

2012

Annual Report: Department of Education and Skills



Contents

1	PART 1 Corporate Information	1
1.1	Our Mission	1
1.2	Our High Level Goals	1
	Foreword by the Minister	2
	Statement from the Secretary General	3
2	Organisation Chart	4
3	Review of the Year	5
3.1	Establishment of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	5
3.2	Establishment of SOLAS	5
3.3	Irish Research Council	5
3.4	Reconfiguration of the Vocational Education Committees	5
3.5	National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy	5
3.6	Junior Cycle Reform	6
3.7	Inspection and Quality Assurance in Schools	6
3.7.1	Implementation of an Inspection Programme in Schools and Centres	6
3.7.2	Development of Models of Inspection	6
3.8	Action Plan on Bullying	6
3.9	Education Passport	7
3.10	Forum on Patronage and Pluralism	7
3.11	Building Programme/Works	7
3.11.1	School Building Programme	7
3.12	Student Grants Reform Programme	8
3.13	European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF)	8
3.13.1	Proposed EGF Regulation 2014-2020	9
3.13.2	Review of EGF Operation in Ireland	9
3.14	Implementation of the Higher Education Strategy	9
3.15	Skills Initiatives	10
3.16	Residential Institutions Redress	10
3.17	Organisation Review Programme (ORP)	10
4	General Corporate Data in 2012	11
5	PART 2 Progress on Goals	13
6	Goal 1 – Provide a quality inclusive school and early years education system, with improved learning outcomes	13
6.1	Support a High Quality Early Years Education System	13
6.2	Curriculum and Assessments in Schools	14
6.2.1	Project Maths	14
6.2.2	Junior Cycle Reform	15
6.2.3	Supporting the Examinations Process	16
6.2.4	The Post Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI)	16
6.2.5	National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)	16
6.3	Anti-Bullying Forum	16
6.4	Improving our Standards in Literacy and Numeracy	16
6.5	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)	18
6.5.1	DEIS Staffing	18
6.5.2	School Support Programme	19
6.5.3	Home School Community Liaison (HSCL)	19
6.5.4	School Completion Programme (SCP)	19
6.5.5	National Educational Welfare Board	19
6.5.6	Literacy and Numeracy	20
6.5.7	Evaluation of DEIS	20
6.6	Special Education	21
6.6.1	Home Tuition Scheme	21

6.6.2	July Education Programme	21
6.6.3	2012 Output	21
6.6.4	Co-ordination between the Education and Health services in supporting children with special educational needs	22
6.6.5	Provide targeted supports for children with special educational needs.	22
6.7	School Patronage	23
6.8	Support the use of ICT in Teaching and Learning	23
6.9	School Enrolment Policies	24
6.10	Development of a New Post-Primary On-line Database (P-POD)	24
6.11	School Transport	24
6.12	Teaching of Irish at primary and post-primary levels	25
6.13	School Inspection and Quality Assurance in Schools	26
6.13.1	Self-review and Ongoing Improvement of Teaching and Learning in Schools and Centres for Education	26
6.13.2	Inspection Reports Published in 2012	26
6.14	Teacher Payroll	27
6.15	Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development	27
6.15.1	Professional Development Support Service for Teachers (PDST)	28
6.15.2	Introduction of a Project Maths Postgraduate Programme	28
6.15.3	National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT)	28
6.15.4	Summer Course Programme	29
6.15.5	Jewish Studies	29
6.16	Number of Graduate Teachers from the Primary Colleges of Education in 2012	29
6.17	The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)	29

7 Goal 2 – Provide opportunities for upskilling and reskilling that meet the needs of individuals and the labour market31

7.1	Further Education and Training	31
7.2	Ireland's EGF programmes	32
7.3	SOLAS	33
7.4	Supporting the implementation of the National Skills Strategy – FET	33
7.5	Support the implementation of the National Skills Strategy (NSS) – Higher Education	34
7.6	National Employment and Entitlements Service	34
7.7	Training for People with Disabilities	34
7.8	Skillnets	35
7.9	Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills	35

8 Goal 3 – Provide high quality learning, research and innovation opportunities in the higher education sector.36

8.1	The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030	36
8.2	Promoting Equity of Access to Higher Education	37
8.3	Reform of the Student Grants System	37
8.4	Expenditure on Student Support	38
8.5	Higher Education Research and Finance	38
8.6	International Activities	39
8.7	Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013	40
8.8	Departmental Participation in International Meetings and Initiatives	41
8.9	North/South	41

9 Goal 4 – Plan and provide appropriate infrastructure for learning environments43

9.1	Increasing the Efficiency in the Delivery of Building Projects	43
9.2	Provision of School Places	43
9.2.1	Major school building projects completed in 2012 included the following:	43
9.3	Public Private Partnership	44
9.4	Developments in the Higher Education Sector	44
9.5	Increased Efficiencies	44
9.6	Energy Policy	45
9.7	Provide education and training related data to the public and organisations	45

10 Part 3 – Improving our Efficiency and Effectiveness47

10.1	General Education Sector Reform	47
------	---------------------------------	----

10.2	Support the modernisation of the education sector through a partnership process that promotes good industrial relations practice.....	47
10.3	Organisational Review Programme	47
10.4	Children First.....	48
10.5	Residential Institutions Redress	48
10.6	Improving our Department’s Performance and Efficiency.....	48
10.6.1	Finance	48
10.6.2	Monitoring our Internal Systems and Processes	49
10.7	Human Resources	49
10.7.1	Staff Training and Development	50
10.7.2	Business Process Improvement	50
10.7.3	Business Intelligence	50
10.7.4	Internal ICT Improvements	51
10.7.5	Development of our New Website	51
10.7.6	Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)	51
10.7.7	Business Planning and Improvements at Section Level	51
10.7.8	Support staff performance	52

Appendix A - Bodies under the Aegis of the Department in 2012.....	53
---	-----------

Appendix B - Publications in 2012	54
--	-----------

Appendix C – Direct Links to our Website www.education.ie	62
--	-----------

1 PART 1 Corporate Information

1.1 Our Mission

Our mission is to enable learners to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's economic, social and cultural development.

1.2 Our High Level Goals

We aim to ensure that the Department and the wider education and training sector provide a high quality service which delivers value for money for the taxpayer. Our overarching goal is to improve the quality of teaching and learning at all levels of the education and training sector and improve learning outcomes over time. In support of this we have identified the following high level goals:

1. Provide a quality inclusive school and early years education system, with improved learning outcomes
2. Provide opportunities for upskilling and reskilling that meet the needs of individuals and the labour market
3. Provide high quality learning, research and innovation opportunities in the higher education sector
4. Plan and provide appropriate infrastructure for learning environments

Foreword by the Minister

I welcome the publication of the 2012 Annual Report which documents the scale of work undertaken by the Department in 2012 and the contribution that the Department is making to the country's fiscal and socio-economic recovery. In addressing the extensive education brief, 2012 represented a challenging, yet productive year for myself and Ministerial colleagues Ciarán Cannon T.D. and Seán Sherlock T.D. and I am pleased to acknowledge the steady progress being made in achieving the goals as set out in the ambitious reform agenda for the education sector.

As part of the Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work, the Department is continuing to develop high quality education and training to support unemployed people to return to employment by accessing reskilling opportunities appropriate to their needs. In terms of activation of the unemployed, by the end of 2012: approximately 30,000 additional places were provided in the education and training system across a number of initiatives including a new phase of Springboard, ICT graduate conversion programmes and the new Momentum programme.

In the third level sector, significant progress has been made on the implementation of The National Strategy for Higher Education under the auspices of the Implementation Oversight Group. Progress has also been made on the reform of initial teacher education, including the publication in July of the *Report of the International Review Panel on the Structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland*.

In the schools sector, implementation has commenced on a suite of reforms including the introduction of increased time for literacy and numeracy in primary and post-primary schools and a significant extension in the use of assessments in reading and mathematics as part of the implementation of *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020*.

Late last year *A Framework for Junior Cycle* was published which builds on proposals developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment in their publication *Towards a Framework for Junior Cycle-Innovation and Identity*. Work has already commenced on reforming the Junior Cycle, with changes commencing in schools from 2014. Reform will address the issues of curriculum overload and rote learning, promote increased creativity and innovation, while supporting the development of key skills including literacy and numeracy.

The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector completed its work at the start of 2012 and I outlined an action plan in response to the report of the Forum Advisory Group in June. As part of this plan, work commenced on the distribution of divestment surveys to pilot areas to establish the views of local parents on the need for additional school types in identified areas.

I would like to thank the staff of the Department, staff in our agencies and those working at all levels throughout the wider education sector, for their commitment to progressing the challenging and ambitious education brief.

Ruairí Quinn
Minister for Education and Skills

Statement from the Secretary General

I am pleased to introduce the Annual Report which documents the significant advances that have been made across education and training which will have a long-lasting impact for the benefit of Irish society. These advances have been made at a time when we have been facing severe financial and economic difficulties.

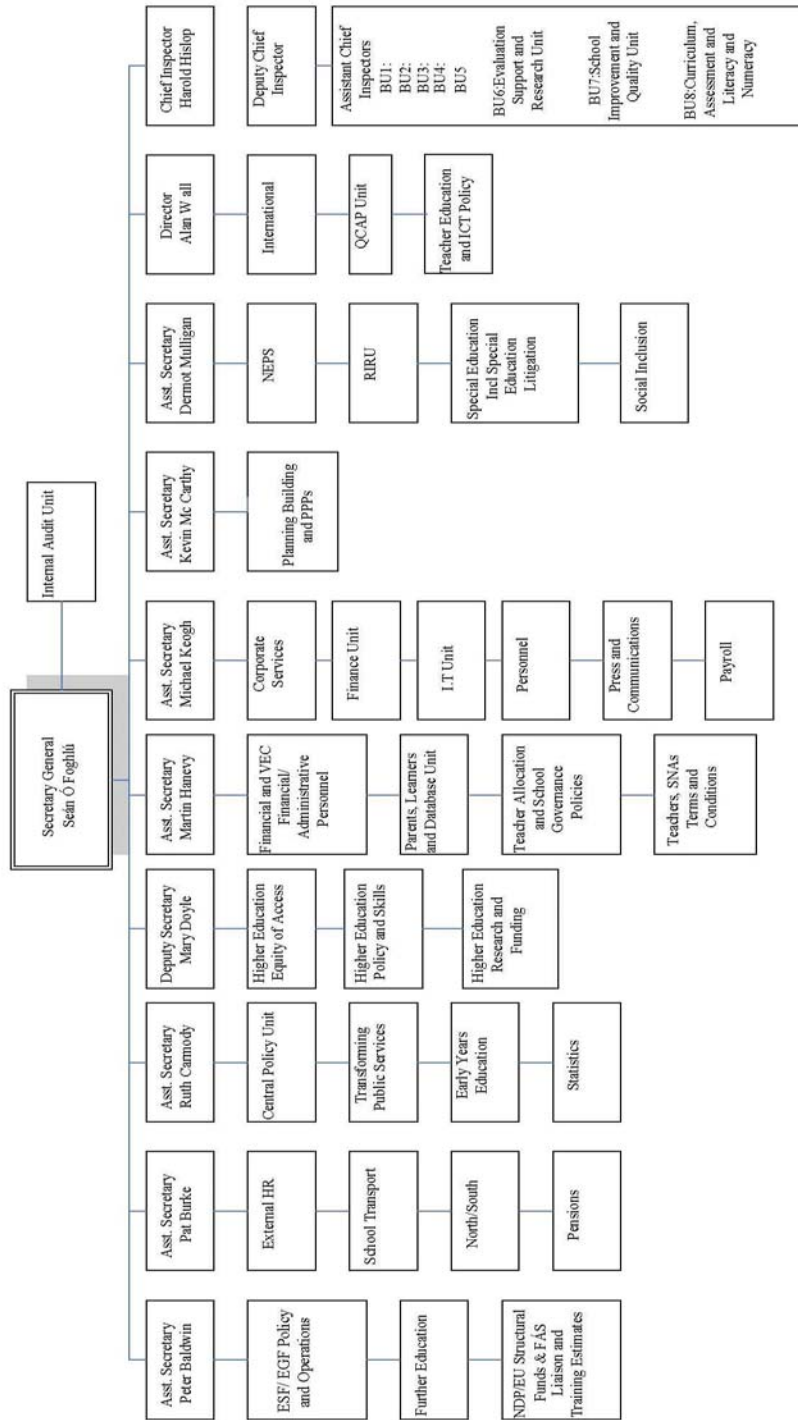
During 2012 progress was made in a number of areas - new arrangements for the junior cycle and for school self-evaluations, progress on the implementation of the national literacy and numeracy strategy and on the review of organisational structures for the delivery of teacher education in higher education institutions. We have made progress with the implementation of the higher education strategy and of new tailored upskilling and reskilling opportunities for the unemployed, the publication of legislation to lead to the establishment of education and training boards and the implementation plan to lead to the establishment of SOLAS, the new Further Education and Training Authority Quality and Qualifications Ireland has been established while real progress has also been achieved on the implementation of revised arrangements for the patronage of new schools and on the establishment and implementation of policies on changes to the patronage of existing primary schools. A new centralised on-line student grant application process was introduced. A significant number of difficulties occurred in the operation of the new centralised system in the first year of its operation, resulting in unacceptable delays in the award and payment of grants. The causes of these delays have since been analysed and addressed.

The Department faced many challenges during 2012, and the progress achieved in the continuing testing fiscal environment, along with the successful performance of on-going necessary operational tasks with reduced financial and human resources, reflects the commitment of the staff of the Department and its agencies. I would like to thank all of the staff of the Department, as well as our agencies and all involved in the wider education sector for their work in this regard I look forward to working together with colleagues with continued focus on the delivery of efficient high quality education services that can make a real and tangible contribution to Ireland's economic recovery.

Seán Ó Foghlú
Secretary General

2 Organisation Chart

Organisation Chart - Department of Education and Skills - MAC Responsibilities (May 2012)



3 Review of the Year

The Review of the Year reflects some of the key developments which occurred during 2012 as the Department continued to make progress in achieving the goals set out in the Statement of Strategy.

3.1 Establishment of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established in November 2012 as a single, integrated agency, replacing four existing bodies, FETAC, HETAC, the National Qualifications Authority and the Irish Universities Quality Board. QQI will provide a joined-up service to learners and education and training providers and will work to open up flexible, quality assured, learning pathways within the context of the National Framework of Qualifications.

3.2 Establishment of SOLAS

During the year the Department continued the process of establishing the new further education and training authority, SOLAS, to oversee the operation of the further education and training sector. Its mandate is to ensure the provision of up-to-date high-quality further education and training programmes to jobseekers and other learners. Work on legislation to establish SOLAS was at an advanced stage at the end of 2012.

During 2012, FÁS Employment Services was transferred into Department of Social Protection. The transfer of functions to that Department is intended to facilitate the delivery of a more targeted, effective and streamlined response to the needs of the unemployed.

Work on legislation to establish SOLAS was at an advanced stage at end 2012.

3.3 Irish Research Council

The new Irish Research Council (IRC), which was established through a merger of the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) and the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET), was launched in March 2012. The IRC will encourage innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, and will support researchers. It will also play a vital role in driving future job creation across economic, cultural and social spheres.

3.4 Reconfiguration of the Vocational Education Committees

In October 2011, the Government approved the heads of the Education and Training Boards Bill which provides for the reconfiguration of the VECs reducing the number from 33 to 16. The 16 entities will be known as Education and Training Boards. The Education and Training Boards will ensure better delivery and coordination of education and training at local level.

At end 2012 the Bill had completed second stage in Dáil Éireann and was awaiting committee stage.

3.5 National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

The implementation of *the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy*

among Children and Young People 2011-2020 has commenced resulting in a suite of reforms including the reconfiguration of the content and duration of courses for primary teachers to ensure the development of teachers' skills in literacy and numeracy teaching, increasing the time for literacy and numeracy in schools, and a significant extension in the use of assessment and testing in reading and mathematics.

3.6 Junior Cycle Reform

A new *Framework for Junior Cycle* was published in 2012 and work is underway on reforming the Junior Cycle with changes commencing in schools from 2014. Reform will address the issues of curriculum overload and rote learning, promote increased creativity, innovation and support the development of key skills including literacy and numeracy.

3.7 Inspection and Quality Assurance in Schools

3.7.1 Implementation of an Inspection Programme in Schools and Centres

In 2012, the Inspectorate carried out an inspection in over one fifth of primary schools and in over 80% of the 730 post-primary schools in the country.

3.7.2 Development of Models of Inspection

In 2012 new models of inspection were piloted and revisions to existing models of inspection were also made. The use of questionnaires for all whole-school type evaluations in 2012 has given a greater voice to students and parents in the evaluation of schools. There has been a significant reduction in the amount of documentation required of schools as a result of shorter and more focused evaluation models.

Follow Through Inspections

The Inspectorate commenced piloting a model of Follow Through inspection in 2012. These inspections focus on the progress schools have made in implementing recommendations presented in previously published inspection reports. 177 such inspections were conducted in 2012.

Evaluations of High Support Units, Special Care Units and Children Detention Schools

A new dedicated inspection model for schools attached to High Support Units, Special Care Units and Children Detention Schools was piloted in 2012. All ten schools in these units were inspected in 2012.

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE:MLL) Primary

At primary level, a new model of evaluation, WSE-MLL, was piloted in twenty-one schools in 2012. This model provides greater flexibility in terms of how educational provision is evaluated across the full range of primary school settings. The model also supports greater efficiency in terms of finalising reports and providing timely feedback to schools.

3.8 Action Plan on Bullying

During 2012, an Anti-Bullying Forum was convened to consider changes to existing practices and policies in schools in order to effectively tackle bullying. Alongside the Forum, a working group was established on tackling bullying, including homophobic bullying, cyber bullying and racist bullying. Work on developing an Action Plan on Bullying was ongoing in 2012.

3.9 Education Passport

To assist students in the transition from primary to post primary, from September 2012, all students moving from primary to second level schools are accompanied by an "education passport" which is an end of year report card sent to their new school. This sharing of information is aimed at ensuring that a rounded picture of children's ability and achievement at primary school is available to their new school.

3.10 Forum on Patronage and Pluralism

The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector completed its work at the start of 2012 and work on divesting in the pilot areas is underway.

In April 2012, the Report of the Advisory Group to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector was published. In June 2012, the Action Plan outlining the Department's response to Advisory Group Report was published.

3.11 Building Programme/Works

The delivery and provision of building projects in 2012, which incurred expenditure amounting to €410m, contributed to economic activity, assisted in job creation and generally increased the capacity of the economy to respond to growth and productivity. The total expenditure on primary and post primary schools building projects in 2012 amounted to almost €347m. The sum expended on higher education capital projects in 2012 was over €55m, while over €2m was expended on Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects.

3.11.1 School Building Programme

A new initiative was announced in March 2012 to replace rented prefabs in schools with permanent classrooms. The initiative estimated to cost in excess of €42m, will provide modern high quality accommodation for pupils and teachers in over a third of all schools that currently rent prefabs.

In order to increase efficiency in the delivery of building projects, the Department has made arrangements for the delivery of 37 projects to be managed by Vocational Education Committees. Additionally, the Office of Public Works is managing 15 projects, Louth County Council 2 projects and Westmeath County Council 1 project. The Department has also made arrangements for the delivery of 18 schools projects to be managed by the National Development Finance Agency. These arrangements will assist the Department in delivering new schools and extensions required over the next five years.

In 2012 a total of 53 large-scale projects were completed; 39 in the primary school sector and 14 in the post-primary school sector. A total of 9,792 permanent school places, of which 6,324 were additional permanent places, were provided in 25 new primary schools and 1,820 additional permanent places in 14 existing primary schools.

In the post-primary school sector, 7 new schools and 7 large-scale extension/refurbishment projects were completed in 2012. These projects delivered a total of 4,800 permanent school

places, of which 2,000 were additional permanent places, as well as providing enhanced facilities for 4,150 pupils.

The number of smaller scale projects approved for delivery by schools amounted to 746 and consisted primarily of projects under the Additional Accommodation Scheme, the Jobs Initiative Scheme, the Prefab Replacement Initiative and approvals arising from Emergency Works applications. Within the smaller scale projects cohort, the Permanent and Additional Accommodation Schemes and the Prefab Replacement Initiative realised a total of 6,677 permanent school places.

3.12 Student Grants Reform Programme

Student Universal Support Ireland

In 2011 the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee was selected as the single grant awarding authority and a dedicated unit within the City of Dublin VEC was established to centralise the process for new entrants for the academic year 2012/2013. While a significant number of difficulties occurred in the operation of the new centralised system in the first year of its operation, resulting in unacceptable delays in the award and payment of grants, it is envisaged that, as these difficulties are addressed and the new system is further streamlined and automated, these reforms will deliver a significant service enhancement for student grant applicants in the longer term.

The existing 66 different grant awarding bodies responsible for student grants (Local Authorities and VECs) are continuing to deal with grant renewals for their existing students until they complete their current courses.

Online Application Facility

An online-only application facility was made available to all new applicants applying to Student Universal Support Ireland for the 2012/2013 academic year. Almost 100% of applications were submitted online for the 2012/13 academic year.

Student Grant Appeals Board

An independent Student Grants Appeals Board was established following enactment of the Student Support Act 2011. Where an individual applicant has had an initial appeal turned down by a grant awarding authority an appeal may be submitted to the Student Grant Appeals Board which is independent in the exercise of its functions. In 2012, the Student Grant Appeals Board sat on fourteen occasions and considered 375 appeals.

Payment of Student grants by Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT)

From September 2012, grants for all new applicants transitioned from term-based payments by cheque made through higher education institutions, to monthly electronic payments made directly to students' bank accounts.

3.13 European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF)

The EGF is an EU co-financing instrument to assist Member States in providing active labour market supports to workers made redundant as a result of the adverse impacts of globalization.

3.13.1 Proposed EGF Regulation 2014-2020

Ireland contributed throughout 2012 to ongoing negotiations conducted under the Danish and Cypriot presidencies of the EU to progress the European Commission's proposal for a new EGF Regulation covering the period 2014-2020.

3.13.2 Review of EGF Operation in Ireland

A Review of Ireland's operation of the Dell, Waterford Crystal and SR Technics EGF programmes, was published in August 2012. The Review, which encompassed input from all stakeholders in the EGF process, including the redundant workers, contained a number of recommendations such as earlier and more focused individual engagement with the redundant cohort. Many of the Review's recommendations have been taken on board in the Department's operation of the current EGF Talk Talk programme.

3.14 Implementation of the Higher Education Strategy

A number of priority goals from the National Strategy for Higher Education were implemented during 2012.

National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning at Third Level.

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Training and Learning at Third Level was established in 2012. Its central focus is on enhancing the quality of the learning experience for all students, be they full-time, part-time or flexible learners. It will have a vital role to play in supporting excellence in teaching and learning across all higher education institutions.

Initiation of the Process for Reconfiguration of the Higher Education Landscape

In February 2012, the Higher Education Authority published a range of documentation and initiated a process of consultation and deliberation on system configuration which will inform how best to reconfigure the higher education system to meet the objectives of the Strategy. The publication *Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape* included the four stage process and criteria for the designation of institutes of technology as technological universities. During 2012, all higher education institutions made submissions to the HEA, outlining their future strategic fit within a reconfigured system and expert analyses were also commissioned by HEA as part of the process.

Criteria and process for designation of technological universities

To feed into the HEA's deliberations on system re-configuration, groups of institutes of technology submitted formal expressions of interest for designation as technological universities as part of the first stage of the four stage process outlined in *Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape*. Three groups expressed their interest: a) DIT, Institute of Technology Tallaght and Institute of Technology Blanchardstown; b) Cork Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology, Tralee; and c) Waterford Institute of Technology and Carlow Institute of Technology

Transitions Reform Steering Group

The Department established a Steering Group, chaired by the Secretary General, with membership from key partners and agencies to co-ordinate research and to develop and agree proposals for reform of the transition from 2nd level to higher education.

Grangegorman DIT

During 2012, funding for the DIT Grangegorman project was secured as part of the Government's economic Stimulus Package.

3.15 Skills Initiatives

A range of initiatives were undertaken to provide additional places in the education and training system to meet the needs of industry as well as meeting the needs of the unemployed including *Springboard, MOMENTUM and the ICT Action Plan*.

3.16 Residential Institutions Redress

The Residential Institutions Statutory Fund (RISF) Act 2012, which provides for the establishment of the RISF, was passed. This Fund will oversee the use of the cash contributions of up to €110 million pledged by the religious congregations to support the needs of some 15,000 survivors of residential institutional child abuse, via the provision of a range of approved services, including health and personal social services, education and housing services.

3.17 Organisation Review Programme (ORP)

The Department's Action Plan was published as part of the third Report of the ORP process in January 2012. The full report, which includes reviews of three other Departments, is available to download from www.orp.ie. (Further details on the ORP are set out in [Part 3](#) of this Report). To date 14 actions have been completed and work is underway on the remaining actions

4 General Corporate Data in 2012

This section of the report provides general corporate data. Data in relation to specific initiatives can be found in Part 3 of the report. Key education statistics can be found on the statistics page of the Department's website via the following link: www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/

Supporting the Parliamentary Process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3892 Parliamentary Questions were responded to in 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Offices of the Minister and Ministers of State received in the region of 11,500 representations in 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 53 Topical Issues were replied to in the Dáil and 49 Adjournments Debate motions were replied to in the Seanad.

Information Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 7,100 mail enquiries were received through info@education.gov.ie
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were 1,506,082 visits to our website www.education.ie in 2012, 42% of which were new users
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 417 requests under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Acts 1997 and 2003 were received in 2012. Over 600 decisions were made on FOI requests in 2012.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press Office - 129 Press Releases were issued and 6 Press Conferences were held in 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On June 29th the Department sent its first tweet and by the end of 2012, we had just over 1,000 followers.

School Inspection Reports

Further information on school inspections and the work of the Inspectorate can be found in Part 2 under Goal 1 6.

Type of Inspection	2012
Whole-school evaluation (WSE) Primary	262
Whole-school evaluation (WSE) Post-primary	4
Whole-school evaluation - (WSE-MLL) Post-primary	80
Subject inspections Post-primary: stand-alone	373
Subject inspections Post-primary: within WSE	16
Incidental Inspection (Primary)	326
Incidental Inspection (Post-primary)	343
Follow-through inspections (Primary)	98
Follow-through inspections (Post-primary)	79
School Self-Evaluation support visits (Primary)	346
School Self-Evaluation support visits (Post-primary)	159
Centres for Education (Youthreach, former Senior Traveller Training Centre)	9
Special Schools for Autism	13
Special Schools at High Support Units, Special Care Units and Child Detention Centres	10

Type of Inspection	2012
Evaluation reports on Irish Colleges (Coláistí Gaeilge)	40
Evaluations of Cursai Samhraidh (Teachers)	71
Literacy/Numeracy Summer Camps (for DEIS schools)	19
Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) units	15
Section 24 inspections	2
Probation of teachers (Primary) in 2012	4,257 Inspections conducted on 2,502 teachers in 2011/2012 year
Total inspections / visits	6,522

Prompt Payments ¹ Summary January to December 2012			
Details	Number	Value (€)	Percentage (%) of total payments made (Number)
Number of payments made within 15 days	10,438	508,176,072	74.82%
Number of payments made within 16 days to 30 days	3,141	11,818,890	22.46%
Number of payments made in excess of 30 days	381	633,222	2.72%
Total payments made in 2012	13,960	520,628,184	100.00%
Total Disputed Invoices in 2012	9	58,865	

Source: Summary of 2012 Quarterly reports for the Department pursuant to Government Decision No.S29296 of 19th May 2009

¹ Payments made on or before the date on which payment is due under the terms of a written contract, or where there is no written contract, or if the written contract does not specify a payment date, within 45 days of receipt of the invoice or delivery of the goods or services, whichever is the later.

5 PART 2 Progress on Goals

6 Goal 1 – Provide a quality inclusive school and early years education system, with improved learning outcomes

In providing supports to the school system and for early education the Department's priority is to enable schools and other providers to deliver quality outcomes for all learners. Through the following actions the Department continues to promote quality, relevance and inclusiveness.

- Providing teaching, financial and curricular supports,
- Addressing educational disadvantage through targeted interventions,
- Addressing the needs of learners with special educational needs,
- Providing policy, legislative and regulatory support, and
- Promoting ongoing curriculum, teaching and learning improvements through evaluation, accountability and leadership developments

6.1 Support a High Quality Early Years Education System.

The Department supports the quality of provision in the early years education sector through workforce development and through the promotion of effective practice. The Early Years Education Policy Unit in the Department is co-located with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to ensure that policy developments in the early childhood sector are developed within an overall strategic policy framework for children.

The Workforce Development Plan for the Early Years Sector, which was published by the Department in 2010, acknowledged the strong correlation between the availability of an appropriately trained workforce to staff early years services and the ability to deliver high quality pre-school provision. As part of the implementation of the Plan, innovative approaches to meeting the challenge of flexible delivery of education and training programmes are being explored. A trial of an assessment of learning initiative, delivered through the VEC, was initiated in 2012. Participants in the trial were offered an alternative pathway to achieve a component award in Child Development, which is one of the mandatory component awards for the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Level 5 major award in Early Childhood Care and Education. The likely demand from experienced practitioners in early years settings, who do not currently have nationally accredited qualifications, for this type of course delivery is currently being analysed.

The Department continued to work with the Voluntary Childcare Organisations and the Prevention and Early Intervention sites on the field test of Síolta, the Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education. The field test is contributing to the ongoing development of the programme and the learning from it is informing the continuing review and refinement of Síolta materials, processes and supports. During 2012, the Department published and disseminated a

further update on the implementation of *Síolta* for the broader sector. The Department also organised a Sharing Practice seminar in 2012 to bring together practitioners from early years services and from the primary school system to showcase and share good practice.

Supports for early years practitioners and teachers to use Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, continued during 2012. Such supports include the online Aistear toolkit, which is a web-based resource providing audio and visual podcasts to providers of early childhood education, and the Aistear Tutor Initiative. Aistear Tutors deliver professional development activities for infant class teachers through the education centre network nationally.

The phasing out of segregated Traveller pre-schools is one of the objectives of the 2006 Traveller Education Strategy. The introduction of universal pre-school provision (the ECCE scheme) in January 2010, and with it the opening of places in private and community services for all children, provided an opportunity for Traveller and settled children to attend pre-school together. The phasing out of Department funding for segregated Traveller pre-school provision was completed in 2012. During 2012, pre-school services were supported in integrating children from all backgrounds through accredited equality and diversity training funded through the Dormant Accounts Fund.

The Department is participating in the European Commission Thematic Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) which was established in 2012 to develop a European Quality Framework for ECEC. Membership of the Working Group includes ministerial and expert representation from all Member States of the EU and representatives from relevant organisations such as the OECD, Eurydice and the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE).

6.2 Curriculum and Assessments in Schools

Throughout 2012, the Department continued its work with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the State Examinations Commission (SEC) in relation to curricular development and prioritised the continued implementation of Project Maths and Junior Cycle Reform.

6.2.1 Project Maths

Project Maths involves the introduction of revised syllabi for both Junior and Leaving Certificate Mathematics. It involves changes to what students learn in mathematics, how they learn it and how they are to be assessed.

It aims to provide for an enhanced student learning experience and greater levels of achievement for all. Much greater emphasis is to be placed on student understanding of mathematical concepts, with increased use of contexts and applications that will enable students to relate mathematics to everyday experience.

The initiative also focuses on developing students' problem-solving skills. Assessment will reflect the different emphasis on understanding and skills in the teaching and learning of mathematics.

The initiative began in September 2008, with the start-up of Project Maths in an initial group of 24 schools. These schools are key players in the process of curriculum development. Their work helped the NCCA to learn from schools as to how the proposed revisions to the syllabus would work in classrooms. Their work led to the development of teaching and learning resources and assessment instruments.

The Mathematics syllabuses will be introduced by strand as follows:

1. Statistics and Probability
2. Geometry and Trigonometry
3. Number
4. Algebra
5. Functions

The first two strands were the subject of further work in the 24 schools prior to being introduced nationally for incoming first year and fifth year students in September 2010. Following this phased implementation in the 24 network schools all five strands of Project Maths were rolled out to mainstream schools in September 2012.

A review to conduct research into the impact of Project Maths on student motivation, learning and achievement was carried out, in the initial 24 schools who were engaged in the project since September 2008, and in all the other post-primary schools where syllabus change commenced in September 2010.

The first interim report, published in November 2012, found that students appear to be performing well in many aspects of the revised syllabus. The report is available online at www.ncca.ie.

6.2.2 Junior Cycle Reform

The Framework for Junior Cycle was launched by the Minister in October 2012. It sets out the principles underpinning the reform, statements of learning outlining what students should know, understand and value at the end of their three years in Junior Cycle, and the skills which they should acquire through their learning. It builds upon proposals developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and published in November 2011 under the title, *Towards a Framework for Junior Cycle-Innovation and Identity*. The Framework adopted many of the curricular changes proposed by the NCCA but it also contained additional changes to how students' progress and learning are assessed at Junior Cycle level. The terminal Junior Certificate Examinations will be replaced with a school-based model of assessment where the emphasis will be on the quality of students' learning experiences.

Under the new Framework, schools will be expected to deliver a programme that will enable students to develop a wide range of skills, including critical thinking skills and basic skills such as numeracy and literacy. Implementation of the new programme will be phased in, with English and Mathematics being introduced to first year students from September 2014.

Short courses are being prepared by the NCCA in seven areas and will be available for schools from September 2014. These courses may be assessed as a part of the School Certificate in the new Junior Cycle.

6.2.3 Supporting the Examinations Process

The Department provided on-going support to the SEC in providing an objective and transparent State examinations process. It also supported the SEC in relation to the practical implications of the changes, in particular Junior Cycle Reform. Further information on State examinations can be viewed on the SEC website www.examinations.ie

6.2.4 The Post Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI)

The Post Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI) has worked to implement the policy of the Department of Education and Skills of diversifying, enhancing and expanding the teaching of languages in second level schools. The new PPLI website www.languagesinitiative.ie was further developed to include resources for MFL teachers on MFL, Teaching and Learning, and Curriculum, Assessment and Policy. In addition, there is now access to relevant material for teachers and learners of all languages on the website and on PPLI social media sites.

6.2.5 National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)

The Department also supports the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) in providing resources, training and supports to guidance counsellors in schools.

6.3 Anti-Bullying Forum

During 2012, an Anti-Bullying Forum was convened to consider changes to existing practices and policies in schools in order to effectively tackle bullying. Alongside the Forum, a working group was established on tackling bullying, including homophobic bullying, cyber bullying and racist bullying. Work on developing an Action Plan on Bullying was ongoing in 2012.

6.4 Improving our Standards in Literacy and Numeracy

The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011 to 2020 was published in July 2011 and its implementation continued in 2012.

Circular 56/2011 issued to all primary schools in November 2011 to draw the attention of boards of management, principal teachers and teachers to the publication of The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020. This Circular was followed on by Circular 18/2012, the purpose of which was to give further information on the implementation of the revised standardised testing arrangements. There was a follow on Circular 25/2012 aimed at post-primary schools.

The Department supported the Educational Research Centre (ERC) in providing a programme of national monitoring in both English and Irish medium primary schools in English reading, Irish reading and Mathematics. It also supported the ERC to participate in the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA), Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) which are international studies of the reading and science skills of primary school pupils.

The requirement for the use of standardised testing in literacy and numeracy at the end of second and fourth classes was extended to include sixth class in primary schools. The results were collected, using Esinet, for the first time in 2012.

Primary Standardised Testing Circular 0056/2011, which issued in November 2011 to primary schools, urged that standardised tests be implemented from May/June 2012 for all students in 2nd, 4th and 6th class, and that the NCCA developed report card templates should also be used for providing a written report to parents on pupils' progress. The results of standardised testing should be included with the reports.

The NCCA developed a selection of report card templates to assist schools in recording and reporting on pupils' learning and social development. They are available from the NCCA website at www.ncca.ie

From 2016, standardised testing will commence at the end of second year in post-primary schools.

The fifth cycle of PISA took place in Ireland in March 2012. Mathematics was the main focus of the assessment, with reading, science and problem solving assessed as minor domains. Ireland, along with 32 other countries, also participated in a computer-based assessment of reading, mathematics and problem solving. In total, just over 5,000 students in 182 schools participated in the assessment in Ireland. Schools were classified according to size (small, medium, large) and type (secondary, community/comprehensive, vocational) and were selected in such a way as to ensure that the sample was nationally representative, but also included each of the 23 initial Project Maths schools. The first set of findings from PISA 2012, which will include results from the mathematics, reading and science assessments, will be published in 2013. The results of the assessment of problem solving will be published in 2014.

The results of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2011) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 2011) were published in December 2012.

In reading, Irish pupils were ranked 10th out of 45 participating countries. Ireland was placed 17th out of 50 participating countries in Maths and 22nd out of the 50 participating countries in Science. Irish pupils are performing above the international average in all three tests, especially in reading.

In all three tests pupils in a number of other countries are performing significantly better than the Irish pupils. There are a number of initiatives currently underway to improve the quality of teaching and learning in our primary schools so as to ensure that the outcomes for our pupils continue to improve. These initiatives include the introduction of standardised testing at 2nd, 4th and 6th classes.

The second John Hooper Medal for Statistics was awarded by the Central Statistics Office in association with the Department in 2012; it is awarded to post-primary students in Transition Year or Senior Cycle who design a poster to describe an aspect of their environment with the help of statistics. The John Hooper Medal for Statistics aims to promote statistical literacy,

encourage teamwork among students and allow students to develop communication skills. In the context of the roll out of Project Maths, it is of considerable interest to students and teachers.

In 2012, the Department of Education and Skills carried out the second Lifeskills Education Survey in both the primary and post-primary sector. The original Lifeskills Survey was carried out in 2009. The survey provides data on a number of life skills related issues including health promotion and healthy eating within schools. There was a response rate of 70% (all primary schools excluding Special Schools) at primary and 53% (all post-primary schools) at post-primary.

During 2012, the Inspectorate continued to support and advise on the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy in areas including:

- Development of an online facility for the collection of standardised test results from primary schools
- Contribution to the content of a circular on literacy and numeracy that issued to post-primary schools
- Contribution to quality assuring the continuing professional development materials in literacy and numeracy that were developed and delivered by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST).
- Provision of advice to the Project Maths Development team and advice on the post-graduate diploma in mathematics education which commenced in October 2012.

6.5 Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)

DEIS, the action plan for educational inclusion, focuses on addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities from pre-school through to second-level education (3 to 18 years). DEIS provides for a standardised system for identifying levels of disadvantage and an integrated School Support Programme (SSP).

In 2012 the 860 DEIS schools (665 primary and 195 Post primary) in the School Support Programme received additional resources according to their level of disadvantage. Total additional funding of some €14 million was provided to DEIS schools in 2012 together with 1,036 additional teachers costing €63 million.

The number of schools participating in DEIS	
Primary Urban Band 1 Schools:	197
Primary Urban Band 2 Schools:	144
Rural Primary Schools:	324
Post Primary Schools:	195
TOTAL	860

6.5.1 DEIS Staffing

Band 1 urban primary schools attract resources both in terms of reduced pupil-teacher ratios and in terms of the allocation of additional permanent Learning Support teachers under the General

Allocation Model (GAM), the principal mechanism by which schools are supported to include students with high incidence special educational needs. DEIS Band 1 schools comprise 197 urban/town primary schools with the highest concentrations of disadvantage relative to other schools.

From September 2012, the staffing schedules for these schools are based on a general average of one teacher for every 20 students in junior schools, 22 students in vertical schools and 24 students in senior schools.

DEIS Band 1 schools are given an additional allocation of 0.2 of a post where the school has less than 200 students and 0.4 of a post where the school has 200 or more students under GAM.

A total of 195 DEIS post-primary schools are provided with additional support through an improved staffing schedule of 18.25:1. This is a 0.75 point improvement compared to the existing standard 19:1 that generally applies in post-primary schools that do not charge fees.

6.5.2 School Support Programme

Component programmes of the DEIS School Support Programme include:

- Home School Community Liaison Scheme
- School Completion Programme
- School Meals Programme
- School Books Grant Scheme (enhanced payment)

6.5.3 Home School Community Liaison (HSCL)

The aim of the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme is to promote partnership between parents and teachers to enhance pupils' learning opportunities and to promote their retention in the education system. The Scheme places great emphasis on collaboration with the local community. The Scheme helps to develop and promote teacher and staff partnership with parents and encourages a whole-school approach to improving attendance, participation and retention in education. In 2012 the Department of Education and Skills allocated 400 teachers to undertake liaison duties in 545 schools availing of HSCL. The Scheme is managed by the NEWB.

6.5.4 School Completion Programme (SCP)

The School Completion Programme (SCP) is a Department of Children and Youth Affairs programme that aims to have a significant positive impact on levels of pupil retention in primary and second level schools and on the numbers of pupils who successfully complete the Senior Cycle.

Supports include in-school, after-school and holiday time activities, which are designed to make school more relevant, meaningful and attractive to those most at risk.

6.5.5 National Educational Welfare Board

While responsibility for the NEWB, including the School Completion Programme, has transferred to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs since May 2011, the two Departments are working together to ensure that the services in the NEWB, including the School Completion

Programme, Home School Community Liaison and the Education Welfare Service have a renewed focus to more effectively target and support all children at risk.

6.5.6 Literacy and Numeracy

Under the terms of the DEIS Action Plan a high priority is given to specific measures and supports to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes which include the programmes listed in the table below:-

Programme	
Primary	Number of DEIS schools 2012
Reading Recovery	238
First Steps	334
Maths Recovery	327
Ready Set Go Maths	261
Post-primary	
Junior Certificate Schools Programme	186
Demonstration Library	30

DEIS schools continue to be prioritised for teacher CPD support for these programmes.

6.5.7 Evaluation of DEIS

Ongoing evaluation of DEIS is provided by the Educational Research Centre (ERC). The ERC has completed two reports based on achievement testing, both focused in the primary school sector; one on the rural dimension (published on the ERC website) and the second report focused on the urban dimension of DEIS. This second report was published together with two Inspectorate Reports on Planning in DEIS Primary and Post-Primary Schools in January 2012.

The initial findings of the Evaluation of DEIS in the Primary School Sector by the ERC show that:

- When comparing the overall average reading in 2007 with its equivalent in 2010, urban schools revealed an overall improvement in average reading and Maths achievement;
- The improvements are statistically significant at all grade levels in both English reading and Maths;
- Improvements are greatest at lower grade levels, with the largest gain among 2nd class pupils;
- Progress appears most marked among pupils with lower levels of achievement;
- Positive change in achievement is most evident among junior grades.

The findings of the Inspectorate's evaluation on the effectiveness of planning and target setting in 18 primary and 18 post-primary DEIS schools indicates that:

- Parents indicated positive levels of satisfaction in relation to the extent of their involvement in their children's education;
- Practically all of the primary schools reported significant, measurable improvements in the attendance levels of their pupils, and the majority of post-primary schools had effective measures in place to improve attendance;

- Due to the development of effective transfer programmes, the majority of schools report 100% progression from primary to post-primary;
- Strategies and interventions to facilitate and maintain optimal progression of pupils were found to be effective in almost all cases.

6.6 Special Education

The Department provides for a range of educational supports and services for children with special educational needs in mainstream and special schools including teachers, special needs assistants, assistive technology, specialist equipment, enhanced capitation and special transport arrangements.

The Department is committed to ensuring that all children with special educational needs can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in inclusive mainstream school settings through the primary and post-primary school network. Where children with special educational needs cannot be provided for in mainstream settings, the Department provides for specialised special class and special school places

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for processing applications from schools for supports for children with special educational needs.

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides support to schools in identifying pupil strengths and needs and in planning for, and reviewing, interventions appropriate to those needs.

6.6.1 Home Tuition Scheme

The Home Tuition Scheme provides funding to parents to provide education at home for children who, for a number of reasons such as chronic illness, are unable to attend school. The scheme was extended in recent years to facilitate tuition for children awaiting a suitable educational placement and to provide early intervention for pre-school children with autism.

6.6.2 July Education Programme

A July Education Programme was made available in 2012 to all special schools and mainstream primary schools with special classes catering for children with autism who choose to extend their education services through the month of July. The Department also provides for a July Programme for pupils with a severe/profound general learning disability. Where school-based provision is not feasible, home-based provision may be grant aided through the Home Tuition Scheme.

6.6.3 2012 Output

Targeted supports for children with special educational needs (SEN).

- At the end of 2012, there were approximately 9,950 whole time equivalent learning support/resource teachers in mainstream primary and post-primary schools. In addition, over 1,100 teachers provided education to children attending special schools with reduced pupil teacher ratios ranging from 6-1 to 11-1 depending on disability categorisation.

- Children with special care needs are also supported by Special Needs Assistants. 10,575 whole time equivalent Special Needs Assistants posts were made available for allocation for the school year beginning in September 2012, to provide for the care needs of children with special educational needs attending primary, post-primary and special schools.
- 1,464 grants issued to Primary and special schools in 2012 for the purchase of specialist equipment to assist children with special needs in the classroom. The type of equipment provided includes soundfield systems for children with hearing impairment and software and computer facilities for children with communicative disability.
- By the end of 2012, 628 special classes for children with special educational needs were approved and provided for.
- Approximately 80 additional classes for children with autism attached to mainstream and special schools were approved, bringing the total number of special classes for children with autism at the end of 2012 to 540 approx.
- 20 additional early intervention classes for children on the autistic spectrum were provided in 2012.
- Approximately 1,040 pupils availed of home tuition during the 2011/12 school year.
- There has been a steady increase in the number of schools offering the July Programme since it was introduced in 2001. 151 schools participated in the programme in 2012.
- 3,462 pupils availed of the home-based July Programme provision in 2012.
- 20,080 places were provided for Continuing Professional Development for teachers of children with Special Educational Needs by the Special Education Support Service in 2012.
- 337 places were provided on college based programmes in Learning Support and Special Education.

6.6.4 Co-ordination between the Education and Health services in supporting children with special educational needs

Officials from the Departments of Health, Education and Skills, the new Department of Children and Youth, the Health Service Executive and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) comprise a cross-sectoral group which meets regularly to co-ordinate an approach which will ensure delivery of the most effective response for children living with disability and special educational needs.

6.6.5 Provide targeted supports for children with special educational needs.

The need for additional CPD for teachers to enable them to meet the needs of students with special educational needs continues to be a high priority in the education system. Funding for the provision of places for teachers to pursue post-graduate qualifications in special education in third level institutions continued in 2012.

All teachers are also encouraged to seek assistance from the Special Education Support Service (SESS) and to pursue specialised CPD in relation to the learning and teaching of students with a wide range of special educational needs. The table hereunder shows CPD courses provided in 2012.

SERVICE	2012
SESS	20,080
College based programmes in Special Education	337
Total	20,417

6.7 School Patronage

The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector which was established in 2011 to address the diverse cultural needs of our society completed its work at the start of 2012 and work on divesting in the pilot areas is underway.

In April 2012, the Minister published the Report of the Advisory Group to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector and in June 2012, the Minister outlined his Action Plan in response to the Advisory Group Report.

6.8 Support the use of ICT in Teaching and Learning.

The ICT in Schools Programme is focused on the integration of ICT into teaching and learning and promotes the development of pupils' digital literacy.

The programme addresses four broad areas:

1. The provision of essential ICT infrastructure and networking within schools.
2. The provision of access to broadband connectivity to schools.
3. Up-skilling teachers' ICT skills.
4. Integrating ICT within the curriculum and providing curriculum relevant digital content and software.

Strategies are pursued through the work of the ICT Policy Section and the PDST Technology in Education, in collaboration with other agencies, support services and representative bodies as appropriate.

Since 1 June 2012 the NCTE has been integrated with the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), facilitating the better integration of ICT across the system and delivering administrative efficiencies for the long term. The daily average of aggregate schools broadband network traffic has increased from 1200 Mbits/s in September 2011 to 1400 Mbits/s in October 2012. Rollout of the 100M/bits connections to post-primary schools continued with 202 schools connected in 2012. Approximately 13,500 ICT CPD teacher training places were provided. There were two new ICT CPD courses added to the current provision.

In 2012 there were 1.6 million visits to www.scoilnet.ie which is the national portal for ICT in education and offers access to a growing repository of advice, information and evaluated and categorised web sources, software and multimedia resources.

6.9 School Enrolment Policies

A discussion document on school enrolment policies was published in 2011 to develop a new regulatory framework for school enrolment. The document, *Discussion Paper on a Regulatory Framework for School Enrolment* contains suggestions on how to make the process of enrolling in schools more open, equitable and consistent. The aim of the discussion document was to initiate debate leading to changes in how primary and post-primary schools allocate places to students in order to ensure a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory enrolment system. The Minister invited education partners and interested parties to submit their views to the Department by the end of October 2011. A total of 90 submissions were received. The feedback from this consultation has helped inform the nature and scope of a new regulatory framework for school enrolment which the Minister intends to bring to Government in 2013.

6.10 Development of a New Post-Primary On-line Database (P-POD)

In 2012 the Department began to replace the current school administration software capturing post-primary pupil data with a new database to be known as PPOD. PPOD has been developed to bring greater efficiency and effectiveness to how post-primary schools make their returns of student data to the Department. The PPOD system, which will be hosted by the Department, will be a central database for student and some school data. When PPOD is developed, post-primary schools will be able to access the system using the Department's *esinet* portal to maintain their students' data. PPOD was trialled in thirty schools during the 2012/2013 school year. It is expected that it will be deployed in all schools for the 2013/2014 school year, and that by the 2014/2015 it is envisaged that all schools will make their returns of student data, known as the September and October Returns, through the PPOD system.

6.11 School Transport

Some 114,000 children, including 8,000 children with special educational needs, were transported safely to school in the 2011/12 school year. A total of 82 million kilometres were travelled, covering 42 million journeys using some 6,000 routes. The outturn for the service amounted to €168.5m, which was within the 2012 financial allocation of €169.7m.

Changes to the School Transport Scheme, arising from budgetary decisions, taking account of the value for money review were implemented from the 2011/12 school year, with further changes proposed from the 2012/13 school year. These changes related primarily to eligibility criteria and included the following:

In 2011/12:

- The cessation of the closed school rule,
- The application of the minimum distance eligibility criterion of 3.2kms (primary level)
- The increase from 7 to 10 of the number of eligible children in a distinct locality required to establish or retain a service
- The introduction of transport charges for the first time for eligible primary children (€50 per primary child or a primary family maximum of €110)

In 2012/13:

- The cessation of eligibility based on the closed school rule (CSR) and the central school rule for all new children entering primary schools.
- The cessation of the catchment boundary system for determining eligibility for all new post-primary children
- An increase in the primary transport charges for eligible children to €100 per primary child or a primary family maximum of €220. The charge for concessionary primary pupils was reduced from €200 to €100.

In addition, in 2012 the Primary and Post-Primary School Transport Schemes were revised to take account of the changes to eligibility criteria. The revised schemes were published on the Department's website and circulated to relevant stakeholders.

A new process for school transport applications was introduced whereby parents of children at primary and post-primary level applied directly to Bus Éireann for school transport.

6.12 Teaching of Irish at primary and post-primary levels

An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta (COGG), with the support of the Department, continued in 2012 to offer advice, research, resources and texts in Irish and support services for teaching of Irish and through Irish.

In 2012 the Department supported the implementation of improvements to the assessment of literacy in Irish (L1) in Irish-medium schools as outlined in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and the revision of the contents of the Irish (L2) curriculum for mainstream English schools using a "learning outcomes" approach, specifying clearly what children will be expected to achieve at each stage of the primary cycle.

As part of an on-going implementation phase, work which will improve Irish in our primary and post-primary schools is currently underway: this includes the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy as regards the revision of the contents of the L1 and L2 curriculum.

Circular 0056/2011 issued to primary schools in November 2011 setting out measures to improve assessment and to allow for more time spent on the development of literacy skills in (L1) by increasing that time, particularly in the **first** language (Irish and English) by one hour overall per week.

A revised Leaving Certificate curriculum in Irish began in all schools in September 2010 for first examination in 2012. The revised programme provides for an increase in the proportion of marks available for oral assessment to 40%, and is aimed at promoting a significant shift in emphasis towards Irish as a spoken language, where students can communicate and interact in a spontaneous way, and where Irish is spoken every day in schools. The NCCA has been asked to review this syllabus in the light of the experiences of students in the examinations in 2012 and 2013.

As part of the overall approach and the phasing in of the Junior Cycle reforms, the Irish syllabus will be reviewed, and there will be a strengthening of portfolio and other forms of assessment.

6.13 School Inspection and Quality Assurance in Schools

The Inspectorate Division of the Department has statutory responsibility for evaluating the quality of educational provision in schools and centres for education. The Inspectorate has expanded its range of inspection models to allow it to evaluate a much larger number of schools in a proportionate way. In 2012, the Inspectorate carried out some form of inspection in over one fifth of primary schools and in over 80% of the 730 post-primary schools in the country.

In 2012, the following inspection activity took place in schools:

- 669 Incidental (unannounced) inspections in both primary and post-primary schools.
- 346 Whole-School Evaluations (WSEs) in primary and post-primary schools, focusing on the quality of management and leadership and on the quality of teaching and learning.
- 389 Subject Inspections were conducted in post-primary schools, focusing on the quality of provision within specific subject areas.
- Over 2,500 newly qualified primary teachers were inspected during the 2011/2012 school year as part of their probationary process.
- 957 school inspection reports, were published on the Department’s website (www.education.ie) thereby ensuring that schools, parents and the general public have access to meaningful information on quality and standards in the education system. The publication and dissemination of inspection findings also supports the provision of relevant policy advice for the education system.
- The Inspectorate published a number of thematic and composite reports, and guides to good practice in 2012.

6.13.1 Self-review and Ongoing Improvement of Teaching and Learning in Schools and Centres for Education

School self-evaluation (SSE) is a collaborative, reflective process of internal school review. It provides teachers with a means of systematically looking at how they teach and how pupils learn and helps schools and teachers to improve outcomes for learners. In 2012, the Inspectorate, in consultation with the education partners, further developed and published guidelines to assist schools to engage in SSE. In addition, a dedicated website to support schools in implementing school self-evaluation was also developed. In 2012, inspectors commenced the task of engaging in a series of advisory visits to schools to support the implementation of school self-evaluation. 346 primary schools and 159 post-primary schools received such support in 2012.

6.13.2 Inspection Reports Published in 2012

Inspection reports published in 2012	
WSE Primary	314
WSE / WSE-MLL Post-primary	108
Subject/Programme inspection within WSE	51

Stand-alone Subject/Programme inspections	484
Total	957

6.14 Teacher Payroll

The Department is responsible for the payment of salaries and pensions to teaching and non-teaching staff who are, or were, employed in primary, secondary and Community and Comprehensive schools.

The Department pays 95,300 serving and retired teaching and non-teaching staff on behalf of the managerial authorities of schools on a fortnightly basis. This involves 2.4 million transactions per annum. 99.9% of staff paid on the payroll are paid by Electronic Fund Transfer.

During 2012 a revised payslip was introduced which provided additional information for part-time and substitute teachers in particular.

In February 2012, the Revenue Print Centre commenced printing and packing school employee/pensioner payslips. This initiative yields savings of approx. €300,000 per annum, due principally to postal discounts achieved as a result of the improved print quality.

6.15 Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development

The Department is responsible for policy formulation along with the co-ordination, management, quality and financial control of measures to support the provision of education for teachers and schools leaders throughout their careers. The Department devises and implements effective policies and measures to ensure the adequate supply of suitably qualified and trained primary school teachers in the short, medium and long terms. This involves a high-level of communication and interaction with the Colleges of Education, the Teaching Council and others. The Department is also responsible for implementing policies in relation to the postgraduate diploma programme for post-primary teachers which is provided by the education departments of participating universities.

During 2012, collaboration and cooperation continued with the Teaching Council in implementing and amending the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2006 and developing shared policy in relation to the teaching profession.

Legislation enacted in 2012 included primary legislation, namely the amendment of SS 30, 33 and 38 of the Teaching Council Acts through Part 3 of the Education (Amendment) Act 2012. Secondary legislation promulgated in 2012 included the Teaching Council (Election of Members) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (SI No 607/2011); the Teaching Council Act 2001 (Amendment of Nominating Bodies) Order 2012 (SI No 73/2012) and the Teaching Council Act 2001 (Commencement) Order 2012 (SI 328/2012).

The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020 launched in July 2011 aims to ensure that teachers and schools maintain a strong

focus on literacy and numeracy skills, within a broad and balanced curriculum and sets out a wide-ranging programme of reforms in initial teacher education courses at primary and post-primary levels. Under the Strategy, improvements are being made to initial teacher education courses including the setting of new higher entry requirements for teacher education courses and the reconfiguring of the content and duration of courses for primary teachers to ensure the development of teachers' skills in literacy and numeracy teaching.

6.15.1 Professional Development Support Service for Teachers (PDST)

The PDST was restructured in 2012 with a view to developing an organisation that will be effective and responsive to the CPD needs of the education system, as well as having the flexibility to address future needs. In 2012:

- A new management team was appointed
- The NCTE (National Centre for Technology in Education) was integrated into the PDST with effect from 1 June and
- From September 2012, an tSeirbhís Tacaíochta Dara Leibhéal don Ghaeilge (STDL Gaeilge), the Gaeilge Support Service has also been integrated into the PDST.

This integration allows for greater cohesion in the provision of CPD for teachers.

PDST is charged with leading the provision of support for teachers in relation to the Department's Literacy and Numeracy Strategy as well as the provision of support for teachers in the area of school self-evaluation. These key themes in the Department's Strategy dominated the PDST's CPD provision in 2012.

6.15.2 Introduction of a Project Maths Postgraduate Programme

A postgraduate course for 'out of field' teachers of mathematics is in place since September 2012. The Professional Diploma in Mathematics for Teaching, a blended learning, two year part-time programme, is available nationwide free of charge, at a cost of approximately €2 million in 2012, to improve the skills of maths teachers at post-primary level.

Provision of the course is led by the National Centre for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching & Learning (NCE-MSTL), based in the University of Limerick (UL), and will be accredited jointly by the UL and NUI Galway through their strategic alliance. 390 places were made available for the first intake and at least two further intakes are proposed.

6.15.3 National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT)

The main objective of the Teacher Induction programme is to support the professional development of newly qualified teachers at both primary and post-primary level by way of systemic support in their first year of teaching, thus laying the foundations for subsequent professional growth and development.

The management of the National Induction Programme for Teachers continued in accordance with the model which operated during the pilot phase. Both the primary and post-primary sectors are now operating from St Patrick's in Drumcondra.

Induction became mandatory for all NQTs (Newly Qualified Teachers) on the 1st September 2012 and they will be required to complete all 12 Induction workshops within three years of registration with the Teaching Council. Workshops are available to NQTs whether they are employed or not.

6.15.4 Summer Course Programme

The principal objective of the Summer Course Programme is the advancement of teachers pedagogic and management skills in the context of the work of the primary school.

Summer courses included a greater emphasis in 2012 on literacy and numeracy in both English and Irish. 27,961 teachers attended 676 summer courses which were approved this year. Summer courses, which were traditionally open to primary teachers in the past, were open to post-primary teachers in 2012.

6.15.5 Jewish Studies

Hosted by the Dublin West Education Centre, in-service training for teachers of Jewish Studies commenced in January 2012 and the intensive phase was completed in Easter 2012 with the first exams in Senior Cycle to be held in 2013.

6.16 Number of Graduate Teachers from the Primary Colleges of Education in 2012

Colleges	Graduates – Bachelor of Education & Post Graduate 2012
Non HEA Colleges	
Froebel College	102
Coláiste Mhuire, Marino	156
Church of Ireland CoE	29
HEA Colleges	
St Patricks College	469
Mary Immaculate College	550
Total	1306

6.17 The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

All primary and post-primary schools have access to psychological assessments either directly through the assigned NEPS psychologist or through the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA). Schools that do not currently have NEPS psychologists assigned to them may avail of the SCPA, whereby the school can have an assessment carried out by a member of the panel of private psychologists approved and paid for by NEPS.

In common with many other psychological services and best international practice, NEPS has adopted a consultative model of service. The focus is on empowering teachers to intervene effectively with pupils whose needs range from mild to severe and transient to enduring. Psychologists use a problem solving and solution focused consultative approach to maximize positive outcomes for these pupils. NEPS encourages schools to use a continuum based

assessment and intervention process whereby each school takes responsibility for initial assessment, educational planning and remedial intervention for pupils with learning, emotional, social or behavioural difficulties. Teachers may consult their NEPS psychologist should they need to at this stage in the process. Only in the event of a failure to make reasonable progress, in spite of the school's best efforts in consultation with NEPS, will the psychologist become involved with an individual child for intensive intervention. This process allows psychologists to give early attention to urgent cases and also to help many more children indirectly than could be seen individually. It also ensures that children are not referred unnecessarily for psychological intervention. NEPS psychologists have worked on embedding the continuum process in the primary sector following the production by the Department of *Special Educational Needs – A Continuum of Support* guidance and resource materials for teachers which have been distributed to all schools since 2007/8.

NEPS provides, upon request, assistance to all schools and school communities that experience critical incidents. NEPS also processes applications for Reasonable Accommodation in Certificate Examinations (RACE) and responds to queries in relation to individual children from other sections of the Department and from specialist agencies.

In 2012/13 NEPS psychologists are assigned to some 85% of primary schools representing 90% of primary pupils, and 94% of post-primary schools representing 95% of post-primary pupils. Overall therefore, NEPS psychologists provide service to 86% of all schools and 92% of all pupils.

During the 2011/12 academic year NEPS psychologists were involved in casework (assessment and intervention) in relation to over 8,504 named students, and provided advice to teachers regarding interventions for approximately a further 14,700 un-named students. Additionally some 1,948 assessments were funded under the SCPA in 2012.

In addition NEPS psychologists made recommendations on some 5,100 additional pupils under the Reasonable Accommodation in Certificate Examinations scheme (RACE) on behalf of the State Examinations Commission and attended at some 97 critical incidents in schools at the request of school authorities.

During 2012, NEPS commenced a pilot project in some 40 schools involving some 800 5th class pupils in the Friends for Life Programme, which is designed to promote resilience / social emotional competence and reduce anxiety in pupils.

Additionally NEPS personnel actively participated in the drafting and production of the Post-Primary Well-being and Suicide Prevention Guidelines along with the Department's Inspectorate and the National Office of Suicide Prevention.

7 Goal 2 – Provide opportunities for upskilling and reskilling that meet the needs of individuals and the labour market

7.1 Further Education and Training

The Department co-ordinates, funds and monitors the development of further education and training (FET) programmes for young people and adults who have either left school early and/or who need FET to enhance their employment prospects and to enable them to achieve a higher level of qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

In 2012, funding was provided for over 450,000 education and training places across the range of provision in the higher education and further education and training sectors. These places included provision for school leavers and self-referred clients, and in particular for the long-term unemployed who were deemed a specific priority. Places in the further education and training sector were prioritised specifically for those on the Live Register for twelve months or more. Further targeting of those who are under 25 years old for certain programmes such as the new MOMENTUM programme was also introduced.

In excess of 170,000 learners, including significant numbers of unemployed people, participated in further education courses in 2012.

In 2012, over 83,000 learners benefited from FÁS courses, which is in excess of the output target of just over 80,000 for the year. Of this figure, over 75,000 places were provided for the unemployed and the remainder relate to training for those in employment including apprentices.

MOMENTUM

A new initiative called MOMENTUM, which was launched in 2012, will fund the provision of free education and training projects to allow 6,500 jobseekers, who are unemployed for 12 months or more, to gain skills and to access work opportunities in identified growing sectors. MOMENTUM is administered by FÁS and funded by the Department of Education & Skills through the ESF supported Labour Market Education & Training Fund (LMETF). The payment system to providers is outcomes based with part payment reserved for key stages of the programme, including challenging certification, progression and employment outcomes at the end of the programme.

MOMENTUM will provide eligible jobseekers with

- Access to a range of quality education and training projects
- Links to identified job vacancies and employers
- Work placement and support
- Relevant industry and NFQ (National Framework of Qualifications) Certification.

The total investment in FET by the Department amounted to some €900m² in 2012.

² See Chapter 2 of the SOLAS Action Plan for further breakdown

Springboard

During 2012 the Department supported more than 10,000 participants under the Springboard programme, which provides free part time higher education courses for unemployed people in areas of identified skills needs.

ICT Action Plan

As part of the ICT Action Plan, which was launched in January 2012, in excess of 700 places were provided for jobseekers on the first phase of the ICT graduate skills conversion courses in 2012.

Apprenticeship Review

In 2012, the Department initiated a review of the Irish Apprenticeship training model, with a view to providing an updated model of training that delivers the necessary skilled workforce to service the needs of a rapidly changing economy and ensures an appropriate balance between supply and demand. This review will be undertaken in two stages. The first stage is the preparation of a background issues paper, which is to provide a factual description of the current system of apprenticeship, including the governance arrangements, trends and forecasts in relation to recruitment and identified strengths and weaknesses of the current model. The Paper is to set out proposals for a range of possible options for change. It is proposed that the second stage of the review, commencing in 2013, will involve consultation with all key stakeholders on the options for change.

7.2 Ireland's EGF programmes

NACE Sector Construction

Ireland's EGF programmes to assist redundant workers in the following three construction sub-sectors ended in June 2012:

- Construction of buildings (NACE 41)
- Specialised construction services (NACE 43)
- Architectural and engineering services (NACE 71)

The three EGF programmes covered approximately 8,000 redundant workers made redundant during the 9-month reference period from 1 July 2009 to 31 March 2010. A suite of approved measures encompassing career guidance, training, apprenticeships, further education, higher education and entrepreneurial supports were delivered between 1st July 2009 (the date the first of the redundancies took effect) and 9th June 2012 to the eligible workers.

Final reports and statements of expenditure for the three programmes including final participation, output and expenditure figures, were submitted by the Department to the European Commission in December 2012 and are currently under consideration by the Commission.

Talk Talk

An application from the Department for EGF co-financed assistance for 585 workers affected by redundancies at the Talk Talk Call Centre facility in Waterford in September 2011 was submitted to and approved by the European Commission in October 2012. The approved programme includes the following measures:-:

- Career guidance
- Training and up-skilling supports provided through bodies receiving public funding such as FAS and Skillnets Ltd;
- EGF training grants for privately provided accredited higher or further education courses.
- Further and higher education supports
- Enterprise supports
- Course expenses contributions towards the cost of necessary expenses (travel, subsistence, course equipment and materials).

A Talk Talk EGF Consultative Forum was established by Minister Cannon in August 2012 and has met three times to date. The Forum is chaired by the President of WIT and its members are drawn from the Department of Education and Skills, Department of Social Protection, Waterford City Council, ICTU, the EGF Coordination Unit and local service providers such as FÁS, Waterford City Enterprise Board, Waterford City VEC and the Talk Talk Former Workers Association.

The EGF Talk Talk programme is operational from 7th September 2011 to 28th February 2014. At the end of 2012, 363 of the 585 affected cohort had received supports.

7.3 SOLAS

Further to the Government's announcement in 2011 of the establishment of a new further education and training authority called SOLAS, whose function is to reform, co-ordinate and fund further education and training programmes nationally, the Further Education and Training Bill was published in 2012.

FÁS will be disbanded and its training provision transferred to the VECs, which are to be reconfigured as the new Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

SOLAS will be responsible for commissioning and funding the delivery of services from the new Education and Training boards (ETBs). These boards will be responsible for the planning and delivery of all the vocational training and further education in their region.

7.4 Supporting the implementation of the National Skills Strategy – FET

The National Skills Strategy (NSS) notes that virtually all occupations in the future will require workers to up-skill and/or re-skill and to engage in continual learning.

Significant progress has already been made towards meeting the objectives set out in the National Skills Strategy for the period to 2020. This is particularly the case in relation to third level. However, there is still a significant gap to close especially in relation to the targets aimed at the Leaving Certificate equivalent and lower levels of the NFQ.

The progress made so far regarding the implementation of the Skills Strategy indicates that the most significant challenge for the period to 2020 is up-skilling those at Levels 1-3 to Levels 4 and 5. This challenge will now be given a specific focus. Combating early school leaving and ensuring the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills will be key factors in determining the extent to which this challenge is met.

7.5 Support the implementation of the National Skills Strategy (NSS) – Higher Education

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

Progress was made towards achieving the NSS goals through funding full time undergraduate provision in universities and institutes of technology and through the roll out of additional places under the Springboard and ICT skills conversion programmes.

In 2011/12 162,786 full time students were enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Higher Education Authority (HEA) funded institutions. A further 33,401 students were enrolled on part time programmes.

The Springboard programme provides part time higher education places for unemployed people in areas of identified skills needs. 10,000 participants were supported on Springboard programmes during 2012; this includes participants on the more than 6,000 new places that were made available under the roll out of the second phase of Springboard in 2012.

A 1st stage evaluation of the first phase of Springboard in 2011 was published in February 2012. It showed that Springboard was successfully reaching its target cohorts. 77% of participants were aged between 25 and 49, 60% had been out of work for more than 1 year and 20%, the largest single group, were previously employed in the construction sector.

The ICT Action Plan was published in January 2012. It was developed as a direct response to specific ICT skills. A key measure in the plan was the roll out of more than 700 places on level 8 graduate skills conversion courses from March 2012.

7.6 National Employment and Entitlements Service

In early 2012, FÁS Employment Services were transferred to the Department of Social Protection. A memorandum of understanding was put in place between FÁS/SOLAS and that Department to coordinate referrals to FÁS from the National Employment and Entitlements Service, now called Intreo, which is the new integrated employment and support service provided by the Department of Social Protection. Close working relationships between Intreo and the education and training sector are being enhanced as part of the government's activation policy as set out in *Pathways to Work*.

7.7 Training for People with Disabilities

FÁS works in conjunction with Specialist Training Providers (STP) countrywide to deliver training for people with disabilities. This client group requires more intensive support than is available in non-specialist training provision. The features of this specialist vocational training include:

- Additional training duration
- Adapted equipment
- Transport arrangements
- Enhanced programme content
- Enhanced trainer-learner ratio.

A total of 1,494 participants completed their programme.

7.8 Skillnets

Skillnets is a state-funded, enterprise-led support body which has facilitated enterprise training since 1999. The objective of this training is to assist companies in remaining competitive and ensure workers continue to develop industry-specific skills, particularly across emerging sectors. Skillnets training promotes worker mobility and skills transferability.

In 2012, Skillnets received 14.5 million through the National Training Fund to provide up-skilling and re-skilling opportunities for up to 40,000 people including the unemployed and employed individuals.

In early 2012, Skillnets was appointed to set up a specific management training initiative under the Government's Action Plan for Jobs 2012. The new initiative, which is being branded as ManagementWorks, was set up in early 2012. With a budget of up to €1.2m, the ManagementWorks project commenced the roll-out of a range of training and development programmes available to help private sector small and medium enterprises to improve their performance through seeking to build their managerial capability to allow them to improve trading both nationally and internationally.

Review of Skillnets TNP 2010-2011

In 2012 an independent evaluation of Skillnets training programmes in 2011 was completed. The evaluation covered the activity of 70 Skillnets supports training networks across the country with the resources and expertise to design and deliver training solutions that contribute to competitiveness and the employability of employees and job-seekers.

Forfás updated the 2011 guidelines for aligning Further Education provision with the skills needs of enterprise, which included a review of Further Education statistics.

7.9 Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills

In 2012, the Department issued new operational guidelines for adult literacy and community education provision which highlight the importance of integrating literacy into further education and training programmes.

The process for interviewing adults in their homes under the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) programme, which involved surveying adults between the ages of 16-64 in their homes, was completed in March 2012 with a response rate of 72%. This was one of the highest response rates of all the countries conducting the survey.

The number of participants in adult literacy tuition has increased from 5,000 in 1997 to 57,000 in 2012.

In the period 2000-2012, there have been approximately 500,000 participants, including 100,000 ESOL participants. In 2012, funding of approximately €30 million was provided for the Adult Literacy Service and a further €2.8 million was provided from the National Training Fund for the Skills for Work Programme which aims to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of employees. Over 2,800 learners completed programmes in 2012.

8 Goal 3 – Provide high quality learning, research and innovation opportunities in the higher education sector.

Higher Education has an important role in supporting personal opportunity, social, civic and cultural development. It is also recognised as an increasingly important element of our national infrastructure for supporting enterprise development, innovation and economic growth. Within that context, supporting quality teaching and learning, research and innovation in higher education and enhancing the capacity of the sector to respond to the changing needs of learners, the economy and society are a priority for the Department. The Department aims to promote access to higher education, particularly for under-represented groups, by providing flexible learning opportunities. Our long term objectives are to increase the levels of overall educational attainment in the workforce and to increase the participation of under-represented groups in higher education.

8.1 The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 was launched in January 2011 with the overall objective of bringing a more coherent and coordinated approach to the development of the higher education sector. In order to ensure effective oversight of the implementation of the Strategy, the Department has established an Implementation Oversight Group. The Group is co-ordinating, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of recommendations contained in the National Strategy on an ongoing basis in conjunction with other expertise and stakeholders as required. There are four key strands to the Strategy, excellence in teaching, learning, research and engagement; system development; sustainability and funding and governance (HR/IR). The Higher Education Authority (HEA) has a key role in the implementation of the Strategy, which will also require the involvement of the QQI to a large extent.

Work has commenced to progress the implementation of the recommendations of the Strategy and the Oversight Group has agreed a short to medium term implementation progress reporting template that details actions under four broad strategic headings together with a number of supporting objectives. Implemented priority areas for 2012 from the National Strategy for Higher Education include:

- The launch of National Forum for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning;
- Initiation of the process of consultation and deliberation on the reconfiguration of the higher education system, including the publication by the HEA in February 2012 of *Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape* which outlined the process for designation as Technological University;
- The publication of quarterly progress reports by the Implementation Oversight Group which are available on www.education.ie; and the
- Amalgamation of the existing two research councils into one council, the Irish Research Council.

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 was passed in July 2012. The Act provided for a comprehensive and updated system of quality assurance in further and higher education, as well as extended provisions on the National Framework of Qualifications. A central feature of these new provisions was the creation of an amalgamated qualifications and quality assurance agency.

The new agency, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), was established under the Act in November 2012. QQI takes on responsibility for the functions previously undertaken by FETAC, HETAC, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and the Irish Universities Quality Board. This delivers on a key commitment in the Programme for Government and the Public Sector Reform Plan. QQI will provide a joined-up service to learners and education and training providers and will work to open up flexible, quality assured, learning pathways within the context of the National Framework of Qualifications. The efficiencies achieved through the amalgamation will also deliver annual savings in the region of €1 million.

8.2 Promoting Equity of Access to Higher Education

The Higher Education-Equity of Access section in the Department has responsibility for leading the development of national policy on equity of access to higher education for all students, but particularly among those groups who are currently underrepresented in the sector. The Section supports a range of measures which facilitate greater levels of participation by disadvantaged students, mature students and students with disabilities. The principal support in financial terms is provided for under the Student Grant Scheme, which makes available means-tested financial assistance to students in further and higher education. Other targeted access supports include the Student Assistance Fund and the Fund for Students with Disabilities. A number of third-level scholarship opportunities, including scholarships targeting disadvantaged students, are also provided by the Section.

8.3 Reform of the Student Grants System

The Student Support Act, which was signed into law in 2011, provided for fundamental reform of the student grants system. In the first major step to overhaul the student grant system, the existing schemes were replaced by a single unified scheme with effect from the 2011/12 academic year and one single awarding authority within CDVEC, called Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), was established to centralise the process for new entrants for the 2012/2013 academic year.

While the student grants reform programme has not been without its difficulties in the introductory phase, it is envisaged that the establishment of a single grant awarding body will serve our students better in the longer term.

The on-line Student Grant application facility was made available for all new applicants in May 2012. The facility was accessed through www.studentfinance.ie website. SUSI conducted comprehensive information campaigns for students and their parents on the grant application process and engaged with guidance counsellors, the Citizen Information Board, the HEA, the CAO and the Union of Students Ireland.

A significant number of difficulties occurred in the operation of the new centralised system in the first year of its operation, resulting in unacceptable delays in the award and payment of grants. However, the causes of these delays have since been analysed and addressed, and it is envisaged that the establishment of a centralised, automated system will serve our students better in the longer term.

The existing 66 different grant awarding bodies responsible for student grants (Local Authorities and VECs) are continuing to deal with grant renewals for their existing students until they complete their current courses.

8.4 Expenditure on Student Support

In 2012 the maximum standard rate of maintenance grant was €3,025. Students qualifying for the special rate of grant received a maximum of €6,100 in 2012. The total spend on student grants in 2012 was some €356m for 76,644 students, compared with a spend of some €335m in 2011 for 71,532 students. A total of 6,849 students benefited from the Fund for Students with Disabilities in 2011/12, compared to 6,097 in the 2010/11 academic year. A total of 13,347 students benefitted from the Student Assistance Fund in 2011/2012. There were 20,196 beneficiaries of Third Level Access Schemes with overall expenditure of €16.2m. In the academic year 2011/12, 291 students benefitted from the Department's scholarship schemes and a total of €2m was expended in 2011.

2012		
Scheme	Beneficiaries	Overall Expenditure
Student Grant Schemes	76,644	€336m
Third Level Access Scheme	20,196	€16.2
Department scholarship scheme	291	€2m

2011/2012	
Fund for Students with Disabilities	6,849
Student Assistance Fund	13,347

8.5 Higher Education Research and Finance

The Department is responsible for the development and implementation of policy, along with formulating and reviewing the budgetary allocations for the provision of higher education and research in approved institutions in the State. This involves financial management and reporting on the funding framework which combines a system grant funding model with the Free Fees schemes; the provision of funding to the HEA for direct allocation to institutions; liaison with the HEA, which deals with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on a day-to-day basis and the provision of direct funding to non HEA designated HEIs. The Department is responsible for the review and development of robust systems of monitoring and evaluation to promote accountability within the institutions, including compliance with code of governance requirements. It also engages in the on-going review of the impact of changes in legislation, both Irish and EU, on the free fees schemes.

The Department provides support for the development of research capabilities across the broad range of disciplines in third level institutions through the funding of human capital – generally

PhD students and early-stage postdoctoral researchers - by the Irish Research Council. The provision also funds underpinning e-infrastructure for the research system.

Recurrent provision to the university and institutes of technologies amounted to €1.118 billion in 2012. Recurrent funding to the third level sector includes grant in lieu of the cost of tuition fees which amounted to some €367 million in the 2011/12 academic year covering 125,034 full-time undergraduate students. The final provision under the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) promoting inter-institutional collaboration, reform and quality improvement, amounted to some €750,000. Recurrent expenditure under Research and Development amounted to €37.6 million in 2012. A total of 350 PhD awards and 84 Postdoctoral awards were made by the Irish Research Council in 2012.

8.6 International Activities

EU Education Council of Ministers

In 2012, Education Ministers continued to contribute to the achievement of the *Europe 2020 strategy* goals and targets.

At Council in February, under the Danish presidency of the EU, Education Ministers adopted the draft 2012 Joint Report on the implementation of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020) 'Education and Training in a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe'.

Under ET2020, member states agreed four long-term strategic objectives for the period up to 2020. The four long-term objectives are:

- Making lifelong learning and learner mobility a reality
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
- Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship
- Enhancing innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

The draft Joint Report analyses progress on short-term objectives within these areas from 2009-11 and makes proposals for the period from 2012-14.

In May 2012, Education Ministers reached agreement on a partial general approach on the EU's 2014-2020 programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport. This will allow future Presidencies to enter triologue negotiations with the European Parliament on the programme, with the goal of reaching agreement by mid-2013

The Council also adopted conclusions on a benchmark on the employability of graduates from education and training. This benchmark will enable improved analysis of the transition from education and training to employment across the EU and will also facilitate discrete analysis of data between different levels of education attainment and different fields of education, which will help to highlight any gap in employment potential between those with third level education and those with an upper secondary level education.

In November, under the stewardship of the Cypriot Presidency, negotiations on the EU's 2014-2020 programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport continued. In addition, the Council agreed a Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, and conclusions on Literacy and the role of Education & Training in the Europe 2020 European growth strategy.

8.7 Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013

In keeping with its role in supporting and supplementing the actions of the Member States in the area of education and training, the European Commission has adopted a range of programmes supporting cross-border mobility, networking and sharing of best practice. The European Commission has integrated its various educational and training initiatives under a single umbrella: the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013.

With a budget of nearly €7 billion for 2007 to 2013, this programme enables individuals at all stages of their lives to pursue learning opportunities across Europe. It consists of four sub-programmes: Erasmus, Comenius, Leonardo DaVinci and Grundtvig, as well as transversal programmes covering inter-sectoral themes such as ICT and languages

Funding under the Programme is administered by the national agencies in the member states. In Ireland, the administering agencies are Léargas and the Higher Education Authority. The Department of Education is the national authority, or guarantor, that oversees the administration of the programme by the agencies. The board of Léargas, which is appointed by the Minister, includes an official of the International Section and a Senior Inspector.

Between 2007 and 2013, Ireland will receive over €80 million from the Lifelong Learning Programme, which will allow some 18,500 Irish third-level students and lecturing staff to participate in Erasmus educational exchanges. This EU funding will also provide opportunities for some 2,500 Irish trainees to benefit from European work placements, for some 800 workers to up-skill during placements in European companies, for some 500 vocational education and training professionals to exchange best practice and around 550 schools and 150 adult education organisations to participate in various European partnerships. In addition to these, some 300 adult educators will participate in the Grundtvig Programme, and over 1,100 teachers and future teachers will be given the opportunity to participate in the Comenius programme. The total funding allocated to Ireland under the Programme in 2012 was €12.5m.

Expenditure on International Education Initiatives in 2012	
Programme	Expenditure in 2012
Erasmus	€5,154,181
Comenius	€1,899,449
Leonardo daVinci	€4,038,574
Grundtvig	€587,322
Study Visits	€102,731
Operational Costs to the national agencies	€803,000

The Department acts as the Irish national commission for United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

8.8 Departmental Participation in International Meetings and Initiatives

The year 2012 saw a great increase in preparations for Ireland's upcoming 2013 Presidency of the EU in Education & Training. An increased number of Ministerial and high level meetings between Departmental staff and staff from the European Commission and the European Parliament were held in order to finalise preparations for the Presidency.

The meeting of the EU's High Level Group on Education & Training was held in Dublin Castle in December 2102, which was chaired by International Section as the incoming Irish Presidency of the EU. This event served as the informal beginning of the Presidency for the incoming Chair.

The Department's International Section also performs an administrative and coordination role in terms of circulating information on, and organising and registering of delegates to, various EU Presidency Conferences, Seminars and other meetings.

An officer of the Section serves as Education Attaché in the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU in Brussels. An officer of the Section regularly attends the meetings of the EU's working group on education & training, the Education Committee.

In 2012 the Department was instrumental in facilitating and making provision for the following meetings and initiatives:

- Outward Ministerial missions to priority countries including China, India, Vietnam and Malaysia.
- Developing inter-governmental contacts, including the hosting of 12 incoming international delegation visits and the joint working group on education with Malaysia.
- Monitoring and co-ordinating implementation of the international education strategy.
- Developing national approaches to market opportunities, including signing a major new agreement to facilitate Irish participation in the Science Without Borders programme in Brazil.
- Supporting Ireland's profile as a centre of international education through support of the 2012 *European Association of International Education* conference in Dublin, attracting over 4,500 delegates from over 80 countries.

The EU programme under which primary and post-primary teachers are seconded from Irish schools to teach in the 14 European Schools continued in 2012, with about 60 Irish teachers being on secondment in that year.

8.9 North/South

North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC)

Three meetings of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in Education Sector format were held in 2012. Ministers reviewed developments and agreed to advance progress in North/South cooperation in the areas of Educational Underachievement, Special Educational Needs, Teacher Qualifications and School, Youth and Teacher Exchanges.

In addition, two meetings of the NSMC in plenary session took place in 2012 during which there was agreement on the potential for future co-operation between the two jurisdictions in the area of higher education. While there is already a significant level of North-South engagement and co-operation on higher education issues taking place on an informal basis at official and institutional levels, it is considered that there is scope to further enhance such co-operation by including higher education matters formally within the North South Ministerial Council framework.

NSMC Working Group

The Educational Underachievement and Literacy Numeracy Working Group at its meeting in September 2012 reported that the Education Inspectorates in both jurisdictions were progressing work on the production of a North/South Joint Inspectorate Report, Best Practice Guidelines in Literacy Provision at Post-Primary Level, expected to be published in 2013.

On the recommendation of the Working Group, both the Department and the Department of Education in Northern Ireland supported all-island initiatives to promote literacy and numeracy in 2012: - a Maths Week and a Children's Books Ireland programme aimed at promoting the engagement of young teenagers aged 12-15 in reading.

North/South General Activities

In 2012, the Department continued to co-fund with the Northern Ireland Department of Education, and the Department of Employment and Learning North/South cooperation initiatives which cover a wide range of initiatives in respect of Educational Underachievement; Schools, Youth & Teachers and 3rd Level. Total expenditure by this Department in supporting these initiatives in 2012 amounted to approximately €879,655.

The Department also continued to engage on a bi-lateral basis with the Northern Ireland Department of Employment and Learning (DEL), with a view to furthering cooperation between the two Departments in the area of third level education. In particular the Departments worked to develop a programme of cooperation on areas of mutual interest and benefit including policies on access to higher and further education in both jurisdictions; identification of the potential for greater student mobility and cross-border student flows; cross-border institutional collaboration; and the potential for joint North/South access to EU funding. The National Educational Psychological Service continued its bi-annual meetings with the Principal Educational Psychologists, Northern Ireland.

9 Goal 4 – Plan and provide appropriate infrastructure for learning environments

The Department aims to provide appropriate infrastructure for learning environments so that all learners have access to a modern learning environment. We must ensure that we provide accommodation to meet demand for school places in areas where enrolments are rising. Delivery of building projects in the education sector will contribute to economic activity, create jobs around the country and increase our productive capacity. Construction costs have reduced significantly in recent years and we will seek to achieve the best value for the taxpayer.

In March 2012 a Five Year Construction Programme was announced, which included 275 major school building projects and involving a total investment of €1.5 billion. In July 2012 a planned €280 million investment in educational projects through the public private partnership process (PPP) was announced as part of the Government's economic stimulus package. As a result, a further 2 bundles of school projects will be rolled out, consisting of a total of 12 individual schools worth a total investment of approximately €100m. Some €180 million was allocated towards Stage 1 of the planned consolidation of the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) at the Grangegorman campus from the 39 existing sites across the capital.

9.1 Increasing the Efficiency in the Delivery of Building Projects

In November 2011, the Government committed over €2 billion in funding for school building projects as part of the Medium Term Infrastructure and Capital Investment to meet rising demographic demands. This investment is for the next five years and the five year plan includes alternative methods of delivering projects. Agencies like the Office of Public Works, the Vocational Education Committees and the National Development Finance Agency, as well as a number of Local Authorities are all assisting with the delivery of over 70 major school projects.

9.2 Provision of School Places

9.2.1 Major school building projects completed in 2012 included the following:

- 25 new primary schools were completed providing 9,792 permanent school places, of which 6,324 were additional permanent places.
- 14 large scale extensions were completed providing additional permanent primary school places and enhanced facilities in existing schools for 1,820 pupils
- At post-primary level 7 new schools were completed providing 4,550 permanent school places, of which 1,750 were additional permanent places.
- 7 large scale extensions were completed providing 250 additional permanent post-primary school places and enhanced facilities in existing schools for 4,150 pupils.
- 210 additional accommodation projects were completed in the primary sector providing 5,684 permanent school places.
- 29 additional accommodation projects were completed in the post-primary sector providing 741 permanent school places.
- 7 projects were completed under the Prefab Replacement Scheme providing 252 permanent primary school places.

- 375 projects were approved for funding under the Emergency Works Scheme.
- Sites acquired in 2012 will cater for 10 primary schools and 2 post-primary schools.

9.3 Public Private Partnership

In line with Government policy, the Department of Education and Skills uses Public Private Partnership arrangements for the provision of educational infrastructure. School projects undertaken by the Department are based on a 25 year design, build and maintain arrangement which is funded via annual unitary payments. The unitary payments comprise loan repayments (capital and interest) for the project financing which covers design, construction and equipment, building and equipment life cycle funds and facilities management of the schools. The latter item includes maintenance, cleaning, salaries and sundry expenses. Almost 11,000 pupil places have been provided to date through the PPP system: 3,475 in an initial pilot phase; 2,700 in a Bundle 1; and 4,700 in a Bundle 2 which came on stream during 2011.

As part of the 2012 Economic Stimulus Package three further packages of PPPs were approved by Government. Two were in the schools sector involving 12 school projects - Bundles 4 and 5 and the re-commencement of the Higher Education Grangegorman capital project involving the consolidation of Dublin Institute of Technology.

Additionally, in 2012 building work on Schools Bundle 3 commenced. In November, 2012, a contract was signed with BAM PPP for delivery of these eight schools. The first of these schools is expected to be completed in December 2013 with the remaining 7 completed in spring 2014.

9.4 Developments in the Higher Education Sector

The total spend in 2012 was approximately €55m. Projects included:

- Completion of library at NUI Maynooth
- Refurbishment of PESS building in UL
- Conclusion of Health and Safety works at various IOT's and smaller colleges
- Major projects that progressed during 2012 were UCD Science Centre / UCD Law/ TCD Medical School

Third Level Capital projects are devolved to higher education institutions for delivery, permitting speedier provision.

9.5 Increased Efficiencies

The Online Inventory of School Accommodation (IOS) is being compiled by schools using the Esinet Portal as part of the overhaul of the central database of school accommodation. Over 80% of schools completed the inventory data.

An inventory of all primary and post-primary education infrastructure and related community assets was undertaken on a pilot basis in five areas of the country during 2012. The pilot exercise will inform future development of a national inventory of education and related infrastructure.

A range of Frameworks for consultancy appointments are in operation for larger, complex and urgent projects.

In late 2012 the Department carried out 65 inspections on schools that had received devolved funding in 2010 and 2011 to see if works were carried out in accordance with Department guidelines.

Arrangements are in place to diversify the delivery of projects including arrangements with VECs and a County Council. In July 2012 Louth County Council delivered a new 16-classroom primary school in Drogheda, Co. Louth. This was the first school to be delivered by a local authority on behalf of the Department under the new arrangements aimed at building schools more efficiently and cost-effectively. The €3.4 million project was managed by Louth County Council, and was delivered on time and within budget.

A Memorandum of Understanding with the County and City Managers' Association was signed by the Minister in 2012. The Memorandum fosters increased levels of cooperation and formalises the local authorities' part in securing sites for educational use.

As part of the reform process, the Department reviewed its procedures and developed a new suite of procedural documents – the 2012 Design Team Procedures - which were implemented in March 2012. These new procedures give increased freedom and authority to Design Teams and focus on streamlining the Design process and minimising delays during that process.

Lists of projects approved for delivery are published on the Department's website on a monthly basis. In the case of major projects, updates are provided on the progress through the various stages of delivery. In the case of smaller devolved projects information is published on a weekly basis listing the name of the school, the type of project and dates of approval.

9.6 Energy Policy

The Department of Education and Skills is at the forefront of design with respect to sustainable energy efficiency in school buildings. The Departments Technical Guidance Documents (TGD'S) continues to set the benchmark for sustainable design in school buildings with a clear focus on energy efficiency which is supported by a strong research programme with forty research projects at various stages including the energy website at www.energyeducation.ie and the Passive schools project with two passive schools completed this year. All schools built in accordance with the TGD'S are capable of achieving an A3 BER.

The Department won the Energy Sustainability in the Built Environment Award 2012 for its research project Coláiste Choilm, Tullamore, at the SEAI Sustainable Energy Awards, it also won the Green Building of the Year Award at the Green Awards 2012 and also took the top award in the overall competition, the Overall Green Award, based on the same project and for its continued work in developing low energy sustainable schools.

9.7 Provide education and training related data to the public and organisations

Data was supplied to Eurostat, the OECD and UNESCO on various features of education including

- the number of students enrolled in education and training at all ISCED levels classified by various categories such as sex, age group, nationality and whether the education or training is full or part time
- the number of new entrants to education or training programmes
- the number of graduates from education or training programmes
- the number of teachers and teaching staff
- the number of students learning foreign languages
- financial data relating to education or training
- information relating to the curriculum at first and second level.

This information feeds into the OECD's annual publication *Education at a Glance*. The information is also published in Eurostat's Education Database.

10 Part 3 – Improving our Efficiency and Effectiveness

The Department is committed to providing a high quality and efficient service to all of our customers and stakeholders. In 2012, we continued to ensure that we delivered value to the taxpayer through the delivery of effective and efficient services. This section of the Report outlines the improvements which the Department implemented in 2012 to increase its efficiency and effectiveness with reference to the actions and performance indicators set out in Part 4 of the Department's Statement of Strategy 2011-2014.

10.1 General Education Sector Reform

During 2012 the Department made significant progress in relation to structural reform of the education sector including: the Establishment of the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the merger of the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) and the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET) and the establishment of SOLAS and the Reconfiguration of the Vocational Education Committees. Further information on individual reforms is available in the Review of the Year.

10.2 Support the modernisation of the education sector through a partnership process that promotes good industrial relations practice.

Through its External Staff Relations Unit (ESRU), the Department continued to provide and operate an industrial relations framework and service at national level to manage the processing of industrial relations issues relating to the wider education sector. The functions of the ESRU include the promotion of compliance with Government pay policy throughout the wider education sector, the full implementation of the Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (Croke Park Agreement) with regard to the education sector and provision of advice to line sections within the Department (and the educational institutions) on the application of employment law.

10.3 Organisational Review Programme

In 2011, the Department submitted an Action Plan to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and was published as part of the Third Report of the ORP process in January 2012. The full report, which includes reviews of three other Departments, is available to download from www.orp.ie.

The actions in the plan centre around strategic direction and leadership, improving internal and external communication, structures and governance, evaluation, human resource management and deployment and internal business processes and structures.. Our long term objective is to nurture a culture of continuous improvement and innovation in the way we all approach our work and to improve service delivery across the education system.

The Department has identified 39 priority actions to be progressed over the next 2 years. These priority actions centre around the following themes which were highlighted in the ORP Report:

- Strategic direction and leadership
- Improving internal and external communication

- Structures & Governance
- Evaluation
- Human Resource Management and Deployment
- Internal business processes and structures

To date 14 actions have been completed and work is underway on the remaining actions.

10.4 Children First

Throughout 2012, the Department provided training and information seminars to schools on the Child Protection Procedures for Schools that were updated and published in September 2011 following the revisions in July 2011 to the National Children First guidelines.

10.5 Residential Institutions Redress

In line with keeping with the commitment in the Programme for Government to implement the recommendations of the Ryan Report:

- the process of providing a memorial for victims of institutional abuse was progressed, with the announcement of the competition winner in July, 2012;
- the Department continued to support the Origins Family Tracing Service, operated by Barnardos, which processed 84 requests during 2012; and
- the Department continued to provide personal records to individuals on request, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act, processing 421 requests during 2012.

The 2012 Act also enables the congregations, as charities, to make cash contributions to the RISF and to the State as contributions towards the costs of redress. During 2012 the Department engaged with the congregations in relation to their property offers and the transfer of the 12 properties accepted in principle by the Government was progressed.

10.6 Improving our Department's Performance and Efficiency

10.6.1 Finance

The Department's expenditure allocation for 2012 took account of a number of savings measures decided by Government as part of the Comprehensive Expenditure Review (CER) process yielding savings of €76m in 2012, increasing to €241m by 2014. However, recognising the priority of the Government's activation agenda provision was made for a new Labour Market Activation Fund and for funding under the Springboard initiative to increase part time higher education opportunities for unemployed people. Provision was also made to commence implementation in 2012 of actions in the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, for work on Junior Cycle reform and for the phased rollout of high speed (100mbps) broadband to second level schools.

The Estimates for 2012 included the presentation in indicative form of the Estimate in the new Performance Budgeting format, which seeks to strengthen the focus on what is delivered (outputs & outcomes) with public funds rather than the traditional focus on financial inputs. Work on progressing full migration to the Performance Budgeting format for 2013 continued during 2012 and was accompanied by a major restructuring of the Department's Vote, moving from what was effectively a four-vote to a single vote structure.

Expenditure for the Department in 2012 came in within the allocation. There was a net underspend of current expenditure of €20.2m, while the underspend on capital expenditure was €19.085m, of which €19m was carried over to 2013 under capital carryover provisions.

10.6.2 Monitoring our Internal Systems and Processes

The Internal Audit Unit at the Department is responsible for providing assurance to the Accounting Officer on the adequacy, efficiency and effectiveness of the Department's risk management, internal control systems and governance processes. The European Social Fund (ESF) Financial Control Unit ensures that Ireland complies with the regulatory requirements of the European Union in relation to the audit of ESF, promotes best practice in the management, control and audit of ESF in Ireland and ensures that audits are performed in accordance with international auditing standards in order to provide high quality, fair and balanced reports. Annual audit programmes are prepared under the auspices of the Audit Committee and both the Internal Audit Unit and the ESF Audit Authority report to the Committee on the conduct of these programmes and the finalisation of audit reports. A total of five internal audit reports were finalised in 2012 and Internal Audit Unit tracked, on a quarterly basis, progress on the implementation of recommendations arising from audit reports.

10.7 Human Resources

The staffing reductions which were required by the end of 2012 in terms of the Department's Employment Control Framework (ECF) target were met. A more flexible Human Resources (HR) environment was operated whereby staff were redeployed internally on a temporary basis to correspond with particular peaks and troughs identified in the workload of sections across the Department. The Department also commenced the process of redeploying volunteer staff to other Departments and Agencies.

As a supporting initiative to the Public Service Reform Plan, a formal Work Force Planning process was commenced in 2012, the basis of which is to identify in a structured manner, how and where the Department is going to reduce its staffing, where critical gaps may arise in the organisation and how to plan for them while at the same time ensuring to the greatest degree possible, a continuation of existing levels of service with reduced resources

Another critical function for Human Resources in 2012 was the continuation of the implementation of measures under the Croke Park Agreement and for reporting such measures and savings achieved by the Department and its Agencies to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to inform their report on progress and savings for the Implementation Body.

A key priority of the Governments Reform Agenda is the establishment of Shared Services in a wide variety of areas across the public service including a Human Resources Shared Service Centre (HRSSC). The Government confirmed during 2012 that the HRSSC project would proceed following a financial appraisal. This Department continued its engagement with the Human Resources Shared Service Centre (HRSSC) and began to prepare for its move to that service in 2014 particularly in terms of a Data Clean-up exercise and the redeployment of staff to PeoplePoint.

10.7.1 Staff Training and Development

During 2012, the Department's Staff Training and Development Unit continued to engage with staff and management to identify priority training and development needs. To meet those needs a range of targeted and customised training was available to staff. Almost 3,000 training days were provided during the year. Training, which was mainly delivered in-house, was provided in areas including Financial Management and Audit (including training to support the changeover to Performance Budgeting and Restructure of Education and Skills Vote), Pensions Administration, Business Process Improvement, Irish language, Freedom of Information, and Project Management. The Department also continued to prioritise management training to enhance its capacity to adequately meet new and evolving challenges through the provision of training programmes for middle and senior managers.

In addition to training and development for administrative grades, tailored training support was provided for the Inspectorate, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the Planning and Building Unit (PBU) and the IT Unit to meet their specific professional and technical training requirements.

Separate to the organised training and development outlined above, the Department continued to foster a learning culture by providing support for staff to attend further education courses in their own time. These courses were in areas relevant to the work of the Department and the broader civil and public service and included Technology Management, Governance, Spatial Planning, Legislative Drafting, Human Resources, Public Management and Education.

10.7.2 Business Process Improvement

The implementation of a structured approach to streamlining and improving business processes was commenced. A Business Process Improvement (BPI) steering committee, chaired by an Assistant Secretary, was established and key staff attended training in BPI Lean Six Sigma. Pilot improvement projects, to commence in January 2013, were identified.

10.7.3 Business Intelligence

By end 2012, the following data was incorporated into Business Intelligence (BI):

- Primary census data
- Post-primary pupil data
- Primary literacy / numeracy data
- State Examinations data
- NEWB absenteeism data
- Medical card data.

The availability of high-quality data from many different sources, is already assisting the Inspectorate in targeting inspections and provides the Department with valuable data to inform policy decisions.

BI phase III commenced in 2012. This phase entails the incorporation of school employee payroll financial data into BI.

10.7.4 Internal ICT Improvements

During 2012, the Department's IT Unit continued to exploit the capabilities of ICT for the benefit of the Department's business units and customers.

Significant progress was made on the development of PPOD (Post-Primary Online Data), during 2012. This application is scheduled to go live for the 2013/14 school year, replacing software currently used to capture post-primary pupil data.

By end 2012, the following data was incorporated into Business Intelligence (BI) and can be accessed by members of the Inspectorate, Statistics, Pupil/Learner Database Section (PLDS), Qualifications Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit (QCAP) (as appropriate):

- Primary census data
- Post-primary pupil data
- Primary literacy / numeracy data
- State Examinations data
- NEWB absenteeism data
- Medical card data.

By end 2012, 27 of the 30 National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) offices have been amalgamated with the Department's technical infrastructure.

10.7.5 Development of our New Website

The Department's redeveloped website went live in July 2012. The new website was designed around the needs of the following key user groups i.e. learners, parents, education staff and schools/colleges. Apart from improved search facilities for circulars etc, it also contains a map-based Find-a-School application and twitter feed from the Press Office.

10.7.6 Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)

In April 2012, the Department replaced an outdated PABX telephone system, with a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephony system in its three main offices in Dublin, Athlone and Tullamore. This system will be rolled out to all Regional and Local offices, following the award of a contract for Fixed Voice. The new system will yield savings of approx. €250,000 per annum.

10.7.7 Business Planning and Improvements at Section Level

The Department's annual business planning process is central to the timely and successful achievement of our goals. Each year, sections are requested to identify their critical tasks for the coming year with reference to documents such as our Statement of Strategy and to plan for their implementation via the business planning process. In addition to identifying critical tasks, the business planning process also provides an opportunity for staff to consider business process improvement which leads to greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness and improved customer services, all of which are key elements of the Government's Public Service Reform Plan. All sections of the Department participated in the business planning process for 2012.

As a result of this process and the evaluation by sections of their procedures, various changes at section level were made which resulted in greater efficiency, the standardisation of procedures and a reduction in expenditure due to the implementation of cost saving measures.

10.7.8 Support staff performance

Planning commenced in 2012 for a major PC refresh programme in Dublin, Athlone and Tullamore, along with an upgrade of Windows, Microsoft Office and installation of Unified Communications (UC). UC will facilitate presence awareness, desk-top video conferencing etc.

Appendix A - Bodies under the Aegis of the Department in 2012

An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta	(COGG)
The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse	(CICA)
The Education Finance Board	(EFB)
Foras Áiseanna Saothair	(FÁS)
The Further Education & Training Awards Council	(FETAC)
The Grangegorman Development Agency	(GGDA)
The Higher Education and Training Awards Council	(HETAC)
The Higher Education Authority	(HEA)
Léargas - The Exchange Bureau	
The National Centre for Guidance in Education	(NCGE)
The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment	(NCCA)
The National Council for Special Education	(NCSE)
The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	(NQAI)
The Residential Institutions Redress Board	(RIRB)
The Irish Research Council	(IRC)
The Residential Institutions Review Committee	(RIRC)
Skillnets Ltd	
The State Examinations Commission	(SEC)
The Teaching Council	

Appendix B - Publications in 2012

The following list sets some of the Department's publications in 2012. It is not an exhaustive list. Most of the publications below and further publications can be viewed on the Department website at All Publications <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/> Some of the publications are available on the websites of agencies under the aegis of the Department or on other Department websites as indicated via the web links.

General Publications
A full list of Corporate Publications can be viewed at www.education.ie
PIRLS & TIMSS 2011: Reading, Mathematics and Science Outcomes for Ireland
Report to New Schools Establishment Group on the pilot surveys regarding parental preferences on primary school patronage
The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector Report of the Forum's Advisory Group
PIRLS & TIMSS 2011: Reading, Mathematics and Science Outcomes for Ireland
Report to New Schools Establishment Group on the pilot surveys regarding parental preferences on primary school patronage
Policy
A full list of Corporate Publications can be viewed at www.education.ie
A Framework for Junior Cycle
Addressing High Level ICT Skills Recruitment Needs
An Action Plan for SOLAS
An Evaluation of the Special Education Support Service (SESS)
General Scheme of a Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS) Bill 2012
ICT Action Plan Meeting the high-level skills needs of enterprise in Ireland
National Strategy for Higher Education 2030 Progress Report Q1 2012
Review of the Completed EGF Programmes in Support of Redundant Workers in Dell, Waterford Crystal and SR Technics
Corporate Publications
A full list of Corporate Publications can be viewed at www.education.ie
Department of Education and Skills Annual Report 2011
Public Service Agreement - Department of Education and Skills - Progress Report May 2012
Public Service Agreement - Department of Education and Skills - Revised Action Plan (Oct 2012)
Public Service Agreement - Education Sector - Action Plan (Dec 2012)
Public Service Agreement - Education Sector - Action Plan (Oct 2012)
Public Service Agreement - Education Sector - Action Plan 2012
Public Service Agreement - Education Sector – Key achievements during reporting period – Q1 2011 to Q1 2012
Public Service Agreement - Education Sector - Note on Productivity achievements during the Reporting period Q1 2011 – Q1 2012
Public Service Agreement - Education Sector - Savings Achieved In Year Two - 2010-2014
Statistical Publications
A full list of Corporate Publications can be viewed at www.education.ie
Boarding Schools Lists (Post-Primary) 2011/2012

Class Size Information 2011/2012
Class Size Information at Individual Primary School Level 2011/2012
Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2012 - Briefing Note
Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2012 - Key Facts
Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2012 A Country Profile for Ireland
Fee-Paying Schools Lists (Post-Primary) 2011/2012
Key Statistics 2011/2012
Post-Primary Schools Lists 2011/2012
Primary Schools Lists 2011/2012
Projections of demand for Full Time Third Level Education, 2011 - 2026
Projections of full time enrolment Primary and Second Level, 2012 - 2030
Retention Rates of Pupils in Second Level Schools 2005 and 2006 Entry Cohorts
Statistical Report 2011-2012
Teachers who retired from 1st November 2011 to 29th February 2012
Inspectorate Publications
A full list of Corporate Publications can be viewed at www.education.ie
An Evaluation of Planning Processes in DEIS Primary Schools (Meastóireacht ar Phróisis Phleanála i mBunscoileanna DEIS)
An Evaluation of Planning Processes in DEIS Post-Primary Schools (Meastóireacht ar Phróisis Phleanála in Iarbunscoileanna DEIS)
Oideachas Sóisialta, Pearsanta agus Sláinte sa Bhunscoil
School Self-Evaluation: Draft Guidelines for Primary Schools (Féinmheastóireacht Scoile: Dréacht-Treoirlínte do Bhunscoileanna)
School Self-Evaluation: Draft Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (Féinmheastóireacht Scoile: Dréacht-Treoirlínte d'Iar-bhunscoileanna)
School Size and the Quality of Teaching and Learning
School Self-Evaluation: An Update for Primary Schools (Féinmheastóireacht Scoile: Nuashonrú do Bhunscoileanna)
School Self-Evaluation: An Update for Post-Primary Schools (Féinmheastóireacht Scoile: Nuashonrú d'Iar-Bhunscoileanna)
A Guide to Incidental Inspection in Second-Level Schools and Centres of Education (Treoir don Chigireacht Theagmhasach i Scoileanna Dara Leibhéal agus Ionaid Oideachais)
Joint Evaluation Report: Dissolving Boundaries Programme 2010/2011
An Introduction to School Self-Evaluation of Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools (<i>Réamhrá don Féinmheastóireacht Scoile ar Theagasc agus ar Fhoghlaim i mBunscoileanna</i>)
An Introduction to School Self-Evaluation of Teaching and Learning in Post-Primary Schools (<i>Réamhrá don Féinmheastóireacht Scoile ar Theagasc agus ar Fhoghlaim in Iar-Bhunscoileanna</i>)
Guidelines on School Self-Evaluation for Primary Schools (<i>Féinmheastóireacht Scoile: Treoirlínte do Bhunscoileanna</i>)
Guidelines on School Self-Evaluation for Post-Primary Schools (<i>Féinmheastóireacht Scoile: Treoirlínte d'Iar-bhunscoileanna</i>)
Science in the Primary School
English as an Additional Language in Primary Schools
Looking at English as an Additional Language: Teaching and Learning in Post-Primary Schools
Looking at Biology (<i>Ag Féachaint ar Bhitheolaíocht</i>)

Circulars			
A full list of circulars produced in 2012 can be viewed at www.education.ie			
Circular Number	Title	Sector	Classification
0001/2012	Prescribed Material for English in the Leaving Certificate Examination in 2014	Post-Primary, VEC	Curriculum Information
0002/2012	Prescribed Material for Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate 2014	Post-Primary, VEC	Curriculum Information
0003/2012	Budget 2012 – Public Service-Wide Review of Allowances and Premium Payments	Primary, Post Primary, VEC	Conditions of Employment
0004/2012	Good practice guidelines - Community and Comprehensive Schools	C&C	Administration
0005/2012	Good practice guidelines - Voluntary Secondary Schools	Post-Primary, VEC	Administration
0006/2012	Oireachtas Funded Pension Schemes III Health Retirement Procedures	Bodies under the Aegis of the Dept.	Pensions
0007/2012	Staffing arrangements in Primary Schools for the 2012/13 school year	Primary	Staffing Schedules
0008/2012	Teacher Fee Refund Scheme 2011	Primary, Post Primary, VEC	Funding/Grants
0009/2012	Staffing arrangements in post-primary schools for the 2012/13 school year	Post-Primary, VEC	Staffing Schedules
0010/2012	Arrangements for the Provision of Resource Teaching Supports for the 2012/13 school year	Post-Primary, VEC	Staffing Schedules

Circulars			
A full list of circulars produced in 2012 can be viewed at www.education.ie			
Circular Number	Title	Sector	Classification
0011/2012	ESF Aided Operations - VEC Sector – Pay and Non Pay 2011 - Information Booklet and Instructions for Beneficiaries	VEC	Funding/Grants
0012/2012	Panel access for fixed-term (temporary), substitute and part-time teachers	Primary, Post Primary, VEC	Conditions of Employment
0013/2012	Combined Post-Graduate Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Teachers involved in Learning Support and Special Education – 2012/2013	Primary, Post Primary	In-Career Courses
0014/2012	Graduate Certificate in the Education of Students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) for teachers working with Students with ASDs in Special Schools, Special Classes or as Resource Teachers in mainstream Primary and Post-Primary Schools - 2012/2013	Primary, Post Primary	In-Career Courses
0015/2012	Post-Graduate Certificate/Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development in Special Educational Needs (Autistic Spectrum Disorders) for Teachers	Primary, Post Primary	In-Career Courses

Circulars			
A full list of circulars produced in 2012 can be viewed at www.education.ie			
Circular Number	Title	Sector	Classification
0016/2012	Capitation grants for the 2011/2012 school year	Primary	Funding/Grants
0017/2012	Reduction in the rate of the fee payable to schools and Vocational Education Committees for the administration of the Supervision / Substitution Scheme.	Post-Primary, VEC	Rates of Pay
0018/2012	Supporting Assessment: Standardised Testing in Primary Schools	Primary	Curriculum Information
0019/2012	Revised Rates of Pay in respect of Supervision /Substitution for the 2011/2012 school year	Primary, Post Primary, VEC	Administration
0020/2012	Web based Advertising of Teaching Posts	Post-Primary, VEC	Conditions of Employment
0021/2012	Parental Leave Amendment for Registered Teachers in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools	Primary, Post Primary	Conditions of Employment
0022/2012	Career Break Scheme for Special Needs Assistants in Recognised Primary and Post Schools	SNA	Conditions of Employment
0023/2012	Important Public Health Alert 2012 Measles	Post-Primary, VEC	Health & Safety
0024/2012	Grading Structure and Pay Scales for Chief Executive Officers of Education Training Boards	Further and Higher Education	Rates of Pay

Circulars			
A full list of circulars produced in 2012 can be viewed at www.education.ie			
Circular Number	Title	Sector	Classification
0025/2012	Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy- Post-Primary Schools	Post-Primary, VEC	Curriculum Information
0026/2012	Home Tuition Scheme 2012/2013	Primary, Post Primary, VEC	Children with Special Needs
0027/2012	Revised Syllabuses in Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Mathematics for Leaving Certificate examination in 2014 and Junior Certificate examination in 2015.	Post-Primary, VEC	Curriculum Information
0028/2012	Payment in respect of Substitution for the academic year 2011/2012 in Prisons	VEC	Rates of Pay
0029/2012	Probationary requirements for registration purposes for primary teachers	Primary	Conditions of Employment
0030/2012	Arrangements for the Election of Parent and Staff Representatives to VECS (2012)	VEC	Administration
0031/2012	Switchover from Analogue to Digital TV Network	Primary, Post Primary, VEC	Administration
0032/2012	School Vaccination Programme and MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) Vaccination Catch up Campaign in 2012/2013.	Primary, Post Primary, VEC	Health & Safety

Circulars			
A full list of circulars produced in 2012 can be viewed at www.education.ie			
Circular Number	Title	Sector	Classification
0033/2012	Statistical Returns in respect of part-time courses in Vocational Schools/Community Colleges in the 2011/2012 School Year	Post-Primary, VEC	Administration
0034/2012	Parental Leave / Amendment for Staff in Institutes of Technology	Third-Level	Conditions of Employment
0035/2012	Travel Pass Scheme 2013	Primary, Post Primary	Administration
0036/2012	The new un-certified sick leave arrangements for Teachers	Primary, Post Primary, VEC	Conditions of Employment
0037/2012	The new un-certified sick leave arrangements for SNA's	Primary, Post Primary, VEC	Conditions of Employment
0038/2012	Panel Access for Fixed Term (Temporary), Substitute and Part-Time Teachers	Primary	Staffing Schedules
0039/2012	Implementation of School Self Evaluation - Primary	Primary	Administration
0040/2012	Implementation of School Self Evaluation - Post Primary	Post-Primary, VEC	Administration
0041/2012	SELF CERTIFIED PAID SICK LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ALL STAFF (EXCLUDING TEACHERS AND SNAS) IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEES (VECs)	VEC	Conditions of Employment

Circulars			
A full list of circulars produced in 2012 can be viewed at www.education.ie			
Circular Number	Title	Sector	Classification
0042/2012	SELF CERTIFIED PAID SICK LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEPARTMENT PAID SECRETARIES AND CARETAKERS IN RECOGNISED PRIMARY AND POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS	Primary, Post Primary	Conditions of Employment
0043/2012	SELF CERTIFIED PAID SICK LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ALL STAFF (OTHER THAN TEACHERS AND SNAS) IN RECOGNISED PRIMARY AND POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS	C&C	Conditions of Employment
0044/2012	Payment of Tool Allowance to Craft Workers	VEC	Administration
0045/2012	Home Tuition Scheme 2012/2013 (NOT PUBLISHED)	Primary, Post Primary	Student Support
0046/2012	Implementation of Budget 2013 in respect of the Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) programme, the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) and Youthreach	Further and Higher Education	Administration

Appendix C – Direct Links to our Website www.education.ie

Statistical Information	http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/
Inspectorate Reports	http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/
Education Legislation	http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Legislation/Education-Legislation.html
All Publications	http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/
Circulars and Forms	http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/
Special Education	http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/
School Design	http://www.education.ie/en/School-Design/
Press and Events	http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/
Services and Information for Parents	http://www.education.ie/en/Parents/
Services and Information for Education Staff	http://www.education.ie/en/Education-Staff/
Services and Information for Learners	http://www.education.ie/en/Learners/