ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION

2017

AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION 2017

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INTRODUCTION

Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 including the Statement of Strategy was launched in September 2016. As part of the Plan we are committed to actively monitoring progress against plans, to engaging with stakeholders to learn from experience and to adopt a planning approach that enables us to meet emerging challenges over the lifetime of the Plan. In October 2016 we initiated a consultation process to gather feedback on AP-Ed 2016-2019 and to inform the development of a specific Action Plan for 2017. Consultation activity included an online call for submissions, input from other Departments, regional fora, thematic workshops and other meetings with key stakeholders.

Since the launch of the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 and Statement of Strategy substantial and significant progress has been made towards achieving our goals and objectives. 82% of actions targeted for delivery by the end of 2016 have been achieved including: a major increase in the number of inspections in Early Years settings; publication of the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016; commencement of the Fitness to Teach provisions of the Teaching Council Act; launch of the new Junior Cycle Business Studies and Science subject specifications; publication of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022; allocation of funding for an additional 430 Resource Teachers; funding and launch of the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH); and launch of the International Education Strategy.

Action Plan 2017 is derived from the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 and builds on the progress made to date and incorporates feedback from the consultation process. It reaffirms our vision and ambition to create the best education and training service in Europe by 2026. It reiterates our five key goals and over 400 actions and subactions to be achieved before the end of 2017.

Action Plan for Education 2017 represents the significant strategic reform programme under way in education and training and recognises the importance of critical business functions to ensure business continuity and quality of service to all our stakeholders. The publication of an annual plan within a broader strategic framework, enables us to respond in an agile way to the demands of the challenging and complex environment in which we operate while maintaining a strategic focus for sustainable reform over the next decade. Challenges of political change both nationally and internationally, including Brexit, the growing demand for upskilling and reskilling for those in employment, innovations in technology and changing demographics and demands for places are some of the factors to which we must respond in 2017.

Key themes and projects for 2017 include: work on promoting and supporting Wellbeing; tackling disadvantage and the launch of a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion; setting targets and taking action on STEM; publication of the Interim Review of Literacy and Numeracy Strategy; introducing a new Resource Teacher Allocation Model; using digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment; increasing competence in foreign languages; strengthening entrepreneurship and innovation and building leadership capacity; embedding a new model of inspections; focused engagement with enterprise; and enhancing apprenticeships.

We will publish progress reports against the actions in AP-Ed 2017 every quarter and we will publish an end of year review of 2017 and a plan for 2018 to build and consolidate progress towards the achievement of a long term, sustainable programme of change and reform.

Foreword by the Minister

Education is at the heart of all of our ambitions as a nation. No other area of Government activity has greater capacity to change our country for the better. It is crucial to all of our ambitions to support a fairer society, and it is crucial to all of our ambitions to deliver a stronger economy.

For example, in areas like disadvantage and special educational need, we have the capacity, through our policies, to deliver dramatic changes in the course of people's lives, by providing more opportunity for people to develop and fulfil their potential. My ambitions in these areas are to see more people progressing through the education system, more people being challenged and ultimately more people entering the workforce.

Equally, in the area of skills, by implementing the right mix of policies, we can deliver dramatic changes in our ability as a country to attract more jobs from abroad, grow more businesses within the country, and ultimately support strong economic growth.

All of this is why we have set out the ambition to become the best education and training service in Europe, as this means becoming the best at providing opportunities for children with special educational needs or children from disadvantaged areas, and becoming the best at providing the skills to support a growing economy.

The Action Plan for Education is our means of delivering on this. Last September we set out, quarter by quarter, the hundreds of actions to be delivered over 40 months 2016-2019. We also committed to publish, at the start of each year, an updated and more detailed list of the actions to be delivered during that 12 months. We also committed to publishing regular updates on actions delivered on time and those not delivered on time, as a means of ensuring that we track progress against plans and make adjustments where necessary – and ultimately of ensuring that measures get implemented.

By focusing the energies of the entire education system on achieving this ambitious goal, and by setting out a mechanism to deliver on it, I believe we can deliver on becoming the best education service in Europe over the next 9 years. We can also be certain that in this way we will see the best possible improvements in each year.

This will ultimately mean better outcomes for children with special educational needs, better opportunities for children who come from disadvantaged areas, better skills for a growing enterprise base – and ultimately a stronger economy and a fairer society.

Richard Bruton TD,
Minister for Education and Skills

Statement by the Secretary General

The Action Plan for Education 2017 is an important document, marking the first annual action plan under the broader strategic framework of the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 which was published in September 2016.

The Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 articulates the ambition, values and goals that are the basis for the high-level work programme of the Department, its agencies and the Education and Training sector. The 2017 Plan is derived from this and sets out in detail the actions which we aim to deliver this year. In this way, we will be progressing towards our overall ambition of making Ireland's education and training system the best in Europe by 2026.

Underpinning the three-year framework is an ambitious sector-wide reform programme. We want to ensure that we equip learners with the skills and knowledge that they need to achieve their potential and to participate fully in society and the economy. In doing so, we are fully aware of the environment in which we operate and we will respond appropriately to the opportunities and challenges this presents. Issues such as the broader uncertainty around Brexit, as well as global political and economic developments, will have an impact here in Ireland. Delivering on our reform agenda through the Action Plan framework, allows us to have an innovative and responsive education and training system which will be well-positioned to meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities that arise from change.

I would like to acknowledge the active engagement of people and organisations from across and outside the sector in the development and implementation of the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 to date. I am confident that this spirit of partnership will help us as a Department to deliver on our commitments for the year ahead.

Seán Ó Foghlú
Secretary General

TO PROVIDE THE BEST EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM IN EUROPE OVER THE NEXT DECADE

Education is central to our nation's economic, cultural, scientific and social ambitions. Education supports the development of a strong growing economy while sustaining a fair and compassionate society.
The Programme for Government states that "Education is the key to giving every child an equal opportunity in life. No child should be left behind in economic recovery and we should use our strengthening economy to become a leader in the provision of world-class education and skills."

An excellent and innovative education and training system is pivotal to personal fulfilment, the building of a fair society and a successful nation. It is central to sustaining economic success and in converting economic success into building a strong community.

Our central vision is that, through adopting a "whole-of-system" approach, the Irish education and training system should become the best in Europe.

Being the lead in Europe means an ambition to be the best at:

- Delivering a learning experience to highest international standards

- Harnessing education to break down barriers for groups at risk of exclusion and setting the benchmark for social inclusion

- Equipping learners of all ages and capacities to participate and succeed in a changing world

- Leading in innovation and a broad range of endeavours; scientific, cultural, enterprise and public service

- Fostering strong relationships between enterprise and education and building strong bridges with the wider community

At the heart of the Action Plan is the aim to improve the impact of the education and training experience on the lives of each and every learner, particularly those who are likely to face greater obstacles because of disadvantage or special needs.

In each of the five high-level goals which underpin the Statement of Strategy and Action Plan for Education 2016-2019, we aim to deliver systematic improvement across the continuum of education and training to achieve this ambition.

Our Strategy

GOAL 01	GOAL 02	GOAL 03	GOAL 04	GOAL 05
Improve the learning experience and the success of learners	Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs	Help those delivering services to continuously improve	Build stronger bridges between education & the wider community	Improve national planning and support services

Themes for 2017

GOAL 01	GOAL 02	GOAL 03	GOAL 04	GOAL 05
Wellbeing	Early Years	Building capacity	Parents	Action Plan 2017
Key competencies	Inclusion	Leadership	Communities	Sustainable funding models
Better subject choices	Engaging learners	Best Practice	Enterprise	Infrastructute
New Junior Cycle	Special Education	Innovation	Greater career choices	New ways of working
Embracing technology	Improving Access	Inspection and Support	Innovation	
			Entrepreneurship	
			Vibrant Research Communities	

Our Approach

We are committed to a consultative and partnership approach to the development and delivery of the Action Plan for Education 2016 -2019.   An open call for submissions took place during summer 2016, and over 600 parties made returns. They represented interested members of the public, agencies and State bodies, other Government Departments, and various interest groups. This feedback was considered in the drafting of the three year Plan, and was re-considered when updating existing, and devising new, actions for 2017. It was supplemented by a further open call for submissions in Q4 2016 for inclusion in the 2017 Plan.

When developing the material for 2017, the Department's agencies were consulted and a series of in-depth workshops and consultation meetings with key stakeholders was held on priority issues including ICT, languages and wellbeing.

To achieve our ambition we must work in consultation and partnership with key stakeholders and in particular with our agencies, other Departments and their agencies. System-wide performance monitoring will track progress against Plans and ensure that timely remedial action is taken. Performance indicators will be used to benchmark policies and processes for each goal against national and international best practice.

Work with other Government Departments

Adopting the underlying principles of the Programme for a Partnership Government, the Department will continue to deepen its engagement with other Departments and agencies in order to deliver in priority areas.

These areas include:

- **Early-years sector**: Improve the quality of education provision, and develop the workforce, working to deliver the second free ECCE year, and to improve the school engagement, participation and retention levels of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, through the delivery of TUSLA's integrated delivery model for educational welfare. Work with the **Department of Children and Youth Affairs** to achieve these aims.

- **Using ICT to improve learner outcomes and service delivery**: Improve schools connectivity (and other relevant actions under the National Broadband Plan), working to implement the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2014-2020 (which is linked to Our Sustainable Future Policy Framework). Work with the **Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment** to achieve these aims. Implement relevant actions set out in the Build to Share Strand of the Public Service ICT Strategy (including ePQs, eSubmissions, and eCorrespondence), through working with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and other Departments and agencies.

- **Curricular reform**: Advance the Education for Sustainable Development and Development Education agendas, through working with the **Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**. Progress the literacy and numeracy agenda through collaboration with library services, under the **Department of Housing Planning, Community and Local Government**

- **Wellbeing**: develop a new in-school speech and language service, and continue work on the National Taskforce on Youth Mental Health, through working with the **Department of Health**, and other departments, agencies and stakeholders.

- **Meeting identified skills needs**: Increase enterprise engagement, develop a new skills architecture, as outlined in the National Skills Strategy, and implement Innovation 2020 and the ICT Action Plan 2014-2018, through working with the **Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation**.

- **Irish language**: advance the education elements of the "20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language, 2010-2030", working in cooperation with the **Department of the Taoiseach** and the **Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.**

- **Infrastructure**: Implement the student housing aspects of the Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness, and plan school infrastructure, building on existing cooperation (through the statutory land use plan processes). Work with the **Department of Housing Planning, Community and Local Government** to achieve these aims.

The Action Plan Process

The three year process associated with the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 involves the publication of updated annual plans, outlining more specific and ambitious actions for each 12 month period within a longer term strategic framework. These actions will be monitored against their published timelines, with quarterly reports published to ensure an informative and transparent process. This methodology builds on the approach used for the Action Plan for Jobs.

Accordingly, this document sets out measurable actions which the Department will achieve in 2017.

Goal 1: Improve the learning experience and the success of learners

Learning environments which promote health, wellbeing and personal development enable learners to fully participate in, and get maximum benefit from, their education and training experience. Successful learning environments ensure that learners have the opportunity to reach their potential and prepare learners to play a key role as active and responsible citizens.

The latest OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results show that in 2015, Ireland's 15-year olds are among the best in OECD countries in reading and are performing significantly higher than the OECD average in Mathematics and Science. Ireland's Higher Education system continues to build on its strong international reputation. However there are areas where we can do better. Goal 1 aims to improve the learning experience and the success of learners through building positive learning environments, creating agile, responsive curriculums across all levels of the system, and embracing the power of ICT in education and training.

What we aim to achieve:

Enhance well-being in our school communities: Fostering the personal development, health and well-being of learners and the wider school community helps to ensure that our children and young people develop resilience, have respect for diversity, learn to create and maintain supportive relationships and become active and responsible citizens in society.

Deliver a "Step Change" in the development of critical skills, knowledge and competences: The increasingly diverse and globally interconnected nature of our society and the world of work means that the proficiencies and abilities that help learners to develop the critical skills, knowledge and competencies necessary to contribute to society and the economy are changing. We are delivering a "step change" to the curriculum across the education and training system, implementing a major programme of system-wide curriculum reform.

Increase subject choice for students in senior cycle: Increasing subject choice for students is important for student motivation and engagement. In addition, it is essential that curriculum development continues to respond to the changing needs of learners, society and the economy.

Improve transitions in order to support children and young people: Research shows that it is important to support children and young people as they move between levels of the education and training system. Significant progress has been made to improve this.

Increase the use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment: The Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 aims to realise the potential of digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment to help students become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens.

Improve the development of language competence: Effective communication, through reading, listening, writing and speaking, is a fundamental life skill and there will be a particular focus on increasing competence in languages over the coming years.

Key Themes for 2017:

Wellbeing: we will actively support and develop wellbeing initiatives to ensure that mental resilience and personal wellbeing are integral parts of the education and training system. We will support schools to implement guidelines to promote mental health and we will make the Wellbeing programme available to all Junior Cycle students; we will increase the reach of the Incredible Years Teacher Programme and the Friends programme within DEIS schools and we will increase the capacity of National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

Literacy, Numeracy and Language competency: we will set new targets to 2020 following the publication of the Interim Review of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, building on the significant improvements achieved since the national strategy was adopted in 2011. We will roll out the oral and reading/writing strands of the new Primary Language curriculum (Irish and English) to Junior Infants to 2nd class levels in all schools; we will continue to develop the new Primary Language Curriculum for 3rd to 6th class levels with a view to implementation in 2019.

Junior Cycle Reform: we will continue to implement the new Junior Cycle framework and will implement new Junior Cycle subject specifications for Irish, Modern Languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian), Visual Arts and develop a range of new short courses. We will award the first cohort of learners (approximately 60,000 students) with the new Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement which will capture a wider range of experiences and competencies.

STEM: we will begin the implementation of the priority actions identified by the STEM Education Review Group. With relevant partners, we will identify gaps in provision and develop strategies to address them. We will produce an integrated national STEM Education Policy Statement with input from, and relevance to, all stakeholders across the continuum of education. We will formulate indicators to measure success.

Use digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment at all levels: we will commence implementation of the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020, including outlining the competencies that teachers need to effectively embed ICT in teaching and learning, and working on the planning, design and delivery of coherent CPD programmes, and continuing to allocate ICT equipment funding to schools. We will work with SOLAS to implement the Strategy for Technology Enhanced Learning in FET 2016-2019, including through the development of a Technology Enhanced Learning Action Plan in each of the 16 Education and Training Boards. We will implement the recommendations of the Roadmap for Enhancement in a Digital World 2015-2017, working with HEIs to develop strategies to support the development and embedding of digital capacity in their teaching and learning activities; strengthen and support collaboration within and between institutions; and develop consistent digital experiences for learners.

Modern Languages: we will make Modern Foreign Languages at Junior Cycle available to schools to increase the range and quality of languages which can be taught and we will publish the Foreign Languages in Education Strategy and commence implementation.

Guidance services: we will enhance guidance services in schools, with the allocation of 100 additional guidance posts from September 2017. We will commence a review of guidance services, tools and careers information for students and adults.

Key Themes for 2017

Curriculum and assessment reform: we will deliver curricular resources in early years' settings to encourage the roll out of the curriculum framework, Aistear; and we will conduct a consultation process regarding the structure of, and time allocation in, the primary school curriculum.

Senior Cycle: we will review senior cycle programmes (including Leaving Certificate Applied) and vocational pathways with a view to recommending areas for development. We will commence development of a Leaving Certificate Computer Science subject specification and undertake trialling of new specifications for Leaving Certificate Biology, Physics and Chemistry, with a view to increasing take-up. We will finalise a new draft specification for Leaving Certificate Economics and commence consultations on a new draft specification for Leaving Certificate Applied Mathematics.

Improving transitions: we will introduce the new grading system and new common points scheme for the Leaving Certificate and we will monitor and report on the progress of HEIs in reducing the number of entry routes into higher education through the introduction of a specific indicator in the new Higher Education Systems performance Framework.

Gaeltacht Education: we will implement the Gaeltacht Education Strategy including publication of arrangements for Gaeltacht school recognition process; commence support and advice to schools, and commence drafting the tendering process for expanded Initial Teacher Education provision.

Actions for 2017

Objective 1.1: Improve services and resources to promote wellbeing in our school communities to support success in school and life

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
1		Establish a DES Wellbeing Steering Committee which in 2017 will undertake a number of priority tasks, as detailed in the subactions below.		DES
	1.1	Review and issue the DES policy statement and practice framework with regard to the promotion of Wellbeing in schools, Youthreach and other centres for education, consistent with the 2016 Quality Framework for Schools, the "Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention" (2013), the "Wellbeing in Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion" (2015) and the "Guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle"	Q4	DES
	1.2	Review the current range of supports and programmes offered by the Department to schools in the area of Wellbeing and make recommendations for improved alignment of provision and the availability of effective supports.	Q4	DES
	1.3	Review and update Circulars 22/2010 and 23/2010 to provide more comprehensive and strengthened guidance for schools on the effective use of external programmes.	Q4	DES

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
	1.4	Develop guidance and support materials for use by schools to recognise and prioritise gaps in school practice in relation to wellbeing. This process will give an explicit voice to the child/young person and their parents.	Q4	DES
	1.5	Publish a set of wellbeing indicators against which outcomes will be measured.	Q4	DES
2		Implement the new Junior Cycle area of learning entitled Wellbeing, which will build on work to date in post-primary schools to support students' wellbeing.		DES
	2.1	Commence provision of a Wellbeing programme to all students in the first year of Junior Cycle.	Q3	DES
		Junior Cycle Team will provide a comprehensive CPD programme to support schools in the implementation of the Wellbeing Guidelines.	Q4	DES
	2.3	NEPS psychologists will be available to consult with schools to support the implementation of their Junior Cycle Wellbeing programme, as appropriate, including signposting supports that are available.	Q4	DES
3		Support all schools in implementing the "Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention" (2013) and the "Wellbeing in Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion" (2015).		DES
	3.1	Develop an integrated programme of support for all schools to implement the Wellbeing Guidelines and an implementation plan for roll-out of this programme to all primary and post-primary schools. The Guidelines will provide a clear and rational structure to support the promotion of positive mental health and wellbeing in all schools.	Q4	DES
4		Roll-out of the Incredible Years Teacher Programme and the FRIENDS programmes to all DEIS schools.		DES
	4.1	Commence the extension of the Incredible Years Teacher Programme to all DEIS primary schools. This is an evidence-based programme for teachers, partnering with parents, which reduces behavioural difficulties and strengthens social and emotional competence in early primary school-age children. Specifically deliver the first three modules of the 6-module Incredible Years Teacher Programme to 500 teachers in DEIS primary schools.	Q3	DES
	4.2	Commence the extension of the FRIENDS Programme to all DEIS schools. This programme reduces anxiety and promotes coping, resilience and school-connectedness in children and young people from 4-18 years. Specifically deliver Friends training to 400 teachers in DEIS primary and post-primary schools.	Q3	DES

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
5		Increase NEPS time allocation to DEIS schools in accordance with NEPS plan developed for priority service delivery. This will enhance the supports to schools for the implementation of interventions at a preventive and early intervention level, in addition to ensure that those pupils with emerging and complex learning and emotional needs will have access to the support of an educational psychologist.		DES
		Commence the appointment of an additional 10 educational psychologists for 2017.	Q2	DES
6		Further develop school Student Support Teams through a series of actions.		DES
	6.1	Provide a final report on the Student Support Team Project and make recommendations informed by the learning.	Q3	DES
	6.2	Oversee the development of a training programme and set of resources in relation to the implementation of Student Support Teams in Schools.	Q3	DES
	6.3	Expand the Student Support Team project to an additional cluster of 20 SSP Post-Primary Schools.	Q4	DES
7		NEPS to commence the delivery of training to all post-primary schools on the revised "NEPS Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resources for Schools", starting with 50 schools in 2017.	Q3	DES
8		NEPS and the Inspectorate to develop a protocol to support all schools to have a Critical Incident Management Plan in place.	Q2	DES
9		Enhance guidance counselling at second level by allocating 100 additional guidance posts from September 2017, which, together with the 300 guidance posts restored under Budget 2016, will be allocated separately outside of the general allocation.		DES
	9.1	Circular to be issued to schools will include a requirement for schools' guidance plans to include specified time allocation for guidance counsellors to be available for one-to-one guidance counselling for students and time allocation for the role in supporting the Student Support Team.	Q3	DES
10		DES to work with the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) to gather data on how guidance resources are currently allocated in schools and finalise the NCGE Career & Learning Development Framework for Whole School Guidance.	Q4	DES
11		Publish the 2015 Lifeskills Survey, providing information on how primary and post-primary schools cater for the wellbeing of their students.	Q1	DES

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
12		Work closely with the Department of Health and other Departments on the National Taskforce on Youth Mental Health and the Pathfinder Project which will consider how best to introduce and teach resilience, coping mechanisms, greater awareness to children and young people, and how to access support services voluntarily at a young age.	Q4	DES, DOH, DCYA and other key stakeholders
13		Support anti-bullying awareness initiatives through supporting the development and roll out of anti-bullying training materials for parents, teachers and boards of management.		DES
	13.1	Continue to roll out training on Intervention Strategies and Restorative Practices for teachers at post-primary level.	Q1	PDST, DES
	13.2	Commence training on Intervention Strategies and Restorative Practices for teachers at primary level.	Q2	PDST, DES
	13.3	Distribute a revised Stay Safe Programme pack to schools, with an associated programme of support.	Q2	PDST, DES
	13.4	Publish a research report on thematic evaluation of bullying.	Q2	DES
	13.5	Support the NPC in providing bullying awareness training courses for parents.	Q4	DES
14		Implement quality assurance of wellbeing provision in schools.		DES
	14.1	In post-primary schools, commence whole-school evaluations and subject evaluations in SPHE, PE, and CSPE, which will reflect the need for schools to engage with the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme, and will signpost supports that are regarded as appropriate and necessary.	Q3	DES
	14.2	The Inspectorate will review the module on wellbeing in the early years' inspection framework, as part of the wider review of education–focussed inspections in these settings.	Q4	DES
	14.3	Education-focussed inspections will continue to report on wellbeing provision in all early years settings inspected.	Q4	DES
	14.4	Whole-school evaluations and Curriculum Evaluations of SPHE in primary schools will be informed by the relevant standards set out in "Looking At Our School" to support students' wellbeing and inspectors will make recommendations and signpost supports for schools as appropriate and necessary.	Q4	DES

Objective 1.2: Deliver a "Step-change" in the development of critical skills, knowledge and competences to provide the foundations for participation in work and society				
No.		**Actions and sub-actions**	**Quarter**	**Delivered by**
15		Deliver curricular resources in early years' settings to encourage the roll out of Aistear, a curriculum framework designed to engage children in learning about identity and belonging, exploring and thinking, wellbeing and communicating in an enjoyable and challenging way. The Framework also provides guidelines on supporting children's learning through partnerships with parents.		DES
	15.1	Provide the first round of training for mentors to deliver the National Síolta/Aistear CPD programme by February 1st 2017.	Q1	NCCA
	15.2	Deliver the first round (pilot) of the Aistear CPD element of the National Síolta/Aistear initiative between February-June 2017. 25 mentors deliver 10 hours each of CPD to 14 practitioners in various geographical areas - so up to 350 practitioners will avail of this training in the pilot phase.	Q2	NCCA
	15.3	Review the pilot of the Aistear CPD element of the National Síolta/Aistear initiative and make recommendations for next phase.	Q4	NCCA
16		Build on significant improvements in literacy and numeracy achieved since the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy was adopted in 2011.		DES
	16.1	Publish the Interim Review of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, which will include revised/new literacy and numeracy targets, which will take account of the findings from TIMSS and PISA studies published in late 2016.	Q1	DES
	16.2	Implement actions to deliver the revised/new literacy and numeracy targets to 2020.	Q4	DES
17		Review the structure of, and time allocation in, the primary school curriculum to ensure that the allocation reflects learners' requirements in new foundation skills that they will need in a changing society. Target date for completion is Q4 2018.		DES
	17.1	Conduct consultation process up to Spring 2017, with public and education stakeholders, regarding the structure of, and time allocation in, the primary school curriculum (to be informed by December 2016 NCCA consultation document). The outcomes of this consultation will then inform more detailed work by the NCCA in developing an overview of a redeveloped primary curriculum. This overview will be the basis for further consultation in 2018.	Q4	NCCA

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
18		Introduce and implement new subjects and short courses on a phased basis.		DES
	18.1	Publish the final report on the consultation on proposals for a curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs and Ethics.	Q1	NCCA
	18.2	Commence work, through the NCCA, with a network of schools on gathering and sharing examples of good practice in the area of ERB and Ethics.	Q2	NCCA
	18.3	Develop proposals for provision for Education about Religion and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics at primary level in the context of the review of structure and time allocation in the primary school curriculum outlined in Action 17.	Q4	DES
	18.4	First examination of the new specifications in English for Junior Cycle.	Q2	DES
	18.5	Implement new Junior Cycle subject specifications for Irish, from September 2017.	Q3	DES
	18.6	Implement new Junior Cycle subject specification for Modern Languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian), from September 2017.	Q3	DES
	18.7	Implement new Junior Cycle subject specification for Visual Art, from September 2017.	Q3	DES
	18.8	Develop guidelines for Level 1 (NFQ) Learning Programmes (and their Priority Learning Units) at Junior Cycle, to complement the Level 2 Learning Programmes already introduced and have them available to schools to address the learning needs of students in the low moderate and severe and profound range of general learning disabilities.	Q3	NCCA
	18.9	Commence consultation on the new primary maths curriculum, including computational thinking, creative thinking skills and coding.	Q4	DES
	18.10	Develop new options including short courses and other learning experiences at Junior Cycle. NCCA will, during 2017, develop examples of student work for the wellbeing-related short courses.	Q4	NCCA
19		Undertake trialling of new specifications for Leaving Certificate Biology, Physics and Chemistry, with a view to increasing take-up.		SEC, NCCA, Schools
	19.1	Commence trialling in a number of schools of the new specifications for Leaving Certificate Biology, Physics and Chemistry, with a view to increasing take-up.	Q4	SEC, NCCA, Schools

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
20		Finalise and implement new specifications for Leaving Certificate subjects: Economics, Art, Applied Maths, Agricultural Science, and Physical Education.		NCCA
	20.1	Commence a limited review and updating of the syllabus for Leaving Certificate Art, for completion in 2018.	Q2	NCCA
	20.2	Finalise draft specification for Leaving Certificate Economics.	Q3	DES
	20.3	Commence consultation on draft specification for Leaving Certificate Applied Mathematics.	Q3	DES
21		Review senior cycle programmes (including Leaving Certificate Applied) and vocational pathways in senior cycle with a view to recommending areas for development.		NCCA
	21.1	Commence senior cycle review with a scoping of international development	Q1	NCCA
22		Following the November 2016 publication of the report of the STEM Education Review Group, progress the development of a strategy to increase competence in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) and set targets for take-up.		DES
	22.1	Commence implementation of the actions in the STEM Education Review Group's report identified for priority implementation.	Q1	DES
	22.2	DES CPD Support Services will commence work on collaborating to develop standards for the CPD.	Q1	DES
	22.3	Refer STEM report recommendation to support all student teachers in primary ITE in building their subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge in science, mathematics, engineering and technology as part of a broader professional portfolio of expertise and related activities to the Teaching Council for their views.	Q2	DES
	22.4	Produce an integrated national STEM Education Policy Statement with input from, and relevance to, all stakeholders across the continuum of education in Ireland (primary, secondary and third level).	Q2	DES
	22.5	Produce a detailed implementation plan for the National STEM Education Policy Statement with responsibilities and timelines clearly outlined.	Q2	DES

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
	22.6	DES to provide feedback on initial draft subject specification for Leaving Certificate Computer Science as presented by the NCCA	Q2	NCCA
	22.7	Conduct scoping exercise to establish the opportunities for validating the participation of students in informal (extra-curricular) STEM events and activities.	Q3	DES
	22.8	Review existing research base on barriers to the uptake of STEM careers by females including subject uptake at post-primary level.	Q3	DES
	22.90	A scoping exercise will be completed to establish what actions and resources are needed to implement the recommendation that all STEM teaching in post-primary schools should be delivered by qualified STEM teachers (as defined by the Teaching Council), that the imbalance in the proportions of teachers qualified in biology, physics and chemistry should be addressed and that STEM upskilling programmes in physics, chemistry and biology for post- primary science teachers be developed.	Q4	DES
	22.10	Complete mapping exercise of current and planned provision of CPD at primary and post-primary level for teachers of STEM education.	Q4	DES
	22.11	Identify gaps in provision and develop strategies in conjunction with relevant partners to address them, including measures to support the implementation of inquiry-based learning.	Q4	
	22.12	Promote inquiry-based learning and problem-based learning at primary curricular level, in conjunction with NCCA.	Q4	NCCA
	22.13	Engage with the NCCA on the development of a policy for the provision of curricular materials for teachers, in consultation with support services and other relevant parties.	Q4	NCCA
	22.14	All STEM CPD programmes will be required to have ICT as an integral component.	Q4	DES
	22.15	Undertake a mapping exercise of the existing provision of multimedia STEM educational content.	Q4	DES
	22.16	Scope actions necessary to provide a single gateway to multimedia STEM educational content.	Q4	DES

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
	22.17	Develop guidance to support the establishment of online communities of practice.	Q4	DES
	22.18	Scope out and examine/identify actions necessary to exploit digital technology in promoting and facilitating new engagements between schools and enterprises, drawing on the experience of similar initiatives already underway.	Q4	DES
	22.19	Update "eLearning in Your School" planning resource and align with School Self Evaluation and the Digital Competency Framework currently in development.	Q4	DES
	22.20	Provision of guidance for schools on technical support options.	Q4	DES
	22.21	Commence guidelines for promotion of STEM careers to young people and parents (of primary and post primary children), in conjunction with Science Foundation Ireland, parents, guidance counsellors, HEIs, Further Education sector, students and industry, having particular regard to gender imbalance. The guidelines should take account of exemplars of best practice and resource implications.	Q4	DES
	22.22	Scope out the STEM 2020 Partnership in consultation with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation with the initial focus on a common vision and approach for supporting STEM education across enterprise and the education sector.	Q4	DES
	22.23	Formulate indicators to measure the success of the implementation of the STEM Report.	Q4	DES

Objective 1.3: Increase subject choice for learners in Senior Cycle to equip them with the skills and knowledge to participate in a changing world				
No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
23		Introduce Computer Science as a subject at senior cycle (for September 2018 implementation), following completion in 2016 of scoping exercise.		NCCA
	23.1	Steering Group to develop and oversee implementation plan for the introduction of Leaving Certificate Computer Science in schools from September 2018.	Q4	NCCA

Objective 1.4: Improve the transition of learners at critical stages in the education and training system

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
24		Implement online reporting templates to support pre-schools, primary schools and parents, by improving the transfer of information about the progress and achievement of learners between all schools and state-funded ECCE settings.		DES
	24.1	Prepare reporting templates to support pre-schools, primary schools and parents based on research and trialling.	Q4	NCCA
25		Roll out the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA), ensuring that a wider range of experiences and competencies of learners are nurtured and recognised in the Junior Cycle programme. The JCPA will highlight for learners and their parents where their particular strengths lie and support them in making informed subject choices for Senior Cycle.		DES
	25.1	Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) awarded to the first cohort of learners- approximately 60,000 students.	Q4	DES
26		Implement reforms to improve transitions and remove barriers to progression to the levels of the education and training system. The Systems Performance Framework for HE will be reviewed and a revised framework developed – it is intended that this will address the issue of broadening undergraduate entry, as part of this next Systems Performance Framework which will be put in place for Higher Education Institutions later this year.		IUA, HEA, THEA, QQI, SEC
	26.1	Introduce a new grading system and new common points scheme for Leaving Certificate.	Q3	IUA, HEA, THEA, QQI, SEC
27		Establish a strong evidence base to monitor the effect and impact of the implementation of the key elements of the Transition Reform process.		IUA, HEA, THEA, QQI, SEC
	27.1	Establish Research Sub-Group on Transition Reform process and Agree Terms of Reference.	Q1	IUA, HEA, THEA, QQI, SEC
28		Monitor and report on the progress of HEIs in reducing the number of entry routes into higher education.	Q4	HEA, HEIs

Objective 1.5: Increase the use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment so that learners are equipped with the necessary skills to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing learning environment			
No.	**Actions and sub-actions**	**Quarter**	**Delivered by**
29	Implement the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015 -2020 to enhance teaching, learning & assessment and develop annual implementation plans to ensure that our services in this area can continually respond to best practice and changing technologies. The Strategy aims to realise the potential of digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment to help students become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens to participate fully in society and the economy.		DES
29.1	Establish an Implementation Advisory Group for the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020. This Group will comprise representation from the Department, industry, academic experts, practitioners/ teachers and representatives from the tech voluntary sector.	Q1	DES
29.2	Draw up and recommend an implementation plan for the Digital Strategy (broken down by quarter) for 2017.	Q1	Implementation Advisory Group
29.3	Establish a Support Services Planning Group to collaborate on the planning, design and delivery of CPD and other support services to schools to ensure a consistent approach in the embedding of ICT in support programmes (CPD courses, and advice and information provided).	Q1	PDST-TIE, Support Services
29.4	Commence updating the elearning Planning resource for schools to ensure it reflects the localised ICT Competency Framework and technological and educational developments since 2009. This resource provides a step-by-step guide to the development of the school's e-Learning Plan.	Q3	PDST-TIE
29.5	Develop a strategic partnership(s) with relevant cultural, educational and/or sporting bodies in order to adapt relevant content into useful learning and teaching resources for schools.	Q3	PDST-TIE, Support Services
29.6	Scope a proposal to incentivise and facilitate schools in innovation, clustering approaches (enabling schools to collaborate on curriculum and related matters using technology), to maximise the impact of ICT in teaching and learning.	Q3	DES
29.7	Commence the Pilot of the Localised UNESCO ICT Competency Framework – this will outline the competencies that teachers need to effectively embed ICT in teaching and learning and will help inform teacher professional development.	Q4	PDST-TIE, NCCA
29.8	Provide and facilitate the sharing of examples of good classroom practice regarding the effective use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment, including through the DES Scoilnet portal, and the websites of the PDST-TIE and other support services.	Q4	PDST-TIE, Support Services
29.9	Draw up and recommend an implementation plan (broken down by quarter) for 2018	Q4	Implementation Advisory Group

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
30		Establish a working group to determine how best to provide for high speed broadband for primary schools in collaboration with DCCAE in the context of the National Broadband Plan and the Intervention Strategy. The timeframe will be developed by the working group, in the context of the National Broadband Plan roll out.	Q2	PDST-TIE
	30.1	Continue to allocate funding, under the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015- 2020, for the provision of ICT equipment for schools, with the first tranche (€30 million) to be delivered in Q1.	Q1	PDST-TIE
	30.2	Continue to improve broadband services to schools where available, under the existing Schools Broadband Access Scheme. Continue upgrade of services to a further 300 primary schools by year end.	Q4	PDST-TIE
	30.3	Explore the development of advice and guidance to facilitate schools working together on curriculum and related matters using technology, in order to bring remote learning into the classroom.	Q4	PDST-TIE
31		Work with SOLAS to implement the Strategy for Technology Enhanced Learning in FET 2016-2019, through the actions outlined below. The Strategy sets out 18 practical actions, associated timelines and performance indicators to build on existing capacity and good practice in technology-enhanced learning, and expand access to and continuously improve and innovate FET provision.		DES
	31.1	Develop a content sharing and management infrastructure to facilitate sharing and development of learning resources among all teachers.	Q2	SOLAS, ETBs
	31.2	Develop a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy in each ETB.	Q2	ETBI, ETBs
	31.3	Establish a 2016 baseline of technology enhanced learning provision in each ETB using a shared benchmarking exercise.	Q2	SOLAS, ETBs
	31.4	Use funding guidelines to support the expansion of learner access to technology enhanced learning, particularly for disadvantaged learners. (See also subactions 31.3 and 31.5).	Q4	SOLAS, ETBs
	31.5	Develop a Technology Enhanced Learning Action Plan in each of the 16 Education and Training Boards to cover infrastructure, pedagogy and CPD, content creation and sharing and organisational practice.	Q4	SOLAS, ETBs
32		Implement the recommendations of Roadmap for Enhancement in a Digital World 2015-2017. See also action 95.		NFETL, HEIs
	32.1	HEIs develop strategies to support the development and embedding of digital capacity in their teaching and learning activities; national policy and quality frameworks in a way that supports innovation for impact.	Q4	NFETL, HEIs

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
	32.2	Develop a consistent digital experience for students and engage with students and teachers to develop their digital skills and knowledge.	Q4	NFETL, HEIs
	32.3	Develop a strong evidence base for enhanced pedagogy through targeted research and development projects.	Q4	NFETL, HEIs
Objective 1.6: Enable learners communicate effectively and improve their standards of competence in languages				
No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
33		Roll out Primary Language Curriculum (Irish and English) across all primary schools.		DES
	33.1	Commence the roll out of the reading/writing strand of new Primary Language Curriculum (Irish and English) to Junior Infants to 2nd Class.	Q3	DES
	33.2	Continue the roll out of the oral strand of the new Primary Language Curriculum (Irish and English) to Junior Infants to 2nd Class (roll out commenced September 2016).	Q4	DES
	33.3	Develop draft specification for Primary Language Curriculum (Irish and English) for 3rd to 6th class NCCA (Q2.2017), with consultation on the draft specification to take place in Q4 2017.	Q4	DES
34		Implement the Gaeltacht Education Strategy on a phased basis.		DES
	34.1	Establish Gaeltacht Unit.	Q1	DES
	34.2	Publish arrangements for Gaeltacht school recognition process.	Q2	DES
	34.3	Commence support/advice to schools.	Q3	DES
	34.4	Commence drafting of tendering process for expanded ITE provisions.	Q4	DES
	34.5	Devise Inspectorate advisory/challenge visit guidance to support Gaeltacht schools.	Q4	DES
35		A new Framework for Modern Foreign Languages at Junior Cycle will be available to schools to increase the range and quality of languages which can be taught. See subaction 18.6 for further details of actions to be implemented in 2017.	Q3	DES
36		Implement the Foreign Languages in Education Strategy and report on progress.		NCCA, Schools, HEA, HEIs
	36.1	Publish the Foreign Languages in Education Strategy.	Q1	DES
	36.2	Explore the potential for the greater use of CLIL (content and language integrated learning) to increase the use of language skills and increase confidence in language learning.	Q3	DES
	36.3	Support the implementation of the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) to provide a transparent, comprehensive benchmark and to support targeted increases in proficiency levels.	Q4	DES

Goal 1: Improve the learning experience and the success of learners - Targets and Indicators

Goal	Measure	Target / Indicator
Improve the learning experience and the success of learners	**Wellbeing** Extension of incredible years teacher programme in DEIS primary schools Extension of friends programme in deis schools	Increase reach from C. 20,000 learners in 130 schools to 104,000 learners in 646 schools (2019) Increase reach from c. 25,000 learners in 275 schools to 172,000 learners in 831 schools (2019). 172,000 students in 831 schools (2019)
	Literacy and Numeracy	Additional Revised/New targets for improvement, building on the existing targets set out below, will be published in the Interim Review of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Increase the percentage of students taking higher level mathematics examination at the end of junior cycle to 60% by 2020, from 55% in 2016 Increase the percentage of students taking higher level mathematics examination in Leaving Certificate to 30% by 2020, from 28% in 2016
	PISA* performance in reading	Increase the proportion of students performing at Level 5 or above from 10.7% (OECD average 8.3%) to 13% by 2025 Consolidate the proportion of students performing below Level 2 at less than 10% (Currently 9.6%, with an OECD average of 18%) Consolidate our position in the top 5 performing OECD countries
	PISA* performance in science	Increase the proportion of students at Level 5 or above from 7.1% (OECD average 7.7%) to 10% by 2025 Decrease the proportion of students performing below Level 2 (currently 15.3%, with an OECD average of 21.2%) to less than 10% by 2025 Reach and consolidate our position in the top 10 performing OECD countries
	PISA* performance maths	Increase the proportion of students at Level 5 or above from 9.8% (OECD average 10.7%) to above the OECD average by 2025 Decrease the proportion of students performing below Level 2 (currently 15%, with an OECD average of 23.4%) to less than 10% by 2025 Reach and consolidate our position in the top 10 performing OECD countries

Goal 1: Improve the learning experience and the success of learners - Targets and Indicators

Goal	Measure	Target / Indicator
Improve the learning experience and the success of learners	Awarding of junior cycle profile of achievement	Junior cycle profile of achievement (JCPA) awarded to the first cohort of learners (approximately 60,000 students) in 2017 First new junior cycle subject specifications assessed in 2017 All new junior cycle subject specifications assessed in 2022
	STEM	New targets for STEM will be published in the policy statement on STEM
	Embrace the power of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment across all levels	A Total of 1,100 primary schools provided with enhanced broadband services by the end of 2017 Working Group established to determine how best to provide for high speed broadband services for primary schools having regard to the national broadband plan and the Intervention strategy
	Languages	New targets for foreign languages will be published in the foreign Languages in Education Strategy Continued roll-out, on a phased basis, of the primary language curriculum
	Strengthening transitions at different points in the system	Online reporting templates available to support pre-schools, primary schools and parents, by improving the transfer of information about the progress and achievement of learners between all schools and state-funded ECCE settings. New grading system and new common points system introduced for leaving certificate Decrease in number of entry routes to higher education. Targets will be set for this Indicator through the publication of the new systems performance framework for higher education (2021) in Q1 2017

* Reference figures for PISA have been updated to reflect the findings in PISA 2015 (published, December 2016).

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

Inclusive education is a fundamental principle of our education and training system. Education and training are key to breaking the cycle of disadvantage. Ireland has had measures in place to support the diverse needs of students of all ages for many years. While we have made considerable progress in advancing equity and equality of opportunity, we recognise that significant challenges remain if we are to ensure that children and young people from different backgrounds and needs are adequately supported so that they can experience success in the education system. Goal 2 aims to improve the educational outcomes of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs. The actions associated with Goal 2 also seek to ensure that the profile of learners progressing through the education system should become more representative of the population in general.

What we aim to achieve

Improve learning experience, learning outcomes and progression for those at risk of educational disadvantage: We have significant capacity to achieve the goal of a strong economy and a fair society through education and training. By getting our system of supports for learners, schools and institutions right we can have a huge impact on the life prospects of children, young people and adults. We can increase their chances of learning well in school, of progressing to, or returning to, further and higher education and training, and of entering and remaining in the workforce. In conjunction with other Government Departments and their agencies, we can assist in supporting people in avoiding the many problems that too often impact on families affected by disadvantage. We will expand the range of education and training programmes to better meet the needs of key target groups, including the unemployed and early school leavers. The aim of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, is to ensure that the profile of learners participating in higher education becomes more representative of the population in general.

Support learners with special educational needs to participate and progress: Our approach to special education has undergone a huge transformation with a growing proportion of children with special educational needs being educated with their peers in mainstream schools. Participation, including participation in inclusive mainstream settings, and progress of children with special educational needs across the whole education system remains, a key focus with an emphasis on improving whole-school and whole-system approaches.

Key Themes for 2017

Action Plan on Educational Inclusion: A key focus of our 2017 plan is on improving educational outcomes for learners at risk of educational disadvantage. Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), which focuses on addressing and prioritising the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities has recently been reviewed. We will commence implementation of a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion in 2017. The new Action Plan which will constitute an updated DEIS scheme, will draw on international best practice for using the education system to increase opportunities and outcomes for children attending schools participating DEIS schools. We will introduce a school support programme, an assessment framework for resource allocation, and a monitoring and evaluation framework as we implement the new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion. We will begin development and trial new Inspectorate advisory/challenge visits to support the implementation of the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion and we will establish arrangements for the introduction of the Schools' Excellence fund for DEIS schools.

Access to Further Education and Training: ETBs will work closely with Intreo Offices to deliver Further Education and Training provision in line with Pathways to Work 2016-2020. We will publish research into barriers to participation in Further Education and Training and commission a review of the Youthreach programme.

Access to Higher Education: We will review the Fund for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education; develop the 1916 Centenary Bursary Scheme; reintroduce maintenance grants for the most disadvantaged post-graduate students; develop measures to reduce non-completion in Higher Education and initiate projects to improve access to initial teacher education for under-represented groups. We will also conduct a mid-term review of the plan to ensure its continued effectiveness.

Special Education Needs – allocation model and review of SNA scheme: We will introduce a new model for the allocation of teachers in mainstream schools to support children with Special Educational Needs (SEN); we will revise the SEN model of inspection for post-primary schools; we will further consult with education partners on implementation of section of the EPSEN Act and on the provision of services to children with Down Syndrome; we will complete a comprehensive assessment of the Special Needs Assistants (SNA) scheme to identify the most appropriate form of support options to provider better outcomes for students with special educational needs and we will work with the Department of Health to introduce a new in-school speech and language service.

Inclusion Support Service: Under the NCSE we will establish a new inclusion support service. We will increase the number of Educational Psychologists who, while supporting the development of the academic, social and emotional competence of all students, prioritise support for students at risk of educational disadvantage and those with special educational needs.

Objective 2.1: Improve the learning experience and learning outcomes for learners impacted by disadvantage				
No.		**Actions and sub-actions**	**Quarter**	**Delivered by**
37		Publish a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion which will include a new Assessment Framework for the identification of schools and allocation of resources under a new School Support Programme. This will be subject to a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework and will include improved support for school leadership, creating networks and clusters for teachers and schools, better integration between the work of schools and local community supports, and greater use of the Home School Community Liaison programme.		DES
	37.1	Targets set for DEIS schools to improve literacy, numeracy and pupil retention; increased NEPS supports; priority professional development and behavioural supports; Piloting of innovative practice supported by a School Excellence Fund.	Q1	DES
	37.2	Develop a strategy for communicating the new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion.	Q1	DES
	37.3	Commence the phased implementation of the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion, with new schools being phased into DEIS in Q3 2017; additional supports added to the DEIS School Support Programme from September 2017; pilot projects to support innovation and creativity in Q3 2017; monitoring and evaluation framework and additional Inspectorate resources in place in Q3 2017.	Q3	DES
38		Devise Inspectorate advisory/challenge visits to support the implementation of DEIS policy.		DES
	38.1	Complete initial development work on devising Inspectorate advisory/challenge visits to support the implementation of DEIS policy.	Q4	DES
	38.2	Assess the feasibility of trial use regarding devising Inspectorate advisory/challenge visits to support the implementation of DEIS policy.	Q4	DES
39		Develop proposals for a Schools' Excellence Fund.		DES
	39.1	Identify first tranche of DEIS schools to participate in initial trial.	Q3	DES
	39.2	Approve proposals from schools and commence initial trial of pilot in first group of schools.	Q4	DES
	39.3	Commence support/advisory services to schools in relation to the Schools' Excellence Fund.	Q4	DES
40		Implement strands of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, so that higher education becomes more representative of the population in general.		DES

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
	40.1	Review the Fund for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education.	Q1	DES
	40.2	Initiate projects to improve access to initial teacher education for under-represented groups.	Q1	DES, HEA
	40.3	Develop 1916 Centenary Bursary Scheme for 2017/18 academic year.	Q3	DES
	40.4	Develop Data Plan for Access to ensure that access policy is informed by the most appropriate and reliable data, and to inform the mid-term review of the National Access Plan in 2017.	Q4	DES, HEA
	40.5	Conduct mid-term review of National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education.	Q4	DES, HEA
	40.6	Develop measures to reduce non-completion in Higher Education.	Q4	DES, HEA
41		Issue call for measures to engage directly with disadvantaged communities, to promote the benefits of higher education.	Q2	DES, HEA
	41.1	Initiate projects for HEIs to engage directly with 'disadvantaged' communities to promote the benefits of higher education.	Q3	DES, HEA
42		Prepare a report on the barriers to lone parents accessing higher education, and publish the report's recommendations in advance of Budget 2017.		DES, DSP, DCYA
	42.1	Publish report on the barriers to lone parents accessing higher education.	Q1	DES, DSP, DCYA
43		Reintroduce maintenance grant for the most disadvantaged post graduate students.	Q3	DES, CDETB (SUSI)
44		Publish a national policy on the Recognition of Prior Learning.	Q4	DES, QQI, HEA
45		Ensure FET is meeting the specific needs of unemployed people and other groups impacted by disadvantage:		DES
	45.1	Publish research into barriers to participation in FET, with particular emphasis on unemployed people and other disadvantaged groups.	Q1	SOLAS
	45.2	Set targets for participation by unemployed people at programme and ETB level through the agreement of 2017 Service Plans.	Q2	DES

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
	45.3	Deliver FET provision to DSP client groups, in line with Pathways to Work 2016-2020, through ETBs working closely with Intreo Offices under new protocols, to support and develop engagement between ETB and Intreo centres and local branch offices, to ensure case officers have a full understanding of the range of programmes provided through the ETBs, to support improved client matching and to ensure that the emerging education and training needs of DSP clients are highlighted and addressed through local area liaison.	Q4	ETBs
46		Commission a review of the Youthreach Programme.	Q1	SOLAS
47		Develop a cohesive Life-Course approach to tackling educational disadvantage, with a policy statement on interaction between measures to tackle educational disadvantage across the education continuum. This action will be progressed in parallel with the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion process (Action 37).		DES
	47.1	Complete Report of Mapping Exercise on the interaction of measures to tackle educational disadvantage across the education continuum, to inform future policy.	Q1	DES

Objective 2.2: Target policies and supports for learners with special education needs to support their participation and progression across the continuum of education

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
48		Introduce the new model for the allocation of teachers in mainstream schools to support children with Special Educational needs (SEN).		NCSE, NEPS, DES, ERC
	48.1	Allocate teachers to schools under the new allocation model to support children with Special Educational needs.	Q1	DES
	48.2	Commence an appeals process for the new allocation model to support children with Special Educational needs.	Q1	NCSE
	48.3	Introduce emergency allocation provision associated with the new allocation model to support children with Special Education needs.	Q3	NCSE, ISS
	48.4	The NCSE will support schools to implement the new SEN allocation model.	Q4	NCSE
49		Consult with Education Partners on implementation of sections of the EPSEN Act and on the provision of services to children with Down Syndrome.	Q1	NCSE, NEPS, DES
50		Undertake a comprehensive assessment of the SNA scheme to identify the most appropriate form of support options to provide better outcomes for students with special educational needs.		NCSE

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
	50.1	Complete comprehensive assessment of the SNA scheme.	Q3	NCSE
	50.2	Publish outcomes of the assessment of the SNA scheme.	Q3	NCSE
51		Work with relevant Government Departments and agencies to introduce a new in-school speech and language service creating stronger linkages between parents, teachers and Speech and Language Therapists.		HSE, NCSE, DOH, DCYA
	51.1	Cross-sectoral meeting to discuss development of service.	Q1	HSE, NCSE, DOH, DCYA
	51.2	Findings of a HSE review of speech and language therapy services considered by cross-sectoral group and proposals developed for further consideration.	Q3	HSE, NCSE, DOH, DCYA
52		Commence revision of the SEN model of inspection for post-primary schools.		DES
	52.1	Develop SEN model of inspection for post-primary schools for consultation and trial use in Q1 and Q2 2018.	Q3	DES
53		Establish an Inclusion Support Service, under NCSE, to assist schools in the provision of education to children with special education needs.	Q1	NCSE
	53.1	Publish a plan for service delivery by the newly established Inclusion Support Service, under NCSE, for 2017/2018.	Q3	NCSE

Goal 2: Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs – Targets and Indicators

Goal	Measure	Target / Indicator
Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs	Action plan for educational inclusion	DEIS Retention Rates Continue to improve retention rates at second-level in DEIS schools, from their current rate of 82.7% to the national norm, currently 90.2%, by 2025 DEIS literacy and numeracy rates in the context of the literacy and numeracy strategy review, improve performance in deis schools, in line with revised targets set under the review, by 2025
	Inclusion Targets	EU2020: Reduce the percentage of 18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training to the target adopted by Ireland of 8% by 2020 Progress on reduction consolidated at the current rate of 6.9% Reduce the percentage of the Labour force at levels 1-3 on NFQ TO 7%, from a current rate of 15% by 2020

Goal	Measure	Target / Indicator
Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs	Early years Inclusion	First 900 inclusion co-ordinators will complete their studies in August 2017
		Further 900 inclusion co-ordinators will commence their studies in September 2017
	Access to Higher education	Increase proportion of students in higher education from non-manual worker group to30%, from a current rate of 23%, by 2019
		Increase proportion of students in higher education from semi-skilled and agricultural workers group to 35%, from a current rate of 26%, by 2019
		Increase proportion of full time and part-time mature entrants to higher education to 24%, from a current rate of 19%, by 2019
		Increase proportion of students with disabilities as % of all entrants to higher educationto 8%, from a current rate of 6%, by 2019
		Increase participation by students progressing from further education into higher educationto 10%, from a current rate of 6.6%, by 2019
		Increase the number of travellers in higher education 80 from a current figure 35 by 2019
		Reintroduce maintenance grant for the Most disadvantaged post graduate students - maintenance grant awarded to 1100 most disadvantaged post graduate students
		Develop 1916 centenary bursary scheme for 2017/18 year - 100 bursaries awarded
	Support children with Special Educational Needs	New model of allocating Special Needs teaching resources implemented
		In-school Speech and Language Therapy model developed
		Review of SNA scheme completed
		Over 13,000 Resource Teaching/ Learning Support posts in place in 2017
		Over 13,000 SNAs in place in 2017
		Ensure that all children with special educational needs can continue to avail of and benefit from an education provision which is appropriate to their needs and to provide them with the skills necessary to participate, to the level of their capacity, in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives
	Inclusion support service	Inclusion Support Service established

Goal 3: Help those delivering education services to continuously improve

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

The quality of Ireland's education system is recognised internationally, but to be the best we need to continuously improve. Through the achievement of the actions in Goal 3 we aim to ensure that leadership, management, quality frameworks, teaching methods, and initial and continuing training are all operating to the highest standards across the continuum of education and training provision. We will promote Innovation and Excellence, recognise high achievement and seek to mainstream successful approaches

What we aim to achieve

Increase quality of learning in early years: Early childhood is a crucial stage of life in terms of a child's physical, intellectual, emotional and social development. Growth of mental and physical abilities progress at an astounding rate and a very high proportion of learning takes place in the early years. It is a time when children particularly need positive early learning experiences to lay the foundation for later school success. We recognise that the provision of high quality professional development opportunities for early years practitioners is needed to improve the quality of the learning experience for our youngest learners.

Develop the continuum of teacher education and improve school leadership*:* Ireland is fortunate to attract high calibre people to the fields of teaching and training who deliver to high standards and who have established a strong international reputation. The quality of our teaching profession is the single most critical factor in sustaining and enhancing the quality of education outcomes in our system. Teachers, lecturers and educational practitioners deliver education services to meet the very diverse needs of learners, parents, and their local communities. We know that providing the best possible professional development and ongoing practical support to these key people in the education sector is vital if we are to realise the ambitious objectives that we have for Irish education. However, as new challenges place new demands on the education and training system we must ensure that we have the capacity to develop and adopt best practices. We also recognise that high performing education systems make strategic investment in the capacity of their educational leaders. We want to provide new innovative programmes to support the professional development of school leaders and to provide for professional coaching services and the introduction of a postgraduate qualification for aspiring school leaders.

Improve quality, promote innovation & excellence and increase autonomy in schools: To meet the challenges of a changing world, schools, education institutions and other providers must themselves be learning organisations continually improving and evolving and learning from best practice. We know that that robust external evaluation combined with expert advice can help support innovation and high standards of learning in schools and other settings. We will develop school self-evaluation and ensure that the Department Inspectorate's complementary programme of inspections and advisory visits help to support innovative and effective practice in schools and early years settings, while at the same time, providing adequate quality assurance for parents and the public.

Promote high quality learning experiences in further education and training and higher education: In Further Education and Training and in Higher Education, as with schools, the quality of education and training experienced by the learners is highly depended on the quality of the workforce and the systems to support evaluation, benchmarking and continuous improvement based on best international practice.

Key Themes for 2017

Improve the quality of the early year's curriculum: we will continue to actively support the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to improve the quality of early year's provision. We will support the implementation of Síolta and Aistear (the early years quality and curricular frameworks) through joint implementation with DCYA of the Síolta Aistear Initiative being funded by DCYA. We will implement a national programme of early years education focussed inspections; plan and design appropriate training and CPD for teachers and childcare assistants; develop resources and a central system for registration and tracking of engagement. We will support the development of the workforce in the early year's sector and work with DCYA to develop a workforce plan.

Strengthening Leadership and promoting professionalisation: we will provide access to professional coaching for Principals; introduce a new postgraduate qualification for aspiring school leaders; begin to change the leadership and middle management structures and functions; work with ETBs to adopt a more flexible and targeted approach to the deployment of Principals and Deputy-Principals; scope the potential capacity of ETBs to be regional hubs for the funding and delivery of CPD programmes; provide 183,000 CPD units for teachers in primary and post-primary school and we will continue to regulate the Teaching progression through the Teaching Council.

Embed the new model of Inspection: we will undertake a planned programme of inspection and advisory visits in all schools and conduct School Self Evaluation advisory visits in 400 schools; we will examine ways in which better information could be provided on and for schools; we will publish inspection reports and manage the monitoring of and intervention in poorly performing schools; we will advance proposal for the better involvement of Principals with inspection teams and we will update and publish new revised Child Protection Procedures.

Encouraging innovation: Encourage innovation within schools through all our programmes initiatives (including in the new Resource Teacher Model, Action Plan for Social Inclusion, Digital and ICT, and Inspection models) and through external partnership and collaboration.

Build capacity in Further Education and Training sector: we will implement the Further Education and Training Professional Development Strategy to enhance the skills of those involved in the delivery administration and management of FET programmes; continue to build the capacity of the ETBs to deliver the goals of the Further Education and Training Strategy; continue to review FET programmes including the publication of outcomes and recommendation from the Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) evaluation and commission an independent evaluation of VTOS. We will develop a new sectoral QA governance model.

Quality in Higher Education: we will initiate a review of quality in Higher Education; develop a new systems performance framework for Higher Education for the period to 2021; commence implementation of the recommendations of the review of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education; launch TRACE+ to recognise higher education disciplines in their commitment to the development of excellence in teaching and learning.

Objective 3.1: Increase the quality of Early Years to deliver a better learning experience for young children			
No.	**Actions and sub-actions**	**Quarter**	**Delivered by**
54	Support the Implementation of Síolta the National Quality Framework and Aistear, the early years curriculum framework.		NCCA, DCYA
54.1	Develop and implement a central system for registration and tracking of engagement with Síolta and Aistear.	Q1	NCCA, DCYA
54.2	Review, revise and develop Síolta materials and resources to support implementation of Síolta.	Q1	NCCA, DCYA
54.3	Consult with Early Start personnel in order to plan and design appropriate Síolta and Aistear Training and CPD for teachers and childcare assistants employed within these programmes.	Q2	NCCA, DCYA
54.4	Review process for allocation of Síolta Validators and recruit and train additional validators.	Q3	NCCA, DCYA
54.5	Update and maintain the online Aistear Síolta Practice Guide to support Early Years' workforce in their work.	Q4	DES
55	Work with DCYA to advance DES commitments under "Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014- 2020".	Q4	DCYA
56	Support the development of the workforce within the Early Years sector.		DES
56.1	Publish and consult on commissioned report on occupational role profiles in the Early Years sector.	Q1	DES
56.2	Establish steering group to review standards and guidelines for higher education programmes for the Early Years workforce to report by end 2017.	Q1	DES
56.3	Work with DCYA to put in place a process to develop a workforce plan for Early Years workforce.	Q2	DCYA
57	Implement a national programme of Early Years Education-focussed Inspections (EYEIs) which will provide advice and support a progressive improvement in standards, leadership and teaching methodologies for the over 4,000 early years settings providing the ECCE programme.		DES
57.1	EYEI model reviewed, in consultation with the Early Years sector.	Q2	DES
57.2	750 Early Years Education-focussed Inspections conducted and 650 inspection reports published.	Q4	DES

Objective 3.2: Develop the continuum of teacher education to equip teachers with the right skills for 21st century teaching and learning and improve school leadership

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
58		Consider and publish the report of the Technical Group on Teacher Supply and scope out the actions necessary for the implementation of the recommendations.	Q1	DES
59		Continue the reform of initial teacher education (ITE) and teacher induction.		DES
	59.1	Publish revised entry criteria for initial teacher education programmes.	Q1	DES
60		Strengthen leadership through enhanced support for Principals.		DES
	60.1	Introduce a professional coaching service for serving Principals, allowing up to 400 Principals per annum to access professional coaching.	Q1	CSL
	60.2	Complete rollout of mentoring programme for newly appointed school Principals.	Q3	CSL
	60.3	Provide access to professional coaching for up to 400 Principals each year.	Q4	CSL
	60.4	Expand the range of supports available through the Centre for School Leadership.	Q4	CSL
61		Develop and introduce a new postgraduate qualification for aspiring school leaders.		DES
	61.1	Commence course for new postgraduate qualifications for aspiring school leaders facilitating 200 participants annually.	Q3	DES
62		Change the leadership and middle management structure and the functions carried out in schools by the holders of posts of responsibility.		DES
	62.1	Commence discussions on Leadership circular to support changes to leadership and middle management structure and functions.	Q1	DES
	62.2	Advance discussions with ETBI to develop a project which will encourage ETBs to adopt a more flexible and targeted approach to the deployment of Principals and Deputy - Principals.	Q1	DES
63		Further develop our CPD programmes and their organisation.		DES

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
	63.1	Outline a programme of actions for the further development of our CPD programmes and their organisation, having regard to: ■ The options regarding the legal model and potential functions of a centre of excellence to have oversight of the supports for school improvement and professional development of teachers, including research, identifying international best practice ■ The potential and capacity of Education and Training Boards to be regional hubs for the funding and delivery of national programmes and services for CPD for teachers, including curricular change and supports for schools ■ The redefinition of the core remit of Education Support Centres to be the providers of professional development opportunities in a local, innovative and creative way.	Q2	DES
	63.2	Scope the potential and capacity of Education and Training Boards to be regional hubs for the funding and delivery of national programmes and services for CPD for teachers, including curricular change and supports for schools.	Q4	DES
64		Provide dedicated professional support to teachers to support the implementation of curricular and policy change.		DES
	64.1	Scope and plan for the provision of CPD to support the implementation of the revised Children First Guidelines.	Q2	PDST
	64.2	Provide CPD to support the Primary Languages curriculum, revised senior cycle subject specifications, and Junior Cycle reform.	Q4	PDST, JCT
65		Regulate the teaching profession.		DES
	65.1	Progress the growth phase of Droichead through the Teaching Council. Assess and scope the policy implications that the Teaching Council may put forward on the revised Droichead policy.	Q1	Teaching Council
	65.2	Assess and scope the policy implications of the proposals that the Teaching Council may put forward for the development of Cosán.	Q4	Teaching Council
66		Facilitate the delivery of SafeTalk and ASIST suicide training programmes for teachers through the Education Centre network.		DES
	66.1	Introduce a training model for the delivery of the SafeTalk and ASIST suicide programmes through the Education Centre network.	Q4	DES

Objective 3.3: Improve quality, promote excellence and innovation, and increase autonomy for schools

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
67		Advance work on school autonomy through capacity building measures, included in actions 39, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64 and 133, regarding the Schools Excellence Fund, the Centre for School Leadership, a postgraduate qualification for future leaders, changes to school leadership and middle management structure, a centre of excellence for schools and teachers, CPD, and ETB organisational design.		DES
68		Undertake a planned programme of inspection and advisory visits in all schools and increase the frequency of advisory visits.		DES
69		Conduct School Self Evaluation advisory visits in 400 schools.	Q4	DES
	69.1	Scope research proposal for development of better information on and for schools.	Q4	DES, ERC
70		Publish inspection reports in accordance with agreed arrangements for the various inspection models, including new inspection models for primary schools. The reports will be more accessible to parents, with clearer evaluative judgements.	Q4	DES
71		Manage the monitoring of, and interventions in, poorly performing schools, through the School Improvement Group and the School Improvement Monitoring process conducted by the Inspectorate.	Q4	DES
72		Advance proposals for the better involvement of Principals with inspection teams in primary and post-primary schools.	Q4	DES
73		Mainstream quality assurance mechanisms for inspection work in schools.	Q4	DES
74		Update and publish the existing Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools taking into account the updated Children First National Guidelines and new Guidance on Child Safeguarding Statements (to be published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Tusla respectively). In preparation for the full commencement by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs of the Children First Act 2015. Date for achievement is subject to availability of updated Children First and Tusla guidance and the timeline for commencement of Children First Act.	Q4	DES

Objective 3.4: Promote high quality learning experiences in Further Education and Training and Higher Education				
No.		**Actions and sub-actions**	**Quarter**	**Delivered by**
75		Initiate review of quality in Higher Education. The issues to be covered in the review, and the proposed approach to be taken, are currently being scoped out with a view to initiating the review in Q1.	Q1	DES, QQI, HEA
76		Implement the Further Education and Training Professional Development Strategy 2016-2019, in order to enhance the skills of those involved in the delivery, administration and management of FET programmes through targeted and consistent training and support.		SOLAS, ETBs
	76.1	Produce ETB-level staff development plans, aligned with the FET Skills Profile and Professional Development Strategy.	Q4	ETBI, ETBs
	76.2	Develop a system for the recording and tracking of professional development activity at ETB and national level.	Q4	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs
77		Build capacity within the ETB sector to achieve the delivery of the FET Strategy goals, focussing particularly on Organisational Design, Change Management and Quality Assurance. See also Actions 133 and 134.		ETBI, ETBs
	77.1	Development of a new Sectoral QA Governance Model.	Q3	ETBI, ETBs
	77.2	The completion of an ETB Executive Self-Evaluation Process and QA Improvement Plan by all ETBs.	Q4	ETBI, ETBs
	77.3	Development of a new Sectoral Model and Process of External Moderation/Authentication.	Q4	ETBI, ETBs
78		Implement the Programme Learner Support Service (PLSS) to provide a FET database which provides information on outcomes and supports linkages with other data sets, to allow for the follow-up of learners upon course completion; measurement of course impact on learners' socio-economic status; and the planning of support services and investment priorities.	Q1	SOLAS, ETBI, ETBs
79		Improve the impact of PLC, VTOS and BTEI schemes, by reviewing each programme, publishing the review, and setting out time-bound implementation plans.		DES
	79.1	Publish outcomes and recommendations from Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) evaluation.	Q1	SOLAS
	79.2	Commence a review of the VTOS Programme.	Q3	SOLAS
	79.3	Publish tender specification for VTOS Evaluation	Q3	SOLAS
	79.4	Award contract and commence evaluation fieldwork	Q4	SOLAS

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
80		Complete the review of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. The Forum mobilises expertise and inputs from across the HE sector to extend and shape best practice in all institutions.	Q1	HEA
	80.1	Publish review of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education with implementation plan setting out timelines and targets for agreed actions.	Q2	DES
	80.2	Implement the recommendations of the review of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.	Q2	NFETL, HEA
81		Initiate a national discipline-focused learning impact awards (TRACE+) by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. These will recognise higher education disciplines in their commitment to the development of excellence in teaching and learning.		NFETL
	81.1	Launch TRACE+ (national discipline-focused learning impact) awards scheme.	Q1	NFETL
	81.2	Make initial TRACE+ Awards recognising higher education disciplines in their commitment to the development of excellence in teaching and learning.	Q4	NFETL

Goal 3 - Help those delivering education services to continuously improve – Targets and Indicators

Goal	Measure	Target / Indicator
Help those delivering education services to continuously improve	Quality of early years curriculum	Increase number and reach of Early years inspections
		1,200 inspections by end 2017, from 500 in 2016
		1,000 inspection reports published by end 2017, from 450 in 2016
		Workforce development in early years
		50 Siolta Mentors trained [in addition to 15 existing mentors] pilot aistear-siolta CPD Programmes in 160 early years settings in 2017
	Strengthening leadership and building capacity in schools	Up to 400 serving Principals able to access professional coaching per annum
		200 teachers commence new post-graduate programme for aspiring leaders per annum
		Roll-out of a mentoring programme for all newly appointed school Principals is completed
		Restructuring of leadership and middle management in schools and ETBs agreed and implemented date
		183,000 CPD Units delivered for teachers in 2017[1]
	Embed new model of Inspection	School Self-Evaluation (SSE) in place in all primary and post-primary schools, focussed on identifying and implementing improvements
		SSE supported by up to c.400 advisory visits from Inspectorate annually
		Revised models of inspection implemented focussing on supporting improvements, assuring quality, and providing information for parents
		Inspections conducted in c.1500 primary and post-primary schools annually

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[1] A CPD Unit is defined as an interaction between a teacher support service and an individual teacher. Interactions range from a 2 hour session in a local education centre to a suite of sessions.

Goal	Measure	Target / Indicator
Help those delivering education services to continuously improve	Quality Further Education and Training	VTOS and youthreach evaluations commenced in 2017 Outcomes and recommendations from PLC evaluation published in 2017 Progress in implementing Professional development framework: ■ ETB-level staff development plans in place in 2017, and aligned with the FET Skills Profile and Professional Development Strategy ■ System developed in 2017 to record and track FET professional development activity, at ETB and national level
	Quality in Higher Education and Training	Progress in implementing the National Professional Development Framework for Higher Education Practitioners Review of quality in higher education initiated 2017 New systems performance framework for Higher Education to 2021 in place in 2017

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

Schools and education and training institutions and providers are at the heart of their communities. Building strong linkages, creating clusters and sharing good practice all lead to better outcomes and benefits for everyone involved. Ireland and the global context in which we live is changing and the needs, choices and expectations of citizens are shifting with it. Our education service must be able to respond to these new expectations. Goal 4 aims to put the learner at the centre of the education and training experience, increasing choice of school type and strengthening the voice of parents and students (including through strengthening complaints procedures), improving the flow of information and increasing the level of consultation.

To become an innovation leader and to build a strong talent base we must effectively engage with enterprise. We must identify and address skills needs in critical areas. Successful enterprise engagement is key to driving the growth of traineeships and apprenticeships, ensuring the relevance of work placements and work-based projects and increasing the diversity of opportunity in learning beyond school. We want to develop stronger entrepreneurship in education to match top performers in Europe. We want to promote lifelong learning and improved career guidance for students so that they can make well-informed choices. We want to attract talent from around the world to our education institutions, engage in world-class research and collaborations and we want to ensure quality standards and best international practice for learners in Ireland.

What we aim to achieve

Support local communities through the utilisation of schools buildings and facilities out of hours: Bridges between education and training providers and different social and economic communities such as employers, the unemployed, parents, students and other stakeholders will help us to understand each other's challenges, enable people to work together to problem-solve and innovate and to deliver for local, regional and national ambition. Schools are at the heart of their communities and are more successful the more they can collaborate with other organisations within the community.

Strengthen the role of parents and students and provide greater school choice: Parents and students are key partners in the teaching and learning process. Improving the information available to them as well as complaints procedures will underpin the high professional standards of dedicated and committed teachers and school communities. Planned new legislation will require every school to consult with parents and students and publish and operate a Parent and Student Charter and will establish a set of principles to guide how schools students and parents engage with each other placing the student at the centre of school life.

Our aim is to give parents and students a stronger voice at school level and to make school enrolment easier. We also want to provide parents and children with a greater choice of school type by increasing the number of multi-denominational and non-denominational schools, both through the provision of new schools in areas of demographic growth and through the reconfiguration of existing school provision to accommodate parental demand for greater patronage diversity. We will ensure that no small school closes against the wishes of parents and we will facilitate amalgamations where desirable.

Enhance our capacity to meet national and regional skills needs: The National Skills Strategy is a key pillar in the Government's plan to keep the recovery going and build sustainable economic growth. The Government is committed to improving and using skills for sustainable economic growth. Central to this is

the development of a well skilled, adaptable workforce that contributes to, shares in and benefits from opportunities from economic expansion.

Implementation of the National Skills Strategy will enhance employer and learner access to a dynamic, adaptable, innovative and high-quality education and training system. Employers, whether public or private, will have access to an excellent pipeline of talented, innovative workers. Lifelong learning will be promoted and supported as will effective use of skills in the workplace to drive productivity and innovation. The National Skills Strategy is designed to benefit all people living here, companies currently operating in Ireland and those planning to, people working here and those hoping to. It recognises the role that skills can play in the betterment of all, and supporting people to grow as global citizens.

Create a greater diversity of opportunity in learning beyond school: Providing a broader range of flexible opportunities for learners and supporting an increase in lifelong learning activity will help to meet Ireland's current and future workforce needs, achieving greater productivity and supporting economic and social prosperity and growth. This greater diversity of opportunity should ensure our people have the skills they need to succeed and that Irish business has the skills it needs to expand. A critical success factor is real partnership between education and enterprise.

Apprenticeships and traineeships are an integral part of addressing existing and future skills needs. Strengthening these areas will build robust alternative learning and employment pathways for people, as well as creating another source of varied skills supply for employers. Apprenticeship and traineeship development is a crucial element of providing a range of career options for young people. SpringBoard+ develops talent required in the economy and providers people with the opportunity to reskill and to gain employment. Upskilling and re-skilling employees, especially those with lower skills is especially important as the number of people in employment grows. Skillnets delivers enterprise-led training to employees and provides a range of valuable learning opportunities.

Enhance support for learners to make informed career choices: Career information and guidance services are key to supporting learners in making informed choices. Work experience also provides an opportunity for students to gain insight into the world of work and help in identifying possible career paths.

Create a stronger focus on Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation: Creating a stronger focus on these three areas is vital in order to sustain our economic recovery, and to adapt our national skills base to meet the challenges of growth in the modern world. Our education and training systems needs to recognise this and nurture these talents.

Grow a vibrant research community in Ireland: The national ambition is to position Ireland as a Global Innovation Leader. Innovation 2020 includes proposals for an increase of 500 funded postgraduate students, an increase in the number of funded post-doctoral researchers and the initiation of a new programme of funding for Frontier Research across all disciples. The postgraduate and post-doctoral proposals will be actioned by a number of agencies, including Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and the Irish Research Council (IRC). Fellowships developed through the CAROLINE programme (Collaborative Research Fellowships for a Responsive and Innovative Europe) will provide mobility and career development opportunities for researchers.

Position Ireland to attract more international students: Our education system has a long history of international engagement and is globally respected. The International Education Strategy aims to support the development of global citizens through Ireland's high quality education system, by attracting talent from around the world to our education institutions, equipping Irish learners with the skills and experience they need to compete internationally, engaging in world-class research and international collaborations, and addressing global challenges. A range of targets are outlined for the term of the Strategy.

Key Themes for 2017

Strengthening the relationship between schools, parents and communities: we will work towards securing Government approval for drafting the Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill 2016; we will strengthen the focus on reducing schools costs for parents and publish measures to be adopted by schools to reduce the cost of school uniforms. We will advance the legislation in relation to the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016; establish a working group to develop amalgamation protocols and finalise protocols to ensure that no small school closes against the wishes of parents and we will ensure that parental preference continues to be one of the key considerations in deciding the patronage and medium of instruction for new schools. We will commence the implementation of the DES actions arising from the interdepartmental Action Plan on School-Age Childcare and we will develop guidelines for the use of school buildings out of hours.

Enhancing Skills, Innovation and Entrepreneurship: we will commence the work programme of the National Skills Council and monitor implementation of the National Skills Strategy providing annual reports on progress; oversee the work of the Regional Skills Fora to support employer engagement with education and training providers and ensure that Regional Skills Managers serve on Action Plan for Jobs committees. We will complete a national survey of Employers to inform policy and programme development; develop a new Systems Performance framework for Higher Education; agree 2017 Annual Service Plans between SOLAS and ETBs and complete a review of the current national ICT Skills Action Plan 2014-2018 and publish a revised plan. We will develop new guidelines for schools on Entrepreneurship Education; implement the Arts in Education Charter and the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development including an audit of Education for Sustainable Development in the primary and post-primary curricula.

Creating more diverse learning opportunities beyond schools: we will complete approval of new curricula in 14 further craft trades and announce new apprenticeships for development and commence a new branding and marketing campaign for apprenticeships. We will launch two further traineeship programmes; deliver enterprise-led training through the implementation of the Skillnets Statement of Strategy 2016 to 2019. We will publish the FET Policy Framework for Employee Development, for those in employment; create a greater diversity of learning opportunities through the rollout of Springboard+ 2017.

Helping learners to make informed career choices: we will review work experience at post-primary level; commence a review of guidance services, tools and career information and make recommendations to improve services and encourage FET providers and Higher Education Institutions to provide employability statements for courses/disciplines to better inform students, parents and employers.

Growing a vibrant research community in Ireland: we will establish a new Frontiers Research competitive fund to enable the next generation of researchers transition to Principal Investigator status and to develop initiatives to attract world-leading researchers, both of which are particularly important actions in the context of Brexit; we will provide 50 researchers with an opportunity to obtain research mobility and career development Fellowships through CAROLINE (Collaborative Research Fellowships for a Responsive and Innovative Europe);

Key Themes for 2017

Position Ireland to attract more international students: we will commence implementation of the International Education Strategy 2016 to 2020 including supporting the mobility of Irish researchers and strengthening the Education in Ireland brand to increase the visibility of Ireland's international education offering and we will introduce the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill; make necessary legislative changes to introduce the International Education Mark to ensure quality standards and best practice for learners in Ireland.

Objective 4.1: Increase opportunities for schools to support their local communities through the utilisation of school buildings and facilities out of hours

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
82		Commence implementation of the DES actions arising from the interdepartmental Action Plan on School Age Childcare	Q2	DCYA
83		Develop and publish guidelines for the use of school buildings out of hours, and engage with property owners and school authorities with a view to facilitating increased use of school buildings where feasible.	Q2	DES

Objective 4.2: Strengthen the role of parents and students, and deliver progress in providing greater school choice

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
84		Introduce a stronger complaints procedure and charter for parents and students.		DES
	84.1	General scheme of the Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill 2016 has been submitted to the Oireachtas for pre-legislative scrutiny. The date for completion of pre-legislative scrutiny is dependent on the Oireachtas Committee schedule. It is hoped that the scrutiny will be completed in the first half of the year to allow the approval of the Government to be sought for the drafting of the Bill.	Q2	DES
85		Strengthen the focus on reducing school costs for parents.		DES
	85.1	Finalise and publish the measures to be adopted by schools to reduce the cost of school uniforms.	Q1	DES

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
86		Advance the legislation in relation to school admissions to make enrolment easier for children and parents.		DES
	86.1	Complete consultation process on the impact and role that religion plays in school admissions, including the impact on minority religions, the issue of mandatory catchment areas, impact on school transport, and issues of competing rights and the Constitution. Consultation process to be completed in Q1. Next steps to be outlined and delivered from Q2, depending on outcomes and decisions arising from consultation process.	Q1	DES
	86.2	The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill has been published with a view to enactment by Q3 2017. Date for completion is subject to the Oireachtas legislative process.	Q3	DES
	86.3	Commence the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 on a phased basis to allow schools time to adjust to the new requirements, subject to the completion of work on the regulations and procedures. Date for completion is subject to the Oireachtas legislative process.	Q4	DES
	86.4	Following enactment of the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 commence consultation with relevant Stakeholders on the detail of regulations as regulations move to drafting stage. Date for completion is dependent on the date of enactment.	Q4	DES
87		Establish 400 multi-/ non- denominational schools.		DES
	87.1	Announce new approaches to deliver on the target of establishing 400 multi-/non- denominational schools by 2030.	Q1	DES
	87.2	Complete the patronage processes for four new primary schools due to open in 2017 and 2018.	Q1	DES
	87.3	Establish Working Groups on protocols for patronage reassignment and school amalgamations.	Q1	DES
	87.4	Commence discussions with existing and prospective patrons on potential "early movers" – schools in respect of which a desire for patronage reassignment has already been expressed.	Q1	DES
	87.5	Develop process for the identification of demand for diversity with ETBs and DCYA.	Q2	DES, ETBs, DCYA
	87.6	Establish reporting framework with ETBs for returns to Department for schools reconfiguration for diversity.	Q2	DES, ETBs
	87.7	Agree engagement process for patrons on the transfer of schools in relation to consultation with school communities and prospective patron bodies.	Q3	DES, Schools, patrons

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
88		Develop policy on an amalgamation protocol for schools reconfiguration to increase diversity of school type.		DES
	88.1	Establish Working Group to develop amalgamation protocol for schools reconfiguration to increase diversity of school type.	Q1	DES
89		Revise protocols to ensure that no small school closes against the wishes of parents and facilitate amalgamations where desirable.		DES
	89.1	Finalise Protocol to ensure that no small school closes against the wishes of parents and write to patrons, asking them to initiate local discussions to address future sustainability issues.	Q2	DES

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Objective 4.3: Enhance our capacity to meet national and regional skills needs			
No.	**Actions and sub-actions**	**Quarter**	**Delivered by**
90	Develop innovative responses to skills gaps across key priority areas of the economy including ICT, languages and biopharma.		DES
90.1	Design new data portal in collaboration with EI, HEA, SOLAS, Maynooth University, DKIT, AIT and DCU to enhance availability of skills data.	Q1	DES
90.2	Commence pilot of new data portal.	Q2	DES
90.3	Hold quarterly meetings with IBEC, ICTU, CIF and other key stakeholders to enhance engagement between education and enterprise.	Q4	DES
90.4	Commission a review of pathways to participation in apprenticeship (SOLAS). The review will identify barriers to participation and make recommendations which will include any pre-apprenticeship initiatives that may be required.	Q4	SOLAS
90.5	Report on responses to individual actions under the National Skills Strategy within the framework of the Action Plan for Education.	Q4	DES
90.6	Seek reports from other government departments and agencies to monitor external implementation of actions under the National Skills Strategy.	Q4	DES
90.7	Represent the Department on interdepartmental, sectoral and North-South groups on skills issues and consider relevant outcomes for inclusion in our work plan.	Q4	DES
90.8	Coordinate response to requirements emerging under the EU Skills Agenda.	Q4	DES
91	Establish the National Skills Council, which will use data on skills requirements to proactively address emerging skills gaps, and develop a revised mandate for the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.		DES
91.1	Establish the National Skills Council.	Q1	DES
91.2	Review and finalise mandate for Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.	Q1	DES
91.3	Agree and publish Work Programme for National Skills Council.	Q2	DES
91.4	Commence implementation of the Work Programme of the National Skills Council.	Q2	DES
91.5	Hold national forum for Stakeholders to input into work programme of National Skills Council.	Q3	DES

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
	91.6	Support the work of the National Skills Council, which will use data on skills requirements to proactively address emerging skills gaps.	Q4	DES
92		Oversee the work of the Regional Skills Fora and monitor performance. The Fora aim to provide a cohesive education-led structure for employers and the Further and Higher Education systems to work together in identifying and addressing the skills needs of their regions.		DES
	92.1	Formal launch of the Regional Skills Fora.	Q1	DES
	92.2	Disseminate the work of the Fora, with the support of all of the members of the fora and other dissemination mechanisms such as the Regional Skills Fora website (www.regionalskills.ie).	Q4	DES
93		Ensure Regional Skills Managers participate in Regional Action Plan for Jobs committees to facilitate coordination between the Fora and relevant stakeholders in relation to regional skills priorities	Q4	DES
94		Complete National Survey of Employers to inform policy and programme development.	Q4	DES
95		Develop new Systems Performance Framework for Higher Education for the period to 2021.	Q1	DES
96		Agree 2017 Annual Service Plans between SOLAS and ETBs and monitor progress against agreed quality and performance target. These plans will include projected programme inputs, outputs and outcomes.	Q2	SOLAS, ETBs
97		Complete review of the current national ICT Skills Action Plan 2014 – 2018 and publish revised plan.	Q1	HEA, DJEI
	97.1	Publish revised plan to meet increasing demand for ICT graduates from domestic supply to meet the skills needs of enterprise through mainstream and targeted initiatives including Springboard+.	Q1	DES
	97.2	Implement the actions in the new ICT Skills Action Plan to increase the domestic supply of ICT graduates to meet the skills needs of enterprise.	Q4	DES

Objective 4.4: Create a greater diversity of learning opportunities beyond school

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
98		Strengthen the apprenticeship and traineeship systems through enhancing the range of courses and increasing student places; achieve Government targets of over 100 apprenticeship schemes, and a cumulative target of 50,000 apprenticeship and traineeship registrations to 2020. This is a total of 31,000 apprenticeship registrations and 19,000 traineeships over the period to 2020. This would involve an annual average of 6,000 apprenticeships and 4,000 traineeships.		DES, SOLAS, HEA, QQI, Apprenticeship Council, HEIs, ETBs
	98.1	Commence a new branding and marketing campaign for apprenticeship.	Q1	SOLAS, HEA, Apprenticeship Council
	98.2	Approve the development of apprenticeships from categories 2 and 3 from the 2015 call, where project plans have been agreed.	Q1	DES, SOLAS, HEA, Apprenticeship Council
	98.3	Issue a second call for apprenticeship proposals from consortia of employers and education and training providers.	Q2	Apprenticeship Council
	98.4	Complete approval of new curricula in 14 further craft trades.	Q3	SOLAS, QQI
	98.5	Announce new apprenticeships for development, based on the second call for proposals.	Q4	DES, Apprenticeship Council
	98.6	Launch 2 further career traineeship programmes.	Q4	SOLAS, ETBs
99		Continue to work with Skillnets to deliver enterprise-led training and continue to develop the model in accordance with the Skillnets Statement of Strategy 2016-2019. The Strategy has been developed to be closely aligned to the National Skills Strategy (NSS) and the needs of enterprise. Skillnets will establish five new networks in 2017 in addition to the existing 63 networks reaching 43,000 employees up from the 40,000 reached in 2016. Skillnets will complement the development of the new networks by working with the existing networks to enhance their capacity.		Skillnets
	99.1	Establish and resource the Skillnets Programme Management Office with responsibility for the implementation and governance of the Skillnets Statement of Strategy 2016-19.	Q2	Skillnets

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
	99.2	Commence the operation of newly funded training Networks that have strong enterprise support and demonstrate compelling training requirements. Skillnets will undertake a significant promotional campaign to encourage enterprise engagement.	Q3	Skillnets
	99.3	Establish a first-class talent programme for the Skillnets Network Manager community to assist in the growth of their Human Resource Development competence. Skillnets will establish a talent programme to develop the capacity of the existing 63 network managers. The Programme, which will include mentoring and project work, will be delivered centrally by Skillnets.	Q3	Skillnets
	99.4	Review and publish a report on the new programmes approved for 2017 under the Future Skills Needs Programme.	Q4	Skillnets
	99.5	Commence the roll-out of the revised Management Development offering to the owner managers of SMEs. 850 owner managers will receive structured management training in 2017 in areas such as strategy and business growth.	Q4	Skillnets
100		Publish the FET policy framework for Employee Development to support skills development for those in employment, in consultation with partners, aligning with the National Skills Strategy.		SOLAS
	100.1	Publish the FET policy framework for Employee Development and associated implementation plan. The aim of the framework is to guide ETB activity undertaken in the FET sector to support employee development in Ireland and to contribute to the objectives for workforce development and lifelong learning as set out in the National Skills Strategy 2025. This includes the target to increase the level of participation by those aged 25-64 in lifelong learning (LLL) to 10% by 2020.	Q2	SOLAS
101		Create a greater diversity of learning opportunities beyond school through competitive calls for Springboard+ courses.		DES
	101.1	Launch Springboard+ 2017 following competitive call for proposals.	Q2	DES
	101.2	Roll-out of Springboard+ 2017.	Q3	DES

Objective 4.5: Enhance support for learners to make informed career choices

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
102		Review work experience at post-primary level with a view to increasing access and quality of work experience for students.	Q4	DES
103		Further Education and Training providers and Higher Education Institutions to provide employability statements for courses / disciplines to better inform students, parents and employers.	Q4	DES
104		Review guidance services, tools and careers information for students and adults and recommend changes to improve services.		HEA, NCGE
	104.1	Scope the extent of the review of guidance services.	Q2	HEA, NCGE
	104.2	Commence the review of guidance services.	Q3	HEA, NCGE

Objective 4.6: Create a stronger focus on Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
105		Benchmark entrepreneurial activity in HE and work with the HEA to ensure an ambitious and implementable plan to identify and address skills gaps, ICT and STEM needs.		HEA
	105.1	Finalise and implement HEInnovate report on Entrepreneurship in Higher Education.	Q1	HEA
	105.2	Develop new Systems Performance Framework for Higher Education for the period 2017- 2021.	Q1	HEA
106		Develop and publish new Entrepreneurship Education policy statement.	Q2	NCCA, HEA, SOLAS
107		Develop new Entrepreneurship Education Guidelines for Schools.	Q3	DES
108		Implement the Arts in Education Charter, subject to the drawdown of Dormant Account Funding.		DES
	108.1	Commence the expansion of Music Education Partnerships (MEPs), under the remit of Music Generation, to up to nine extra areas of the country, a project co-funded by U2/the Ireland Fund and the DES, with a call for Phase 2 (2017-2021) applications.	Q1	Music Generation

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
	108.2	Deliver National Arts in Education Day & Conference	Q2	DES
	108.3	Commence the first new Music Education Partnerships (MEPs), to expand MEPs, under the remit of Music Generation, to up to nine extra areas of the country, a project co-funded by U2/the Ireland Fund and the DES	Q3	Music Generation
	108.4	Implement Pillar 1 of 'Creative Ireland' Initiative on Arts Rich Schools Initiative, ARIS.	Q3	DAHRRGA
	108.5	Deliver Teacher/Artist Partnership as a Summer Course in each of the 21 Association of Teachers/ Education Centres in Ireland areas, as a model for CPD.	Q4	DES
	108.6	Co-operate with D/Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs on implementation of Creative Ireland Programme 2017-2022.	Q4	DAHRRGA
	108.7	Create a National Digital Map of Arts in Education activity throughout the country.	Q4	DES
	108.8	Develop a National Central Research Repository for Arts in Education Research in Ireland.	Q4	DES
109		Implement the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development.		DES
	109.1	Conduct an examination of Education for Sustainable Development across the primary and post-primary curriculum to inform review of overall progress on the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2014-2020.	Q4	NCCA
	109.2	Implement a review of overall progress since 2014.	Q4	NCCA
	109.3	Convene a third national forum on Education for Sustainable Development.	Q4	NCCA

Objective 4.7: Increase the number of researchers, establish a new competitive programme of funding for Frontiers Research to enable the next generation of researchers transition to Principal Investigator status and develop initiatives to attract world-leading researchers, particularly in the context of Brexit

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
110		Establish a new competitive fund to enable the next generation of researchers transition to Principal Investigator status. The Programme will encompass three levels - Starting Grant (after post doctorate – junior lecturer level); Consolidator Grant (lecturer/senior research fellow level) and Advanced Grant (Senior lecturer/Professor – Principal Investigator). Awards will be up to four years in length.		DES
	110.1	Launch of programme	Q1	IRC
	110.2	Awards made under Programme	Q4	IRC
111		IRC Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme (CAROLINE – Collaborative Research Fellowships for a Responsive and Innovative Europe) will provide 50 researchers (over two calls) with an opportunity to obtain research mobility and career development Fellowships.		IRC
	111.1	Make awards under the CAROLINE Scheme (first call).	Q2	IRC
	111.2	Issue 2nd call for applications for the CAROLINE Scheme, with closing date Q4 2017.	Q3	IRC
	111.3	Commence CAROLINE Fellowships from first call.	Q4	IRC
112		Develop a strategy to attract world-leading researchers to Ireland in the context of Brexit. This strategy may include additional awards funded by the Irish Research Council for researchers or academics who relocate.		IRC
	112.1	Develop and publish strategy	Q1	IRC
	112.2	Begin to implement actions flowing from strategy	Q2	IRC

Objective 4.8: Position Ireland as a desirable location for international students

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
113		Draft the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill. Date for completion is dependent on Committee timing and process. The Heads of the Bill are currently being finalised with a view to submitting them for Government approval in Q1. Following approval, the Heads of the Bill will be submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by the relevant Oireachtas committee, before drafting can commence.	Q4	DES, QQI
	113.1	Make necessary legislative changes to introduce the International Education Mark. Date for completion is dependent on legislative process.	Q4	DES, QQI
114		Implement the International Education Strategy 2016-2020, through the responsible High Level Working group.		DES
	114.1	Amend the current 12 month stay back permission for international students to further incentivise high performing students to come to Ireland to meet the current skills and language needs as identified by business.	Q1	DES, DJE
	114.2	Support the mobility of Irish researchers through exploring methods to increase participation in the Marie Sklodowska-Curie actions within the Horizon 2020 programme, to ensure the international connectivity of the Higher Education sector.	Q4	HEA, HEIs, DJEI
	114.3	Explore increased opportunities for engagement with Governments and their agencies in targeted overseas markets, to create and put in place the right environments to develop collaborative projects.	Q4	EI, DFAT, DES
	114.4	Continue to strengthen the Education in Ireland brand to increase the visibility of Ireland's international education offering.	Q4	DES, EI
	114.5	Carry out a review of the number of grant holders as a proportion of Erasmus+ students (or the proportion of those who undertake non-compulsory Erasmus+ programmes) to see if disadvantaged students are adequately represented.	Q4	DES, HEA,IUA, THEA, HECA

Goal 4: Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community – Targets and Indicators

Goal	Measure	Target / Indicator
Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community	Broaden the choice of school type	400 multi-/ non-denominational schools by 2030
	Controlling school costs	Publish measures to be adopted by schools to reduce the cost of school uniforms
	Strengthen Skills, Innovation and Entrepreneurship	Improve our Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) ranking Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (An international survey on entrepreneurship in participating countries - education is part of the overall survey). In the 2014 survey, Ireland ranked 12th on primary and second level education and 14th for post second level out of 24 EU countries surveyed. Primary and Post Primary: improve Ireland's current rating of 2.09 (on a scale of 1-5, with an EU average of 2.12) to above 2.3 by 2025 Post Second Level: improve Ireland's current rating of 2.95 (EU Average 2.8) to above 3.05 by 2025
	Addressing Skills needs	National Skills Council established and programme of work commenced to implement the National Skills Strategy and develop relevant targets in closing skills gaps. National Survey of Employers to inform policy and programme development completed Provision of upskilling and reskilling courses under Springboard+ over 5,000 places provided in 2017 50,000 Higher Education places provided by 2021 Springboard+ Provision of skillnets training to over 43,000 individuals in 2017 Provision of further education and training to over 320,000 beneficiaries in 2017
	Increase number and range of Apprenticeships and Traineeships	13 new Apprenticeships in 2017 4,147 new registrations on craft Apprenticeships in 2017 800 registrations on new Apprenticeships in 2017 2 new traineeships in 2017 2,400 places on existing Traineeships in 2017 200 places on new/relaunched Traineeships in 2017

Goal	Measure	Target / Indicator
Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community	Informed Career Choices - Work placements	Work Experience at post primary reviewed Work placements for HE levels 6 to 8 - Increase the number of HE students undertaking a work placement or work based project as part of their course by 25% by 2021
	Innovation and research[2]	New competative Frontiers Research Programme – 24 awards to be made by the end of 2017 Increase of 200 Postgraduate research enrolments by 2020 (IRC) Increase (20) in the number of funded post-doctoral places by 2020 (IRC)
	Life-long learning rate	Increase to 10% the number of those aged 25 - 64 engaged in lifelong learning by 2020 (From 2015 rate of 7.2%). Increase to 15% by 2025 Increase the numbers of HE entrants studying on a flexible basis by 25% by 2021
	Small schools	No small school closed against the wishes of parents
	Growing Ireland's international reputation	12 month stay back permission for international students amended in 2017, to further incentivise high performing students to come to Ireland to meet the present skills and language needs Grow international student numbers (public and private HEIs) by 33% (from 33,118 to 44,000) by 2020. Midterm target of 39,700 by 2018 Grow English-language teaching sector by 25% (from 106,000 to 132,500) by 2020. Midterm target of 122,000 by 2018.

[2] Innovation 2020 sets the agenda for cross departmental actions to realise the potential of research and innovation. These figures relate to the Irish Research Council, an aegis body of the DES

Goal 5 - Improve national planning and support services

The Department and its agencies have an important role in providing strategic leadership, developing policy and delivering services. This involves coordination with sectoral stakeholders, the broader public sector, the political system and other Governmental bodies and cross sectoral work programmes. The remit of the Department encompasses early years education, primary and second level education, further education and training and higher education, including supports for research and international education. We also represent education and training overseas and participate in various international fora. Education and training policy and programmes in Ireland are often of interest to other countries and many of our initiatives are recognised internationally.

The ambition to have the best education and training system in Europe places a particular demand on the Department and its national agencies, to work in partnership and consultation, to create the right structures, develop the right policies, use the right funding instruments, provide the right service supports and deliver effectively and efficiently.

The Department's Strategy and Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 deliberately sets stretching ambitions over the next three years. We are committed to annually publishing time-lined actions and publicly monitoring progress.

What we aim to achieve

Strengthen strategic oversight and focus on delivery for results: To deliver the ambition of the Action Plan for Education and to meet our commitments under civil and public service reform, the Department will continue to work in partnership, and consultation, with our agencies and other Departments and agencies. System wide performance monitoring will track progress against plans and ensure that timely remedial action is taken. Performance indicators and targets will be used to benchmark policies and processes against national and international best practice. We aim to provide strong governance, leadership and direction for improvements and reform across the system in order to provide better outcomes for all learners.

We aim to strengthen our strategic policy analysis capability, oversight of programmes and policy, governance and programme and project management structures. We will also enhance the indicators we use to assess the effectiveness of our major activities and the implementation of our policies and action plans and will build our capability to benchmark against the best.

The Department provides a range of sectoral services to support the delivery of education and training directly and indirectly. These supports, services and systems are monitored for effectiveness and efficiency and new ways of working such as shared services are introduced where benefits can be gained from centralisation of functions such as procurement, finance and payroll.

Deliver appropriate infrastructure for learning environments: One of the major challenges is to provide the education infrastructure for primary, post-primary, further and higher education and training to meet the demands of changing demographics.

The over-arching objective of the Department's capital expenditure investment programme (schools) is focussed on meeting demographic demands to ensure that our school system is in a position to accommodate increasing pupil numbers. In the schools sector over 60,000 additional, permanent school places will be delivered by 2021. Under the programme, provision is made for the delivery of over 310 major school projects,

including 14 new schools in areas of very strong demographic demand.

In Higher Education €150m investment from the State and €200m worth of Public Private Partnership projects will support the delivery of a range of projects.

Improve the quality of the national support services and shared services: The Department is responsible for ensuring that the national support services and shared services are delivered to the highest standards in line with our overriding ambition to be the best education and training system in Europe. Shared services and ICT will be used to improve a range of administrative and support services. Once operational, shared services in Finance, Payroll and other functions will enhance customer service and provide high quality management information. A focus on continuous improvement will realise benefits in process efficiency and expert knowledge. Progress will be benchmarked against other public sector shared services and internationally where possible.

Key Themes for 2017

Deliver Action Plan 2017 and enhance strategy, evaluation, data and governance: we will monitor the implementation of Action Plan for Education 2016-2019, publish and monitor progress against plans for AP-Ed 2017, IRDP and the Programme for Government. We will develop proposals to enhance the Department's structures in relation to strategy, evaluation and governance; we will initiate a review of corporate governance processes and procedures of agencies under the Department's aegis and we will publish a mid-term evaluation of the ESF co-financed Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2016 (PEIL). We will publish the Department's Data Strategy focusing on building our data capacity and capability, strengthening data governance and management, improving data collaboration and maximising the use of and value of our data.

Introduce sustainable funding models: we will publish a policy review aimed at designing and implementing a sustainable and predictable multi-annual funding model for higher and further education and training; we will complete a review of the Higher Education funding model (RGAM) with a new model in place for 2018 budget allocation.

Technological Universities and other legislation in Higher Education: we will advance the legislative programme in the Higher Education sector including the Higher Education Reform Bill and the Technological Universities Bill.

Increase infrastructure capacity to meet demographic and other demands: we will complete 46 large-scale projects as part of the Department's Construction Programme; approve further projects under the summer works programme and commence preparatory work on identifying schools with purchased prefabs for replacement. We will achieve contract award and initiate the construction phase of the Grangegorman PPP project. We will implement the 2016-2020 Capital Plan in respect of Higher Education and we will publish a national student accommodation strategy.

New ways of working: we will support the rollout of the Financial Services Support Unit (FSSU) in the primary schools sector; complete the connection of ETB head offices to the Government Network; upgrade ICT system for Higher Education HR/Payroll to support the shared service agenda; we will publish the shared services plan for 2017 - 2019; establish education Shared Business Services and begin the phased implementation of Payroll and Finance shared services for ETBs.

Prepare for Brexit: we will develop a response to the potential impact of Brexit on the education and training system and to the delivery of the Action Plan for Education 2016 to 2019; we will consult with the sector and ensure that education priorities are included in the Irish Government negotiations with the EU and the UK.

Objective 5.1: Strengthen strategic oversight and focus on delivery for results				
No.		**Actions and sub-actions**	**Quarter**	**Delivered by**
115		Monitor the implementation of the "Action Plan for Education and Skills 2016 - 2019", assessing the challenges to be faced on the road to becoming the best education and training service in Europe.		DES
	115.1	Publish review of 2016 actions from the "Action Plan for Education and Skills 2016 - 2019".	Q1	DES
	115.2	Publish "Action Plan for Education 2017".	Q1	DES
	115.3	Publish Q1 progress report on implementation of the "Action Plan for Education 2017".	Q2	DES
	115.4	Publish Q2 progress report on implementation of the "Action Plan for Education 2017".	Q3	DES
	115.5	Publish Q3 progress report on implementation of the "Action Plan for Education 2017".	Q4	DES
116		Improve strategic policy capability, oversight, evaluation of programmes and policy, governance and programme and project management structures to deliver on Government-wide public service reform commitments, with reporting on the IRDP and a Programme for a Partnership Government commitments, in line with best international practice.		DES
	116.1	Develop proposals to enhance Department structures to achieve improvement in strategic policy capability, oversight, evaluation of programmes and policy, governance and programme and project management structures.	Q2	DES
	116.2	Develop the 2017 Integrated Reform Delivery Plan (IRDP), based on the new Public Service Reform Plan 2017 - 2020.	Q3	DES
	116.3	Report every quarter on progress against the Integrated Reform Delivery Plan (IRDP).	Q4	DES
	116.4	Meet Programme for Government reporting commitments.	Q4	DES
	116.5	Conduct focused policy assessments and programme evaluations in order to answer specific issues of policy configuration and delivery.	Q4	DES
	116.6	Provide for project management training across the Department and introduce programme management training.	Q4	DES
	116.7	Develop indicators to demonstrate effectiveness of major activities under each of the high-level goals of the Action Plan for Education, in comparison with best practice in Europe.	Q4	DES

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
117		Provide greater strategic direction in the Department's governance, management and use of data.		DES
	117.1	Publish Department's Data Strategy.	Q1	DES
	117.2	Develop Data Strategy Implementation Plan.	Q1	DES
	117.3	Develop and implement an Education Data Map resource.	Q2	DES
	117.4	Develop a plan to manage and coordinate Department participation in Government-led data initiatives, e.g. Open Data, ICT Strategy, CSO National Data Infrastructure, CSR Action 24.	Q3	DES
	117.5	Strengthen the Department's approach to Data Management through the development of a Corporate Data Management Framework and guidelines for each stage of the data lifecycle.	Q4	DES
	117.6	Provide a corporate support service to work with business units to build data capacity and capability, address specific data issues, develop data use and opportunities for collaboration.	Q4	DES
118		Review the higher education funding model (Recurrent Grant Allocation Model) to underpin delivery across the sector.		HEA
	118.1	Complete review of higher education funding model to underpin delivery across the sector and enhance progression on the goals of this Action Plan.	Q2	DES
	118.2	New higher education funding model will be in place for 2018 budget allocation.	Q2	HEA
119		Finalise recommendations in the Expert Group on Future Funding in Higher Education report related to the review of the funding model, as proposed in the Cassells Report. This will include reforming the funding model to support the growth ambitions and the capacity to meet specific targets on skill gaps, access for disadvantaged groups and stronger impact on Innovation.	Q2	HEA
120		Publish policy review announced in Budget 2017, with the aim of designing and implementing a sustainable and predictable multi-annual funding model for higher and further education and training involving increased Employer and Exchequer contributions from 2018. The review will complement the ongoing work of the Oireachtas Committee in relation to the Cassells report and will feed into the 2018 budgetary process.	Q2	HEA
121		Advance legislative reform in the Higher Education sector.		DES
	121.1	Review and prioritise issues to be addressed in the Higher Education Reform Bill and finalise drafting of a general scheme.	Q4	DES

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
	121.2	Enact Technological Universities Bill to underpin the development of a new model of higher education in Ireland. Support applicant consortium for TU status. Date for completion dependent upon Government legislative priorities.	Q4	DES
122		Support the operation of a high quality school system through the annual provision of teaching and financial supports to schools, based on agreed criteria and enrolment data.	Q4	DES
123		Provide payroll and pension services to teachers and school staff in all schools (except the ETB sector), issuing payments to over 104,000 people on a fortnightly basis.	Q4	DES
124		Develop a standardised approach to governance and accountability across the education sector to ensured consistent application across the education sector of corporate governance compliance requirements.		DES
	124.1	Undertake a review of corporate governance processes and procedures of agencies under the Department's aegis and disseminate review findings and recommendations to each agency.	Q1	DES
	124.2	Roll out a compliance questionnaire on the capacity of relevant DES State agencies to adhere to the stipulations of DPER's 2016 Code of Practice for the Governance of State Agencies, and to ensure a consistent approach to Departmental considerations of derogations from the 2016 Code.	Q3	DES
	124.3	Develop and commence roll-out of training programme to upskill staff in responsible Line Sections to enhance their corporate governance skills, including examination of financial accounts.	Q4	DES

Objective 5.2: Deliver appropriate infrastructure for learning environments

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
125		Implementation of 2016 - 2021 Construction Programme.		DES
	125.1	Complete 46 large-scale building projects.	Q4	DES
	125.2	Provide for next round of Summer Works programme.	Q4	DES
126		Roll out the next phase of the Prefab Replacement Initiative, undertaking preparatory work in schools with older, purchased prefabs, to begin construction of permanent accommodation in 2019.		DES
	126.1	Commence preparatory work on identifying schools with purchased prefabs for replacement.	Q4	DES
127		Continue with capital investment in Higher Education.		DES, HEA
	127.1	Achieve contract award and initiate construction phase of the Grangegorman PPP project.	Q2	DES
	127.2	Implement the 2016- 2021 Capital Plan in respect of Higher Education. This includes the provision of €150m Exchequer funding and the progression of €200m worth of Public Private Partnership projects for the sector over the period.	Q4	DES, HEA, NDFA
128		Publish a national student accommodation strategy, which will set out a broad framework for delivery of an enhanced level of accommodation and which will inform local authority housing strategies and the land management process in general, in order to provide suitably located and affordable sites.	Q2	DES, DHPCLG, DFinance, DPER, HEA, HEIs

	Objective 5.3: Improve the quality of the national support services and shared services		
No.	**Actions and sub-actions**	**Quarter**	**Delivered by**
129		Strengthen DES management systems through shared services.		DES
	129.1	Prepare business case for the upgrade the Department's Payroll and Pensions functions to a shared service standard to yield significant efficiencies and better outcomes for the Department and customers.	Q2	DES
	129.2	Continue "shared service ready" projects encompassing plan for retained finance functions.	Q3	DES
	129.3	Engage with the Financial Management Shared Services Centre in the Design, Build & Test phase of the Financial Management Shared Services Project.	Q4	DES
130		Publish the shared services plan 2017 - 19 for the Department and the Education and Training Sector in line with DES Shared Service Strategy.	Q1	DES
131		Improve the quality of services across the sector through the introduction of shared services, in line with the Shared Services Plan.		DES
	131.1	Connect the ETBs' head offices and training centres to one network provider, Government Networks, allowing inter-office connectivity and future agreements for associated services, such as VOIP.	Q2	DES
	131.2	Further develop the Education Sector Procurement hub and the sectoral procurement initiatives to maximise the benefits of centralised procurement for all parts of the sector from schools through to Higher Education Institutions.	Q4	EPS, SPU
	131.3	Upgrade ICT systems for Higher Education HR/Payroll to support the shared service agenda.	Q4	DES
132		Support the rollout of the Financial Services Support Unit (FSSU) to the primary schools sector.		DES
	132.1	Recruit initial staff for provision of FSSU service at primary level.	Q1	FSSU
	132.2	Develop guidance for primary schools on financial matters including standardised national format for school accounts.	Q2	FSSU
	132.3	Commence the FSSU service at primary level (Circular issued to primary schools).	Q3	DES
133		Establish Education Shared Business Services (ESBS).		DES

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
	133.1	Develop operational site for new ESBS functions.	Q4	DES
	133.2	Agree supports from the Department for the new services.	Q4	DES
	133.3	Develop operational governance for initial shared service projects.	Q4	DES
	133.4	Commence the development of the management structures for Shared Services.	Q4	DES
134		Begin the phased implementation of shared services for ETBs.		DES
	134.1	Establish a Legal Shared Services Centre of Excellence to support the ETB sector.	Q2	DES
	134.2	Begin the phased implementation of Payroll shared service for ETBs.	Q3	DES
	134.3	Begin the phased implementation of Finance shared service for ETBs.	Q4	DES
135		Initiate engagement with the ETB sector in relation to the next phase of the organisation design.	Q1	DES
136		Develop a plan to support and enable continued integration across the ETB sector and prepare for the advent of shared services.	Q2	DES
137		Exploit the capabilities of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for the benefit of the Department's business units and customers.		DES
	137.1	Introduce on-line application for appeals to the Student Grant Appeals Board.	Q1	DES, CDETB (SUSI)
	137.2	Develop and implement pre-enrolments facility on the Primary Online Database.	Q2	DES
	137.3	Develop and implement online School Transport Appeals application.	Q2	Bus Éireann
	137.4	Implement eSubmissions, developed by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), under the Build to Share strand of the Public Service ICT Strategy.	Q2	OGCIO
	137.5	Implement eCorrespondence, developed by the OGCIO, under the Build to Share strand of the Public Service ICT Strategy.	Q4	OGCIO

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
	137.6	Deliver the Department's ICT Strategy 2015 – 2019, which prioritises innovation, integrated systems, strengthened information governance, improved customer experience, costs optimisation, and reusable applications.	Q4	DES
	137.7	Enhance the Post-Primary Online Database to facilitate the implementation of the Junior Cycle Reform programme, allowing for the input of short courses and assessments, followed by the generation of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement.	Q4	DES
	137.8	Continued support for the school employee payrolls to provide for statutory changes, new or changes to existing policies etc.	Q4	DES
	137.9	Continue ICT support for business critical applications including the financial management System, pupil databases, Inspectorate Management Information System, website etc.	Q4	DES
138		Provide safe, efficient and cost effective school transport services for eligible children.		DES
	138.1	Review criteria and guidelines for the School Transport Appeals Board.	Q2	DES
	138.2	Work with Bus Éireann to transport in the region of 114,000 children, including some 10,000 children with special educational needs on a daily basis for the 2017/18 school year.	Q4	Bus Éireann
139		Lead industrial relations negotiations on behalf of the Department and the education sector and provide industrial relations and employment law advice to the Minister, Departmental colleagues and sector employers.	Q4	Various partners
140		Manage the Department's Human Resources effectively.		DES
	140.1	Develop new Workforce Plan for the period 2017-2019.	Q1	DES
	140.2	Manage the employment of staff with disabilities and report to National Disability Authority via DPER, in accordance with Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005.	Q1	DES
	140.3	Monitor Performance Management across the Department and provide Annual Report regarding Performance Management to DPER.	Q2	DES
	140.4	Provide staff training and development opportunities.	Q4	DES
	140.5	Monitor Staffing Numbers in the context of Delegated Sanction and provide quarterly reports to DPER.	Q4	DES

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
	140.6	Develop new HR Strategy.	Q4	DES
141		Implement the Civil Service Renewal Plan, in line with DPER requirements.		DES
	141.1	Conduct Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey within the DES.	Q3	DES
	141.2	Coordinate DES participation in the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards.	Q4	DES
	141.3	Increase DES participation in Civil Service Mobility arrangements.	Q4	DES
142		Improve business processes using the Business Process Improvement (BPI) Lean Six Sigma methodology.		DES
	142.1	Publish a BPI Internal Communications Plan.	Q1	DES
	142.2	Complete Phase 1 of School Transport - Remote Area Grant BPI project and commence Phase 2.	Q2	DES
	142.3	Complete Phase 1 of Special Education - Home Tuition BPI project and commence Phase 2.	Q3	DES
143		Manage EU co-financed programmes and exploit co-financing opportunities.		DES
	143.1	Certify final expenditure under the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2007-2013 co -financed by the EU through the ESF.	Q1	SOLAS, HEA, ETBs, HEIs, DJE, DSP
	143.2	Certify final expenditure under the EGF Lufthansa technik Airmotive Ireland co-financed by the EU.	Q1	SOLAS, HEA, ETBs, HEIs, LEOs, DSP
	143.3	Designate the Managing and Certifying Authorities for the PEIL 2014 -2020 co-financed by the EU through the ESF and the YEI.	Q2	DES
	143.4	Publish Mid-Term Evaluation of Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014 - 2020 (PEIL).	Q4	DES
	143.5	Verify final expenditure under the EGF PWA International Programme co-financed by the EU.	Q4	SOLAS, HEA, ETBs, HEIs, LEOs, DSP
144		Develop the Department's response to the potential impact of Brexit on our education system and to the delivery of the Action Plan for Education 2016 - 2019.		DES

No.		Actions and sub-actions	Quarter	Delivered by
	144.1	Consultation with education sector and input to Second Plenary Civic Dialogue on Brexit.	Q1	HEA, QQI, IRC, SOLAS, Teaching Council and others
	144.2	Ensure inclusion of education priorities in Irish Government negotiations with EU/UK in relation to Brexit.	Q2	DES
	144.3	Further consultation with sector as positions on issues emerge during the Brexit negotiation phase.	Q4	HEA, QQI, IRC, SOLAS, Teaching Council and others
145		Enhance the standard of customer services within the Department.		DES
	145.1	Review the Department's Customer Charter with a view to improving the quality of the interaction between the Department and its stakeholders.	Q2	DES
	145.2	Commence pilot of the OGCIO eCorrespondence application which aims to improve the tracking and management of incoming correspondence and outgoing responses.	Q3	DES
	145.3	Monitor customer satisfaction through regular requests for feedback on the Department's website.	Q4	DES

Goal 5: Improve national planning and support services – Targets and Indicators

Goal	Measure	Target / Indicator
Improve national planning and support services	Deliver the Action Plan for Education and strengthen strategic oversight, evaluation, data and governance	Action Plan for education 2017 published
		Review of 2016 activity under Action Plan for Education 2016- 2019 published in 2017
		Quarterly progress reports on Action Plan, Programme for Government and IRDP published
		Annual Integrated Reform Delivery Plan published
		Department's Data Strategy published in 2017
		A review of corporate governance processes and procedures of agencies under the Department's aegis is undertaken in 2017, with review findings and recommendations provided to each agency
	Sustainable funding models	Over 4,000 primary and post-primary schools provided with Grant funding in 2017 for operational matters and administrative support
		Review of higher education funding model completed in 2017
	Infrastructure	Over 6,000 school transport routes provided in 2017
		Additional 17,000 permanent primary school places in 2017
		Additional 6,000 permanent post-primary school places in 2017
		182 extension/refurbishment projects at primary level being progressed under 6 year programme (2016-2021)
		114 extension/refurbishment projects at post- primary level being progressed under 6 year programme (2016-2021)
		10 new post primary schools and four new primary schools being progressed under 6 year programme (2016-2021)
		Progress on €200m worth of Public Private Partnership projects in the Higher Education sector
		Transport, in conjunction with bus Eireann, approximately 114,000 children including approximately 10,000 children with special educational needs on a daily basis.

Goal	Measure	Target / Indicator
Improve national planning and support services	New ways of working including shared services	Shared Services Plan 2017 - 2019 published Phased Implementation of Payroll shared service for ETBs commenced 2017 Phased Implementation of finance shared service FOR ETBs commenced 2018 HR/ Payroll ICT system for IOT's upgraded in Higher Education in preparation for Shared Services Commencement of Financial Services Support Unit (FSSU) service at primary level in 2017
	Exploiting ICT	Department's ICT Strategy 2015 - 2019 delivered by end 2019 Post-Primary Online Database allows for the input of short courses and assessments, and the generation of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement by end 2017 Online application for appeals to the Student Grant Appeals Board implemented in 2017 Online School Transport Appeals application developed and implemented in 2017 Pre-enrolments facility on the Primary Online Database developed and implemented in 2017
	Operate the largest payroll in the State	103,000 salary (72,000 serving staff including 1,500 home tutors) and pension (29,000 retired staff) Payments issued on a fortnightly basis. Process 2.5 million transactions annually through the online claim system (absence management and claims for substitution)

Appendix 1- Bodies under the aegis of the Department
1. An Chomhairle um Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)
2. Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA)
3. Educational Research Centre (ERC)
4. Grangegorman Development Agency (GGDA)
5. Higher Education Authority (HEA)
6. Irish Research Council (IRC)
7. Léargas - The Exchange Bureau
8. National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)
9. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)
10. National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
11. Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
12. Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB)
13. Residential Institutions Review Committee (RIRC)
14. Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board/RISF – Caranua
15. Skillnets Ltd
16. SOLAS An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
17. State Examinations Commission (SEC)
18. The Teaching Council

Appendix 2: Acronyms	
AC	Arts Council
AP- Ed 2016- 2019	Action Plan for Education 2016- 2019
AP- Ed 2017	Actin Plan for Education 2017
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DAF	Dormant Accounts Fund
DAHRRG	Department of Arts, Heritage Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DFinance	Department of Finance
DHPCLG	Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government
DJEI	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
DOH	Department of Health
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EGFSN	Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
EPS	Education Procurement Services
EPSEN (Act)	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (Act)
ETB	Education and Training Board
FET	Further Education and Training
GAM	General Allocation Model
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HLIG	High Level Implementation Group for Arts in Education Charter
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison Scheme
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
IOT	Institute of Technology

Appendix 2: Acronyms	
IP	Intellectual Property
IRC	Irish Research Council
ISS	Integrated Support Service
IT	Information Technology
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
IUA	Irish Universities' Association
JC	Junior Certificate
JCT	Junior Cycle for Teachers
LC	Leaving Certificate
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NFETL	National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
PDST- TIE	Professional Development Service for Teachers- Technology in Education
PE	Physical Education
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RGAM	Recurrent Grant Allocation Model
SEC	State Examinations Commission
SEN	Special Education Needs
SENO	Special Education Needs Organiser
SLT	Speech and Language Therapy
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SNE	Special Needs Education
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
SPU	Schools Procurement Unit
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
THEA	Technological Higher Education Association
TU	Technological University
TY	Transition Year

Appendix 3: DES commitments arising from the Programme for a Partnership Government	
Below are commitments assigned to Department of Education and Skills as the Lead Department.	

Com No.	Commitment Description
3.2.3	Invest in skills and training, to allow all to benefit from new opportunities in a recovering economy
4.3.5	To protect the sustainability and viability of rural communities we will not close any small school without the consent of parents. Existing support schemes will remain open for new infrastructural investment in schools.
4.3.7	In partnership with the Apprenticeship Council and industry we will double the number of apprenticeships to provide a total of 31,000 places by 2020 through an annual call for new proposals. We will target over 100 different apprenticeship schemes spread across sectors of the economy and in every region in Ireland.
4.3.21	We will prioritise those institutions with clear ambitions and plans for the furthering of industry-relevant technological research and education. The requirement of a mandatory merger of existing institutions can be reviewed, if a case can be proven, that for geographical reasons, a merger isn't feasible.
6.3.1	An increasing concern in schools and for families, we need to promote awareness and prevention in our education system rather than reacting to incidents. In 2017, Wellbeing will be introduced as a subject in the new Junior Cert curriculum and this is a positive step in raising understanding and awareness amongst teenagers. However, a more thorough understanding of students' own emotional wellbeing is also required
6.3.3	For teaching staff also, we will invest in SafeTALK and ASIST courses
7.4.2	We will examine the adequacy of current special education access and funding provision, in particular for children with Down syndrome and other conditions. We will request the National Council for Special Education to advise on how best to address this. We will also consult with stakeholders to see how best to progress sections of the EPSEN Act that were introduced on a non-statutory basis.
8.1.6	We will also invest additional resources in the National Educational Psychologists Service (NEPS) to ensure earlier intervention and access for young children (and also teenagers).
8.2.8	We must utilise our primary school buildings for afterschool care provision for school age children to offer more options and flexibility to parents. We will link additional capitation to the provision of buildings for afterschool care, where demand exists. Community groups and private providers will be invited to tender to use school facilities (outside school hours).
8.3.2	The introduction of a new Leaving Certificate P.E. syllabus, as a full optional subject.
8.3.7	For teaching staff also, we will support SafeTALK and ASIST courses.

Com No.	Commitment Description
10.0.1	We are committed to investing an extra €500million in education by 2021 through measures including childcare subventions, HSE Speech and Language Therapists, to bring the number up to 1,102 (a 25% increase) additional National Educational Psychologists (NEPs) to the bring the total to 238 (a 25% increase), reducing the pupil teacher ratio in junior and senior infants, annual increases in primary and secondary capitation rates, additional teacher CPD, a new School Excellence Fund, pay increases in accordance with the Lansdowne Road Agreement and extra third level investment. We will also reduce primary school class sizes; reintroduce guidance counselling to secondary schools and increase financial supports for post graduate students with a particular focus on those from low income households. With this investment we will pursue the below principles of access, excellence, transparency and innovation.
10.0.2	We will produce a three year strategy for the Department of Education within the first 100 days and a framework for measuring its progress in consultation with stakeholders.
10.1.2	Reduce the pupil-teacher ratio for junior and senior infants by providing smaller classes, which have the greatest beneficial impact on younger pupils. The gains from smaller class size in early years are shown to carry forward into future years. Research shows pupils are more likely to stay in school longer and earn better results
10.1.4	Providing additional NEPS psychologists to support new intervention strategies for staff and pupils, and offer immediate support to schools in cases of critical incidents
10.2.3	School retention rates are increasing but more can be done to ensure a transition to work or further education for young school leavers. Additional supports to groups working with Early School Leavers will be examined.
10.2.4	We will publish a new updated Action Plan for Educational Inclusion, within 12 months, with particular focus on DEIS schools.
10.2.5	The provision of relevant educational programmes, specifically aimed at early leavers and second chance learners should be made available throughout the year, on a modular basis. We will support an increase in the number of flexible courses available; giving people the opportunity to attend courses part time, during evenings, in the summer and at weekends.
10.3.1	A road map has been agreed for a phased transfer of Catholic schools to new patrons, where the support of communities exists. We will work with all stakeholders to facilitate this process whilst also considering new approaches such as the potential of different patrons on a single site.
10.3.2	We will increase the number of non-denominational and multi-denominational schools with a view to reaching 400 by 2030.
10.3.3	We will publish new School Admissions and Excellence legislation taking account of current draft proposals (publication of school enrolment policies, an end to waiting lists, introduction of annual enrolment structures, and transparency and fairness in admissions for pupils). We will seek to enact this legislation for the start of school year 2017-18.

Com No.	Commitment Description
10.3.4	The role and power of an Ombudsman for Education, to whom a parent could complain and appeal on foot of a decision by a board of management, will be examined by the relevant Oireachtas Committee to ensure its consistency with the need to ensure better local decision making and accountability to parents.
10.3.5	We will ensure that no small school closes against the wishes of parents, while also facilitating those small schools who wish to amalgamate.
10.3.6	Within 3 months, we will commence a review of the teacher appointment thresholds in schools with 4 or less teachers.
10.3.7	We will review the concessionary charges and rules element of the School Transport Scheme prior to Budget 2017. We will review the criteria and guidelines for the School Transport Appeals Board.
10.3.8	We will review the options for standardised testing so that clear information is provided to teachers and parents. Parents should be able to receive annual reports on how their school is doing. Government should also be able to assess how new investments are progressing (e.g. reductions in pupil-teacher ratio, speech & language interventions).
10.3.9	We will introduce a stronger complaints procedure and charter for parents, and commence the Fitness to Teach provisions of the Teaching Council Act (10 years after its enactment).
10.4.1	In promoting excellence and innovation, we will introduce greater flexibility in our schools and pursue measures to achieve this. This may include nurturing different ambitions through new subject choices, greater engagement with enterprise on future skills needs, and increased flexibility in the day to day management of schools in order to improve outcomes. School leadership will be supported in identifying and introducing reforms that drive up educational standards, particularly in the fundamentals of reading, writing and arithmetic.
10.4.2	We will set out capitation rates to schools on a rolling 3-year basis, allowing for forward planning. School management will have the decision making power to allocate these resources as they deem appropriate, including to posts of responsibility.
10.4.3	We will establish a new Schools Excellence Fund, which rewards new approaches driven by teachers and by parents themselves to the benefit of pupils' education. Applications that seek to tackle educational disadvantage will be prioritised.
10.4.4	We will establish a pool of experts (educators, employers, accountants, business leaders, IT specialists etc.) to assist school initiatives, promote innovation and enterprise engagement especially at second level.
10.4.5	As part of the Digital Strategy, we will introduce new technology bringing remote learning into classrooms, ensuring all students have access to a wider range of subject choices and consistent quality education.
10.4.6	We will invest in additional continuous professional development for teachers, to ensure they are supported throughout their careers, and are best placed to respond to the developing challenges that their students face. Newly appointed school principals will take a preparation course in advance of taking up their role.

Com No.	Commitment Description
10.4.7	In order to improve student's outcomes and school performance, we will examine the potential for measures to assist teaching principals.
10.4.8	We will also incentivise voluntary school participation in new "Local Education Clusters" that encourage schools to improve student outcomes by sharing best practice and school improvement experiences, foster collaborative in and out-of-hours initiatives, staff peer mentoring and leadership, and that allow for cost reductions through economies of scale.
10.5.1	The curriculum is evolving. In 2016, we need to focus on the future needs, abilities and capacity of students. Focus must remain on literacy and maths, but new subjects should be introduced such as the arts, entrepreneurial education, and mental health awareness.
10.5.2	We will further accelerate the Digital and ICT agenda in schools by including a coding course for the Junior Cycle and introducing ICT/Computer Science as a Leaving Certificate subject.
10.5.3	We will also introduce a new Leaving Certificate P.E. syllabus as a full subject.
10.5.4	Guidance counselling at secondary level will be enhanced.
10.5.5	We will evaluate transition supports available to young people at all levels of the education, with a view to promoting initiatives which support young people at critical points in their lives. Transition Year, in particular, will be used to prepare young people with key skills before they make the transition to higher education or work. We will work with industry and colleges to open up new opportunities and programmes in transition year.
10.5.6	The relevant Oireachtas Committee will be requested to review the recommendations contained in the forthcoming STEM report and outline the way forward in implementing a National Strategy to develop competence in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths.
10.5.7	We will benchmark entrepreneurial activity in Irish higher education and work with the Higher Education Authority to ensure an ambitious and implementable plan to identify and address skills gaps, ICT and STEM needs.
10.6.1	We are committed to delivering a school capital investment programme for extensions/refurbishments, additional school places, and eliminating the use of prefabs. Significant funding has been secured as part of the Capital Plan.
10.6.2	We support an annual application process for the Minor Works and Summer Works schemes.
10.6.3	In addition we will introduce a new funding mechanism for low cost safety measures for primary schools such as car parks and bus lay-bys.
10.6.4	Schools buildings must be utilised out of hours if they are to remain at the centre of communities into the future, both throughout the day and throughout the year, including better utilisation of information technology. Afterschool care, homework clubs and other community activities should be permissible. Additional capitation funding will be linked to the availability of afterschool care options, where demand exists.

Com No.	Commitment Description
10.7.1	We will examine the adequacy of current special education access and funding provision, in particular for children with Down syndrome. We will request the National Council for Special Education advice on how best to address this. Where efficiencies are made as part of this review, consideration is to be given to the extension of the July Provision Programme to support families over summer months.
10.7.2	We will also consult with stakeholders to see how best to progress sections of the EPSEN Act that were introduced on a non-statutory basis.
10.7.4	We will also invest additional resources in the National Educational Psychologists Service (NEPS) to ensure earlier intervention and access for young children (and also teenagers), and offer immediate support to schools in cases of critical incidents.
10.8.1	We will change the structures of the Department of Education to ensure it operates as a dynamic policy leader focused on quality education and improving outcomes for every student.
10.8.2	We support the creation of Technological Universities, linked to industry and with the capacity to create and retain jobs in regions.
10.8.3	We will implement the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, published in December 2015.
10.8.4	We will support an increase in the number of flexible courses and opportunities available; giving people the opportunity to attend courses part time, during evenings, in the summer and at weekends. We support the introduction of mid-degree "sandwich year" courses, whereby students spend their third year of university working in industry.
10.8.5	Together with the Apprenticeship Council, SOLAS, the Education and Training Boards, and industry, we will double the number of apprenticeships by 2020. We will also significantly increase the number of traineeship places. We will develop a mechanism to recognise a person's practical work experience and expertise in order to enable them to take on an apprentice.
10.8.6	Create financial incentives for the third level system to respond to skills gaps
10.8.7	Invite industry to partner in the delivery elements of the curricula at third and fourth levels
10.8.8	Create a strong system for the delivery and renewal of skills in newly emerging technical areas (including apprenticeships, traineeships, and in service progression)
10.8.9	Significant exchequer resources are invested in both current and capital spending in the Higher Education sector. Following the publication of the Expert Group report on the Future Funding of the Higher Education Sector, we will propose that the relevant cross party Oireachtas Committee review its recommendations and outline a proposed funding plan for this sector.
10.8.10	We will propose an examination of the efficiency and operation of SUSI in parallel with this report, including the potential of providing SUSI liaison personnel in each region

Com No.	Commitment Description
10.8.11	We support new flexibility for appropriate higher education institutions within strict budgets, transparency and new accountability agreements, to set their own staffing needs, hire the best lecturers, automate routine processes and adapt work practices to staff and student needs. By allowing universities more flexibilities and 'earned autonomy' they can prioritise and address issues themselves for the improvement of their institution, and the creation of a new relationship with students.
10.8.12	We will do this by initiating a Review of the Further, Adult and Community Education sector by the Oireachtas Committee on Education and an implementation of reforms to ensure the effectiveness of the sector.
10.8.13	We will also commission an independent examination to identify the supports and barriers to accessing higher education for lone parents, and examine measures to increase participation. The recommendations of this report are to be published in advance of Budget 2017
11.14.1	We will examine the adequacy of current special education access and funding provision, in particular for children with Down syndrome. We will request the National Council for Special Education to advise on how best to address this. We will also consult with stakeholders to see how best to progress sections of the EPSEN Act that were introduced on a non-statutory basis.
11.14.2	We will publish an updated Action Plan for Educational Inclusion to narrow the gap between DEIS and non-DEIS schools, and examine how students outside of DEIS can be better supported.
11.15.1	We will publish new School Admissions and Excellence legislation providing families with fairer access to their local schools.
11.17.2	We will review implementation of the National Action Plan on Bullying in our schools.
14.1.9	We will publish a new updated Action Plan for Educational Inclusion, within 12 months, with particular focus on DEIS schools.
14.1.10	We will also implement a national access programme for higher education to boost college numbers from families without a history of third-level education, as well as mature students.

ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION

2017