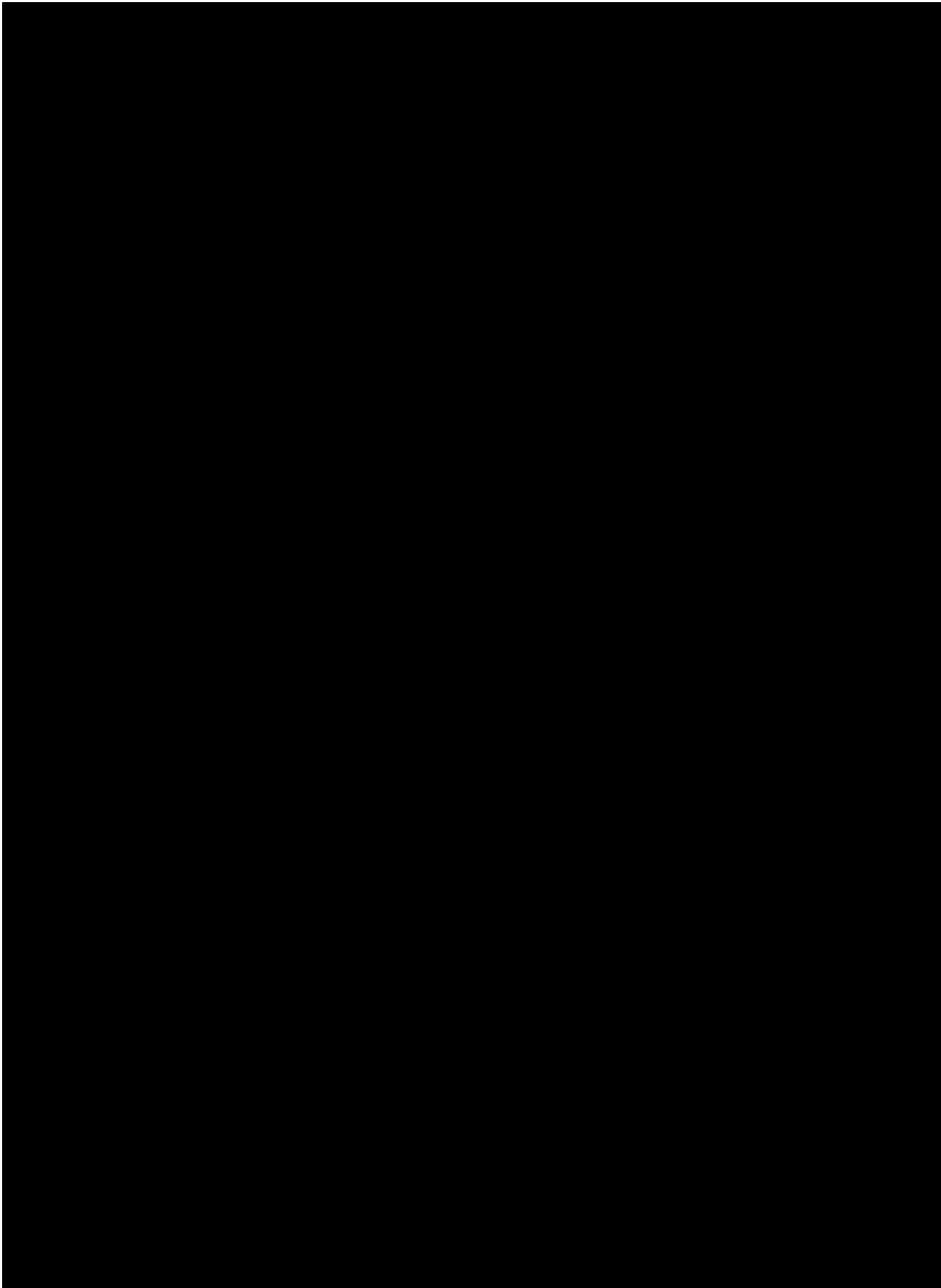
- In 2016, the Inspectorate will assist in the analysis of the responses to the consultation process and will assist in preparing options paper(s) for the consideration of the Minister on how some of the proposals might be advanced.



10.16 School leadership

- The quality of school leadership is a crucial factor in the quality of schools and the Inspectorate has assisted the Department in developing a range of policies to support the professional development and work of principals.





10.18 The Department's Knowledge Management Unit

- The Central Policy Unit of the Department has established a Knowledge Management Unit. The Inspectorate's Evaluation, Support and Research Unit (ESRU) will contribute to the work of this Unit. As noted earlier, the work of this Unit has the potential to improve access for members of the public and policy makers to information on the performance of the education system. See further details in the Chapter on the Central Policy Unit.

10.19 Curriculum advice

- The Inspectorate will be providing curriculum and assessment advice to the Department's Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit (CAP) in the following key areas: Irish, English and Maths at primary level; junior cycle reform generally and in the specific subjects, Irish, Modern Languages, Art Craft Design; other subjects as they come on stream in the coming year s(Geography, Home Economics, History, Music and Maths); Leaving Certificate Science, Irish, Economics, Applied Maths, Agricultural Science, Politics and Society and PE. Full details in the CAP section of this briefing.

10.20 Gaeltacht Education policy

- Schools in Gaeltacht areas face particular challenges arising from the diversity of language background from which they draw their students – some from Irish-speaking homes, many from homes in which the language is rarely used and some who did not speak Irish or English as mother tongue.
- Schools are seen as a central support to the maintenance of Gaeltacht areas and in 2014-15 the Department initiated a major review of education policy in the Gaeltacht. This work was led by the Inspectorate and the Department's Curriculum and

Assessment Policy Unit. A detailed public consultation concluded in autumn 2015 and the Inspectorate's immediate task is to draft a policy paper for the consideration of the Minister. It is expected that this paper will be presented for the Minister's consideration and that of Government by summer 2016.

10.21 A framework for Quality, Evaluation and Assessment in the education system

- The effectiveness and appropriateness of the arrangements that education systems have in place to provide adequate quality assurance at different levels of education systems have become important questions in many countries. A growing body of academic research has been focussed on *how* evaluation and assessment can be used both to *assess* and *drive improvement* in the quality of educational provision and learning outcomes. Evaluation and assessment arrangements are just one mechanism to drive improvement – others include investment in curriculum or course design; spending on the professional development of teachers, lecturers and other practitioners; investment in research; and infrastructural investment. Nevertheless, there has been considerable investment in many countries in a range of tools and approaches to carry out evaluation and assessment effectively, partly to monitor the quality of educational provision (i.e. for accountability purposes) and partly to drive improvement.
- In November 2015, the management Board of the Department established a Management Board Group on Quality, Evaluation and Assessment to facilitate a high-level scoping discussion on existing and planned quality assurance, evaluation and assessment arrangements in the Irish education system. This Group is chaired by the Chief Inspector and includes Management Board members and relevant principal officers from a number of divisions in the Department. The work of the Group is supported by members of the Inspectorate and an officer from another division.
- Initially, the MB Group on Quality, Evaluation and Assessment has been asked to
 - consider and review the range of existing and planned arrangements for the assurance of quality at a general level across the various sectors of the Irish education system, including pre-school, primary, second level, further education and training and higher education and training;
 - identify strengths, weaknesses, gaps, etc. in the elements of quality assurance in place or planned in each of the respective sectors;
 - report to the MB on the outcomes of this work in 2016
- A longer-term task for the group will be to facilitate the drafting of recommendations on how quality assurance mechanisms might be improved or coordinated more

effectively across the education system, possibly in the form of a Framework for Quality, Evaluation and Assessment.

Statistical Tables Re Inspection Numbers And Coverage (11)

Table 7: Summary of all inspections and evaluations, 2010-31 December 2015

Inspection/evaluation activity	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Early-Years Education-focused Inspections (EYElS) (Pilot)						22
Inspections in primary schools*	2,470	2,972	3,115	3,107	2945	2751
Inspections in post-primary schools and centres for education	706	769	904	898	746	589
Other inspections of provision for students and young people	46	73	96	80	95	161
Total inspections in schools and centres for education	3,222	3,814	4,115	4,085	3,786	3,523
Total no of schools which received self-evaluation advisory visits			514	3,201	633	787
Total schools in which the Inspectorate administered or quality assured national or international achievement tests	120	118	181		100	200
Inspection of CPD courses for primary teachers	46	69	71	38	40	40

*Including inspections of the work of primary teachers on probation

Table 8: Inspection and evaluations in Early-Years Settings participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme, 2015

Inspection/evaluation activity	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Early-Years Education-focused Inspections (Pilot)						22

Table 9: Inspection and evaluations in primary schools, 2010- 31 December 2015

Inspection/evaluation activity	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
WSE: Primary	259	291	262	223	266	220
Incidental inspections	459	404	326	429	503	345
DEIS evaluations	18	16			10	10
Follow-Through inspections			98	126	141	85
Total school inspection visits	736	711	686	778	920	660
Inspections of newly-qualified primary teachers: probation of teachers (primary) for the school years 2009/10, 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14 & 2014/15	1,734	2,261	2,429	2,329	2,025	2,091
School self-evaluation advisory visits to schools			354	2,694	491	653

Table 10: Inspections in post-primary schools and centres for education, 2010-31 December 2015

Inspection/evaluation activity	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
WSE: Post-primary	35	8	4			
WSE-MLL: Post primary	24	92	80	71	75	65
Subject Inspections	583	528	389	404	317	231
Programme Inspections	39	23		13	29	31
Incidental inspections in post-primary schools	N/A	92	343	284	210	184
Evaluation of Centres for Education (Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training Centres)	7	10	9	4	4	5
DEIS evaluations	18	16		10	10	8
Follow-Through inspections			79	112	101	65
Total inspection visits	706	769	902	898	746	589
School self-evaluation advisory visits to post-primary schools			160	507	142	134

Table 11: Other inspections and evaluations of provision for students and young people, 2010-2015

Inspection/evaluation activity	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Evaluation reports on Irish language summer colleges (Coláistí Gaeilge)	40	36	38	40	32	32

North/South Joint evaluations of schools‡‡ with ETI Inspectorate, Northern Ireland		16		10		
Evaluation of schools for recognition purposes/assessment of education in places other than recognised schools	6		1	2		6
Evaluations of Early Childhood Care and Education settings / Early Start Project			15	6	19	
Evaluation of special schools for autistic spectrum disorder			13	1		(4) included in Primary WSE figures
Evaluation of special schools attached to High Support Units, Special Care Units, and Detention Schools		8	10	9	9	7
Inspections of literacy summer camps for children		8	10	5	4	5
Evaluation of schools for other purposes including: Review of Gaeltacht Education and Review of Exemptions from Irish					26	
Pilot of Curriculum Evaluation in Primary Schools						24
Pilot of Evaluating SEN provision in Mainstream Primary Schools						28
Research visits to explore schools' provision for students' wellbeing (Primary & Post Primary)						27
Inspections of campaí samhraidh for children		5	9	5	4	5
Evaluation of Teagasc Colleges				2	2	2
Inspections in European Schools (Primary & Secondary)						25
Total other evaluation activity	46	73	96	80	86	161

‡‡ Joint inspections with Education and Training Inspectorate, Northern Ireland: 16 Dissolving Boundaries schools in 2011; 10 joint study research inspections on Literacy provision in 2013

Table 12: Administration of national and international achievement tests, 2010- Dec 2015

Evaluation activity	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Administration and quality assurance of National Assessments of English Reading and Mathematics in Gaeltacht primary schools	120				100	
Administration and quality assurance of TIMSS and PIRLS in primary schools		118				18 (TIMSS)
Administration and quality assurance of TIMSS in post-primary schools						18

Administration and quality assurance of OECD PISA tests in post-primary schools			181			164
Total	120	118	181		100	200

Table 13: Inspections of continuing professional development for teachers, 2010-2015

Evaluation activity	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Inspection of continuing professional development courses (“summer in-service” courses) for primary teachers	46	69	71	38	40	40

Inspectorate Publications 2009-2013 (12)

Table 13: Overview of thematic evaluations and composite reports published in the period 2010-2013

Year	Publication	Notes
2010	Incidental Inspection Findings 2010: A Report on the Teaching and Learning of English and Mathematics in Primary Schools	This report is based on the outcomes of unannounced (incidental) inspections completed in over 450 primary schools throughout all parts of the country between October 2009 and October 2010. During these visits, inspectors observed over 800 English lessons and over 500 lessons in Mathematics.
	An Evaluation of Youthreach	Youthreach is a national provider in the Irish education and training continuum. This report is based on the findings and recommendations from evaluations of the quality of the education and training provision in twenty-five Youthreach centres funded by the Department.
2011	An Evaluation of Planning Processes in DEIS Post-Primary Schools	These reports present the findings of an evaluation of planning processes in post-primary schools participating in a general support programme for schools with high levels of educational disadvantage. The aim was to ascertain the extent to which schools were engaging in the planning process and devising action plans, to assess the quality of the action plans, and to evaluate the impact of the planning on learning outcomes for students.
	An Evaluation of Planning Processes in DEIS Primary Schools	
2012	School Size and the Quality of Teaching and Learning	An analysis of relationships between school size and assessments of factors related to the quality of teaching and learning in primary schools undertaken by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills
	Joint Evaluation Report: Dissolving Boundaries Programme 2010/2011	The Dissolving Boundaries (DB) programme uses information and communications technology (ICT) to facilitate cross-cultural educational linkages between schools in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This is the report on a formal evaluation of the programme by inspectors from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
	Science in the Primary School	Science in the Primary School reports on the implementation of the 1999 science curriculum
	English as an Additional Language in Primary Schools	These reports present the findings of a thematic evaluation of provision for pupils who are learning

	Looking at English as an Additional Language: Teaching and Learning in Post-Primary Schools	English as an additional language (EAL) in Irish primary and post-primary schools.
	Looking at Biology	This composite report provides a detailed insight into students' experience of Biology in the senior cycle. It provides an analysis of the quality of teaching and learning arising from fifty-seven subject inspections carried out between the 2006/07 and the 2009/10 school years.
	The Quality Assurance of Irish Schools and the Role of Evaluation: Current and Future Trends	The Professor Seamas Ó Súilleabháin Memorial Lecture 2012 delivered by Dr Harold Hislop, Chief Inspector at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth
2013	Chief Inspector's Report 2010-2012	The Chief Inspector's Report 2010-2012 reports on quality and standards in the primary and post-primary schools and centres for education that were inspected by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills between 2010 and 2012.
	School Self-Evaluation: An Update for Primary Schools 2	Articles to support continuing engagement by schools with school self-evaluation
	School Self-Evaluation: An Update for Post-Primary Schools 2	
	Looking at Social, Personal and Health Education: Teaching and Learning in Post-Primary Schools	This composite report is based on subject inspections of teaching and learning in SPHE (including Relationships and Sexuality Education [RSE]) in sixty-three post-primary schools between September 2010 and May 2011.
2014	Looking at Mathematics: Teaching and Learning in Post-Primary Schools	This report is based on subject inspections of teaching and learning in Mathematics in fifty post-primary schools and almost 400 lessons.
2015	Composite report on Irish language colleges 2014	This composite report presents the findings of inspections carried out by the Inspectorate on Irish-language colleges in 2014.
2015	A report on Irish-medium educational provision in Gaeltacht schools: Primary and Post-primary Case-Studies	This report presents the findings of a number of case studies carried out by the Inspectorate during on a sample of Gaeltacht primary and post-primary schools. The focus of the case studies was on Irish-medium educational provision. These case studies constituted one strand of the review of Gaeltacht education undertaken by the Department.

2015	Review of Education in the Gaeltacht: Review of National Literature	This report provides a review of the national research relating to Irish-medium educational provision at primary and post-primary levels in Gaeltacht areas. It constitutes one strand of the review of Gaeltacht education that was carried out by the Department.
2015	Policy Proposals for Educational Provision in Gaeltacht Areas	This document outlines policy proposals for educational provision in Gaeltacht areas. These policy proposals formed the basis of consultation with stakeholders in Gaeltacht areas and nationally during 2015. The findings of the consultation will inform the Department's policy on Gaeltacht education.
2015	A Joint Report by the Education and Training and the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate on Promoting and Improving Literacy in Post-primary schools	This report focuses on how best to promote and improve literacy across the curriculum in post-primary schools. It is the result of a joint research and inspection project involving the Education and Training Inspectorate, Northern Ireland and the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate.
2015	A Joint Report by the Education and Training and the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate on Promoting and Improving Numeracy in Post-primary schools	This report focuses on how best to promote and improve numeracy across the curriculum in post-primary schools. It is the result of a joint research and inspection project involving the Education and Training Inspectorate, Northern Ireland and the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate.
2015	Looking at Action Planning for Improvement Primary Schools	This report outlines the strengths and areas for development in the process of action planning for improvement in 44 DEIS primary schools.
2015	Looking at Action Planning for Improvement Post-Primary Schools	This report outlined the strengths and areas for development in the process of action planning for improvement in 44 DEIS post-primary schools.

**FINANCE, PENSIONS
AND CORPORATE
SERVICE DIVISION:
MICHAEL KEOGH,
ASSISTANT
SECRETARY**

Structure of Payroll, Finance, Pensions and Corporate Services Division

Corporate Division is responsible for a number of key internal corporate functions (human resource management, preparation of corporate documents including strategy statement and annual report, corporate expenditure and procurement policy, coordination of requests under the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts and Ombudsman's Office, management of internal accommodation and services and operation and development of internal IT services). The Finance Unit prepares and negotiates the Estimates for the Education and Skills Vote, provides an accounting framework as well as a financial management control/reporting system under the Education and Skills Vote and the National Training Fund and has a reporting and oversight role in relation the numbers of staff employed across the Education and Skills sector.

Payroll Section is responsible for the payment of salaries and pensions to over 100,000 serving and retired teaching and non-teaching staff. Pensions section is responsible for the administration of pension schemes for teachers and special needs assistants in primary, secondary and community & comprehensive schools and has a policy and regulatory role in respect of pension schemes throughout the education sector, including Education and Training Boards (ETBs), third level institutions and other bodies under the aegis of the Department.

The Division encompasses the following six sections each under the management of a Principal Officer:

- Corporate Services – Christine Tiernan
- Finance Unit – Eamonn Moran
- Information Technology Unit – Ann McDonnell
- Personnel and Staff Training – David Gordon
- Payroll – Pádraig Maloney
- Pensions – Martina Mannion

The Corporate Services Section, Finance Unit, Personnel and IT unit have staff located in more than one location. The Payroll and Pension Units are located in Athlone.

Corporate Services

1. Unit / Section Overview

Corporate Services is an internal support service managing resources for the achievement of the Department's strategies, ensuring compliance with a number of governance obligations and improving corporate policies, procedures and outcomes. It also has a co ordinating role in standardising governance and accountability oversight across the education sector.

The Section encompasses the following sub-sections:

Corporate Governance Section

Co-ordinates implementation of corporate governance matters in order to effectively discharge the Department's statutory and policy obligations.

Sectoral governance section

Co-ordinates and develops policies and procedures to support and enhance the Department's approach to governance and accountability of bodies across the education sector

Accommodation & Services/Health & Safety

Provides office accommodation and ancillary services across the Department's offices. Ensures a safe working environment for staff

Procurement Policy and Corporate Expenditure

Manages specific administrative subheads in compliance with EU and national financial management procurement and audit requirements.

Develops and promotes best practice in procurement in the Department.

Websites/Customer Services

Manages content for the Department's website. Supports the development of a new intranet for staff. Develops documentation for internal and external customers

FOI, Data Protection and Records Management Unit

Provides an administrative and coordinating service in relation to FOI, Data Protection and Records Management issues.

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Service	Outturn 2013	Outturn 2014	Provision 2015
	€4.7M	€4.6M	€6.3M

3. Key priority issues

3.1 Civil Service Reform

BACKGROUND:

- (1) Developing a Governance Framework is a key action in the Civil Service Renewal Plan 2014. The purpose of the framework is to enhance governance arrangements in line with international best practice by the introduction of a single governance standard for all Management Boards.
- (11) A new Strategy Statement is required within six months of the appointment of a Minister.
- (111) Engagement with the Procurement Reform Programme which is designed to centralise and improve procurement across the civil and public service.
- (1V) Engagement with Property Asset Management to ensure the best use of property assets throughout the public service.

CURRENT POSITION:

Work has commenced on the Department's Governance Framework and the completion date is set for end March 2016.

NEXT STEPS:

- Complete and publish Governance Framework
- Develop and publish Statement of Strategy 2016-2019
- Develop a new system to manage contracts and embed centralised procurement processes in the Department.
- Reconfigure usage of property in the local office accommodation network.

3.2 Official Languages Act, 2013

BACKGROUND:

Under Section 15 of the Official Languages Act 2003, the Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, has requested the Department to review the Irish Language Scheme 2013-2016 and to prepare a new draft scheme to be completed by 22 April 2016.

CURRENT POSITION:

Work has commenced on the preparation of the new draft scheme.

NEXT STEPS:

- Complete and publish a draft Irish Language Scheme for 2016-2019

3.3 Financial Management Shared Services Project

BACKGROUND:

A Financial Management Shared Services project is underway across the civil service. Its purpose is to allow finance and accounting transactional activities to be standardized.

CURRENT POSITION:

Corporate Services is involved in a Department Financial Management Shared-Services-Ready Project to ensure processes and procedures are reviewed and changed as necessary to ensure a streamlined transfer to FMSS.

NEXT STEPS:

- Review procedures and processes in A&S and Corporate Expenditure sections

3.4 Freedom of Information (FOI) – Publication Scheme

BACKGROUND:

Section 8 of the FOI Act 2014 ([FOI Act 2014](#)) requires public bodies to prepare and publish a Publication Scheme in conformity with a model publication scheme made by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform

CURRENT POSITION:

A model publication scheme was published in late 2015 which commits FOI bodies to make information available as part of their normal business activities in accordance with the scheme.

NEXT STEPS:

- Develop and publish on the DES website, a Publication Scheme, which will set out information to assist the public in their understanding of the Department and its functions.

3.5 Refurbishment of roof of Tyrone House (Minister's location)

Background:

Following examination by the OPW of the roof of Tyrone House in mid-2015, it was noted that a number of structural issues required attention in order to reinforce the supporting structure and improve weather proofing. Initial examinations were conducted by OPW engineers and Conservation Architects in 2015 and repair and refurbishment works commenced in January 2016

Current position:

All staff previously located on the top floor of Tyrone House (Press officer, Press Office and Advisors) have been relocated to alternative locations on the complex and these alternative accommodation arrangements will remain in place for the duration of these works.

Next Steps:

- A&S Unit are continuing to liaise with OPW to monitor and review progress. It is envisaged that works will be completed by Summer 2016. The top floor of Tyrone House will then again be available to facilitate the accommodation of Ministerial support staff.

3.6 Sectoral Governance

Background:

Between Q3 of 2015 and Q1 of 2016 the remit of Corporate Services was expanded to include an enhanced Sectoral Governance oversight role.

Current position:

The Department commenced a pilot programme of work in Q4 2015 to evaluate compliance with broad governance standards with a focus on compliance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's 2009 Code of Practice for State Bodies. Phase one of the compliance review has been rolled out to fourteen national agencies.

Next Steps:

- Detailed analysis and review of the returns by the aegis Bodies will be undertaken with a completion date of Q4 of 2016. The further roll out of corporate compliance reviews will be informed by the first phase of the sectoral governance compliance project.

3.7 Energy Management

Background:

The Department is obliged to reduce energy consumption under Energy Efficiency Directive 2012 (2012/27/EU) and Statutory Instrument 426 of 2014 which is a target of a 33% reduction by 2020.

Current position:

The Department has an energy management structure in place and has taken a number of initiatives to reduce energy consumption through awareness campaigns, the identification of poor energy use and the use of efficient energy technology.

Next Steps:

- An audit of energy use will be completed in January 2016 and the recommendations will be considered for action.

Finance Unit

1. UNIT / SECTION OVERVIEW

The Finance Unit provides a range of financial functions and support services which underpin the provision of education services and contribute to the achievement of the Department's overall objectives.

The Unit is based in Dublin and currently has 19.85 whole time equivalent posts, comprising 1 PO, 1 Professional Accountant, 2 APOs, 3 HEOs, 6.4 EOs, 0.9 SO and 5.55 COs.

Principally, the Unit provides an accounting framework as well as a financial/management/control/ reporting system for the Department in accordance with Government financial procedures and statutory requirements. The Unit co-ordinates production of the annual Appropriation Accounts for the Department.

The Unit prepares and negotiates the Estimates and Supplementary Estimates for the Education and Skills Vote in accordance with the Department's resource allocation priorities. Linked to this the Unit has a reporting and oversight role in relation to the numbers of staff employed across the Education and Skills sector. The Unit provides a general payments system for the Department and a range of ancillary financial services. It also has specific responsibility, in conjunction with HR section, for the staff payroll and domestic travel and subsistence subheads.

In addition, the Finance Unit is responsible for implementation and continued development of the Financial Management System (FMS) for the Department. A key role here involves preparing the Department's FMS for migration to a Civil Service-wide Shared Financial Management System over the next few years.

2. Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2013 €000s	Outturn 2014 €000s	Outturn 2015 (prov) €000s	Provision 2016 €000s
Department Staff Salaries	€57,604	€55,511	€56,491	€58,450
Home Travel and Subsistence	€1,321	€1,334	€1,332	€1,670

3. Significant Issues

3.1 BUDGETARY ALLOCATIONS AND EXPENDITURE PRESSURES

Budget 2016 ((13 October 2015) set out current expenditure ceilings for all Departments for the three-year period 2016-2018. The immediate focus of this Department's Budget 2016 engagement with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was naturally on the

2016 financial year. The Unit has the key role in seeking to ensure that expenditure during 2016 remains within original projections and for keeping the Minister and Management Board up to date in this regard, including drawing attention to any trends that could place upward pressure on the expenditure ceiling.

The expenditure ceilings set for 2017 and 2018 include provision for impacts of demographic growth, including in particular for extra numbers of teachers and for school capitation costs for extra pupil numbers. However, in line with the experience of previous years, it will be necessary to closely review the allocation for 2017 later this year, when the likely expenditure outturn for 2016 and any follow-on impacts are manifested, and when more complete demographic and other information becomes available. Potential areas of further upward expenditure pressures relate to: Special Needs Assistants and Resource Teachers in schools (due to demographic impacts and increased numbers of assessments of needs); Superannuation (demographics); Higher Education Student Supports (mainly demographics) and School Transport (demographics and provision for students with special needs). The cost of certain restoration measures under the Lansdowne Road Agreement will also require to be added to the 2017 allocation.

The determination of expenditure allocations for 2017-18 and beyond will require to be considered against the backdrop of the new EU Fiscal Rules, applying to Ireland since our move in 2016 from the Corrective to the Preventive Arm of the EU Stability and Growth Pact (SGP). Under the preventive arm of the SGP, the public finances will require to be kept on a sustainable path, with revenues sufficient to support spending. Any additional expenditure would require either to (i) be in line with the medium term trend growth rate of the economy (ii) be met by securing savings elsewhere, or (iii) be met by additional taxation measures.

3.2 PUBLIC SECTOR NUMBERS AND DELEGATED SANCTION AGREEMENT

Between 2009 and 2015, central control over total public sector numbers was exercised by the operation of Employment Control Frameworks (ECFs) across all sectors of Government. This was necessary in order reduce the scale of the public sector wage bill. Between 2009 and end 2014, the operation of the ECF resulted in overall education numbers reducing from 97,400 (whole time equivalent) to 96,000, even allowing for the addition of the order of some 900 extra teachers every year to take account of increased pupil numbers.

From 2015 onwards the ECFs and associated moratoriums on recruitment were lifted and replaced with a system of Delegated Sanction Agreements (DSA), restoring authority to Departments for recruitment and promotion, subject to adherence by Departments to binding 3 year pay ceilings and ongoing compliance with Workforce Planning requirements. While the restoration of sanctioning authority to Departments is welcomed, it should be noted that the requirement to remain within fixed pay ceilings effectively still acts as a major restriction against increases in public sector numbers, notwithstanding a sense of expectation that numbers might again be restored to their 'pre-ECF' levels.

Special details regarding the operation of the DSA have been communicated to various areas of the education sector over the past number of weeks. However, separate arrangements will require to be put in place for the Higher Education Institutions (OHEIs), including the Universities and Institutes of Technology. This is due in part to the fact that the pay costs of the HEIs are only partly met by this Department.

3.3 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SHARED SERVICES PROJECT

The Financial Management Shared Services Centre (FMSSC) project is being led by D/Public Expenditure and Reform and includes the implementation of a new single Financial Management System across 48 Public Sector Bodies (PSB) and the centralisation of high volume activity and system skills in three locations (Killarney, Galway and Tullamore) supporting the 48 PSB's. Included in these 48 Bodies is the Department itself, the State Examinations Commission and the National Council for Special Education.

Within the Department this large and complex project is being led by the Finance Unit.

The Government in January 2016 decided, following an approach to the market, that the project should proceed to actual implementation stage. The plan is that the 48 PSBs will migrate to the new FMSSC over 5 separate waves, occurring between Quarter 3, 2017 and Quarter 1, 2020. This Department is scheduled to migrate in Wave 3, in Quarter 4, 2018.

In this Department there is a parallel project in progress to enable us to move to shared services as smoothly as possible. This project will seek to activate parts of our FMS system that have not been used heretofore but which will be necessary for the later migration to the FMSSC. As well as just activating these new FMS modules, there are also some business process changes that need to take place in sections of the Department, which present their own challenges.

Given the critical nature of the FMS system to the smooth operation of the Department's business, a high level of importance is attached by DES to the FMSSC project, with efforts to eliminate or minimise risks being key. One risk that will require constant review is the availability to the Department of the technical skills needed to bring this project over the line. These technical resources are limited in number and demand exceeds supply.

Pensions Unit

1. Unit / Section Overview

Pensions Unit has policy, regulatory and operational functions in respect of the pensions of people working in the education sector. These functions include:

Awarding pensions to primary, secondary, community and comprehensive school scheme members (teachers, special needs assistants and a limited number of ancillary staff) on retirement/death/spouses/children etc. These processes are paper based and require computerization which is a priority for the area but dependent on resources.

Regulating the operation of the pension schemes and approving the pension schemes in the ETB/IOT sector, University sector and in the various bodies under the aegis of the Department. Established up to date Pension Schemes for the various organizations is in train and is also dependent on resources.

Developing, reviewing and amending pension policy in co-operation with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Staffing Allocation: 1 PO, 2.0 APOs, 7.3 HEOs, 16. 8 EOs, and 28.2 Cos (including vacancies to be filled)

2. Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2013	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015 (Provisional)	Provision 2016
Primary teachers Superannuation	€464.132 m	€505.562 m	€528.960 m	€500.774 m
Secondary & C & C teachers Superannuation	€336.108 m	€369.634 m	€371.837 m	€360.605 m
Non-Teaching School Staff Superannuation	€2.854 m	€3.690 m	€4.625 m	€3.634 m

These figures include retirement gratuities paid in the year and the ongoing pension payroll costs of circa 28,000 pensioners.

3. Significant Issues

3.1 NUMBER OF TEACHERS RETIRING

Background

Teacher retirements represent the largest percentage of all school staff retirement. Total retirements in 2013 and 2014 were 1,041 and 1,618 respectively. Retirement numbers fluctuate significantly from one year to another and some 90% of school staff retire before mandatory retirement date. Since the enactment of Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Acts, which provided for adjustment to pay, public servants who retire have their superannuation benefit calculated by reference to pre-cut salary scales. In this regard those who retire since July 2013 have their benefits calculate by reference to the pre-cut salary scales applicable on 30 June 2013. The period in which the pre-cut salaries scales apply is referred to as a “grace period” and it has been extended on a number of occasions by orders made by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The most recent extension continues the arrangement to 01 April 2019.

	Teacher and Non-Teaching school staff retirements			
Service	2013	2014	2015	2016 Projected
Primary Teachers	534	836	721	355
Secondary and C+C Teachers	429	674	447	296
Non-teaching school staff	78	108	134	55
Total in Year	1,041	1,618	1,302	706

Current Position

It is uncertain what impact the recent decision to further extend the “grace period” to 01 April 2019 will have on the pattern of retirements either in the short term or longer term. However it is envisaged that for 2016 a lower number of retirements will occur in comparison with the number who retired in 2015 although there is no certainty of that. The financial allocation for 2016 supports the retirement of circa 706 school staff from Primary, Secondary & C + C schools. Since the vast majority of staff retired at 31 August each year it is too early for any trends to emerge for this year. Should the retirements in 2016 reach recent years levels the financial allocation may prove insufficient.

The demands on Pension Unit for individual benefit statements from serving school personnel continue in an upward trajectory. This is influenced by increasing awareness of pension matters and, a desire to ensure that individuals have adequately provided for their retirement. Pension Unit has worked closely with the IT Unit to create a Pension Modeller which provides basic calculations of pension lump sum and ongoing pensions for those thinking of retiring.

Steps in place

Work is prioritized to ensure those intending to retire are provided with appropriate information.

As much general information as possible is provided through the web and work is ongoing on a new module of the Pension Modeller to facilitate people looking for Cost Neutral Pensions – a large number of requests for statements come from persons entitled only to a cost neutral pension.

Continue to process applications for retirement, pension benefit statements, family law issues etc. and to notify customers of the priorities and likely timelines.

Please note that above figures exclude ETB teacher retirements & costs as these are the responsibility of individual ETBs.

3.2 New Single Public Service Pension Scheme:

Background

The Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2013 provides for a *Single Public Service Pension Scheme* for new public servants and also makes certain other changes affecting existing public service pension arrangements.

The Single Scheme commenced with effect from 1 January 2013 by Order by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Current Position

While there has been a moratorium on recruitment in the Public Service generally, the recruitment of teachers has continued to meet the needs of the increasing population. Since January 2013 new entrant public servants, including teachers, are members of the new Single Pension Service Pension Scheme. The Minister for Education and Skills is the Relevant Authority under the legislation for teachers and other staff on the Department of Education and Skills Payrolls who are employed in Primary, Secondary and Community and Comprehensive Schools. A D/PER Circular (11/2014) highlights the fact that under the legislation each Relevant Authority must issue an annual statement to members of the Single Scheme before 30 June each year for the preceding year beginning with June 2014.

Due to the needs for IT developments and other issues this Department has not done so and is not yet in a position to address these legislative requirements. This has been brought to the attention of the Secretary General of D/PER.

D/PER has established a Focus Group to analyse issues and challenges that have emerged in relation to the Single Public Service Pension Scheme and this Department is represented on that Group by representatives of the Pension and Payroll Units. D/PER has recently appointed

a senior official to manage this issue and it is hoped that progress will be made in 2016 on this issue.

Steps in train

Continue to liaise with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with a view to addressing the issues and challenges of the Single Scheme identified.

3.3 FORMAL UPDATING OF THE STATUTORY PENSION SCHEMES

Background

The pension schemes administered/regulated by the Department are in general statutory schemes that require updating at regular intervals to reflect legislative changes, etc. The updating generally lags behind the changes introduced by several years.

The work involved in drafting schemes is very onerous and requires the involvement of personnel with specific expertise and experience.

Primary and Post Primary (other than ETBs)

Teachers

Statutory Instruments for Secondary, Community and Comprehensive School Teachers Pension Scheme and for Primary School Teachers Pension Scheme were put in place in 2009.

Other staff

Formal schemes are required for ancillary staff and special needs assistants in these sectors. It has not been possible to address the drafting of the schemes due to ongoing pressures of work in the Pension Unit as well as the specialist nature of the work. It is intended to progress these issues as time and resources permit.

Education and Training Board (ETB) / Institute of Technology (IOT)

Employees in ETBs (formerly VECs) and IOTs were members of the Local Government Superannuation Scheme until Statutory Instruments in 1998 and 2001 transferred responsibility to the Minister for Education & Skills. The schemes operated on the basis of the Local Government scheme and circulars from this Department for a number of years following the transfer of responsibilities.

Two statutory instruments were put in place in 2015, one for superannuation for teachers in Education and Training Boards and a second for Staff of Institutes of technology and non-academic staff of Education and Training Boards.

Statutory Instruments for Universities and Education Bodies

Following publication of a new Model Superannuation Scheme by DPER in December 2014, the Department is obliged to manage the drafting/re-drafting of approximately 20 Schemes for the Universities and Education Bodies Schemes and progress them to a Statutory Instrument. A number of these bodies have no sanctioned pension scheme or have sanction on administrative basis only. This is a substantial amount of work and the priority will be given to those bodies with no existing scheme. An information session was held for the relevant bodies in March 2015. As a follow on to the briefing the Bodies were provided with additional information in the form of samples on how to demonstrate the differences between their Schemes and the Model Scheme. They were requested to commence the drafting of the Schemes and to submit same to DES by 30 June 2015. DES has committed to drafting the Colleges of Education and Colleges of Home Economics scheme as this is our scheme and there are a number of Colleges involved. To date 10 drafts have been received, work is underway on these examining these schemes and will continue in 2016.

Steps in train

As resources allow work will continue on putting in place pension schemes for a wide range of education bodies under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills/ Universities.

3.4 Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act

Universities

In April 2008, the Government agreed that the funded pension schemes of the 5 older universities (Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, University College Cork, National University of Ireland, Galway and National University of Ireland, Maynooth) should be wound up, by agreement with the trustees/administrators, and the assets and liabilities of the schemes should be taken over by the State as these schemes were in deficit. Since 2004/2005, the 5 older universities had closed their funded pension schemes and new appointees since then become members of the unfunded schemes based on the Department of Finance model scheme.

In order to give effect to the Government decision, the Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act was enacted in June 2009 and enabled the transfer of the pension funds of the five universities, amongst others, to the National Pensions Reserve Fund on the making by the Ministers of transfer orders for each pension fund. Prior to the transfer of the five funded pension schemes they were formally made and closed by Statutory Instruments in accordance with the University Act 1997.

Discretions

The 2009 Act provides for the continuation of the relevant pension schemes after the transfer of the pension funds. The Act states that all discretions in the pension schemes of the five universities which operated funded pension schemes continue in effect after the date of the relevant transfer order but, from that date, the discretions transfer to the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform who exercise them jointly. The Act permits the Ministers to delegate the exercise of a discretion to the HEA or the governing authority of the university concerned. To-date no discretions have been devolved to the HEA or the individual universities. Most of the discretions which are exercised by the Ministers relate to the granting of notional added years. The Ministers have been requested to exercise a number of other discretions some of which have been approved and some rejected.

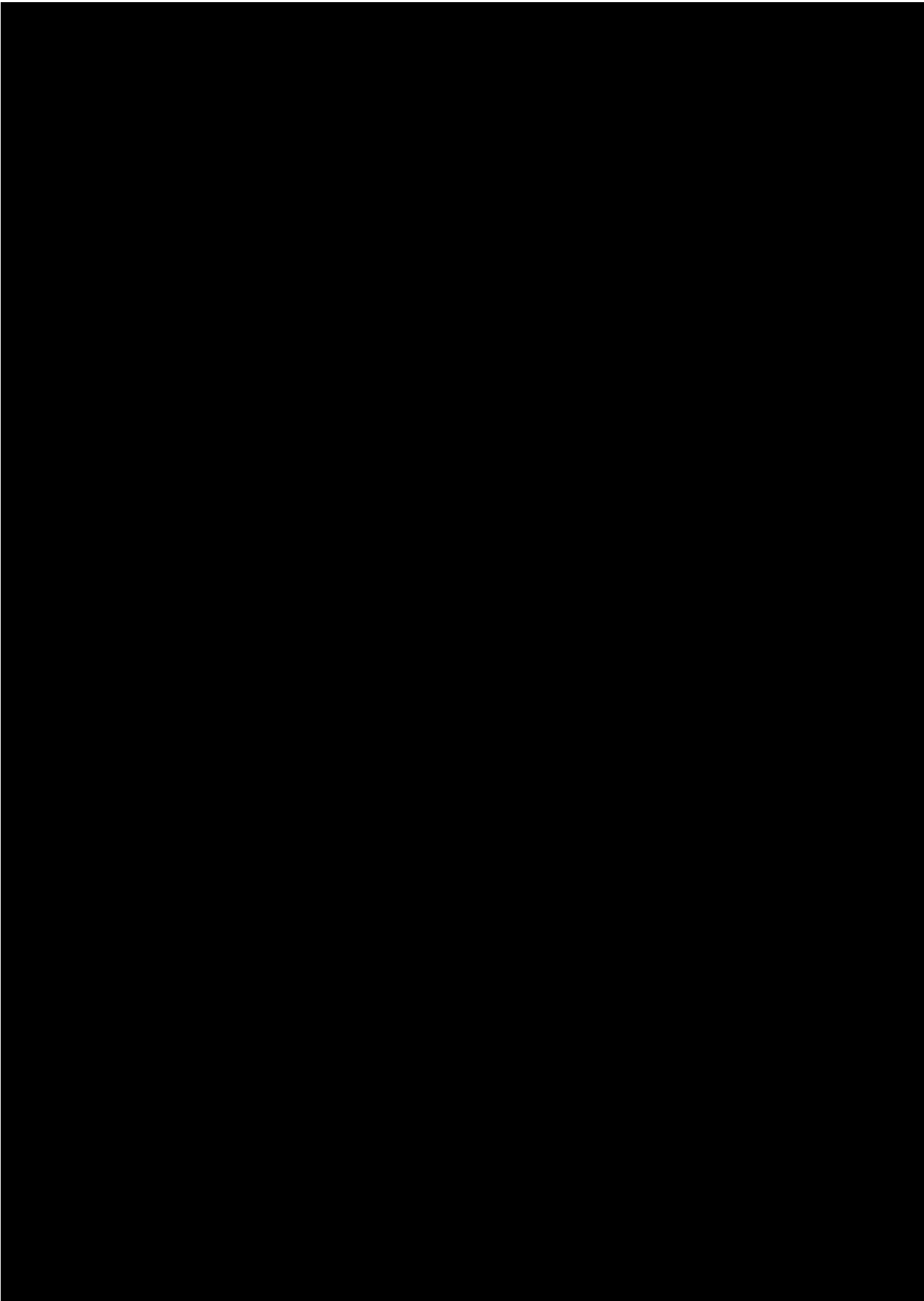
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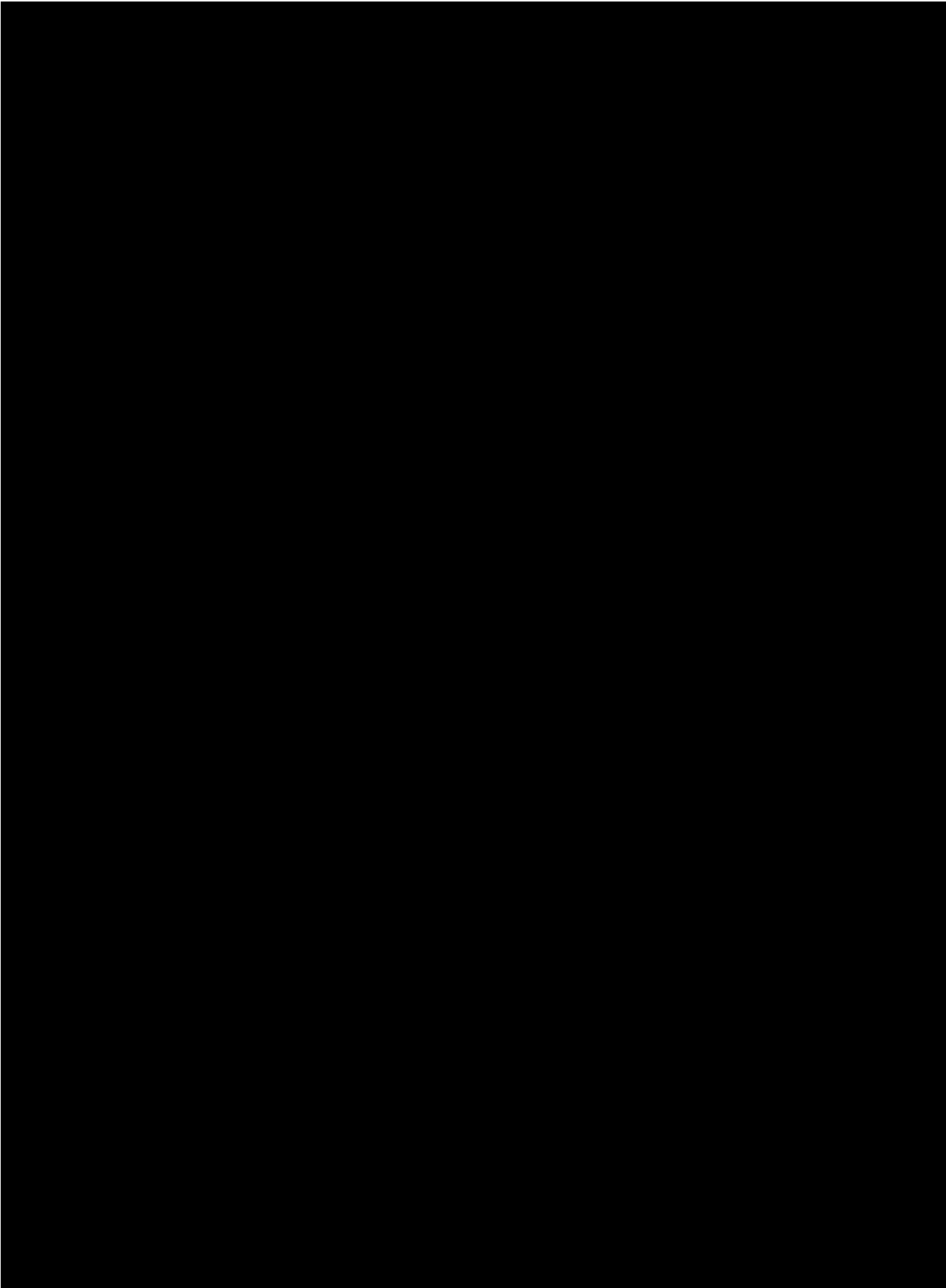
The granting of notional added years of pensionable service to certain public servants in professional, technical and other grades is a feature of public service pension schemes. The notional added years are intended to compensate for the inability of individuals in such positions to qualify by maximum retirement age for a full pension based on 40 years' service. In Public Service Model Schemes added years are awarded in accordance with Department of Finance circulars. It is confined to situations where, by reason of the requirements to be appointed to a post, a person could not have 40 years' service before maximum retirement age or by 65 years of age in the case of a new entrant appointed on or after 1 April 2004. The scheme provides for the award of up to five added years for essential qualifications and/or experience. Awards are confirmed at point of retirement. The unfunded schemes reflect the current approach on professional added years throughout the public sector. This was not the position in the schemes where discretions have transferred to the Ministers.

Current Position

Priority is being afforded to the application of discretions in the cases of persons who are retiring. Each individual case is evaluated by officials of the two Departments. The Ministers have delegated authority to officials who apply the pension scheme rules in accordance with the policy approach approved by the two Ministers

In the region of 600 applications were received since 2010. There have been 36 appeals to the Ministers under the Internal Dispute Resolution Process, the majority of which are in relation to the added year's discretion. A number of these cases were referred to the Pension Ombudsman where he has found primarily in favour of the Ministers.





Steps in train

Continue to exercise Ministers discretions in accordance with policy

3.5 REVISED SICK LEAVE REGULATIONS

Background

In accordance with S.I. No. 124/2014 - Public Service Management (Sick Leave) Regulations 2014, education sector staff are subject to the terms of the Regulations with effect from 1 September, 2014. This has implications for Pension Unit as the individual's entitlement to remuneration while on sick leave after a certain period is determined by pensionable service with certain conditions attaching.

Current Position

The calculation of Temporary Rehabilitation Remuneration (TRR) arises in the case of school staff where the member because of absence due to illness has exhausted entitlement to payment of salary. The introduction of the Sick leave Regulations involved a new approach for this Department. While Pension Unit had absolutely no involvement in sick leave entitlement in the past, the calculation of a rate of payment akin to ill-health pension entitlements is undertaken by Pension Unit in order to address the scheme. This process involves a totally different cohort of customers for Pension Unit as the individuals are vulnerable due to the ongoing illness and may not be in a position to fully comprehend the complexities of pension calculations, requires careful handling by the more experienced staff members.

Steps in train

Since its introduction a dedicated team has worked to process cases and to provide information and appropriate details to teachers/special needs assistants and certain other non-teaching staff in respect of pensionable service on which remuneration will be based and inform Payroll system of the TRR amounts in order that individuals are provided with their entitlements in a timely manner.

The Department of Expenditure and Reform recently commenced a review of the operation of the TRR system in its current form and Pension unit will input into that review.

3.6 REVIEW OF SUPPLEMENTARY PENSIONS

Background

A Supplementary pension is an additional element of pension payable to a retiree in accordance with the terms of teachers' pension schemes where such a retiree, as in employment, paid full rate PRSI (Class A). Class A employees paid a reduced pension contribution and the amount of occupational pension is reduced accordingly. The reduction is balanced out by the Social Welfare benefits payable. A Supplementary pension is payable, upon application to the Pension Unit of the Department, where

the retiree, in receipt of occupational pension, is unemployed, and due to causes outside of his/her control, fails to qualify for Social Welfare benefit or qualifies for benefits at a reduced rate.

In May 2013, following a Review, payment of supplementary pension to certain pensioned teachers were ceased. The Review established that some pensioners had, subsequent to the award of a supplementary pension, claimed and been awarded benefit from Department of Social Protection, Following further detailed examination of the cases, Pension Unit confirmed that a total of 320 cases were involved and the individuals concerned were notified by letter in 2013 that an overpayment existed.

Current Position

The recoupment of the overpayments began in 2015. The Department was conscious that the recovery of the overpayment would have implications in terms of tax treatment for the individuals and did not wish to see a situation arise whereby the repayment of the monies would give rise to payment of statutory deduction on the double by the pensioners. In the interim the Department had engaged with the Revenue Commissioners on the issue of repayment in respect of periods outside the Revenue 4 year limit. When Revenue confirmed that their 4-year limit was sacrosanct the Department engaged with Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and in Autumn 2015 a policy in regard to write-down of statutory deduction already paid was approved for periods outside the 4-year Revenue limit. In taking this approach the Department was particularly mindful of the sensitivity of this aspect given the age profile of some of the individuals involved. Each case is the subject of individual consideration. The reduction in individual pensions already effected through the cessation of the supplementary pension payment and the impact of the Public Service Pension Reduction are influencing factors in the timescale for recovery.

Steps in train

Recovery of the overpayment which is currently under way will continue. Approximately one-third of the 320 cases have received invoices and circa 100 have either repaid in full or entered in an instalment repayment method.

Continue to liaise with individuals and respond to all queries.

Information Technology (Internal Department) Unit

1. Unit / Section Overview

The IT Unit is responsible for the provision of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to the Department solely.

Some of the key existing IT systems include:

- School Employee Payrolls (paying up to 102,000 serving/retired school employees every fortnight).
- OLCS (On Line Claims System) used by primary and post-primary schools to submit details of staff absences and claims for casual appointees (approx. 2.4M transactions p.a.).
- PPOD (Post-Primary Online Data) an application implemented across the post-primary sector in late 2013 and used by schools to submit pupil data, which is critical to many business processes including capitation grants, teacher allocations and the State Examinations system.
- POD (Primary Online data) an application implemented across the primary sector in 2015 and used by primary schools to submit pupil data, which is critical to many business processes including capitation grants and teacher allocations. The implementation of POD facilitates the tracking of pupils from commencement of their primary education through the post-primary system.
- Financial Management System (FMS) - approx. 86,500 payments per annum.
- The Department's website was redeveloped in 2012 and includes a map based find-a-school facility.
- A basic pension's modeler for school employees was developed and went live in 2015. This modeler is being enhanced to provide for cost-neutral retirements.
- There are a number of smaller internal and external facing applications including the:
 - Summer Works Scheme (SWS) application used by schools to apply for SWS grants. This application includes a facility for schools to upload photographs, reports from architects/engineers etc and for the Department to advise schools of the outcome of their applications online.
 - Application used by primary schools to submit annual aggregate literacy and numeracy returns.
 - Irish Language Service Application - sections can upload documents for translation, which are automatically emailed to a translator on the Department's framework. If the assignment is not accepted within a specified period, the offer is emailed to the next translator.

The IT Unit also has responsibility for maintaining the Department’s PC and printer networks, some mobile devices, network and database servers, bandwidth between offices, telephony, video-conferencing, in addition to payroll operations.

The present staffing complement of the IT Unit is 52.73 FTEs comprising 1 PO, 6.8 APs, 26.83 HEO/AOs, 16.1 EOs and 3 COs.

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
IT Capital	646,752	876,196	1,800,000
IT Current	2,792,971	3,199,808	3,200,000

3.1 Main projects for 2016:

School Employee Payrolls (including OLCS)

There is an ongoing programme of enhancements to the school employee payrolls, to implement budgetary changes, HR policy changes (eg sick leave regulations, paternal leave etc). Priorities for Q1 2016 include:

- Implementing phase 3 of holiday pay for casual employees ie updating service history and increment dates.
- Updating of Pension Rate Calculation System.

Primary Online Database (POD)

- By end 2015, 99% of the overall primary pupil cohort was uploaded by schools to POD.
- Work is ongoing on automating the primary census returns with effect from the 2016/17 school year.

Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD)

Analysis is underway for the enhancement of PPOD to facilitate the:

- Revised Junior Cycle programme and
- Roll-over of data from POD to PPOD.

Inspectorate Management Information System (IMIS)

Inspections application to facilitate in-school data capture by inspectors, using mobile devices.

- This will allow collection of stable and comparable data for a management information system supporting evidence based policy formulation.
- In-house development due for pilot prior to the end of the 2015/2016 school year and for rollout in September 2016.

Pensions Digitisation Project:

Pensions Section is reliant on paper based records for the calculation of pensions/lump sums for school employees with pre-1999 post-primary service. On foot of a public procurement exercise, a company has been selected to commence digitisation of approx. 1.2 million paper based records, in order to improve internal effectiveness and efficiencies within Pensions Section

Student Grant Appeals System

Approximately 800 grant appeals per annum are administered by the Higher Education Equity of Access section of the Department. Phase 1 of the project is complete which involves Department staff inputting appeal details to a SharePoint application. Planned developments for 2016 include:

- Sharing of data/existing scanned documentation between SUSI and the Department where required to support an appeal.
- Automated emails to SUSI requesting background details and the appellant acknowledging receipt.
- Online data entry by appellant.

Redevelopment of esinet (education services interactive network)

Planning has commenced for the redevelopment of esinet (Department's portal for the delivery of online applications to schools), which went live in 2006.

Stabilisation of hardware and database technologies

In 2015, the Department completed an upgrade of its main School Employee Payroll Application hardware software, and database technologies; a similar project to move the FMS onto newer hardware and a better supported operation system pending the migration of the Department's FMS to the Financial Management Shared Service in mid-2018 is now underway. Completion of this project is scheduled for the end of June 2016. A final stabilization project to migrate the esinet Portal and applications onto newer hardware pending the redevelopment of esinet is in the planning stage and will be carried out in conjunction with our IT colleagues in the Revenue Commissioners. While no dates have been agreed for the completion of the esinet stabilisation project, the optimum time to complete this task from the Department's perspective would be during the school summer holidays.

A shared approach to IT service delivery

Where possible the Department is participating in a shared approach to ICT maintenance and software provision.

- **'Build to Share'**

The build to share project under the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform will see the rollout of eSubmissions (electronic submissions to the Minister and the Secretary General) in Q2/2016 followed by migration of the Department's current PQ system to a shared ePQ system during the 2016 summer recess.

- **Financial Shared Services**

This Department is scheduled to move to Financial Management Shared Services in mid- 2018. Pending this move, the Department has entered into a combined support contract for our current software (Oracle Financial Management System (FMS)) with 5 other Departments under the auspices of the Oracle Government Financial Users Group (OFGUG).

3.2 ICT Strategy 2015-2019

The ICT Strategy for the Department for the period 2015-2019 outlines the direction of the unit over the next period and, in accordance with the ICT guiding principles set out in the Public Sector Reform Plan 2014-2016 and the draft Public Service ICT Strategy, takes account of the following principles:

- Design for Digital (with a "Digital by Default" approach for new services)
- Invest to Transform
- Customer Centric (deliver effective services to the Department as an internal customer and to the external customers of the Department).
- Information Centric (information managed as an asset within the Department – investing in BI to provide evidence based policy advice).
- Need to embrace new/emerging technologies such as:
 - Smartphones, tablets etc for the delivery of applications, reflecting the shift in user ICT consumption trends
 - Utilising cloud technology, while offering a cost-effective opportunity for the seamless access of data anywhere, anytime, on any device, also presents challenges including security of personal data.

3.3 Review of the IT unit

In order to best place the IT unit to respond and preempt the demands of both the Department and the changing technical environment, a review of the capability maturity level of the Unit was commenced in Q4 2015, the outcome of which is awaited.

3.4 Invest to Transform

The Public Sector Reform Plan 2014-2016 makes reference to the impact of continued resource constraints over the years, resulting in an ICT spend profile of many organisations (including this Department) weighted towards “keeping the lights on”. This plan also refers to the need to rebalance ICT spend towards an “Invest to Transform” strategy for the transformation of business processes, exploitation of emerging technologies, greater use of analytical software to further strengthen policy formulation, data sharing between public bodies etc.

Over the past few years, the Department has invested in upgrading its hardware (PCs, servers, VoIP, Video-Conferencing Units, hybrid laptop/tablets pilot etc). However, there are many opportunities for the development of further applications including an On-Line Allocations and Appointments Systems for school employees, Pensions System, self-service portal for school employees to access payslip data, P60s, update personal details (eg address, change of bank account etc), Management Information System (MIS) for the Planning and Building Unit etc.

3.5 ICT Governance

While the IT Unit’s annual work programme is approved by the Department’s MAC, the MAC ICT Oversight Subcommittee (MIOS) established in 2010, consider all potential projects for inclusion in the IT Unit’s annual business plan, following which recommendations are made to MAC. MIOS also monitor progress on projects thereby ensuring that the IT Unit’s work programme is aligned to the business objectives of the Department. The membership of MIOS is comprised of Michael Keogh/ASG (Chair), Martin Hanevy/ASG, Ruth Carmody/ASG, Harold Hislop/Chief Inspector, Alan Wall/ASG, Jim Duffy (retired ASG, CMOD, Department of Finance) and Ann McDonnell/PO, IT Unit.

4. OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

4.1 IT Unit staffing / contractor issues

The IT Unit maintains a complex underlying network, bandwidth and database infrastructure, and supports a broad range of critical core services and systems, in addition to payroll operations. Maintaining this level of activity, in addition to the necessary regular upgrades of the underlying infrastructure and implementation of enhancements to current systems,

absorbs most of the IT resources. As technologies and development tools evolve, there has to be continuous investment in the upskilling of IT staff.

In common with other public sector bodies, the IT Unit is experiencing difficulties sourcing and retaining both skilled ICT staff and contractors, due to promotion opportunities in the public/private sectors and increasing daily rates for contractors, estimated to increase by a further 10-20% in 2016. The unit has 7.5 vacancies at present (2.5 HEO/AOs, 3 EOs and 2 COs), predominantly for developers (Java, SharePoint, FMS and Business Intelligence). Turnover and lack of skilled staff and contractors is impacting on project timeframes and ability of the unit to not only deliver on new projects, but to support current systems.

The Public Appointments Service (PAS) recently ran an Open EO ICT competition. The number of requests for candidates from this panel, greatly exceeded the number of successful applicants. This issue of open recruitment to ICT posts is being raised by the department at meetings with the Head of PAS, Civil Service Head of HR, Corporate Affairs Assistant Secretaries Network and Heads of ICT committee.

Pending the availability of the Office of Government Procurement's (OGP's) mechanism for the procurement of ICT contractors, the Department has extended its current Framework, but is constrained by the maximum daily rates on the Framework. The mechanism being put in place by the OGP for the procurement of ICT contractors should reflect increasing market rates for contractors which may improve recruitment rates, this may put further pressure on the IT Unit's current subhead.

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Nil in respect of IT.

HR Unit

1. Unit / Section Overview

HR Unit's role (which includes Staff Training and Development Unit) is to ensure sufficient staff, with the required knowledge, skills and competencies are available to perform to the best of their ability and contribute to the achievement of the Department's goals and objectives giving particular regard to the Employment Control Framework, Delegated Sanction, Public Service Agreements and any reforms of that agreement which may be announced.

HR Unit is also responsible for staff welfare. The Unit supports the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS) which offers confidential counseling, referral and support to all employees and retired staff who may experience personal and/or work-related difficulties. Training and Development interventions are currently organized through the business planning and PMDS processes. Staff Training and Development Unit also manage the Refund of Fees scheme for staff pursuing third level courses (DPS Circular 23/2007). Training programmes provided aim to enhance the skills and knowledge of staff to build capability to enable the Department meet current and future challenges and promote personal development of staff.

DEPARTMENT STAFF @ 31/12/15

The current staffing of the Department includes administrative (general service) grades, professional and technical staff (inspectorate, psychologists in the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), architectural and engineering staff in the Planning and Building Unit) and other grades (service officers, cleaners, telephonists). The main offices of the Department are in Dublin, Athlone and Tullamore.

Department: 1081 (1011.93 wte)
 NEPS: 208 (194.39 wte)
 TOTAL 1289 (1,206.32 wte)

Dublin	Athlone	Tullamore	Regional
357 (329.85) 27.5%	451 (423.28) 35%	190 (173.79) 14.5%	291 (279.4) 23%

HR STAFF @ 31/12/15

HR Unit: 16.6 Staff Training: 4

	Dublin	Tullamore	Athlone	Staff Training (Athlone)
PO	.8			
APO	3		.8	
HEO (*1 acting)	2*	1	1	1
EO (*1 acting)	3*		1	1
CO	1	1	2	2

Total	9.8	2	4.8	4
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(The PO in HR Unit also has responsibility at PO level for staff in the Ministerial, Press and Communications Units.)

2. FINANCIAL PROVISION

Service	Outturn 2014	Outturn 2015	Provision 2016
Overtime	509,681.84	606,103.66	550,000.00
Staff Training	424,000.00	370,000.00	475,000.00

3. Key priority issues

1. Shared Services

- PeoplePoint
Certain HR transactional functions transitioned to the HR Shared Service Centre “PeoplePoint” in February 2014.
HR Unit liaise closely with PeoplePoint in terms of Service Level Agreements and all issues arising.
- Payroll
Staff payroll transitioned to the Shared Payroll Service Centre in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (D.PER), Tullamore, in March 2015.
HR Unit liaise closely with Finance Unit in respect of any issues arising from a HR perspective.

2. Workforce Planning

- HR Unit developed a Workforce Plan for the period 2015 – 17 in accordance with D.PER guidelines. In order to streamline the workforce planning process, HR Unit added a workforce planning appendix to the Business Planning process. The Workforce Plan will be reviewed in early 2016 in the context of Business Planning returns and in the context of our current staffing profile.

3. Strategic HR

- Following the move of transactional elements of HR functions to PeoplePoint, HR Unit plan to focus on more strategic HR functions and discussions are taking place centrally across Departments in the context of Strategic HR and particularly “Civil Service Renewal”.
HR Anticipate that one focus of Strategic HR will be Staff Training and the identification and targeting of training in accordance with the Departments longer term business needs.

4. IT Staffing

- There are issues across the Civil Service in terms of finding suitable staff to resource IT units as is the case for this Department. As the economy improves, staff with IT skills are tempted to the Private Sector by higher

salaries so retention becomes an issue. In addition, a key element of Civil Service Renewal is mobility for staff which does not sit comfortably with “specialist” staff such as those working in IT areas.

HR Unit is currently considering a number of options regarding IT staffing and is consulting with D.PER and the Public Appointments Service in this regard in the context of a Civil Service wide ICT strategy.

5. Industrial Relations

- One of the functions of HR Unit is to manage the industrial relations environment in the Department. Staff interests in the Department are represented by the following associations:

Association/Union	Grades
Association of Higher Civil Servants (AHPCS)	Principal Officers and Assistant Principal Officers.
Public Service Executive Union (PSEU)	Higher Executive Officers, Administrative Officers and Executive Officers.
Civil and Public Service Union (CPSU)	Clerical Grades.
Federated Union of Government Employees (FUGE)	Service grades.
Irish Municipal, Public and Civil Trade Union (IMPACT)	Professional and Technical Grades.

6. Business Process Improvement

- The Department is implementing a structured approach to streamlining and improving business processes using the Business Process Improvement (BPI) Lean Six Sigma methodology under the remit of a BPI Steering committee which was set up in 2012.
- 7 BPI projects have been completed to date resulting in significant efficiencies in work practices.

The next wave of BPI projects will commence in Q2 2016.

7. Staff Training

- Following a significant number of promotions and transfers under mobility in the last two years, training priorities for 2016 will include grade development programmes, leadership training and induction programmes.

Payroll

1. UNIT / SECTION OVERVIEW

The Payroll Division is responsible for the payment of

- Permanent, fixed term and substitute teachers employed in Primary, Secondary and Community/Comprehensive schools
- Special needs assistants employed in those categories of schools
- Caretakers/ clerical officers employed under the 1979 scheme
- Retired teaching and non teaching staff and their spouses.
- Home tutors

One hundred thousand personnel are paid on a fortnightly basis on the four payrolls operated by the Division. This includes approximately 10,000 part-time and substitute teachers and special need assistants employed on an ongoing basis as replacements for teachers and special need assistants absent on approved leave during the year.

The division is also responsible for the preparation of annual estimates and the monitoring of expenditure of €4.3 billion euros on an ongoing basis in respect of those payrolls.

An ongoing objective of the division is to ensure that all staff paid on the payrolls are paid on time and that payments issued are correct.

An on line claim system for the recording of all absences of teachers and non teaching

Staff employed in schools and the payment of substitute personnel has operated since 2006 and has been very effective.

Payroll Division comprises (WTEs) 1 PO; 3 APOs, 7 HEOs, 15 EOs, 22 SOs, and 82 C.Os.

2. Financial Provision

(000)s

Service	Outturn 2013	Outturn 2014	Provision 2015
Primary Teacher Salaries	€2,145,951	€1,996,180	€2,066,347
Post Primary Teacher Salaries	€1,122,476	€1,099,355	€1,106,440

Special Need Assistants	€339,550	€351,382	€386,392
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Retired Post Primary	€299,991	€308,430	€333,969
Retired Primary	€418,871	€428,272	€463,584

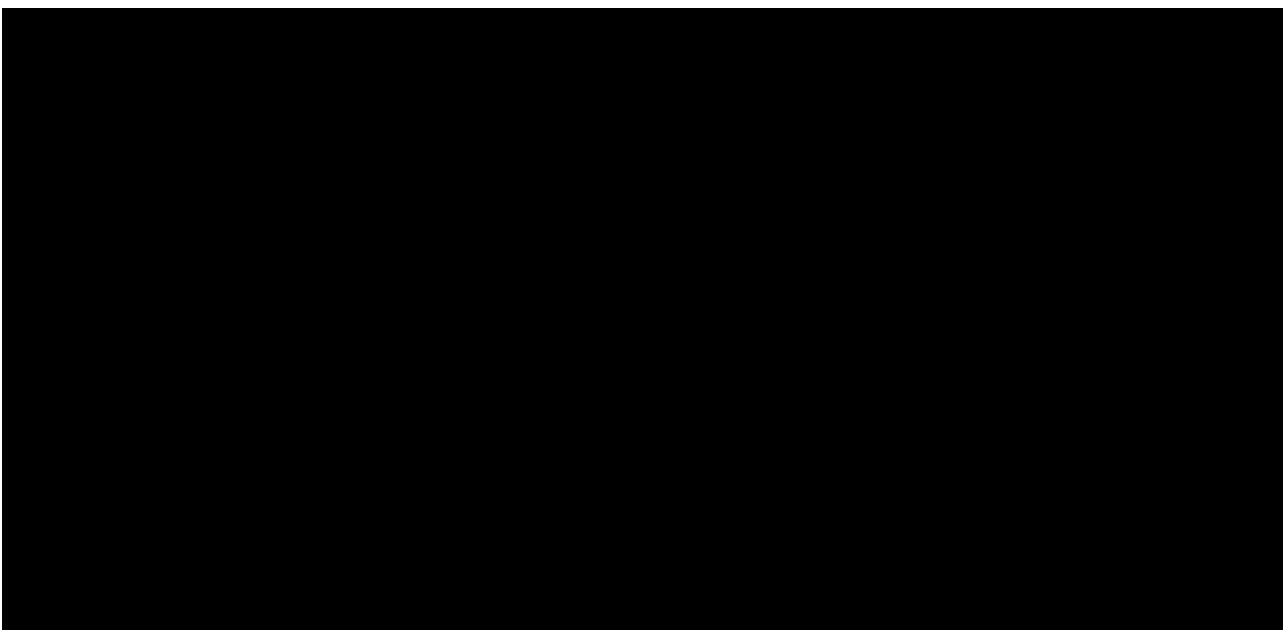
3. Key priority issues

ISSUE:

Ensure that the risk of payroll failure is minimized on an ongoing basis.

background:

The processing of one hundred thousand payments on a fortnightly basis is a huge process. It is necessary on an ongoing basis to ensure that risks of a payroll failure are minimized. Adequate disaster recovery procedures are necessary. The availability of payroll software provider resources, co-operation of banks, support staff in the Department are key factors.



4. Other significant Issues

4.1 ISSUE:

background:

Current Position:

Next Steps:

[Repeat these headings for each significant issue identified]

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Name of Body:

Main responsibilities:

Allocation 2010:

Staff numbers:

Internal Audit Unit

1. Unit / Section Overview

The Internal Audit Unit is responsible for providing assurance to the Accounting Officer on the adequacy, efficiency and effectiveness of the Department's risk management, internal control systems and governance processes. It undertakes its work in accordance with an annual work programme which is approved by the Accounting Officer and is overseen by the Department's Audit Committee. The Unit conducts systems audits of sections of the Department, Community and Comprehensive Schools and Education Centres. It also completes audits of EU funded programmes as agreed with the European Commission.

The Unit is staffed as follows:

Staffing in Internal Audit Unit
0.5 Principal Officer (Head of Internal Audit)
0.5 Assistant Principal
2 Higher Executive Officers
1 Executive Officer

The Unit provides administrative support to the Audit Committee which was established in 2004. The Committee provides independent advice to the Accounting Officer in relation to internal control, the risk management environment and audit matters, and oversees the work of Internal Audit Unit. There are five members on the Department's Committee, three are external representatives, one of whom is the chairperson, and two are internal representatives.

2. Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2013	Outturn 2014	Provision 2015
N/A	Zero	Zero	Zero

3. Key Priority Issues

3.1 ISSUE:

To conduct sufficient number of audits, concentrated in areas/activities of highest risk to the Department, to give the Accounting Officer the necessary assurance that the controls in place are adequate and to enable him to sign the Annual Statement on Internal Financial Control.

Background:

The Unit undertakes a programme of audits as set out in the annual Audit Plan.

Current Position:

Work is in progress on the Audit Plan.

Next Steps:

Complete audit reports as set out in the annual work programme and ensure that the tracking system for monitoring the implementation of audit recommendations is effective.

4. Other significant Issues

Not applicable to Internal Audit Unit

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Not applicable to Internal Audit Unit

European Social Fund Audit Authority

1. Unit / Section Overview

The role of the European Social Fund Audit Authority (ESF Financial Control Unit) is to:

- Ensure that Ireland complies with the regulatory requirements of the European Union in relation to the audit of ESF;
- Promote best practice in the management, control and audit of ESF in Ireland;
- To ensure that audits are performed in accordance with international auditing standards in order to provide high quality, fair and balanced reports;
- Provide annual assurance to the European Commission that statements of expenditure are correct and that there is reasonable assurance that the underlying transactions are legal and regular.

It undertakes its work in accordance with an annual audit work programme which is approved by the Accounting Officer and is overseen by the Department's Audit Committee. The Unit conducts audits in organisations that receive ESF funding, which could be a Section in the Department, another Department, an aegis body or some other agency or operation (project).

The Unit is staffed as follows:

Staffing in ESF Financial Control Unit
0.5 Principal Officer (Head of ESF FCU)
2 Professional Accountants Grade 1
2 Auditors (on-loan from Comptroller and Auditor General)

2. Financial Provision

Service	Outturn 2013	Outturn 2014	Provision 2015
N/A	Zero	Zero	Zero

3. Key Priority Issues

3.1 ISSUE:

Provide annual assurance to the European Commission that statements of European Social Fund expenditure are correct and that there is reasonable assurance that the underlying transactions are legal and regular.

Background:

In the current round of ESF funding (2007 – 2013), the unit is mandated to plan, co-ordinate, conduct, and review an annual programme of verification and systems audits in organisations that receive ESF funding. In addition, it monitors implementation of all ESF audit report recommendations which must be completed by closure of the funding round.

Current Position:

Work is in progress on the work programme for closure of the current round of ESF funding.

Next Steps:

The current round of ESF funding (2007 – 2013) closes early next year and the unit must complete the verification audit fieldwork by the European Commission deadline of 31 March 2017. All audit reports, as set out in the work programme, will be finalised by the deadline of formal reporting to the European Commission in the Closure Declaration (that statements of expenditure are correct and that there is reasonable assurance that the underlying transactions are legal and regular).

4. Other significant Issues

Not applicable to ESF FCU.

5. Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Not applicable to ESF FCU.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Index of Main Bodies under the Aegis of the Department

<u>Title of Body</u>	<u>Section responsible</u>	<u>Chair / CEO / Other</u>
An Chomhairle um Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)	Curriculum and Policy Section	Chair: Mr. Donal ÓhAiniféin CEO: Ms. Muireann Ní Mhoráin
SOLAS	Further Education and Training Unit	Chair: Mr. Pat Delaney CEO: Mr. Paul O'Toole
Higher Education Authority	Higher Education Research and Finance	Chair: Mr. John Hennessey (Term expired on 24/01/2016 - PAS process is underway to appoint new chair and Board members) CEO: Mr. Thomas Boland
Léargas – The Exchange Bureau	International section	Chairperson: Mr. Michael Mc Loughlin CEO: Mr. Jim Mullin
National Centre for Guidance in Education	Curriculum and Policy Section	Director: Ms. Jennifer McKenzie
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment	Curriculum and Policy Section	Chair: Ms. Brigid McManus CEO: Dr. Anne Looney
National Council for Special Education	Special Education Section	Chair: Mr. Eamonn Stack (Term Expired on 31/12/2015 – PAS process to appoint new chair and Board members substantially progressed) CEO: Ms. Teresa Griffin
PDST Technology in Education	ICT Policy Unit	Director: Ms. Ciara O'Connell
Quality and Qualifications Ireland	Higher Education – Equity of Access and Qualifications	Chair: Mr. Gordon Clarke CEO: Dr. Pádraig Walshe
Skillnets	Further Education and Training Unit	Chair: Mr. Brendan Mc Ginty CEO: Mr. Ian Menzies (Acting CEO as of Jan 2016)
State Examination Commission	Qualifications, Curriculum and Policy Section,	Chair: Mr. Patrick Burke CEO: Mr. Aidan Farrell

Teaching Council	Teacher Education Section	Chair: Mr. Mícheál Ó Gríofa CEO: Tomás Ó Ruairc
Residential Institution Redress Board	Residential Institutions Redress Unit	Chair: The Hon. Justice Esmond Smyth Secretary to the Board: Mr. Michael O'Beirne
Residential Institution Redress Committee	Residential Institutions Redress Unit	Chair: The Hon. Justice Francis D. Murphy Registrar: Mr. John Dalton
Residential Institution Statutory Fund Board (Caranua)	Residential Institutions Redress Unit	Chair: Mr. David O'Callaghan CEO: Ms. Mary Higgins
Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse	Residential Institutions Redress Unit	Secretary: Mr. Joe Langan
Education Research Centre	Curriculum and Policy Section	Chair: Vacant pending PAS process to fill post CEO: Mr. Peter Archer

Appendix 2: Main Education Partners

Management bodies

Title	Description	Chair / General Secretary / Other	Details of annual conference
Catholic Primary School Managers' Association (CPSMA)	This is the management body for primary schools of the Catholic denomination, which is the significant majority of primary schools. Has membership of the Teachers' Conciliation Council.	General Secretary: Fr. Tom Deenihan Chair: Martin Hanrahan	Usually held in March End of Feb this year
Church of Ireland Board of Education	This is the management body for primary schools of the Church of Ireland denomination.	General Secretary: Dr. Ken Fennelly	n/a
An Fóras Pátrúnachta	An Foras Pátrúnachta was founded in 1993 to give another choice to parents with regard to patronage. Foras Pátrúnachta will be central to the promotion of education through the Irish language. Foras Pátrúnachta will serve the schools under our patronage at primary and secondary level efficiently and professionally.	Secretary General: Caoimhín ohEaghra Chairperson: Séamas Ó Ceanainn	March
Gaelscoileanna Teo	Established in 1973 as a voluntary national organisation to provide assistance and support in the development of Irish-medium schools at	CEO: Bláthnaid ni Ghreacháin Secretary: Jill McMahon	Usually held in November

	primary and post-primary level.		
Educate Together	A representative body for multi-denominational primary school sector.	Chairperson: Diarmuid MacAoghusa Chief Executive Officer: Paul Rowe	Usually held in June (Spring)
Muslim Primary Education Board	This is the management body for primary schools of the Islamic denomination	Secretary General: Shaheen Ahmed President: Asiya Al-tawash	N/A
National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education	The National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education (NABMSE) provides support to boards of management involved in special education provision.	Chairperson: Éilis Dillion General Secretary: Breda Corr	Usually held in October
Joint Managerial Body (JMB)	Represents the interests of boards of management, managers and principals of voluntary secondary schools.	President: Fr. Paul Connell General Secretary: John Curtis	Usually held just after Easter End of April and beginning of May
Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)	Management body representing the vocational sector. Its membership is broadly comprised of local public representatives, parent and other representatives on education and training boards, and CEOs of ETBs.	President: Pat Gilmore General Secretary: Michael Moriarty	Usually held in September but later in 2014

Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools	This is the management body representing the community and comprehensive sector, representing approximately 100 schools. Represented on the Teachers' Conciliation Council.	President: Antoinette Nic Gearailt General Secretary: Ms Eileen Salmon	Usually held in April March
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Teacher Unions

Title	Description	Chair / General Secretary / Other	Details of annual conference
Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)	Represents teachers in both this jurisdiction and Northern Ireland. It represents approximately 26,000 primary level teachers in the state on all matters relating to terms and conditions.	General Secretary: Sheila Nunan President: Emma Dineen	Held at Easter
Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI)	Represents approx 17,000 teachers, mainly in the voluntary secondary sector but also having a membership in Community and Comprehensive schools. Concerned with terms and conditions of second level teachers.	General Secretary: Kieran Christie President: Máire Ní Chiarba	Held at Easter
Teachers' Union of Ireland	Represents some 12,000 teachers, and lecturers in the Institutes of Technology. Its teacher membership is in the VEC and Community and	General Secretary: John MacGabhann President: Gerry Quinn	Held at Easter

	Comprehensive sectors. Concerned with terms and conditions of second level teachers.		
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Principals' Organisations

Title	Description	Chair / General Secretary / Other	Details of annual conference
Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN)	Represents principals and deputy principals in primary schools. Its remit is restricted to matters of professional nature rather than terms and conditions in the workplace.	President – Ms. Maria Doyle Director - Sean Cottrell	Usually held in January
National Association of Principals & Deputy Principals (NAPD)	Represents principals and deputy principals in the spectrum of schools in the second level sector.	President – Paul Byrne Director – Clive Byrne	Usually held in October

Parents' organisations

Title	Description	Chair / General Secretary / Other	Details of annual conference
National Parents Council (primary)	Represents parents in the primary sector and is represented on a wide range of bodies such as the NCCA.	CEO: Áine Lynch	Usually held in June May
National Parents Council (post primary)	This body is a loose amalgamation of sectoral parents' groups.	President: Paul Mooney	Usually held in October November

Appendix 3: Statistical Overview of the Client Base

Key Statistics 2014/2015

First Released – 30th June 2015

Updated 7th July 2015 to incorporate final second level data

Table 1 Number of Full-time Students in Institutions Aided by the Department of Education and Skills – 2013/2014 and 2014/2015

Level	2013/2014	2014/2015
First Level	536,317	544,696
Primary Schools	528,562	536,747
Special Schools	7,755	7,949
Second Level (excluding number of PLC students)	333,175	339,207
Secondary	188,791	190,587
Vocational	88,247	91,612
Community and Comprehensive	56,137	57,008
Second-level Students in PLC Courses	34,003	33,089
Secondary	655	557
Vocational	32,226	31,466
Community and Comprehensive	1,122	1,066
Third Level	169,254	173,649
Universities	93,023	95,120
Institutes of Technology	66,490	68,324
Teacher Training Institutions	6,703	6,953
<i>Other Aided Institutions</i>	3,038	3,252

**Table 2 Number of Schools Aided by the Department of Education and Skills
- 2013/2014 and 2014/2015**

Level	2013/2014	2014/2015
First Level	3,286	3,277
Primary Schools – Mainstream	3,145	3,137
Special Schools	141	140
Second Level	723	732
Secondary	373	375
Vocational	256	262
Community and Comprehensive	94	95
Total	4,009	4,009
Second-Level Schools Offering PLC Courses	164	159
Secondary	13	11
Vocational	131	129
Community and Comprehensive	20	19

Table 3 Number of Teaching Staff (Full-time Equivalent Posts Allocated)

Level	2013/2014	2014/2015
First Level	32,828	33,613
All Second Level	25,626	26,174
Second Level excluding PLC	23,907	24,455
PLC	1,719	1,719

Only teachers paid from funds provided by the Department of Education and Skills are included in the above table. Second-level teacher figures exclude all Further Education except for PLC.

Table 4 Overview of Pupil-Teacher Ratio at First and Second Level

Level	2013/2014	2014/2015
First Level	16.3	16.2
All Second Level	14.3	14.2
Second Level excluding PLC	13.9	13.9
PLC	19.8	19.2

The pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) is calculated at each level by dividing the total number of pupils by the total number of teaching posts (classroom teachers and support teachers). This calculation differs for example from the staffing schedule at primary level which is the basis for allocating classroom teachers to each school based on their enrolments.

Table 5 The Pupil-Teacher Ratio and Average Class size in National Schools

	2013/2014	2014/2015
Total enrolment in all National Schools (at the start of the school year)	536,317	544,696
Total number of teaching posts (at the end of the school year)	32,828	33,613
Pupil-Teacher Ratio in all National Schools	16.3	16.2
Total enrolment in Mainstream Classes	525,141	532,931
Teaching Teachers of Mainstream Classes	21,147	21,419
Average class size in Mainstream Classes	24.8	24.9

Table 6 Number of National School Pupils and Classes Classified by Local Authority Area in 2014/2015

County	Pupils in Mainstream Classes in Mainstream Schools		Pupils with Special Needs in Mainstream Schools		Pupils in Special Schools		Total	
	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes
Carlow	7,438	283	69	13	160	20	7667	316
Cavan	9,442	390	79	14	136	21	9,657	425
Clare	13,697	573	75	12	160	26	13,932	611
Cork City	13,467	573	113	19	516	70	14,096	662
Cork County	46,618	1,831	447	76	336	51	47,401	1,958
Donegal	18,730	794	161	32	157	24	19,048	850
Dublin City	43,897	1,851	336	57	1,717	235	45,950	2,143
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	18,284	691	77	13	568	80	18,929	784
Fingal	35,514	1,347	241	37	136	24	35,891	1,408
Galway City	7,192	307	115	21	221	36	7,528	364
Galway County	21,891	920	83	15	44	10	22,018	945
Kerry	15,787	656	128	23	206	34	16,121	713
Kildare	28,721	1,089	257	45	228	37	29,206	1,171
Kilkenny	10,729	423	59	10	250	40	11,038	473

Laois	10,676	422	62	11	131	17	10,869	450
Leitrim	3,624	156	6	2	0	0	3,630	158
Limerick City	6,765	286	40	6	442	58	7,247	350
Limerick County	15,009	597	25	5	92	15	15,126	617
Longford	5,231	217	41	7	27	5	5,299	229
Louth	16,510	648	87	15	314	37	16,911	700
Mayo	14,328	632	66	13	127	16	14,521	661
Meath	25,769	965	140	24	228	29	26,137	1,018
Monaghan	7,401	299	65	12	0	0	7,466	311
Offaly	9,627	392	174	26	19	4	9820	422
Roscommon	7,132	320	35	6	37	7	7,204	333
Sligo	7,203	302	46	7	79	12	7,328	321
South Dublin	33,889	1,342	249	34	408	65	34,546	1,441
Tipperary	18,270	761	136	24	343	50	18,749	835
Waterford City	6,116	239	26	5	165	24	6,307	268
Waterford County	7,899	309	28	5	50	6	7,977	320
Westmeath	10,852	436	64	12	155	22	11,071	470
Wexford	18,157	713	142	24	232	29	18,531	766
Wicklow	17,066	655	144	23	265	40	17,475	718
TOTAL	532,931	21,419	3,816	648	7,949	1,144	544,696	23,211

Table 7 Number of Second-Level Pupils* Classified by Local Authority Area in 2013/2014

Local Authority	Secondary	Vocational	Community	Comprehensive	Total
Carlow County Council	3,103	2,295	655		6,053
Cavan County Council	2,064	3,137	601	503	6,305
Clare County Council	4,144	2,130	1,133	707	8,114
Cork City Council	8,730	4,578	1,132	521	14,961
Cork County Council	13,410	11,104	4,490	337	29,341
Donegal County Council	3,315	4,851	3,744	944	12,854
Dublin City Council	25,220	10,465	787	1,346	37,818
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	12,247	2,689	1,486	849	17,271
Fingal County Council	6,731	7,513	5,515		19,759
Galway City Council	4,309	2,358			6,667
Galway County Council	7,683	2,731	2,300	294	13,008
Kerry County Council	6,089	3,113	1,355	621	11,178
Kildare County Council	8,374	5,697	3,309		17,380
Kilkenny County Council	4,270	2,783	581		7,634
Laois County Council	1,504	1,239	1,849		4,592
Leitrim County Council		1,158	893	478	2529
Limerick City Council	5,257	2,045	29	883	8,214
Limerick County Council	2,137	5,185	956		8,278
Longford County Council	2,026	1,307	625		3,958

Louth County Council	7,269	4,293	761		12,323
Mayo County Council	6,121	2,755	1,803		10,679
Meath County Council	4,086	6,827	3,021		13,934
Monaghan County Council	3,129	2,659			5,788
Offaly County Council	3,452	2,122	1,289		6,863
Roscommon County Council	2,039	797	411		3,247
Sligo County Council	3,123	1,688	605		5,416
South Dublin County Council	8,798	7,532	5,622		21,952
Tipperary (NR) County Council	4,924	2,433			7,357
Tipperary (SR) County Council	3,808	2,055	822		6,685
Waterford City Council	4,091	1,214			5,305
Waterford County Council	2,396	1,158	783		4,337
Westmeath County Council	5,712	1,818	1,240		8,770
Wexford County Council	7,240	3,190	1,895		12,325
Wicklow County Council	4,343	6,159	505	394	11,401
Grand Total	191,144	123,078	50,197	7,877	372,296

* Includes Post-Leaving Certificate courses

Table 8 School Size at First and Second Level in 2014/2015

Enrolment Size (Number of Pupils)	Number of Schools	
	First Level	Second Level
Fewer than 50 Pupils	603	
50 – 99	702	21
100 – 199	823	59
200 - 299	513	107
300 - 499	378	185
500+	118	360
Total	3,137	732

Table 9 Number of Third-Level Colleges Aided by the Department of Education and Skills - 2014/2015

Type	Number
Universities	7
Institutes of Technology Sector	14
Teacher Training	6
Other	4
Total	31

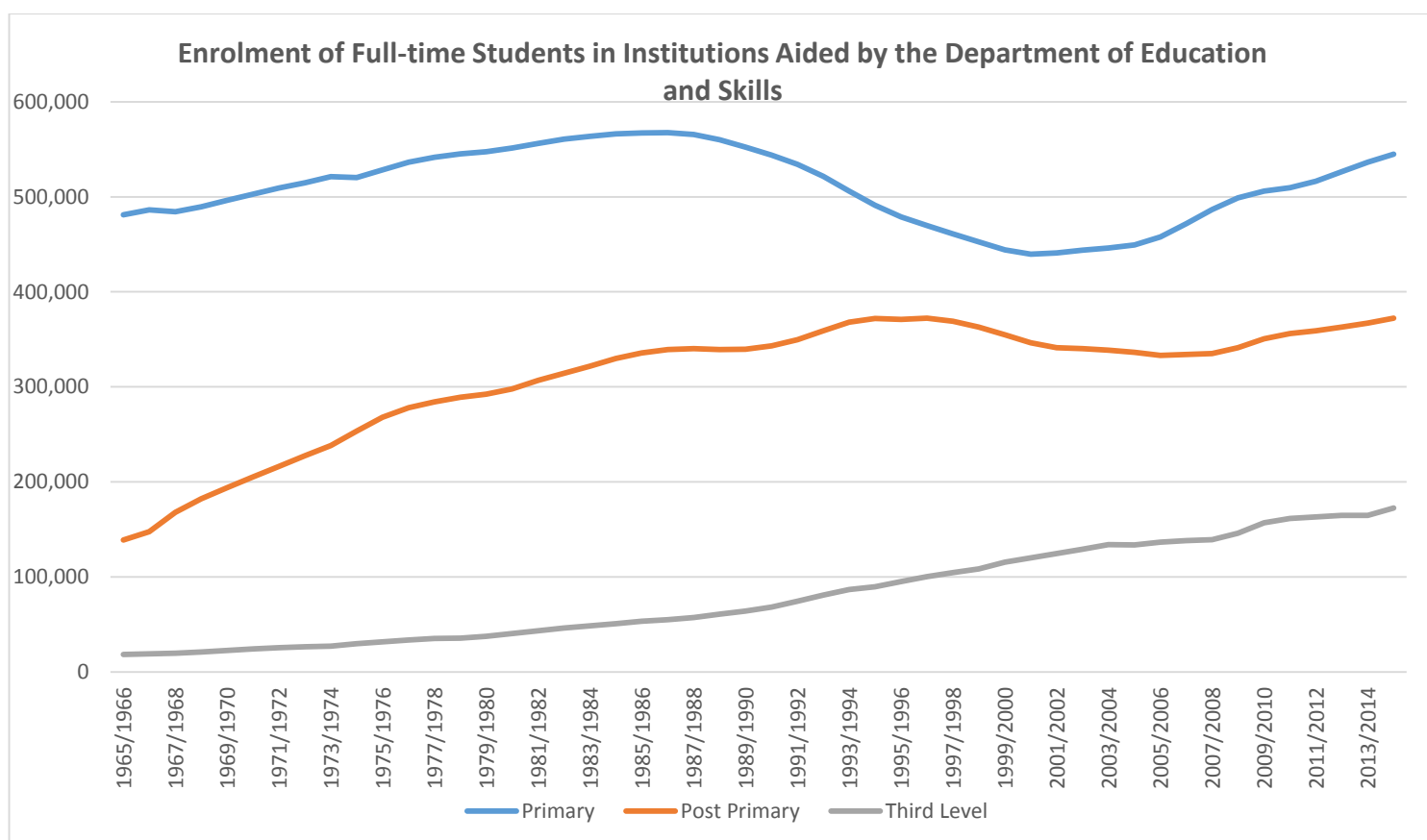
Table 10 Public Examination Candidates - 2013 and 2014

	2013	2014
Junior Certificate Candidates	59,822	60,328
Leaving Certificate Candidates	55,577	56,989
OF WHICH <i>Leaving Certificate School Candidates</i>	49,135	50,643
<i>External Candidates</i>	2,743	2,578
<i>VTOS/PLC Candidates</i>	889	804
Leaving Certificate Applied	2,810	2,964
Total Exam Candidates	115,399	117,317

Table 11 and Graph below Enrolments of Full-time Students in Institutions Aided by the Department of Education and Skills

Level	1974/1975	1984/1985	1994/1995	2004/2005	2014/2015
First Level	520,164	566,289	491,256	449,298	544,696
Second Level (includes PLC)	253,428	329,999	371,957	336,244	372,296
PLC	n/a	n/a	17,644	29,354	33,089
Third Level	29,911	50,836	89,693	133,691	173,649
Total (includes PLC figure, where applicable)	803,503	947,124	952,906	919,233	1,090,641

The PLC Programme (also known as the VPT2) was introduced in 1985.



Time series of the tables in this document and more detailed tables can be found in the Department's Educational Statistical Database at:

<http://w-ww.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/>

Appendix 4: Common Abbreviations

ABA	Applied Behavioural Analysis
ACCS	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
ACELS	Advisory Council for English Language Schools
AEGI	Adult Education Guidance Initiative
AL	Adult literacy
AOS	Annual Output Statement
ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland
BTEI	Back to Education Initiative
CE schemes	Community Employment Schemes
CETS	Childcare in Education and Training Scheme
CGVU	Central Garda Vetting Unit
CMOD	Centre for Management and Organisational Development
CORI	Conference of Religious of Ireland
CPSMA	Catholic Primary School Managers' Association
CPSU	Civil and Public Service Union
CSF	Community Support Framework
CSPE	Civil, Social and Political Education
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools
DCU	Dublin City University
DIAS	Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies
DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act , 2004
ERC	Educational Research Centre
ESF	European Social Fund
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
FESS	Further Education Support Service
FIS	Film in schools
FMS	Financial Management System
HCIOP	Human Capital Investment Operational Programme
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IEP	Individual Education Plan
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
IoTs	Institutes of Technology
JA	Jobseekers allowance
JB	Jobseekers Benefit
JMB	Joint Managerial Body
LCA	Leaving Cert Applied
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

LDA	Locally Devised Assessments
LDS	Leadership Development for Schools
LDTF	Local Drug Task Force
MB	Management Board
MINMAB	Ministers and Management Board
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAER	National Assessment of English Reading
NAMA	National Assessment of Mathematics Achievement
NAPD	National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
NAPS	National Anti-Poverty Strategy
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCTE	National Centre for Technology in Education
NDFA	National Development Finance Agency
NDP	National Development Plan
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NESF	National Economic and Social Forum
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NSMC	North/South Ministerial Council
NUI	National University of Ireland
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLCS	On Line Claims System
OLAS	On Line Appointments System
OMCYA	Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
PCSP	Primary Curriculum Support Programme
PDST	Primary Development Support Service
PIAAC	Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLCs	Post Leaving Certificate Courses
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PRTL	Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions
PSEU	Public Service Executive Union
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
ROS	Regional Office Service
SCP	School Completion Programme
SCPA	Scheme for Commission Psychological Assessments
SDP	School Development Plan
SDPI	School Development Planning Initiative
SIG	School Improvement Group
SLSS	Second Level Support Service
SPHE	Social, person and health education
SSTI	Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation
STTC	Senior Traveller Training Centre
TCD	Trinity College Dublin

TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
T2016	Towards 2016 social partnership agreement
TU	Technological University
TUI	Teachers Union of Ireland
UCC	University College Cork
UCD	University College Dublin (see also NUID)
UCG	University College Galway (see also NUIG)
UL	University of Limerick
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme
VTS	Visiting Teacher Service
WSE	Whole School Evaluation