End Year Review of Action Plan for Education 2017

1.0   Background and Introduction

"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 to deliver a stronger economy"

Richard Bruton, Minister for Education Action Plan for Education 2017

Action Plan for Education 2017 is the first annual action plan under the broader strategic framework of the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 which was published in September 2016. Underpinning the three-year framework is an ambitious sector-wide reform programme the vision for which is for Ireland to become the best education system in Europe by 2026. The reform programme is designed to equip learners with the skills and knowledge that they need to achieve their potential and to participate fully in society and the economy.

To achieve this ambition our commitment is to build on the successes of the past and the strengths of the Irish Education system and to actively address those areas where there is room for improvement.

The environment in which we operate is both challenging and complex. Political change both nationally and internationally including Brexit; the recovering and growing economy and the related changes in demands for skills and growing demand for upskilling and training for those in employment; the projected changes in demographics and their impact on enrolments and demands for places in Further Education and Training and in Higher Education, all present challenges and opportunities for Education and Training policy and provision. We are also part of a wider programme of public and civil service reform and must deliver on these and other Programme for Government commitments.

Our central vision is that, through adopting a "whole-of-system" approach, the Irish education and training system should lead in innovation and a broad range of endeavours and that we will harness education and training to break down barriers for groups at risk of exclusion and set the benchmark for social inclusion. Through this approach our ambition is that we will deliver to the highest international standards and prepare learners of all ages to participate and succeed in a changing world.

The 2016-2019 Strategy and annual action plans allow the various strategy and policy developments to be considered in an integrated way, to identify key actions over the next period and to allow an assessment of progress to be made over time. Since the launch of the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 and Statement of Strategy, we have made real progress towards achieving our goals and objectives. 86% of actions targeted for delivery by the end of 2017 have been achieved or substantially achieved.

Reports on progress during 2017 have been published every quarter and are available on the Department's website www.education.ie As set out in the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019, an updated annual Action Plan will be published each year and Action Plan 2018 is being published in tandem with this short review of progress for 2017.

2.0   Strengthening strategic vision across the continuum of education and training

A range of national education and training strategies underpin and drive the significant changes that are being planned and implemented across the continuum of education. A "whole-of-system" approach enables the integration these strategies and monitors their progress as they each contribute towards the stated vision for education and training. In 2017 work on the following strategies was advanced:

Key Strategies
STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026
Languages Connect, Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026
National Strategy on Literacy and Numeracy for learning and Life 2011-2020
National Skills Strategy 2025
Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020
Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022
Ireland's International Education Strategy 2016-2020
Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019
National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030
Framework for Junior Cycle
National Strategy on Education for Sustainable development in Ireland 2014-2020
20-Year Strategy for the Irish language 2010-2030
Shared Services Strategy 2017-2020
DEIS 2017 (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools)
Resource Teacher Allocation Model

2.1   Significant strategies revised and/or developed and published in 2017

'Languages Connect', Ireland's **Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026 and Implementation Plan 2017-2022** sets out an ambitious roadmap and targets to put Ireland in the top ten countries in Europe for the teaching and learning of foreign languages, through a number of measures targeted at improving proficiency, diversity and immersion. Delivery of the strategy is crucial to ensuring Ireland is prepared for a changed European dynamic following Brexit and the increasing importance of non-English speaking countries globally. A key part of this strategy is not

only increasing the numbers of children taking up a foreign language, but also diversifying the range of languages available to schools and increasing students' depth of knowledge in a language. Implementation of the new strategy will require significant changes to how foreign languages were taught in the past and will require an increase in the number of foreign language teachers.

STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026 and Implementation Plan 2017-2019 is aimed at making Ireland a European leader in STEM education by 2026. Learners must be equipped with analytical, creativity and critical thinking skills to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. The plan includes an increased focus on encouraging traditionally under-represented groups, such as females, to participate in STEM activities; it looks at increasing links between the education system and industry enhancing the supports in place to ensure teachers feel confident to embrace STEM. There is significant work already taking place around STEM education in areas such as curriculum and assessment reform including the introduction of the new Leaving Certificate Computer Science subject and the development of a new primary Mathematics curriculum, including elements relating to computational thinking, creative thinking skills and coding.

An interim review of the National Strategy: **Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011 – 2020** was published in 2017. The Interim Review has shown the considerable progress made, at the mid-way point in the Strategy. Findings from studies such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) highlight progress made in reading and Mathematics. While the results and trends are very positive and encouraging it is clear that there is still room for improvement. Ambitious new targets for literacy and numeracy in schools were identified in the interim review. The updated targets are particularly ambitious in the numeracy area. Specific targets are also set, for the first time, for literacy and numeracy within disadvantaged schools. This development is underpinned by the publication of the DEIS Plan 2017. There is also an increased emphasis on higher-achieving students and on embedding achievements in literacy, in particular literacy for and through the Irish language, and also on enhancing the digital literacy skills of learners.

2.2   Major policy and process reforms in 2017

A key goal in the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 is to become the best in Europe at harnessing education to break down barriers and break the cycle of inter-generational disadvantage by equipping learners to participate, succeed and contribute effectively to society in a changing world.

The ongoing evaluation of the **DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools)** programme, in operation since 2005, has shown real improvements in terms of educational outcomes for students involved and in their progression through school. In June the Educational Research Centre published its latest evaluation report on DEIS which showed continuing improvements in reading and mathematics amongst students in DEIS schools.

A review of DEIS, which led to the development of DEIS Plan 2017, also identified areas for improvement which signpost the way ahead, including a renewed focus on school planning and measuring outcomes; renewed effort for improved literacy and numeracy to address achievement levels in DEIS schools; focus on supporting transitions across the education continuum; enhancement of NEPS provision to better support pupils and teachers in DEIS schools and supporting vulnerable groups who are at a particular risk of poor engagement in school and early school leaving. DEIS 2017, sets out new goals to be achieved in terms of improved outcomes for children including narrowing the gap between DEIS and non-DEIS schools in attendance, achievement and retention to ensure better educational outcomes and in developing better

progression pathways for learners in DEIS schools. The Plan has also put in place a new data based model to assess levels of disadvantage in schools to identify schools needing additional supports; provides for piloting of new approaches, under the Schools Excellence Fund, which will inform programme inputs over time and includes a particular focus on inter-agency collaboration with other Departments and Agencies to improve services to schools for optimal impact and to realise stated national outcomes.

DEIS Plan 2017 was published in early 2017 and a new methodology for the identification of schools using data provided by schools combined with Census based socio economic data as represented by the Pobal HP Index was implemented. This resulted in 109 schools being identified for additional supports under DEIS. The DEIS Plan 2017 presents an ambitious set of objectives and more than 100 actions to support children who are at greatest risk of educational disadvantage. These actions will ensure that the targets set will be achieved and learners most at risk of disadvantage will experience improved outcomes. A more effective system of resource allocation is being developed to ensure that resources are matched to identified educational need in schools and that those in greatest need receive additional supports to address the needs identified. A monitoring and evaluation framework is also being developed to gather better information on school performance and the effectiveness or impact of particular interventions which will inform decisions on resource allocation and future policy direction for educational disadvantage.

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

New Junior Cycle subjects and first Junior Cycle Profiles of Achievement awarded.

The new Junior Cycle provides students with opportunities to develop a wider range of knowledge and skills, it rewards and recognises non-academic performance and achievements and places a central focus on the student's quality of life, wellbeing and mental health.   It is designed to equip students for further learning, for work, for responsible and active citizenship, and for healthy living. New Junior Cycle specifications for Irish, Modern Foreign Languages and Visual Art were introduced in September and a new Junior Cycle Wellbeing programme also commenced. The **first Junior Cycle Profiles of Achievement were awarded in 2017**. The JCPA includes a student's results in State Examinations, in Classroom Based Assessments, their participation in a short course and any other additional aspects of a student's achievement.

Gaeltacht schools recognition process active

The Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme was launched during the year. The scheme is aimed at ensuring that schools in Gaeltacht areas are properly supported to flourish as centres of excellence for education through the Irish language. It has been positively received with nearly 80% of eligible primary schools and 96% of eligible post-primary schools choosing to commence planning towards the implementation of specific language criteria in the Gaeltacht school recognition journey and receive extra supports. A tendering process is underway for Irish-medium B. Ed and M. Ed teacher education programmes designed to enhance the quality and supply of primary and post-primary teachers who can deliver high quality Irish medium education and realise the *Policy on Gaeltacht Education* objective of improving the quality of Irish-medium education. Planning is underway to develop a pilot digital e-hub to enhance the school experience for students attending post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht to provide a wider and more equitable choice of subject options through Irish which are available to them through the use of technology.

First transfer of school patronage under new Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process

Under existing arrangements for new schools, when a demographic need for a new school has been identified, a process is conducted to allow for different patrons bodies to be considered as the patron of the new school. It is open to all patrons and prospective patrons to apply under this process. In 2017 seven new schools were established, three new primary schools which were all multi-denominational and four new post-primary schools.

Providing greater diversity of school patronage is more challenging where the opening of a new schools is not warranted by demographic growth. The report of the advisory group to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector, which was published in April 2012, recommended steps that could be taken to ensure that the education system would provide a sufficiently diverse number and range of primary schools to cater for all religions and none. In 2017 a new Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process was announced which will support transfers of schools to multi-denominational patrons in response to the wishes of local families, based around principles of transparency and co-operation. Two Mile National School outside Killarney in Kerry was the first school to voluntarily announce its transfer under the new process. As an "early mover" under the process, it announced in June that it would re-open under the ETB's patronage as a community national school from September 2017. Development of the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process, currently being progressed, will facilitate further transfers of school patronage in the future.

Encouraging excellence and innovation through the Schools Excellence Fund

The School Excellence Fund (SEF), targeted primarily at DEIS schools, was introduced in 2017 to support and reward innovative practice in schools. The SEF aims to encourage schools to work in clusters to explore and apply new, innovative solutions to tackle educational disadvantage and to improve learning outcomes for students. The Schools Excellence Fund-Step Up project proposal will be developed and agreed in early 2018 between the Inspectorate and JCT. Advisory visits will be piloted in a number of main stream schools at the end of 2018. These visits will advance collaborative working between post-primary schools, the Inspectorate and JCT support service that will encourage self-evaluation and improvement in teaching and learning in selected priority areas. A new Digital stream of the Fund has recently been added. The SEF-Digital supports clusters of

schools to collaborate and work together in exciting ways on projects related to teaching and learning using digital technologies.

Focus on Wellbeing including New Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme

There are growing societal concerns about the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people and the impact of bullying in schools. These have focussed attention on the role schools can play to help students develop resilience and coping skills, to better equip them to manage the social and emotional challenges of modern living.   Work in 2017 included a review of DES policy and practice relating to the promotion of wellbeing in schools and the development of wellbeing indicators. NEPS psychologists provided advice and support to schools in relation to the promotion of children's mental health and wellbeing, as well as training in evidence based programmes to promote social and emotional competence and resilience. The theme of **wellbeing** is evident in the curriculum at all levels, early years, primary and post-primary. Wellbeing as an area of learning has been introduced from September 2017 to schools commencing with all students in the first year of Junior Cycle. This area of learning is supported by a CPD programme for teachers. Work also continued to embed anti-bullying policies across the system. The inspectorate continued to monitor schools' implementation of policies and procedures to support students' well-being, and on the actions taken by schools to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying. The inspectorate also reviewed the module in wellbeing in the Early Years inspection framework and education focussed inspections continued to report on wellbeing provision in all early years settings inspected.

Embracing Technology

The Digital Strategy for Schools was published in 2016 and sets out to realise the potential of digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment so that Ireland's young people become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens to paticipate fully in society and the economy. Progress in 2017 included work on modernising the curriculum and paving the way for inclusion of clear statements on the use of digital technologies and the development of digital skills in all curricula. Initial work has commenced on the development of a new maths curriculum for primary schools and will include computational, flexible and creative thinking skills; Computer Science will be introduced as a Leaving certificate subject from September 2018; research is being conducted to explore approaches to coding in an Irish context and two short courses "programming and coding" and digital media literacy are available at Junior Cycle. A Digital Learning Framework for teachers and school leaders is being trialled and digital technologies are being embedded across the continuum of teacher education including the inclusion of ICT as a mandatory element for Initial Teacher Education; guidance on effective use of digital technologies in teaching and learning in the National Induction Programme for newly qualified teachers; embedding digit technologies in Department funded CPD programmes and workshops and exemplars of good and leading practices on line are available to all teachers. Significant progress has also been made on strengthening the ICT infrastructure in both primary and post-primary schools. All post primary schools have high speed broadband; over 1000 primary schools have broadband with speeds of 30mbs or more; an interdepartmental working group has been established to determine how best to address broadband connectivity to primary schools and the Department is working in collaboration with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE). 30m euro in ICT infrastructure grants was distributed to schools for the 2016/2017 year and a procurement framework has been established for the purchase of Desktop PCs and Laptops.

The Department continued to work with SOLAS on the implementation of the first Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy 2016-2019 to build on existing capacity and good practice in technology-enhanced learning, to expand access and improve and innovate FET provision. Progress in 2017

included the development of *Technology Enhanced Learning Action Plans* in each ETB to provide for infrastructure, pedagogy and CPD as well as the development of a content sharing and management infrastructure to facilitate sharing and development of learning resources amongst teachers. The strategy creates a framework for Education and Training Boards to offer a greater number of training programmes online, supplementing those offered through eCollege, the national online learning service (www.ecollege.ie) which planned online provision for almost 9,000 learners in 2017.

Child Protection Procedures

New provisions of the Children First Act which became law in early December sets out new reporting requirements for registered teachers and requires schools to produce a Child Safeguarding Statement which articulates a school's commitment to keep children safe from harm. The Department has updated and published its child protection procedures for schools which take into account the new statutory mandated reporting and child safeguarding requirements. These procedures include templates to assist schools in preparing, and publishing their Child Safeguarding Statement.

Transitions including new grading system for leaving certificate and a new common points system

A new grading system and new common points scheme for the leaving Certificate was introduced in 2017 as part of the reform programme to improve the transitions process to support students in the transition from second-level into higher education. Over 58,000 students sat the leaving Certificate Examinations in 2017 and were marked under the new 8 band grading scale and 80,345 applicants to the CAO in 2017 were scored using the new Common Points Scale. Further measures to address broadening undergraduate entry are included in the new Systems Performance Framework for higher education and arrangements are in place to monitor and report on the progress of HEIs in reducing the number of entry routes into higher education. There were 964 CAO offerings at level 8 in 2017 (Universities offering 529, Institutes of Technology 412 and Colleges 23 entry routes). This is down from 1036 in 2014. A Research Sub-Group on Transition Reform has been set up to establish a strong evidence base to monitor the effect and impact of the transition reform process.

The new Skills Architecture

A new National Skills Strategy to 2025 (NSS) was published in 2016 and implementation of the Strategy is ongoing. The Strategy has over 125 measures and over 50 different stakeholders and it provides a framework for skills development that will help drive Ireland's growth both economically and societally over the next decade. This architecture is designed to foster closer collaboration between relevant Government Departments and agencies and develop structures to strengthen engagement between the education and training system and enterprise. Two key structural elements of the architecture, the launch of the National Skills Council which is chaired by Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton, T.D., and 9 Regional Skills Fora and 9 Regional Skills Managers took place in April 2017. The new architecture builds on the strengths of the existing arrangements for identification of skills needs, provides a mechanism for mediating demands in a manner that facilitates prioritisation within the identified needs, while at the same time enhancing the education and training provider responses to identified skills needs and ensuring delivery on priorities.

The National Skills Council provides a mechanism to mediate demands across the full range of needs identified through the research and analysis conducted under its direction. The Council oversees research, advises on prioritisation of identified skills needs and on how to secure delivery of identified needs and plays a key role in promoting and reporting on the delivery of responses by

education and training providers to those priorities. It is an advisory, non-statutory body under the remit of the Department of Education and Skills and the members of the Council are drawn from senior levels in the public and private sector.

A network of 9 Regional Skills Fora has been created as a mechanism for employers and the further and higher education and training system to work together in responding to the skills needs of their regions. Key objectives are to help employers better understand and access the full range of services available across the education and training system, to have more informed dialogue with employers to inform programme planning and to improve links between education and training providers in planning and delivering programmes, reduce duplication and inform national funding decisions.

Springboard+ which incorporates the ICT skills conversion programme, complements the core State-funded education and training system and provides free upskilling and reskilling higher education opportunities in areas of identified skills need. Springboard+ 2017 will provide for 6,471 places on 208 courses over the academic year 2017/18. 90% of Springboard+ courses (with the exception of entrepreneurship-based courses) have a work placement. Under Springboard+ 2017, the eligibility criteria was expanded to include homemakers and those in employment or self-employment who wish to upskill, reskill or cross skill in the Biopharma/Med Tech sector and those in employment, or self-employment in the ICT sector who wish to upskill from a level 7 to a level 8 qualification.

The **Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland** sets ambitious targets for the growth of work based learning, involving strong partnerships between employers, higher education and further education and training providers. During 2017 work continued on the revision of existing Craft Apprenticeship and the development of new national apprenticeships. A second call for new apprenticeships took place and 26 new national apprenticeships have been approved for further development in areas ranging from Animation to Healthcare. A review of pathways to participation in apprenticeship has been commenced.

In addition 8 new career traineeships have now been developed with over 230 enrolments to the end of 2017. Traineeships are now available across a range of industries, including care, construction, engineering, fashion and beauty, finance, ICT, sports and logistics. A new Five-Step Guide to Traineeship was launched on 16 November aimed at employers seeking practical information on how to develop a traineeship within their company. As part of expansion of traineeship nationally, the eligibility requirements have been expanded to include a broader group of potential participants, including those who are in employment.

2.3 Key Enablers of future development

Budget 2018

An increase of 5.8% in the budget allocation for education and training was secured in Budget 2018. This will bring the budget for the Department of Education and Skills to €10.085 billion, its highest ever level. The capital allocation for 2018 will be €745 million.

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

where educational disadvantage needs are identified, to deliver equality of opportunity in schools. Funding was made available to support a range of policy initiatives of strategic economic importance, including foreign languages, STEM policy and digital learning. Additional funding was allocated as part of the Government's Creative Ireland programme and to continue the rollout of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022. Funding was allocated from the Exchequer and also from within the Department's existing resources to advance Junior Cycle reform and curricular reform in the areas of primary language and at Senior Cycle, Politics & Society, Agricultural Science, Applied Maths, Physical Education, Computer Science and Science.

The Budget will allow a significant investment to be made in higher and further education and training. The National Training Fund levy will be raised by 0.1% in 2018 to 0.8% and by a further 0.1% in both 2019 and 2020. This measure allows for additional expenditure of €47.5 million from the NTF in 2018. The final two increases will be subject to the implementation of the necessary reforms to ensure that employers have a greater role in determining the priorities and the strategic direction of the Fund. Together with a €17 million additional investment from the Exchequer this will allow a higher and further education training package worth €64.5 million. This will build on last year's Exchequer investment of €36.5 million. A range of reforms will be introduced to the National Training Fund in response to issues raised by employers as part of the consultation process on the Employer-Exchequer Investment Mechanism. This includes an independent review of the National Training Fund, greater alignment of the NTF with employer needs, including increasing "in employment" programmes to €154 million in 2018 (from €106 million in 2017) and the inclusion of certain higher education provision of direct relevance to employers, significant additional and refocused funding on skills programmes, giving a greater say for employers and enhancing transparency and evaluation.

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

Higher Education Funding

The Expert Group's Report (Cassells Report) which was published in July 2016, clearly outlines the funding challenges in the higher education sector and offers a number of approaches and recommendations for consideration. As committed to in the Programme for Government, the report has been referred to the Oireachtas Joint Committee for Education and Skills as part of the process for formulating a plan for the future of the sector.

The Department has been working in the interim to secure additional funding for higher education. This commitment is reflected in Budget 2018 announcement as outlined above. This additional funding will allow for targeted initiatives in higher education including skills programmes, performance and innovation funding, technological university development and apprenticeship costs in the sector. It will also allow for places to be provided for 2,100 additional students in 2018.

In 2016 the Department also approved a review of the current allocation model for funding higher education and an independent Expert Panel was appointed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA)

to undertake this role. The report of the Expert Panel which was published on 15th January 2018 provides a roadmap for transitioning towards a reformed universal funding model that is more transparent, consistent across higher education institutions, that incentivises actions in key strategic areas such as research and STEM provision, and supports improved accountability while also respecting institutional autonomy.

Meeting the demand for new schools and addition school places

A total of 46 large scale projects were completed in 2017. These projects comprised 35 new school buildings and 11 large scale extensions. These projects delivered over 13,200 additional school places as well as almost 5,600 replacement school places. The additional school places provided in 2017 will assist in meeting the requirement outlined in the Capital Plan - Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021.

Progress on the legislative programme

Two major pieces of legislation to underpin the Department's strategy and reform programme were advanced significantly during 2017. The Technological Universities Bill will give effect to the recommendations set out in the National Strategy for Higher Education with regard to the Institute of Technology sector, including the development of a new Technological University model. It is anticipated that this Bill will complete Report stage in the Dáil in January 2018 and will proceed to the Seanad and enactment soon afterwards. Two consortia of Institutes of Technology are awaiting the enactment of this legislation with the intention of proceeding to the application stage for Technological University designation in 2018. The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill to ensure a more structured, fair and transparent decision making process by schools on enrolment has completed Committee Stage in the Dáil and will progress to Report Stage early in 2018. It is anticipated that enactment will take place during 2018.

Other legislation progressed during 2017 includes work on the Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill to provide for a Parent and Student Charter in every school and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill which will amend the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 to address some issues that have arisen regarding the scope of QQI's responsibilities in relation to recognition of awards and regulation of private and voluntary providers; to ensure adequate protection of enrolled learners where providers discontinue a programme; and to give greater authority to Institutes of Technology to award Level 9 qualifications.

Advancing the Shared Services agenda

The shared services initiative to deliver payroll and finance to the 16 Education and Training Boards have made good progress in 2017. The payroll project has moved to implementation phase and is in the final stages of procuring the IT system to operation the shared services payroll. 2018 will see the migration of the ETBs to the shared services model for payroll. The finance project is currently preparing an RFT to procure the IT system for the finance solution for the ETBs. The shared services for the ETBs will be delivered from the Education Shared Business Services Centre which is currently being established in Blanchardstown and recruitment of operations staff is in progress. Work has also advanced on payroll shared services for the Higher Education sector, with the upgrade of payroll software through EduCampus for the Institutes of Technology stabilising services for that sector, the on boarding of a dedicated project team to drive the reforms and the identification of a pilot University site for transition payroll shared services. It is expected that this momentum will continue into 2018 and beyond bringing benefits as these initiatives embed.

Significant progress has been made in procurement reform in 2017, with the further development of the Education Procurement Service, working towards an Education and Training sector wide procurement shared service, in line with the Office of Government Procurement model

Section 3: Progress towards the achievement of the five strategic goals

1.0   GOAL 1: Improve the learning experience and the success of learners

Goal 1 is about building learning environments for all learners that promote health, wellbeing and personal development. Positive, agile and responsive environments provide opportunities for all learners to fully participate, and get maximum benefit from, their education and training experience. Development and review of curriculum and assessment, enabling transitions and embracing the power of Digital Technologies across the continuum of education and training are key to better outcomes for learners, society and the economy.

As a result of successful achievement of the actions associated with this goal participation rates, retention rates and the performance of Irish students at all levels of the system should be ranked amongst the best in Europe.

Good progress has been made during 2017 towards the achievement of this goal in particular in relation to the standards achieved by Ireland's 4th class primary school children which shows that no country in Europe is better than Ireland for reading performance at primary level. Actions achieved to improve the learning experience and the success of learners during 2017 included, the publication of the Interim Review of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and the setting of new ambitious targets particularly in the area of numeracy, roll out of the new Primary Language Curriculum (Irish and English), introduction of new Junior Cycle specifications for Irish, for Modern Languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian) and for Visual Art and issuance of the first Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement marking a major change in national policy on assessment. A new Wellbeing Programme was introduced at Junior Cycle to actively support and develop wellbeing initiatives to promote the development of mental resilience and personal wellbeing in schools, there was an increase in the number of educational psychologists and improvements in resource provision in relation to Whole School Guidance. Teacher programmes to reduce behavioural difficulties, strengthen social and emotional competence, and promote coping, resilience and school connectedness in children and young people (Incredible Years and FRIENDS) were further rolled out and there was increased support for the roll out of the curriculum framework for early years (Aistear). The new Leaving Certificate Grading System and Common Points scale came into effect in 2017 and work progressed on improving transitions at all levels of the education and training system.

Within the Further Education Sector, the first in a series of independent reviews of full time further education and training (FET) was completed on the Post Leaving Certificate Programme. The purpose of these evaluations is to ensure the effective progression of learners as well as relevance to the labour market. The report of the PLC evaluation, carried out by the ESRI, provides a solid evidence base to inform future policy development and to ensure PLC provision is planned to meets the needs of learners and employers, taking into account all of the changes that have taken place, particularly in the labour market, since the programme was established in the mid 80s. Arising from the evaluation, SOLAS has developed a series of recommendations that have been endorsed by the Department and will be taken forward within a three year programme improvement plan (2018-2020) to ensure high quality PLC provision supporting learners to achieve their progression and employment goals and employers to meet through the provision of high quality skills aligned to labour market needs.

Work commenced this year also on the independent evaluations of the Youthreach Programme and the combined evaluation of the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) and Specific Skills Training (SST) Programmes. The Youthreach evaluation which is being carried out by the ESRI is

scheduled for completion in 2018. The combined evaluation of VTOS/SST will complete in 2019. The series of evaluations will continue at pace over the remaining period of the FET Strategy 2014-2019.

Also contributing to the evidence base to inform policy and improve provision for learners, the results of the biannual follow up survey, commissioned by SOLAS, was published on its website. The responses from the 2016 cohort of training programme participants, confirmed very positive views on FET provision overall. The new FET data system, the Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS), has been fully implemented from the start of the year, providing clear data on programmes being offered by FET providers and on the employment and educational progression outcomes for learners, it will inform decision making and enable evidence-based actions to be put in place to improve programmes being offered within the FET sector.

1.1   Key indicators of progress and success for Goal 1 in 2017

Literacy

The 2016 PIRLS report published in 2017 shows that Ireland's 4th class primary school children are among the best in Europe and OECD countries for reading skills. Irish pupils' overall reading achievement score has improved by 15 points since the last cycle of the PIRLS study which was in 2011. The percentage of Irish pupils who have advanced reading skills rose from 16% in 2011 to 21% in 2016, which is much higher than the international average in PIRLS. Irish pupils also performed exceptionally well on the new online reading assessment in ePIRLS. Only one other country (Singapore) outperformed Ireland on this test.

These findings are consistent with a number of other recent, major reports including the National Assessments of English, Reading and Mathematics 2014 and PISA 2015.

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Increase the proportion of students performing at level 5 or above for reading in PISA to 12% by 2020 from a base of 11.4% in 2012.	Measure for PISA 2015 is 10.7%
Consolidate the proportion of students performing below level 2 for reading at 8.5% by 2020 from a base of 9.6% in 2012.	Measure for PISA 2015 is 10.2%

Numeracy

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE

Increase the percentage of students taking higher level maths at the end of Junior cycle to 60% by 2020.	Measure at end 2016 was 55% and 57% at end 2017.
Increase the percentage of students taking higher level maths at the end of Senior Cycle to 30% by 2020 from a base of 22% in 2012.	Measure in 2016 shows 28% and 30% for 2017.
Increase the proportion of students performing at Level 5 or above for maths in PISA to 13% by 2020. Measure in 2012 was 10.7%	Measure for PISA 2015 is 9.8%

Decrease the proportion of students preforming below level 2 for maths in PISA to 10.5% by 2020. Measure in 2012 was 16.9%	Measure for PISA 2015 is 15%

Science

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Increase the proportion of students performing at level 5 or above for science in PISA to 10% by 2020 from a base of 10.8% in 2012.	Measure for PISA 2015 is 7.1%
Decrease the proportion of students performing at level 2 or below for science in PISA, to below 10% by 2020 from a base of 11.1% in 2012.	Measure for PISA 2015 is 15.3%

Retention

Ireland is currently 2nd in EU28 for percentage of people aged 20-24 with at least upper-secondary education at 94%. School retention rates in Ireland show that Ireland's Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate school completion rates are among the highest in Europe. Early leavers from education and training overall is at 6.3%, this is down by over 40% from 10.8% in 2011, improving Ireland's ranking in this measure by 7 places to 7th in Europe. (EU-28).

Attainment

The percentage of 20-24 year olds in Ireland whose highest level of education is at least upper secondary level education is the 2nd best in Europe at 94%.

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Increase tertiary attainment among 30-34 years olds to 60% by 2020	Measure in 2016: 52.9% (Systems Performance Framework)

Strengthening transitions

A new grading system and new common points scheme for the leaving Certificate was introduced There were 964 CAO offerings at level 8 in 2017 (Universities offering 529, Institutes of Technology 412 and Colleges 23 entry routes). This is down from 1036 in 2014. One of the targets for the transitions programme is to reduce the number of entry routes. 80,345 applicants to the CAO in 2017 were scored using the new Common Points Scale.

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Increase progression to higher education by holders of further education qualifications (percentage of new entrants to HE shows basis for admission is a FE qualification) to 10% by 2019. Measure in 2012 was 6.6%	Measure in 2015: 6.4%

Wellbeing

The number of NEPS Psychologists was increased and time allocation to DEIS schools was increased to ensure learners with emerging and a complex learning and emotional needs have access to supports of an educational psychologist.

Provision of Wellbeing programme to all students in the first year of Junior Cycle commenced in September 2017.

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

2.0   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 considerable progress in advancing equity and equality of opportunity has been made, 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.

Actions under Goal 2 have been designed to improve the educational outcomes of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs. **As a result of successful achievement of the actions associated with this goal the profile of learners progressing through the education system should become more representative of the population in general.**

Good progress towards the achievement of this goal was made during 2017 with the recent review of DEIS showing real improvements in terms of educational outcomes and in the progression through school for students involved. In particular the latest evaluation of DEIS published by the ERC showed improvements in reading and mathematics amongst students in DEIS schools. In addition, DEIS schools have a markedly improved retention rate with just a 3% gap existing between DEIS and non-DEIS schools at Junior Certificate level and a 14.5% increase in retention to Leaving Certificate level since the introduction of DEIS. Other achievements under this goal included the implementation of DEIS 2017 which introduced a new methodology for the identification of schools resulting in new schools being identified for additional supports under the DEIS programme and an ambitious set of objectives and actions to support children who are at greatest risk of educational disadvantage; the introduction of a new Schools Excellence Fund to encourage innovative and creative approaches to improving learner outcomes initially in DEIS schools; a new curriculum evaluation model and a model of evaluation of provision for pupils with special educational needs was main-streamed with guidance notes to make reports more accessible to parents; a new Special Education Needs allocation model for teachers in mainstream schools to support children with Special Educational Needs was introduced and the services of the Inclusion Support Service to assist schools in the provision of education to children with special education needs, was transferred to the NCSE. A review of the Youthreach Programme was commissioned; a report on barriers to participation in Further Education and Training was published; maintenance grants for the most disadvantaged post-graduate students were reintroduced; the fund for students with disabilities in Higher Education was reviewed and an independent review to identify the supports and barriers for lone parents in accessing higher education was published.

2.1   Key indicators of progress and success for Goal 2 in 2017

Retention (DEIS)	
Analysis show particularly significant improvements in retention rates in schools in the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) scheme. The gap in retention rates to Leaving Certificate between DEIS and non-DEIS schools continues to narrow, halving from 16.8% for the 2001 cohort to 8.5% for the 2010 cohort.	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**

Achieve 90% retention rates in second-level DEIS schools by 2025.	Last measure of 2014/15 cohort (year of entry 2009) was 83%.

Literacy (DEIS)

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Reduce the percentage of 6th class students in DEIS band 1 primary schools scoring at level 1 or below in National Assessments for English, Reading and Mathematics to 40% by 2020.	Measure was 66.4% in 2009 and 47% in 2014
Increase the percentage of 15 year olds in DEIS post-primary schools scoring at level 5 or above for reading literacy in PISA to 10% by 2020.	Measure in 2012 was 4.8% and 7% in 2015
Decrease the percentage of 15 year olds in DEIS post-primary schools scoring at level 1 or below for reading literacy in PISA to 12% by 2020.	Measure in 2012 was 25.4% and in 16% in 2015.
Increase the percentage of 6th class students in DEIS Band 1 primary schools scoring at level 3 or above for reading literacy in National Assessments for English, Reading and Mathematics to 27% by 2020	Measure in 2009 was 11.9% and in 2014 was 21.3%

Numeracy (DEIS)

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Increase the percentage of 6th class students in DEIS Band 1 primary schools scoring at level 3 or above for mathematics in National Assessments for English, Reading and Mathematics to 27% by 2020.	Measure in 2009 was 12.9% and 18.7% in 2014
Reduce the percentage of 6th class students in DEIS band 1 primary schools scoring at level 1 or below for mathematics in National Assessments to 42% by 2020.	Measure was 66.4% in 2009 and 49.9% in 2014
Increase the percentage of 15 year olds in DEIS post-primary schools scoring at level 5 or above for mathematics in PISA to 10% by 2020.	Measure in 2012 was 5.2% and 6% in 2015
Decrease the percentage of 15 year olds in DEIS post-primary schools scoring at level 1 or below for mathematics in PISA to 16% by 2020.	Measure in 2012 was 37.3% and 22% in 2015

Attendance rates (DEIS)

The mean percentage of student days lost in DEIS schools has improved slightly or remained the same between 2012/13 and 2014/2015 (change of 1 percentage point). In comparison with non-DEIS schools the variance is between 1 and 3%.

Access to Higher Education

The latest data available from the HEA shows that access to third level by disadvantaged groups is improving. In particular, the number and share of students from disadvantaged backgrounds rose from 22% to 26%, and of students with a disability rose from 7% to 11% between 2012/13 and 2014/15. (From 9,147 to 11,189 and 2,561 to 3,343 respectively).

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Increase participation in higher education by those from the non-manual worker group (18 to 20 age cohort) to 30% by 2019.	Most recent measure in 2012 shows this rate to be 23%.
Increase participation in higher education by those from the semi/unskilled manual worker group (including the agricultural worker group, 18-20 age cohort) to 35% by 2019.	Most recent measure in 2012 shows this rate to be 26%.
Increase participation in higher education of mature students (number of full and part-time/flexible mature entrants as a percentage of all new entrants) to 24% by 2019.	Measure in 2012 was 19% , 15% in 2015, 16% 2016
Increase participation in higher education by people with disabilities (percentage of all new entrants to higher education) to 8% by 2019.	Measure in 2012 was 6.4% and in 2015 was 7.8% and in 2016 was 10.3%
Increase number of Irish Travellers in higher education (full and part-time undergraduate new entrants) to 80 by 2019.	Measure in 2012 was 35 students and in 2015 was 36 students.

3.0 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.

As a result of successful achievement of the actions associated with this goal leadership, management, quality frameworks, teaching methods, and initial and continuing training will be operating to the highest standards across the continuum of education and training provision. Innovation and excellence will be recognized and experiences shared and celebrated.

Good progress was made during 2017 towards the achievement of this goal including changes to the minimum entry requirements for primary teacher training programmes to ensure that primary teachers have the capacity to lead learning in the vital areas of Mathemathics, English and Irish; publication of a report on the number of teachers required by the school system "Striking the Balance" (Teacher Supply in Ireland: Technical Working Group Report) and a workforce planning exercise for people working in early Years provision was commenced. There was an increase in the number of Early Years Inspections undertaken and reports published and circa 1500 school inspections took place in primary and post-primary schools. The Centre of School Leadership offered an increased range of supports including, a new Mentoring Programme for newly appointed school Principals, a new Post Graduate Diploma in School Leadership for aspiring school leaders and the introduction of a professional coaching service for serving Principals. Revised Child Protection Procedures were developed in time for the commencement of the Children Frist Act.

The System Performance Report 2014-2017 was published by the HEA in January 2018 and reviews the performance of the Irish higher education system for the years 2014-2017. The Report is of the view that the system has performed well despite the challenging environment of the past ten years. Student numbers have been increased and research and enterprise engagement performance has been maintained. There is, however, evidence of continued challenges ahead. A new System Performance Framework 2018-2020 was also published in January 2018 with six key objectives set out by the Government to form the basis of the next iteration of strategic dialogue between the HEA and the Higher Education Institutions.

Within the FET sector, a steering group, including representation from ETBs, ETBI and SOLAS, chaired by the Department was established to lead on implementation of the first FET Professional Development Strategy (2017-2019). Research and development work has been carried out this year in the areas of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), Leadership and Management, Quality Assurance, ICT and Enterprise Engagement to inform development of initiatives in these areas, to commence in 2018. Work progressed also on planning, recording and tracking of professional development in the sector to enable agreement and piloting in 2018.

3.2   Key indicators of progress and success for Goal 3 in 2017

Inspections	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Increase the number of Early Years Inspections to 600 in 2017 from an initial 22 in 2015. 491 were conducted by end 2016.	1191 inspections have been conducted to the end of 2017 – 491 in 2016 and 700 in 2017.
Publish 1,000 Early Years inspection reports in 2017 from an initial base of 200 in 2016.	1003 inspection reports published on the Department's website.
Conduct c1500 primary and post-primary school inspections.	4519 inspections carried out in recognised schools, centres for education and other settings to end 2017.
Support schools in implementing the School Self-Evaluation process.	A range of support materials provided to schools and 202 visits carried out in 10 primary and 192 post-primary schools: visits to primary schools did not progress because of the INTO Directive against participation.

Leadership

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Provide professional coaching for 400 Principals in 2017.	347 Principals engaged with the service in 2017.
Offer 183,000 CPD units in 2017. Measure was 129,702 in 2012 and 206,217 in 2016.	225,000 (estimated) CPD units provided during 2017.
	257 teachers enrolled on new post graduate diploma in school leadership (level 9) September 2017
Roll-out of a mentoring programme for all newly appointed school Principals.	All newly appointed school Principals have access to a mentor since September, 2017.

Clustering for innovation and excellence

School Clusters for Schools Excellence Fund, HEI Clusters under higher education strategy, ETB Clusters for Apprenticeship development

4.0   GOAL 4: Build stronger bridges between Education and the wider community.

Schools, education and training institutions and providers are at the heart of their communities. Goal 4 is about building strong linkages, creating clusters and sharing good practice to achieve better outcomes and benefits for everyone involved. Our education service must be able to respond to the changing needs, choices and expectations of our changing global context. Successful enterprise engagement is key to driving the growth of traineeships and apprenticeships, ensuring the relevance of work placements and work-based projects and increasing the diversity of opportunity in learning beyond school.

Research, development and innovation are seen as critical to Ireland's economic and social development in the years ahead.   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.

As a result of successful achievement of the actions associated with this goal there will be stronger linkages between education and the wider community particularly parents, employers and the international community to the benefit of learners, society and the economy. There will be increased choice of school type and parents and students will have a stronger voice in the system. There will be stronger links with industry resulting in an enhanced talent base and learners will be equipped to meet skills gaps in critical areas.   Our higher education institutions will be attracting talent from around the world and will be engaged in world-class research.

Progress made towards the achievement of this goal in 2017 included, new schools opened using protocols to ensure sufficient diversity in the number and range of primary schools to cater for all religions and none; a new Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process has been announced to enable existing schools to transfer patronage where demand exists and work has progressed on the underpinning legislation to facilitate the introduction of a Parent and Student Charter in every school. Guidelines for the use of school buildings out of school hours were published and a revised Protocol to ensure that no small school closes against the wishes of parents was published. The National Skills Council, and nine Regional Skills Fora were launched, Springboard+ provided 6,471 places for unemployed people reskilling and upskilling on 208 courses, 1,040 of which were places on ICT Conversion courses; 12 existing craft trades were revised, 26 new apprenticeships were approved for development and 8 new career traineeships were developed; Increased exposure to music, drama, art and coding was supported through the launch of Creative Youth, the announcement to extend the Music Generation project nationwide by 2022 and the commencement of the Arts Rich Schools (ARIS) initiative.

4.1   Key indicators of progress and success for Goal 4 in 2017

School Choice	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase the number of multi-/non-denominational schools to 400 by 2030.	Number of multi-/non-denominational schools at end 2017 is 151.
Strengthen innovation, entrepreneurship and research	

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Expand research through a new competitive Frontiers Research programme. Target to make 24 awards in 2017.	Assessment process for this programme was not completed in 2017. Awards will be made in 2018.
Increase postgraduate research enrolments to 475 awards by 2020 from 282 in 2012. Measure shows 275 awards in 2016.	Estimated 271 awards in 2017.
Increase the number of funded post-doctoral places (enterprise partnership programmes) to 32 by 2020. Measure shows 12 employer partnership awards in 2016.	Measure shows 13 employer partnership awards in 2017.

Address skills needs	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Increase number of available Springboard+ places by 30% by 2021 in both universities and Institutes of Technology. From a base of 4836 in 2011/12. Target to provide 4,476 Springboard+ places in 2017/2018.	Springboard+ 2017 provides for 6,471 places on 208 courses over the academic year 2017/18
Increase ICT skills through the provision of places on ICT skills conversion courses, as part of Springbaord+. Offer 1,995 places in the 2017/18 year. Measure for 2015/2016 was 1,133 and 1,650 in 2016/17.	1040 ICT conversion courses offered in 2017/2018
Increase the number of FET opportunities offered to over 320,000 in 2017 from a base of 263,276 in 2012.	There were 338,427 beneficiaries in FET in 2016. The number of beneficiaries in 2017 will be available in April 2018.
Increase the number of in-employment upskilling, through Skillnets+ to over 43,000 in 2017 from a base of 37,293 in 2012. Measure in 2016 was 44,413.	Measure in 2017 was 48,900.

Apprenticeships	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Develop 13 new Apprenticeships in 2017.	3 new apprenticeships commenced in 2017
Attract 800 new registrations on new apprenticeship programmes in 2017.	Measure in 2016 was 82 new registrations and 32 in 2017.
Increase the number of new registrations on craft apprenticeships to 4,147 in 2017 from base of 1430 in 2012.	3,742 new registrations were recorded in 2016 and 2200 in 2017.
Double 9,000 annual new apprenticeship registrations by 2020) with 78 separate apprenticeships in place.	Over 4,500 in 2017

Traineeships	
TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Offer more choice through the development of 2 new traineeships in 2017 bringing the total to 28 traineeships.	4 new traineeships were developed in 2017 bringing the total to 30.
Attract 200 enrolment on new/relaunched traineeships	Midpoint 2017 showed 234 enrolments.
Attract 2,400 enrolments on existing traineeship programmes.	In 2017 there were 2,718 total enrolments on new/relaunched (234) and existing (2484) traineeships.

Lifelong learning	
TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Increase the number of HE entrants (overall) studying on a flexible basis to 22% by 2019 and 25% by 2021. Systems performance framework in HE. Measure shows 19% for 2015/2016	Measure shows 20% for 2016/2017
Increase the numbers of HE entrants studying on a flexible basis by 25% by 2021	2016/17 20% or 45,018 of total enrolments are flexible learners.

International	
TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Grow the number of international student numbers to 44,000 students by 2020.	Measure in 2014/15 showed 33,018 students.
Grow the English-language teaching sector to 132,500 students by 2020.	Measure in 2014/15 showed 106,000 students.
Increase the output value of internationalisation to €1.15bn per annum by 2020	International Education Strategy baseline €819m in 2014/15
International students to represent 15% of full-time students by 2020.	In 2016/17, 11.6% of all full-time students in HEA-funded higher education institutions were international students

Strengthen relationship with employers

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Improve Employer satisfaction rates with HEI collaboration with enterprise by 25% as tracked in National Employer Survey	Companies <50 employees: 55% rated collaboration as good/very good Companies with 51 – 250 employees: 60% rated collaboration as good/very good Companies >251+ employees: 75% rated collaboration as good/very good
Participation in Erasmus+ in Higher Education and other Study and Work Placements Abroad to reach 4,400 by 2022 in accordance with international strategy.	3,135 in 2016

Research

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Increase of 500 new postgraduate research enrolments in disciplines aligned to enterprise and other national needs by 2020.	Measure shows 2,235 in 2014/15

5.0   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 co-ordination with sectoral stakeholders, the broader public sector, the political system and other Governmental bodies and cross sectoral work programmes. The remit of the Department encompasses early years education, primary and second level education, further education and training and higher education, including supports for research and international education.

As a result of successful achievement of the actions associated with this goal the Department and its agencies will be working 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.

Good progress has been made towards the achievement of this goal in 2017 with the successful achievement of 86% of the 142 actions from Action Plan for Education 2017. Actions achieved to enhance national planning and support included the completion of 46 large scale projects delivering over 13,200 additional school places as well as almost 5,600 replacement school places; 114,000 children including over 10,000 children with special educational needs, were transported to and from school on a daily basis; 109,000 people received payroll and pension payments fortnightly throughout the year. On the development of shared services work was advanced on the development of shared services for payroll and finance for the sector and the location of the Education Shared Business Services (ESBS) centre was established; a Legal Shared Services Centre of Excellence was established to support the ETBs and centrailised advice and support on financial management and control through the Financial Services Support Unit (FSSU) was extended to include primary schools. Enhancements to POD and PPOD the Departments central schools data base systems enabled pre-enrolment to primary schools and the recording of assessments to facilitate issuing of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement Awards respectively. Good progress was made on the advancement of key legislation with two major legislative reforms the Admissions Bill and the Technological Universities Bill expected to move to enactment in 2018.

5.1   Key indicators of progress and success for Goal 5 in 2017

School Transport	
Working with Bus Éireann, approximately 114,000 children were transported on a daily basis in 2017 including over 10,000 children with special educational needs, providing safe, efficient and cost effective school transport services for eligible children.	
TARGET	**MOST RECENT MEASURE**
Provide safe, efficient and cost-effective school transport for on over 6000 routes in 2017	School transport operated 6,400 routes in 2017.

School Building Programme

A total of 46 large scale projects were completed in 2017. These projects comprised 35 new school buildings and 11 large scale extensions. These projects delivered over 13,200 additional school places as well as almost 5,600 replacement school places. The additional school places provided in 2017 will assist in meeting the requirement outlined in the Capital Plan - Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021.

TARGET	MOST RECENT MEASURE
Meet demographic demand though the provision of 14,000 additional permanent primary school places and 4,000 replacement primary school places in 2017.	13,834 additional permanent school places (9,876 large scale projects, 3,958 additional accommodation places) were provided in primary schools in 2017.
Meet demographic demand though the provision of 4,500 additional permanent post-primary school places and 1,000 replacement post primary school places in 2017.	4,468 additional permanent post-primary school places (3,325 large scale projects, 1,143 additional accommodation scheme and 1,350 replacement places) were provided in post primary schools in 2017.
Complete 130 extension/refurbishment projects for primary schools.	134 extension/refurbishment projects for primary schools (6 large scale extensions, 128 additional accommodation projects) completed in 2017
Complete 35 extension/refurbishment projects for post-primary schools.	36 extension/refurbishment projects for post-primary schools (5 large scale extension, 31 additional accommodation projects) completed in 2017
Build 29 new/replacement primary schools.	29 new/replacement primary schools completed in 2017.
Build 6 new/replacement post-primary schools.	6 new/replacement post-primary schools completed in 2017.

Payroll and pension services provided to teachers and school staff in all schools (except the ETB sector), issuing payments to 109,000 people on a fortnightly basis throughout 2017.

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

Appendix: Highlighted Actions achieved under each goal

Goal 1: Improve learning experience and success of learners

Q1

- The Interim Review of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy was published on 14 March
- €30m distributed to all eligible schools in Q1 2017 for the provision of ICT equipment under the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015- 2020

Q2

- First examination of Junior Cycle English, marking the first implementation of the new Junior Cycle Framework
- Digital Strategy for Schools – Action Plan 2017 launched, aimed at maximising the potential of digital technology in the classroom
- The appointment of an additional 10 educational psychologists for 2017 for DEIS schools has commenced
- First round of the Aistear Continuous Professional Development pilot programme element of the National Síolta/Aistear initiative has been delivered to 350 practitioners, supporting practitioners in the roll out of the Aistear Framework, a curriculum framework for early years settings
- The 2015 Lifeskills survey has been published, providing information on how primary and post primary schools cater for the well-being of their students
- Gaeltacht School Recognition process commenced, the objective of which is to provide high quality and relevant Irish-medium education for young people in Gaeltacht schools

Q3

- Wellbeing Programme introduced in all schools at Junior Cycle to actively support and develop wellbeing initiatives to promote the development of mental resilience and personal wellbeing in schools
- Extension of the Incredible Years Teacher Programme and the FRIENDS Programme to DEIS schools. These programmes work to reduce behavioural difficulties, strengthen social and emotional competence, and promote coping, resilience and school connectedness in children and young people
- New Junior Cycle specifications for Irish, for Modern Languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian) and for Visual Art commenced in September 2017
- Improvements in resource provision in relation to Whole School Guidance. Guidance Plans to include specified time allocation for guidance counsellors to be available for one-to-one guidance counselling and time allocation for the role in supporting the organisation and work of the Student Support Team
- New Leaving Certificate Grading System and Common Points scale came into effect in 2017. Over 58,000 students sat the Leaving Certificate Examinations in 2017 and were marked under the new 8 band grading scale. The 80,345 applicants to the CAO in 2017 were scored using the new Common Points Scale
- Rollout of the reading/writing strand of the new Primary Language Curriculum (Irish and English) for Junior Infants to 2nd Class commenced in September 2017

Q4

- STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026 and STEM Implementation Plan 2017 -2019 published on 27 November sets out the intention to make Ireland a European leader in STEM education by 2026.
- Languages Connect - Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017 - 2026 and Implementation Plan 2017 - 2022 published setting out measures for improving fluency, increasing the number of languages taught and increasing immersion programmes.
- Introduction of Leaving Certificate Computer Science commenced with a call issued to schools in November asking them to apply to participate in the phase 1 rollout from Q3 2018.
- Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) awarded to the first cohort of learners of approximately 60,000 students.
- Trialling of the practical assessment component of new specifications for Leaving Certificate Biology, Physics and Chemistry commenced
- Broadband upgrades to 1,100 primary schools complete under the Schools Broadband Access Scheme.
- A Digital Learning Framework was developed and made available to all schools. The Framework supports high quality education mediated by digital technologies promoting active learner participation and engagement in a wider range of learning activities. Trial of the Framework commenced in 50 schools and is accompanied by an independent evaluation process.
- New Digital Learning Planning Guidelines published. These Guidelines will assist schools in the development of a whole school Digital Learning Plan

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

Q1

- Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools Plan was launched in February 2017. The Plan sets out new targets to further improve literacy and numeracy; improve school completion rates; improve progression to further and higher education
- Implementation of new allocation model commenced to allow for the allocation of teachers in mainstream schools to support children with Special Educational Needs
- The Inclusion Support Service, to assist schools in the provision of education to children with special education need, has now been fully transferred of services from the Department to the NCSE

Q2

- Review of the Fund for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education has been finalised and report completed
- Report on barriers to participation in Further Education and Training (FET) was published in June, with the objective of ensuring equality of opportunity and access to FET and equal treatment of learners
- Call for proposals under Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Strand 2 announced, seeking measures to engage directly with disadvantaged communities, to promote the benefits of higher education
- First round of the Aistear CPD pilot programme

Q3

- New schools being phased into Delivering Equality Of Opportunity In Schools (DEIS) in September 2017 and additional supports provided to DEIS schools
- First tranche of DEIS schools to participate in initial Schools Excellence Fund trial have been identified, with applicants in the trial outlining the innovative and creative approaches that the schools will adopt in seeking to improve learner outcomes
- Independent Review to identify the supports and barriers for lone parents in accessing higher education published, with €16.5m announced to support new initiatives to widen access to higher education over the next three years, with a strong focus on Lone Parents and Disadvantaged Groups
- Maintenance grants for the most disadvantaged post-graduate students reintroduced through the Student Grant Scheme & Regulations for 2017/18
- Review of Youthreach Programme commissioned and evaluation commenced

Q4

- School Excellence Fund launched with €1.8m funding made available for Innovative Programmes in DEIS schools. Funding to pilot innovative approaches to tackling educational disadvantage.
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE) supporting schools in implementing the new Special Education Needs allocation model with additional support, guidance, CPD and training available.

Goal 3: Help those delivering education services to continuously improve
Q1

- Professional coaching service for serving principals, allowing up to 400 principals per annum to access professional coaching, in place since January 2017

Q2

- "Striking the Balance" (Teacher Supply in Ireland: Technical Working Group Report) published, the report presents an analysis of the number of teachers required by the school system
- Work to develop a workforce plan for people working in Early Years provision commenced with the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs carrying out a workforce planning exercise

Q3

- Changes to Minimum Entry Requirements for Primary Teacher Training Programmes have been announced to ensure that primary teachers have the capacity to lead learning in the vital areas of Maths, English and Irish
- Mentoring Programme available to all newly appointed school principals, in primary and post-primary, strengthening leadership through enhanced support for Principals
- A new postgraduate qualification for aspiring school leaders commenced with 253 participants accepting a place on the Post Graduate Diploma in School Leadership course

Q4

- Department's revised Child Protection Procedures published in time for commencement of the Children First Act on 11 December 2017. A phased programme of support which includes

- e-learning programmes, webinars and seminars, to assist schools with the implementation of these revised Procedures commenced in December 2017.
- Range of supports available through the Centre for School Leadership have been expanded to include a post graduate programme for aspiring school leaders. Coaching and mentoring established in the system.
- Training model for the delivery of the SafeTalk suicide programme developed and provided through the Education Centre network.
- New curriculum evaluation model and a model of evaluation of provision for pupils with special educational needs have been main-streamed with guidance notes to make reports more accessible to parents.
- Evaluation of VTOS and Specific Skills Training Programmes have commenced with a view to improving the impact of these schemes.

Goal 4: Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community
Q1

- Minister appointed the members of the National Skills Council and the Council will be officially launched in April 2017
- Regional Skills Fora officially launched by the Minister

Q2

- Apprenticeship Council's second call for new apprenticeship proposals announced as part of plan to more than double the number of annual apprenticeship and traineeship registrations to 14,000 by 2020
- 6,471 free higher education places launched under Springboard+, with courses targeted at jobseekers and those in employment or self-employment who wish to upskill, reskill or cross skill
- The National Skills Council, formally launched in April 2017, has commenced implementation of its work plan
- Revised Protocol to ensure that no small school closes against the wishes of parents has been finalised and is published on the Department's website
- National Arts in Education Day took place in May, supporting the continued implementation of the Arts in Education Charter in providing and promoting arts education to children and young people

Q3

- Guidelines for the use of school buildings out of school hours published
- New curricula for 12 existing craft trades validated by Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
- 5 new Skillnets training networks commenced activity in areas of Medtech, Hospitality, Design, Beauty and Tourism sectors
- Roll-out of Springboard+ is ongoing in higher education institutions across the country, providing for over 6,400 places on 198 courses
- 9 new Music Education Partnerships have been selected to participate in Music Generation Phase 2, a project co-funded by US/the Ireland Fund and the DES
- Implementation of Creative Youth, Pillar 1 of the Creative Ireland Initiative on Arts Rich Schools Initiative (ARIS) has commenced

Q4

- 26 new national apprenticeships approved for further development in areas ranging from Animation to Healthcare and second call for proposals on the development of new apprenticeships announced.
- 8 new career traineeships have now been developed with 222 enrolments to-date. Traineeships are now available across a range of industries, including care, construction, engineering, fashion and beauty, finance, ICT, sports and logistics.
- Revised Management Development offerings have been rolled out to over 800 owner managers of SMEs, providing structured management training in areas such as strategy and business growth.
- Creative Youth was launched on 6 December 2017 with aim to ensure that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, art and coding by 2022
- Third national forum on Education for Sustainable Development held on 15 November 2017 to assist the Department in preparing its mid-term review of the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland, 2014-2020

Goal 5: Improve national planning and support services

Q1

- The Department has reported on key issues and priorities it identified for the Irish education sector and which it recommended to Government for consideration in the context of the negotiations to begin once the UK Government invokes Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty

Q2

- Results of the public consultation process undertaken in relation to the proposed Exchequer-Employer Investment Mechanism for HE and FET have been published
- Review of the criteria and guidelines for the School Transport Appeals Board has been completed and report finalised, in line with Programme for Government commitments
- Connections in place in 40 Education and Training Board Head Offices/ Sub-offices and Training Centres to one network provider, allowing inter-office connectivity and future agreements for associated services, such as VOIP
- National Student Accommodation Strategy completed, which sets out a broad framework for delivery of an enhanced level of accommodation and informs local authority housing strategies and the land management process, in order to provide suitably located and affordable sites
- Enhancement to the Primary Online Database to facilitate pre-enrolments went live in June 2017, building on the functionality of the Primary Online Database which monitors the educational progression of pupils as they move through the primary education system and on to post primary
- Legal Shared Services Centre of Excellence to support the ETB sector established

Q3

- 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, has been developed
- The Financial Services Support Unit (FSSU) at primary level has commenced, providing an advice and support service for the schools on all aspects of financial management and control

- Phased implementation of Payroll Shared Service for Education and Training Boards (ETBs) has commenced with the location of the Education Shared Business Services Centre confirmed

Q4

- Operational site for new Education Shared Business Service (ESBS) Centre secured and lease signed.
- Delivery on DES ICT Strategy 2015-2019 progressed, with the implementation of eSubmissions and migration of the DES website to Cloud
- Final work on PPOD complete enabling schools to record pupil assessments for English, other Short Courses and Priority Learning Units (PLUs) and to download the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement Awards
- 2017 Customer Survey undertaken to assess the levels of satisfaction with, and perceptions of, the services provided by the Department completed in December 2017, supporting the Department's commitment to improving the quality of service delivery to its customers.
- Department shortlisted in three categories in the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards 2017, taking first place in the Excellence In Innovation category for the project, A New Model for Allocating Special Education Teachers to Schools