Minister’s Brief

Overview

October 2018
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Part 1 - Context

Overview of the System

The mission of the Department of Education and Skills is to facilitate individuals, through learning, to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development. The Department’s central vision is that, through adopting a “whole-of-system” approach, the Irish education and training system will become the best in Europe.

In pursuit of this, the Department has the following five high-level goals:

**Goal 1 - Improve the learning experience and the success of learners**

We want to enhance wellbeing in schools, deliver a “step change” in the development of critical skills, knowledge and competences, increase senior cycle subject choice, support children and young people at key transition points, and increase the use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment.

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

We want to improve learning experiences, learning outcomes and progression for those at risk of educational disadvantage and support learners with special educational needs to participate and progress.

**Goal 3 - Help those delivering education services to continuously improve**

We want to develop the continuum of teacher education, improve and promote quality (including in the early years, further education and training and higher education sectors), and promote innovation and excellence and increase autonomy in schools.

**Goal 4- Build stronger bridges between education and wider community**

We want to support local communities, strengthen the role of parents and students, and provide greater school choice and enhanced supports for making informed career choices, including creating a greater diversity of post-school learning opportunities. We want to improve our capacity to meet skills needs, create a stronger focus on entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, grow a vibrant research community, and attract more international students.

**Goal 5- Improve national planning and support services**

We want to strengthen strategic oversight and focus on delivery for results, deliver appropriate infrastructure for learning environments, and improve the quality of the national support services and shared services.
In all, there are over 1.5 million full time learners across the system. These include:

- 119,000 pre-school children;
- 921,000 children in almost 4000 schools;
- 320,000 in further education and training; and
- 184,000 full time students and 40,000 part-time students in 31 state-funded higher education institutions.

The Education and Skills sector is a major employer, accounting for one third of public sector employees. This includes over 66,000 teachers, 14,000 special needs assistants (SNAs), 17,500 staff in higher education institutions and approximately 4000 staff working in the further education and training sector.

The Department provides a policy, legislative and funding framework for, and supports, education and skills development in early childhood settings, primary and post primary schools, higher education institutions, further education providers, and adult and second chance education. It provides a range of services directly for the sector. In this, the Department is supported by a number of agencies, details of which are given in the main brief.

The Department is not involved in the direct delivery of education and works in partnership with schools and other education and training providers, parents, students, patrons, staff and communities to achieve its objectives. The Department’s role is reflected in the staff complement of 1,264 (WTE) currently which is of a limited size in comparison with the scale of the sector and its budget.

**Department location and staff**

The Department is headquartered in Marlborough Street with most of its staff based in its main locations in Dublin (342 wte1), Athlone (444 wte) and Tullamore (186 wte). A further 138 wte staff are also based in a number of regional locations throughout the country. The staffing of the Department at September 2018 totalled 1,332 (1,264 whole time equivalents) comprising administrative (general service) grades, professional and technical staff (Inspectorate, educational psychologists in the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), technical staff (architects, engineers etc.) in the Planning and Building area, statisticians, accountants and auditors) and other grades (service officers, cleaners and telephonists). The Department has also established the Education Shared Business Services (ESBS) based in Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, to host some of the Shared Service operations to be provided directly by the Department under its Shared Services Plan for 2017 - 2020.***************REDACTED TEXT***************

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1 WTE – whole time equivalent
The Department operates under a Delegated Sanction Agreement (DSA) for the recruitment and promotion of staff. Under the new DSA, sanction for recruiting and promoting staff up to and including PO (standard) level and equivalent, subject to ongoing compliance with Workforce Planning requirements rests with the Department. To recruit or promote staff at grades above PO (standard) level or equivalent, the consent of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) is still required.

In the context of the pay ceilings for education that were allocated to the Department as part of the recent budgetary process, there is very minimal scope for increases in staff numbers. Instead, the required focus will continue to be on the commitment to ongoing reform and efficiency measures across the sector and the reallocation or reorganisation of work.

The senior management team comprises:

**Secretary General: Seán Ó Foghlú**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alan Wall</th>
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<td>Data Governance and Support Unit</td>
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<td>ESBS Payroll Operations</td>
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<td>Schools Capital Appraisal</td>
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<td>Third Level, PPP and Finance</td>
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The Role of the Education System

The Education and Training system operates on three interrelated levels. The individual benefits from education. He/she is developed as a person, while also acquiring the skills to prosper economically, socially and culturally. There is strong evidence to show that individual outcomes improve in line with the level of education attained.

Society as a whole benefits from education and training. Education can be a powerful instrument of social cohesion and cultural development, and serves to instil the deep-rooted values of the Irish people. As such, education is an instrument of social inclusion and development.

Finally, education plays a key role in economic development. Education is central to the economic wellbeing of the country and plays an important role in economic recovery, stability and strength.

This multi-faceted role of the education system is reflected in the range and depth of relationships between the Department and other stakeholders both within and outside the formal education and training system.

Education is delivered in a spirit of partnership with other key stakeholders. This is underpinned by statute, including in the Education Act, 1998. Furthermore, education has an important role in the delivery of a range of high level cross-Governmental objectives in fields such as:

An Organisation Chart for the Department to Principal Officer level is at Appendix 1.
- Delivering Better Outcomes for Children and Young People;
- Healthy Ireland, including promotion of physical activity, healthy eating, the responsible use of alcohol, combatting abuse of tobacco and other substances, promotion of wellbeing, mental health, anti-bullying strategies and the National Suicide Prevention Strategy;
- Labour Market Activation, the Implementation of the National Skills Strategy and Creation of a Knowledge Economy;
- Social Inclusion, including of Travellers, migrants and refugees, people with disabilities, the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion and the National Anti-Poverty Strategy; National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy and Migrant Integration Strategy;
- The National Strategy for Women and Girls; the National Disability Inclusion Strategy; the National Drugs Strategy (Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery); the Comprehensive Employment Strategy and the National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy;
- Action Plan for Rural Development;
- Child Protection;
- Creative Ireland; and
- The Irish Language.

The Minister is a member of some Cabinet Committees dealing directly with these areas, such as the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs, the Committee on Social Policy and Public Sector Reform, the Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and the Committee on Arts, Irish, the Gaeltacht and the Islands.

The Department is actively involved in a range of interdepartmental and cross-Government committees as well as broader fora and works with other Government Departments, public bodies, NGOs, civil society and external stakeholders in order to ensure that the Education and Skills sector plays a full and active role in the delivery of national policy in these and other areas.

Officials from the Department are centrally involved in developing good working relationships with stakeholders across a range of issues to ensure that policy objectives are achieved and cohere with policy objectives across the wider socio-economic context.

**Demographics**

The number of births in Ireland started to rise substantially from the beginning of the last decade and continues to remain at an historic high. Pupil numbers in primary schools are projected to rise to a peak of almost 568,000 in 2018. This peak figure is reflective of primary enrolment numbers last seen in Ireland in the early 1980s, when enrolments rose to a peak of 567,000 in 1987. Projections for second level are for a continued increase to a peak of over 402,000 in 2024/2025.
At third level, numbers of full time students will increase from 183,000 (2017/18) over the next three years to 195,000 (provisional) by 2020 and will continue to increase until at least 2030. While it is more difficult to estimate demand trends in relation to further education and training places, it is unlikely, given the projected increase in the overall population and the requirement to service an ambitious activation and training agenda, that demand for these places will fall in the short term.

These trends will continue to place considerable pressure on places, funding, teaching numbers, related supports and capital infrastructure.

**Budget**

**Department’s budget & public sector numbers: 2018**

The Department’s gross voted expenditure ceiling for 2018 is **€10.1 billion**, the third largest budget in Government (after Employment Affairs & Social Protection and Health).²

The Department’s current budget for 2018 is €9.34 billion, which represents around 17% of Government current expenditure. In addition to Voted expenditure, the Department’s current budget includes the non-Voted National Training Fund (€415.5m in 2018), which is funded primarily from a training levy on employers collected as part of PRSI (a separate note on the NTF is included in the Minister’s brief).

![Chart: Breakdown of the Department’s voted current expenditure (2018)](chart)

Just over 80% of the Department’s current Voted budget is allocated to pay and pensions. There are forecast to be on the order of 108,000 public sector employees funded through the Department’s Voted pay allocation (indicative breakdown as of Q2 2018 below) and some 48,000 public service pensioners funded through the Department’s pension allocation.

² Note: roundings affect totals throughout this note.
The Department’s capital allocation in 2018 is €745.4 million. This represents around 13% of gross voted capital expenditure in 2018, the third largest allocation (after Transport and Housing).

The Department is also forecast to receive around €0.5 – 0.6 billion in Appropriation-in-Aid receipts which are offset against expenditure (these include pension related deductions and superannuation contributions from public sector employees and EU funding, notably the European Social Fund).

The Department is scheduled to migrate to a financial shared service, in line with Government shared services policy.

Budgetary pressures for 2018

The Supplementary Estimate will need to be considered by the Select Committee on Education and Skills; the Minister will be supported and briefed in advance of this engagement.

The ultimate scale in net terms of the supplementary estimate required in 2018 depends on a number of factors:

- Superannuation expenditure in 2018 above allocation (estimated at c. €140m).
- Other expenditure pressures (including any pressure on payroll subheads and school transport);
- Savings which may manifest in other subheads before year-end (to be confirmed);
- Receipts above the level estimated at the start of the year (primarily European Social Fund receipts).
Following engagement with the Department of Public Expenditure Reform, an additional allocation of €147 million for superannuation was announced as part of Budget 2019 which will be added to the Department’s expenditure base to mitigate the need for a supplementary estimate in 2019.

**Budget 2019**

The Department’s 2019 gross allocation will be €674 million above the 2018 allocation and will bring the Department’s gross expenditure ceiling to €10.763 billion, a 6.7% increase on 2018.

Budget 2019 included the following allocations for the Department:

- Increased capital allocation (€196 million) as per the National Development Plan/Project Ireland 2040;
- Provision to cover superannuation as referenced earlier (€147 million)
- Allocation for the costs of the Public Services Stability Agreement and related pay deals in the education sector (€122 million)
- Carryover and existing level of service commitments (€82 million)
- Demographics in schools to provide for teachers and capitation (€32 million)
- Demographics in higher education (€16 million)
- Additional €69 million generated from a rise in the NTF levy by 0.1% to 0.9% (€69 million) to fund higher and further education and training. This is in addition to the provision for higher education demographics. In addition, €13 million is being reallocated within the further education and training budget to reflect Government priorities in the context of changing economic circumstances.
- €10m for a schools package.

**Chart: breakdown of €674 million additional funding in 2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allocation</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>€196m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Superannuation</td>
<td>€147m</td>
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<td>Pay agreements</td>
<td>€122m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carryover and existing level of service</td>
<td>€82m</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE/FET from NTF increase</td>
<td>€69m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>€49m</td>
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<td>Schools measures</td>
<td>€10m</td>
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<td>Capital</td>
<td>€196m</td>
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<td>Superannuation</td>
<td>€147m</td>
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<td>€82m</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE/FET from NTF increase</td>
<td>€69m</td>
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The 2019 allocation provides for:

**Schools/Special Educational Needs**

- **Additional posts in schools**: Over 1,300 additional posts in schools, including 950 SNA posts and 372 teaching posts catering for demographics and additional special classes.

- **Schools package**: the €10 million package included:
  - **Increased capitation**: 5% increase in schools capitation from September 2019, with an increase of €10 million in school funding over the 2019/20 school year (€4 million in 2019). Enhanced funding for the schools excellence fund (€0.5 million) to bring it to over €2.5 million per annum.
  - **Support for school leadership & wellbeing**: Support for school leadership with additional release days for teaching principals in primary schools and administrative deputy principal posts for special schools. An additional 10 psychologists for the National Educational Psychological Service.
  - **Improving outcomes for children with additional care needs**: €4.75 million to commence the implementation of the Comprehensive SNA review.

**Higher and Further Education and Training**

- **Enhanced Investment in Higher Education**: €57 million package to provide for demographic increases (3,500 additional places), provide for 1,000 additional places on Springboard courses, capacity-building, increased provision of flexible learning options and research funding.

- **Apprenticeship and traineeship**: Provision for over 7,000 apprenticeship registrations, 5,000 traineeship enrolments and 10 new apprenticeship schemes. This is funded through an increased allocation of €11 million and a further €13 million in reallocated expenditure.

- **Skills**: Provision for additional funding for workforce development: Skillnet Ireland (€6 million) and employee development initiatives (€11 million).

**Capital (negotiated as part of the NDP)**

- **Schools**: Continued delivery of an ambitious school building programme which will deliver up to 23,000 permanent school places in 2019 and roll-out of the ICT investment programme in schools. Projects in over 700 schools will proceed in 2019 under the Summer Works Scheme.

- **HE/FET Capital**: €150m for higher and further education and training and research. New projects to be advanced in the higher education sector next year include an engineering campus for Limerick IT, a significant upgrade of STEM and teaching facilities at Dundalk IT, and the E3 Institute at TCD.
Human capital

- **Human Capital Initiative:** In addition, a new Human Capital Initiative is to be established within the National Training Fund to allocate €300 million from the NTF surplus over 5 years from 2020 to 2024 to meet the future skills needs of the economy and provide additional investment in higher education.

**Impact of demographic challenges on numbers and expenditure**

**First and Second level Schools**

In the context of demographic increases, the two main drivers of current school costs are teacher numbers and school capitation grants. On the basis of a no policy change scenario in relation to both of these cost drivers it is estimated that increased expenditure of in excess of €40m and €30m will be incurred in 2018 and 2019 respectively due to increased enrolments in schools.

The upward trend in pupil numbers will also put pressure on administrative and Special Needs Assistants expenditure. In recent years, the numbers of special needs assistants have increased by some 900 per annum giving rise to additional full year cost of approx. €24m p.a.

Demographic pressures will create pressure on school accommodation and consequent pressure for capital investment. While much will depend on the location and distribution of the additional numbers it is expected that increases are likely to occur in cities and commuter belts while more rural areas may experience continuing population decline. Current capital funding is inadequate to the demand for accommodation at first and second level.

**Third level**

The numbers entering higher education and further education will grow as a result of labour markets requirements and demographics trends. Demands on institutional and student support budgets will grow as a result. The majority of students completing second level will desire to continue in education and training – either in further education and training or higher education and there will need to be a significant ramp up in additional places – just as has been seen in the primary and second level system in recent years. The changing needs of the labour market will also demand an increase in life-long and continuous learning, placing further demands on both sectors.

****************************REDACTED TEXT****************************
Current Industrial Relations landscape

Public Service Stability Agreement 2018 -2020 / New Entrant Pay

The current public service collective industrial relations agreement, known as the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA), was reached with the public service trade unions in June 2017 and is due to run to 31 December 2020. The pay benefits of the PSSA range progressively from 7.2% to 6.2% over the three years 2018 to 2020. At the end of the agreement, FEMPI pay cuts will have been restored in full to 90% of all public servants (all of those on salaries up to €70,000).

The three teacher unions voted at ballot to reject the PSSA. However, all three are regarded as being covered by the Agreement because of the provisions of the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017. As of now the teacher unions are all operating the Agreement and are benefiting from its terms. The unions are required to maintain industrial peace to remain covered by the Agreement.

For each of the teacher unions, the question of pay disparity between teachers who have entered the profession since 2011 and their longer serving colleagues is a significant outstanding issue. Salaries and allowances payable to all new entrants to public service recruitment grades were reduced by 10% with effect from 1 January 2011 and such new entrants were required to start on the first point of the applicable salary scale.

The pay of new entrants has been gradually improved under various public service agreements. The latest measures were announced on 24 September 2018. This deal provides for a two-point increment adjustment which will restore fully equal pay as between new entrants and their longer serving colleagues for many staff in the education and training sector.

The teacher unions would see that two issues remain:

i. Teachers traditionally started above the first point of the scale (primary teachers started one point above the minimum and secondary teachers, two points). These historic arrangements are rooted in a time when the duration in higher education required to enter the profession was different across the professions. They also reflect a time when entry to the public service generally did not require a higher education qualification.

ii. The majority of new entrant post-primary teachers would, under the pre-2011 salary arrangements, have been paid an allowance for holding a Higher Diploma in Education/Post Graduate Certificate in Education. Primary teachers who entered via
the PG/PME route would have also benefited. This allowance was withdrawn for new beneficiaries under the 2012 allowances review which withdrew various allowances across the public sector.

The three teacher unions are currently balloting on the 24 September new entrant pay deal as follows:

- **INTO** – are balloting on new entrant pay agreement and formal entry to the PSSA - executive committee have issued no recommendation to accept or reject. Ballot closing date is Friday 26 October.

- **TUI** – are balloting on new entrant pay agreement - executive committee have issued no recommendation to accept or reject. Ballot closing date is Thursday 25 October.

- **ASTI** – are balloting on new entrant pay agreement - executive committee have issued no recommendation to accept or reject. Ballot closing date is not known at this time but is likely to be after the other two unions

Should the ballots be rejected, further ballots on industrial action may follow. As the unions are covered by the PSSA, even if they reject the new entrant pay agreement at ballot, they will receive the benefit of it and of the other PSSA pay restorations unless they take action to put themselves outside of the PSSA. It would be a very significant step for any of the unions to engage in industrial action which would cause them to lose the benefits of the Agreement.

**Junior Cycle**

The ASTI began a campaign of resistance to Junior Cycle reform in 2012, which ended with a suspension of all industrial action in June 2017. However, an issue has recently emerged in relation to the scheduling of Subject Learning and Assessment (SLAR) meetings.

Under the Junior Cycle Framework 2015 teachers have been given 40 minutes of professional time per week (reduction of class contact time which is supported with the allocation of an additional 670 whole-time equivalent posts in schools ) to carry out duties associated with Junior Cycle reform, including SLAR meetings. The annual cost of this is approximately €35 million.
Sectoral reform including the Action Plan for Education

Overview of approach to system-wide reform

An extensive programme of reform is being planned and implemented across the education and training sector. The Department is taking a system-wide approach to reform, based on international research that shows this to be the most effective way to deliver meaningful change and better outcomes for all learners. A joined-up and consistent approach is needed to meet the requirements of the diverse education and training sector.

This system-wide approach is being implemented through a series of co-ordinated, targeted and integrated strategies across the continuum of education and training, which includes key areas of curriculum and assessment, teacher education, quality assurance, infrastructure and leadership. The reform programme is designed to provide all learners with the knowledge and skills they need to participate fully in society and the economy, to facilitate clear and simple pathways for learners within and across the system that support lifelong learning, to improve the quality of the education experience and accountability for educational outcomes, to support diversity and inclusion, and to develop an infrastructure that supports a modern, flexible education and training system.

To coordinate and manage the implementation of the education and training reform programme, a Public Service Reform (PSR) Programme Office has been established in the Department. This Programme Office is the contact point for Action Plan and Public Service reform activity.

Action Plan for Education

The Statement of Strategy/Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 has formed the basis of the Department’s high-level work programme since its launch in September 2016. It sets out a cross-sectoral range of time-bound actions under five high-level goals (see “Overview of the System” section above). These are aimed at working towards achieving the Plan’s overall ambition of providing the best education and training services in Europe by 2026.

Progress against this ambition is monitored through the publication of quarterly and annual progress reports. Publications to date under the Action Plan framework are:

- 2016 Progress Report
- Action Plan for Education 2017, progress reports for quarters 1 to 4 of 2017, and 2017 End Year Review
- Action Plan for Education 2018 and progress reports for quarters 1 and 2

The Action Plan process is used by business units within the Department for workforce and activity planning purposes, and to ensure that targets are being achieved/on course to being achieved. For example, work done on assessing the impact on the schools sector of implementing all relevant actions has influenced the recent establishment of a Primary Education Forum, which aims to support information exchange and the planning and
sequencing of change in that sector in order to identify opportunities for schools to streamline implementation and address workload issues.

**Our Public Service 2020**

This extensive reform programme sits under the broader public service reform agenda, led by DPER. The most recent public service reform plan, “Our Public Service 2020”, contains 18 high-level actions under three broad pillars:

1. Delivering for our public
2. Innovating for our future
3. Developing our people and organisations

The Department’s Programme Office is coordinating activity for the Department and the education and training sector under this Plan.

Six actions have been prioritised for implementation in 2018, and this Department is responsible for working with a cross-sectoral team to deliver one of these: Action 14-
Continuous and Responsive Professional Development. The action is led by Seán Ó Foghlú, sponsored by Alan Wall (MB member) and co-ordinated by Programme Office staff. A scoping paper for the action was recently approved by the Public Service Leadership Board, and work will now commence on prioritising and delivering the proposed initiatives.

At a higher level, Sectoral Implementation Plans have been developed by the sectors to provide a strategic overview of their key reform initiatives under each action. The intention is that they will be reported on at each year end, and updated at the beginning of each year, so as to provide ongoing monitoring of activity across the sectors.

The Department’s own Action Plan process serves as a useful tool for all of this work as it enables a time-bound, prioritised and systematic overview of reform for the sector. In turn, this facilitates easier input into and interaction with the public service reform landscape.

**Legislative programme**

The Department is engaging in a programme of important legislative reform. Since 2011, the following legislation has been enacted:

- Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018
- Technological Universities Act 2018
- Teaching Council (Amendment) Act 2015
- Further Education and Training Act, 2013
- Education and Training Boards Act, 2013
- Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Act, 2012
- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
- Education (Amendment) Act, 2012
- Residential Institutions Redress (Amendment) Act, 2011
Legislation before the Oireachtas

There is currently one Bill from this Department before the Oireachtas:

Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Amendment) Bill

The Bill was published on 1 August 2018. It’s currently before Seanad Éireann (Bill No. 95 of 2018). A Second Stage reading of the Bill was completed on October 10th. The Bill will now advance to Committee Stage which is anticipated in early November.

The Bill had been exempted from Pre Legislative Scrutiny. However, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills has launched a limited stakeholder consultation process which sought submissions from interested parties by a deadline of October 5th. It is expected that a select group of these stakeholders alongside the Department and QQI will be invited to a meeting with the Committee to discuss some of the issues raised. The intention being that the Department will consider any issues that emerge while the Bill is being discussed in the Houses.

The purpose of the Bill is to amend the 2012 Act to address some issues that have arisen regarding the scope of QQI’s responsibilities in relation to recognition of awards and regulation of private and voluntary providers; to ensure adequate protection of enrolled learners where providers discontinue a programme; and to give greater authority to Institutes of Technology to award Level 9 qualifications.

Priority Legislation for Publication this Session

Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill

The General Scheme of this bill was published in December 2016. The Bill will amend Section 28 of the Education Act 1998 and set out the principles that will guide how schools engage with parents and students and require each school to have a Parent and Student Charter which will be based on principles set out in Section 28.

Following publication, the General Scheme was submitted to the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills for pre-legislative scrutiny. The Oireachtas Committee held three public sessions with a range of education stakeholders and in November 2017 the Committee published its report.

In January 2018, the Minister secured Government approval for the drafting of the bill, in conjunction with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel (OPC).
Retention of Records Bill

Other Legislation

Universities (Amendment) Bill
Drafting on this Bill is well advanced but a final draft has not been received. The power of recoupment has been addressed in the FEMPI 2015 Act and provisions relating to investigative powers in the Institute of Technology Sector are contained in the Technological Universities Act. Following observations from the CSO and the Department of Finance the provisions relating to the University sector were not included in the Technological Universities Act. The Department is now considering options in relation to the University Sector.

Higher Education (Reform) Bill
This Bill will replace the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971 and will also amend the Universities Act, 1997 to provide for changes to the governance structures of the universities. The Department is currently drafting the Heads of the Bill. A public consultation was completed in September 2018. A forum is being scheduled for November 2018 to give feedback to stakeholders on the issues raised during the consultation process. It is anticipated that the Heads of Bill will be submitted to Government in Q.1 2019.

Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill
The Bill will make some necessary minor and technical amendments to education legislation. Heads of the Bill are being drafted.

Industrial Training Act (Amendment) Bill
The Bill will extend the scope of the Industrial Training Act 1967 to cover certain areas of activity currently excluded from the development of apprenticeships, such as horticulture and farm management/technician and programmes such as applied accounting and advanced quantity surveyor. Consultation will begin shortly to inform the drafting of Heads of Bill.
Relevant Private Members’ Legislation

There is currently a total of sixteen Private Members’ Bills in the education sector and a further two which are led by other Departments but which have implications for this Department.

One PMB, the Traveller Culture and History in Education Bill 2018 (No. 71), is due before the Seanad (Committee Stage) on Wednesday 17 October. Senators Colette Kelleher, Lynn Ruane and Grace O’Sullivan published this Bill on 3 July. The Bill provides for the inclusion of traveller culture and history in the curriculum taught by recognised schools in the State. The Second Stage was completed in the Seanad in July.

The other PMBs in the education sector are:
1. Equality in Education Bill 2015 (No. 114)
2. Equal Status (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 (No. 48)
3. Residential Institutions Statutory Fund (Amendment) Bill 2016 (No. 96)
4. Education (Amendment) Bill 2015 (No. 97)
5. University College Galway (Amendment) Bill 2017 (No. 6)
6. Education (Disadvantage Committee) Bill 2017 (No. 38)
7. Education (Guidance Counselling Provision) Bill 2017 (No. 56)
8. Equal Status (Amendment) Bill 2017 (No. 55)
9. Education (Regulation of Voluntary Contributions in Schools) Bill 2017 (No. 90)
10. Education (Inspection of Individual Education Plans for children with Special Needs) Bill 2017 (No. 98)
11. Provision of Objective Sex Education Bill 2018 (No. 34)
12. Free Education (Prohibition of Fees and Charges) Bill 2018 (No. 47)
13. Education (Digital Devices in Schools) Bill 2018 (No. 65)
14. First Aid and Mental Health in Schools (Initial Teacher Training) Bill 2018 (No. 44)
15. First Aid and Mental Health in Schools (Existing Teachers) Bill 2018 (No. 48)

Private Members’ Legislation where other Departments are leading but with implications for this Department:

1. Education (Welfare) (Amendment) Bill 2017 (No. 109)
2. Autism Spectrum Disorder Bill 2017 (No. 61)

Board Vacancies on Non-Commerical State Bodies under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills

As of October 15th 2018 there are board vacancies on five of the eighteen boards of Bodies under the aegis of the Department, namely;
- the Grangegorman Development Authority,
- Caranua (Residential Institutions Statutory Fund),
- The Irish Research Council,
- Leargas – The Exchange Bureau; and,
- The Teaching Council.

Vacancies will also arise on the SOLAS board with effect from 26th October 2018.

Vacancies (subject to limited and specified exceptions including the role of the Chair) are typically advertised on the State Boards portal operated by the Public Appointments Service (PAS). Applications are typically processed by way of a transparent assessment system designed and implemented by the PAS. In regard to certain appointments and reappointments to Boards, in limited circumstances, the PAS process is not necessarily required.

Appointments are needed as follows:

- **Grangegorman Development Agency** (Board comprising 15 members) - Minister Bruton had recently considered and approved the appointment/re-appointment of the 15 posts arising, due to the terms of office of the full board having expired, on 8th September 2018. As Section 17(3) of the GDA Act states that members of the Agency shall be appointed by the Minister, with the consent of the Minister for Finance the Department is currently seeking the sanction of the Minister for Finance/Public Expenditure and Reform for the appointments/re-appointments to the GDA Board. Subject to the sanction of the Minister for D/PER the appointments will fall to be considered by Minister Mc Hugh in advance of letters of appointment being considered for signature,
- **Caranua** (Board comprising 9 members) currently has two vacant posts which arise due to the resignation of two board members during February 2018. The two posts are in the process of being filled via the Public Appointments Service process,
- **The Irish Research Council** (Council comprising 12 members) currently has seven vacancies of which one relates to the Chairperson. The vacancies arise due to terms of office having expired between March and September 2018. The mechanisms to be availed of to fill the vacancies are under consideration at a senior level in the Department,
- **Léargas – The Exchange Bureau** (Board comprising 9 members) requires to fill 1 post arising from the resignation of a board member in March 2018. The position is being filled via the PAS process,
- **The Teaching Council** (Governing Council comprising 37 members) requires one post to be filled following the resignation of one member and the subsequent filling of the post holder’s INTO stakeholder vacancy by an elected member in June 2018. The mechanism to fill the vacancy is currently under consideration, with legal advice being sought.
Vacancies arising in late October 2018

- SOLAS (Board comprised 13 members) requires to fill 4 board posts (including the Chairman’s post) which arise due to terms of office expiring on October 26th.

Sectoral Governance: Investigation into certain matters in Kildare Wicklow ETB (KWETB) under section 40 of the ETB Act 2013

Background:

In the course of the Audit by the Comptroller & Auditor General (C & AG) of KWETB financial statements for 2015 (which are not yet finalised) the C&AG brought a number of issues to the attention of this Department. The Department corresponded with KWETB and sought responses to the issues concerned. These issues included:

- compliance with the Department’s procedures and governance arrangements in relation to the procurement and delivery of major building projects
- the ETB’s arrangements in relation to conflicts of interest, in particular in relation to procurement and asset management concerning companies referred to in the audit
- the rationale for the rental of a property and the subsequent use of same
- the use of pool vehicles by the ETB and the sale of a vehicle
- queries on specific aspects of the tendering or management of a number of building contracts.

In October 2017 having considered the issues raised by the C&AG and the subsequent correspondence between the Department and the ETB, the Department was of the view that the matters were of serious concern as they pointed to ineffective governance and accountability in the ETB concerned, particularly in relation to the use of public resources.

In exercise of his power under Section 40 of the ETB Act 2013 the then Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton TD appointed an investigator, Dr. Richard Thorn, to carry out an investigation and to submit a final report as soon as practicable.

Certain issues considered by the investigator in the course of the investigation were outside the scope of the review and were referred to An Garda Siochana (AGS).

Report of Dr. Thorn:

A final report was received from Dr. Thorn by the Department in July 2018. The report in its entirety has been sent for consideration to AGS. It is now a matter for them as how they will proceed given the findings contained therein.

Findings in the Report:

Overall, Dr. Thorn had found that in relation to the ETB’s governance procedures adequate arrangements to manage procurement and conflicts of interest were in place according to the ETB’s documented procedures. However, on an operative basis, in several instances the implementation of procurement processes and management of projects was found to be flawed or suboptimal. He
further found that the Board of KWETB should be more proactive in ensuring oversight of the ETB’s management of projects.

Publication of the Report:

Although the issues under consideration were also the subject of an ongoing investigation by AGS, it was the Department’s preference in the interests of openness and transparency to publish the Dr. Thorn report.

Following the Minister brought the report to Cabinet for information on the 12th September 2018.

The report was also provided to the Chairperson and Chief Executive of KWETB on the same day. At the same time the Minister issued direction to KWETB under Section 41 of the ETB Act 2013 – details of which are set out below.

Directions under Section 41 of the 2013 ETB Act

On foot of the Thorn report the Minister has issued final directions under Section 41 of the 2013 ETB Act to KWETB which require the board:

- To review the actions set out in Appendix Three [i.e. the Initial Action Plan of the ETB in response to the draft report of the investigator] to the report in the light of receipt of the final report and the findings and recommendations contained therein.
- To implement a final action plan arising from the review above. The action plan should be agreed with the Department before finalisation.
- To review the measures which are in place in the ETB to prevent conflicts of interest and inappropriate interventions in processes, which may be contrary to Public Procurement Procedures/internal controls in relation to procurement, contract and project management in particular. This review is to include circumstances where emergency situations arise with school or other buildings.
- To ensure that mandatory governance training is provided to new and existing board members;
- To conduct a Board self-evaluation, with appropriately qualified external input, to ensure that the Board is operating effectively and has appropriate procedures in place, including in relation to the management of conflicts of interest and oversight of the Executive which is accountable to the Board for the carrying out of Executive functions.
- To provide a comprehensive update to the Department on the above matters within three months and quarterly thereafter until notified otherwise.
- To engage with the Department as required in the context of the response of the ETB to the report and any other matters related to the report or to governance and oversight arrangements in the ETB.
- To ensure that any obligations to report to relevant statutory agencies in relation to the matters raised in the report (such as, but not limited to, An Garda Síochána, the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Charities Regulator, Standards in Public Office Commission) are addressed.
The Board has confirmed its agreement to implement those directions and the Department has made arrangements to engage with the ETB in relation to its compliance with these matters. In addition, KWETB has outlined an Action Plan to address the concerns in the Thorn report which will be finalised as part of the engagement with the Department.

**Ongoing issues arising from the report and learning for the Department:**

- **Engagement with KWETB**

  The Department has sanctioned additional resources and staffing to KWETB to assist them in complying with requests for information as part of the investigation by AGS, their ongoing engagement with the C & AG and compliance with corporate governance requirements of the Department.

- **Action Plan for KWETB**

  In response to a draft of the report prepared by Dr. Thorn and given to KWETB in January 2018, KWETB prepared an Action Plan outlining how it intended to comply with issues raised by the investigator, the C & AG and corporate governance requirements of the Department.

  In summary, as the majority of issues raised in the report relate to procurement, KWETB’s Action Plan is largely focused on improving and developing its procurement procedures, practices, staff awareness and implementation of best practice in this area. There is also a strong focus on corporate governance improvements. The KWETB update received indicates substantial progress has been made in respect of these identified actions and it is intended that this Action Plan will be finalised as part of KWETB engagement with the Department on the Section 41 directions.

- **Engagement with the C & AG**

  The C & AG are currently finalising the KWETB 2015 accounts and intend to publish a special report with the 2015 accounts which will be laid before the Houses of the Oireachts. The Department has provided commentary and observations on the draft special report and are awaiting feedback from the C & AG on this. Both KWETB and the Department will be given further opportunity to respond to this report before it is finalised. The C & AG have then indicated that they will commence audit work on the KWETB 2016 accounts.

- **Issues regarding companies referenced in the report:**

  *********************************REDACTED TEXT*********************************

- **Engagement with other ETBs:**

  The Secretary General of the Department has written to all CEs asking them to review processes and procedures in their individual ETBs in light of the Dr. Thorn report.

- **Code of Governance for ETBs**

  The Department agreed a Code of Governance with ETBs in 2015 which is currently being implemented by the ETBs. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform updated the Code of Governance for State Bodies in 2016 and the Department is now reviewing the existing ETB code to comply with the revised DPER code. In doing so the Department will be informed by the matters brought to light in the KWETB investigation. Work is well advanced and a completion date of year end 2018 is envisaged.
- **Engagement with the Public Accounts Committee (PAC)**

The Department has provided the PAC both with a copy of the final report and direction to KWETB. PAC have acknowledged receipt of that correspondence and have indicated they intend to review the report for matters which they may consider are not impacted by the AGS investigation. The C & AG has advised PAC of the special report on the 2015 accounts.

It is possible that upon receipt of the C & AG special report that further consideration of the issues in the Thorn report will be considered by the PAC.
Part 2 – Schools

Early Years Education

Since 2010, with the introduction of the universal free pre-school scheme (ECCE), c. 4,500 pre-schools offer provision in Ireland. The majority of this provision is privately owned and managed, with 80% of providers operating on a commercial basis, and some community based services. In 2015, Pobal estimated that 370 pre-schools are co-located or situated in schools. Most early childhood care and education is funded by DCYA under contracts managed through Pobal. However, the Department of Education and Skills directly funds 40 Early Start centres in DEIS schools and a pre-school in Rutland Street in Dublin. The Department is also responsible for the implementation and development of the national quality and curriculum frameworks for early years education, Síolta and Aistear.

The sector is regulated by the Child and Family Agency, Tusla, under the Childcare Act 1991. A statutory Early Years inspectorate ensures compliance with regulations. Following a pilot in
2015, education-focused inspections by the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate were rolled out across the sector from April 2016.

**Quality agenda and Key issues**

The Department’s Early Years Education Policy Unit (EYEPU) is co-located with the Early Childhood sections of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and reports to an Assistant Secretary in DES. The Unit has a remit to improve the quality of educational provision within the early childhood care and education sector. Since 2010, early years provision is mainly provided through the universal early childhood care and education (ECCE) programme funded by DCYA, although the DES EYEPU funds 40 Early Start centres in DEIS primary schools and a pre-school in Rutland Street.

To support quality provision for children in ECCE, DES has developed two national practice frameworks that apply in all settings where children aged 0-6 are present. Aistear is the national curriculum framework for children aged 0-6 and Síolta is the national quality framework. DES support the implementation and dissemination of the frameworks. Funding was secured by DCYA in Budget 2016 for the National Síolta Aistear initiative (NSAI) which co-ordinates the implementation of both frameworks throughout the sector. Under NSAI, specially trained Síolta-Aistear mentors based in the city and county childcare committees and the national voluntary childcare organisations support early years practitioners in their practice.

Given the need to upskill the workforce in the sector, the unit works closely with DCYA on workforce development, advising on the qualifications list that underpins the monitoring of new regulatory requirements for minimum qualifications in the workforce under the Childcare (Pre-school) Regulations 2016. Under AIM (the Access and Inclusion Model for children with a disability in ECCE led by DCYA in partnership with DES and the Department of Health), the unit co-funded in 2016 the development and establishment of a nationally delivered higher education programme for Inclusion Co-ordinators (LINC) to work in settings. A review of education and training programmes is also underway. As part of the review, extensive consultation surveys of practitioners and employers were carried out and a review of occupational role profiles was commissioned. This will now feed into the development of award standards for ECEC qualifications and a review of existing programmes.

The unit also provides key inputs into strategic policy development in the early years sector and participates in implementation structures for Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (BOBF), the national policy framework for children and on international networks in early years policy development. The unit liaises closely with the new education-focused inspection unit in the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate. As part of its remit in policy development, the unit chairs and supports the Early Years Advisory Group established by the Minister for Education and Skills in 2015 to provide advice on key policy issues in early years education.
School Sector

Legal Status and Governance of Schools

There are approximately 4000 recognised schools in Ireland. These include:

- Primary schools, also known as national schools;
- Post primary schools, including voluntary secondary schools, community and comprehensive schools, vocational schools and community colleges; and
- Special schools.

Almost all schools have the same management structure i.e. they have a patron, board of management and a Principal teacher. This structure has evolved over time and was given statutory effect in the Education Act, 1998.

For historical reasons, as the concept of patronage developed, the representatives of the main Christian churches, in particular the Catholic Church, came to be foremost as school patrons. This reflected the religious allegiances of the majority of the population at the time. However, other bodies, such as VECs (now ETBs) and Educate Together have also acted as school patrons.

Ownership of the school premises traditionally rested with the school patron, with the Exchequer providing grant aid towards the construction and maintenance of the school buildings and funding the operation of the schools. The situation as regards ownership of the school premises is now changing with many new schools being established in premises owned by the Minister.

Under the Education Act of 1998, all boards of management have a duty to manage the school on behalf of the patron and for the benefit of the students and their parents in line with the policies of the Minister. In fulfilling this duty, the board of management is accountable to the Patron for upholding the characteristic spirit of the school.

Boards of Management act on a voluntary basis and are responsible for the overall management of the school. In most schools, they also act as the employer of the teaching and non-teaching staff and are responsible for ensuring that the school has adequate insurance, adheres to health and safety requirements and complies with relevant legal obligations.

The Principal teacher of a school is responsible for the day to day management of the school and for leading teaching in the school.
Curriculum reform

Literacy and numeracy strategy

The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020 was launched in July 2011. The Strategy sets ambitious targets and describes the actions needed to improve the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy.

In March 2017, the Report of the Interim Review of the Strategy was launched. The Report shows that significant progress has been made under the Strategy. All of the targets set for reading and maths at primary level were reached and significant progress was made towards the targets at post-primary level.

As a result of the Interim Review, the original targets in the Strategy have been revised and updated, in particular where achievements are already at or near the benchmark set in 2011. This new focus on priorities and revised targets will be in addition to the continued implementation of the 2011 Strategy, which remains the focal point within the education system for improving literacy and numeracy outcomes to 2020.

To ensure continuing focus on the Strategy and its revised targets, the first of a series of annual fora will be held on Wednesday, October 17th. Its theme is ‘Promoting and encouraging quality, excellence and innovation in Literacy and Numeracy’ and it will showcase and celebrate exemplars of quality, excellence and innovation in Literacy and Numeracy in the Irish school system.

International surveys of achievement

The table below provides a timetable of publication of reports relating to International Assessments (PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS) in the coming years. The publication of each of these will attract considerable publicity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report</th>
<th>Target Group</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Due for publication</th>
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<tr>
<td>2018 PISA Programme for International Student Assessment</td>
<td>15 year old post-primary students</td>
<td>Main area: English reading Also Maths and Science</td>
<td>Main International and National Reports – December 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 PISA Feasibility Study*</td>
<td>15 year old post-primary students</td>
<td>Main area: English reading Also Maths and Science</td>
<td>Release dates to be decided, likely to be December 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 TIMSS</td>
<td>Primary pupils 4th class</td>
<td>Maths and Science</td>
<td>Main international and summary national</td>
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<td>Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study</td>
<td>Post-primary students 2nd year</td>
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<td>reports in November 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>2020 National Assessments</td>
<td>Primary pupils 2nd and 6th classes</td>
<td>English reading Maths</td>
<td>Release dates to be decided.</td>
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A feasibility study, designed to check whether moving the PISA assessments from March to October/November will have an impact on the outcomes for Irish students, is currently underway.

**The Educational Research Centre**

The Educational Research Centre, Drumcondra undertakes a number of national and international assessments of achievement in Irish schools, most of them in conjunction with the Inspectorate. A new governance structure was put in place for the centre in 2015, consequential on its establishment as an independent statutory agency of the Department under Section 54 of the Education Act, 1998.

**Primary Curriculum**

**Structure and Time**

An extensive consultation process has been undertaken by the NCCA to gather the views of educators, children, parents and members of the public on how the primary curriculum can be organised to best cater to children’s learning needs, while ensuring that teachers have the flexibility they need for their particular contexts. This is the first time, in almost twenty years, that those working in primary education had an opportunity to consider the structure of the curriculum, what it should comprise and how time should be allocated within it.

This work will determine the stages of the primary curriculum; the form of curriculum that will apply at each stage – integrated themes, curriculum areas, subjects. It will also determine how much time will be available for these curriculum components.

January to June 2017 saw an extensive consultation related to the future redevelopment of the Primary School Curriculum. The NCCA published the final report on ‘Primary Developments: Consultation on Curriculum Structure and Time’ in January 2018. The Time and Structure consultation report highlights key findings from the consultation and outlines the next phase of the work.
The next phase of work focuses on an overview of a redeveloped curriculum. This overview will be the focus of further public consultation in 2019. The development of the overview involves exploring key aspects of a primary curriculum through:

- Working with schools and settings
- Learning from research
- A series of invitational seminars.

**Integrated Primary Language Curriculum**

An integrated primary language curriculum for all children from Junior Infants to Second Class in English-medium and Irish-medium schools has been developed and implementation commenced on a phased basis in schools in September 2016. Implementation is in two phases with Phase one, implementation of the oral strand from September 2016 and Phase two (reading and writing) from September 2017. The Department is in contact with the INTO in relation to this implementation schedule which is perceived by some as quite challenging. Early evidence suggests that teachers are challenged by the structural elements and the integrated nature of the curriculum and that they may need additional support and/or time to develop their mastery of the new curriculum.

Work on the language curriculum for third to sixth class in the primary sector is ongoing by the NCCA with the draft curriculum due by end of 2018 with rollout expected on a phased basis to schools from the academic year 2019/2020.

**Primary Mathematics Curriculum**

The process of revising the Mathematics Curriculum from Junior Infants to sixth class is also underway. The new primary Mathematics curriculum will support all children in the development of computational thinking and flexible and creative thinking. Consultation on the draft curriculum took place in autumn 2017 with report published in July 2018.

There has been a revision to the schedule for the implementation of the Primary Mathematics Curriculum, whereby the curriculum will be introduced to schools as a single-stage implementation, from Junior Infants through to 6th class, rather than in two stages, Junior Infants to 2nd class and then 3rd class to 6th class, as originally planned. The revision arises in good part from learning from the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum, including listening to extensive feedback received from that process. While the revised approach to implementation of the new Primary Mathematics Curriculum will impact on timing at the initial stages, the proposed date for full implementation of the curriculum in all years of primary, September 2021, remains unchanged.

**Junior cycle**

In July 2015, the Minister for Education and Skills published the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015. Implementation of the new Junior Cycle commenced in September 2014, with the
introduction of English for first year students. The new English subject specification was examined for the first time in June 2017. Further subjects are being introduced on a phased basis up to 2019 and are being supported by a comprehensive CPD programme for teachers.

The new Junior Cycle incorporates a modernised curriculum across all subjects and gives schools greater flexibility to design programmes that are suited to the needs of their students. Schools will have flexibility and discretion to decide what combination of subjects, short courses, Priority Learning Units (PLUs) or other learning experiences will be provided in the three year programme.

Assessment arrangements for the new Junior Cycle are set out in the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015. It involves a dual approach to assessment that supports student learning through regular classroom-based assessment conducted by teachers and through a state examination at the end of the three-year cycle. This dual approach reduces the focus on one terminal exam and increases the prominence given to classroom-based assessment.

Reporting under the Framework for Junior Cycle is captured in a new Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). In addition to recording the results of examinations, the JCPA includes the results of short courses, classroom based assessments and what are known as Students’ Other Areas of Learning. The first JCPAs were provided at the end of 2017 to students sitting the Junior Cycle State examinations in June 2017. Those students that sat their Junior Cycle in June 2018 will receive their JCPAs before the end of 2018.

A range of supports are made available to schools and teachers to ensure successful implementation of the new Junior Cycle. These include allocation of professional time for teachers who are involved in the delivery of Junior Cycle.

In line with the agreement reached with the teacher unions on Junior Cycle reform, from September 2017, in all subject areas (including those where the new Junior Cycle specifications are not yet introduced), full-time teachers involved in the delivery of Junior Cycle are entitled to 22 hours of professional time per year, with a pro-rata entitlement for part-time teachers, subject to the full co-operation of a teacher with all elements of the Framework. In practice, this equates to 40 minutes (or one typical class period per week) for each full-time teacher. This means that the class contact time for a full-time teacher will be reduced from 33 periods per week to 32 periods.

To support the provision of professional time in schools the Department announced that it was making an allocation of an additional 670 whole-time equivalent posts to schools from September 2017 (negotiated and secured as part of Budget 2017). This allows this time to be provided without affecting tuition time for students. The appropriate additional teaching allocation was communicated to individual schools on staffing schedules sent to them recently by circular letter.

An updated circular setting out the arrangements for the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle, with particular reference to the school year 2018/19 will issue shortly.
The ASTI began a campaign of resistance to Junior Cycle reform in 2012, which ended with a suspension of all industrial action in June which in effect means that it is cooperating with the implementation of the Framework.

Under the Junior Cycle Framework 2015 teachers have been given 40 minutes of professional time per week (reduction of class contact time which is supported with the allocation of an additional 670 whole-time equivalent posts in schools) to carry out duties associated with Junior Cycle reform, including SLAR meetings. The annual cost of this is approximately €35 million.

Discussions to date at the Junior Cycle Implementation Committee have not resulted in agreement and the scheduling of SLAR meetings is becoming increasingly critical for schools. The Department is currently examining options in this regard.

**Senior Cycle Reform**

- Given developments at junior cycle as well as the work on improving transitions from second level into higher education, a more broad based review of senior cycle education was considered appropriate.

- A Review of senior cycle programmes (including Leaving Cert Applied) and vocational pathways in senior cycle, with a view to recommending areas for development has been commenced by the NCCA. Part of the review includes two consultation ‘cycles’ which each begin with school-based discussions but will then widen out to conclude with a national seminar series.

- The review of Senior Cycle is being undertaken by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment with DES officials involved in the process. The review will be informed in part by lessons emerging from implementation of the new Framework for Junior Cycle.

- As part of the first phase of the review the NCCA conducted international research on senior cycle in a number of other jurisdictions (France, Sweden, New Zealand, Queensland, Finland, England, Netherlands, and Ontario). The report of this research was published in February 2018 and is available on the NCCA’s website.

- A significant next step in the review started in September 2018. This involves the NCCA collaborating with a group of 41 schools to conduct a school-based review of senior cycle. Schools will be provided with stimulus material to facilitate discussions with staff, students and parents. These school based discussions will then widen out into national discussions and will be followed by reports on the findings.
• The overall findings of the review will be the subject of a public consultation from March to May 2019. A final advisory report will be prepared for NCCA Council in June 2019.

Curriculum Development

As well as the overall review of Senior Cycle by the NCCA, the Council has with the Department being involved in a review of a number of existing Senior Cycle subjects as well as development of some new subject specifications.

New Subjects

1. **Leaving Certificate Computer Science**

   • 40 schools will introduce Leaving Certificate Computer Science from September 2018 as part of the phase 1 rollout. The first examination of the LCCS will take place in June 2020. The next stage will see the subject being available nationally as an option to all schools from September 2020.

   • The 40 schools who will offer Computer Science for Leaving Certificate for September will each receive €3,000 by way of once-off grants towards the purchase of connector devices, totalling €120,000 in grants for these schools.

   • A once-off grant of €350 per digital device will shortly be paid to Phase 1 schools, with one device for every two students commencing the subject in September 2018. A payment of €750 per school will also be made for the uploading hardware. The total amount of grant payments for the subject will be approximately €330,000 across the 64 schools.

2. **Physical Education**

   • Leaving Certificate Physical Education (examinable) and Senior Cycle Physical Education (non-examinable) will be introduced on a phased basis to 80 schools from September 2018 with students sitting LCPE examinations for LCPE in 64 schools in June 2020. Both will then be made available to all schools who wish to introduce it from September 2020.

3. **Leaving Certificate Politics and Society**

   • A new specification for Leaving Certificate Politics and Society was introduced in September 2016 to a selected Phase 1 cohort of 41 schools, with 867 students sitting the examination in June 2018, of whom 774 took the subject at Higher Level.
The next stage (availability to all interested schools) has commenced, with all schools having been asked to express their interest in providing Politics and Society as an option for their students from September 2018. Just under 100 schools will be offering the subject from September 2018 (including the Phase 1 schools).

**Other Subject areas**

- **Sciences:** Trialing of practical assessment arrangements outlined in the new subject specifications for Leaving Certificate Chemistry, Physics and Biology took place in a small number of schools in 2017. The Department, along with the State Examinations Commission are considering the outcome of the trial.

- **Agricultural Science:** The revised specification will be implemented in schools from September 2019 with the first Leaving Certificate examination taking place in June 2021.

- **Economics:** The NCCA has published the new specification for Leaving Certificate Economics with September 2019 agreed as the date for implementation, when students who have completed the new business studies at JC enter the Senior Cycle system.

- **Applied Maths:** The NCCA was consulting on a draft specification for LC Applied Maths in Q4 2017. The specification is due to be finalised by the NCCA by the end of Q3 2018 with an agreed implementation date of September 2019.

- **Classical Studies:** A draft specification will be published by the NCCA for public consultation in Q3 2018, with the specification due to be finalised by the NCCA by the end of Q3 2018.

- **Art:** A consultation on draft specification for Leaving Certificate Art was completed in Q2 2018, with the specification being recently finalised by the NCCA.

- **Gaeilge:** A review of the Leaving Certificate oral Irish component has been undertaken by the NCCA. While most of the findings will feed into the broader development of a new specification for Leaving Certificate Irish, a change is being made in the short term to the oral component, by reversing the order of the ‘general conversation’ and ‘picture sequence’ (Sraith Pictiúr) elements.

- **Leaving Certificate Applied – Module Descriptors:** The NCCA is carrying out a review of three of the Leaving Certificate Applied module descriptors: English and Communications, Mathematical Applications, ICT (Introductory module and specialism). It is intended that all three of the revised modules will be implemented from September 2019.
Recent High Court Judicial Review regarding Leaving Certificate Appeals

This case, involving student Rebecca Carter, has been the subject of recent media attention.

Justice Richard Humphreys delivered his written judgement in this case on 3 October, in which he described the Leaving Certificate appeals system as ‘manifestly not fit for purpose’, given that students were not receiving the results of their appeals until well after the commencement of the academic year and often losing out on places as a result, instead having to defer them, to the following year. The judge stated that an intensified process of coordination in which central government could play a facilitative role, might assist in preventing similar problems in the future. The Department, under the chair of the Secretary General, has convened two meetings with representatives of the SEC, Higher Education Institutions and the CAO to consider this matter, with a view to accelerating the process for the future. However, the SEC and the Department and both currently considering appeals the judgement.

STEM

A STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Education Policy Statement and Implementation Plan was published by the Department.

The Department of Education and Skills STEM Education Policy Statement 2017–2026, published in November 2017, sets out the ambitious goals and actions required to achieve and improve the STEM education experience and outcomes for all learners. In realising Ireland’s aim to have the best education and training service in Europe within a decade, we must provide the most effective and engaging teaching, learning and assessment environment for STEM education at all levels.

The STEM implementation plan builds on a range of reforms and initiatives already underway in STEM, in areas such as curriculum and assessment reform, teacher professional development, embedding digital learning and advances in initial teacher education.

Languages Connect

Languages Connect – Ireland’s Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017- 2026 was launched in December 2017 and aims to put Ireland in the top 10 countries in Europe for the teaching and learning of foreign languages through 100 actions set out in an accompanying 5 year Implementation Plan targeted at improving efficiency, diversity and immersion. A
skilled workforce who have the relevant language skills needed by a global post-brexit economy in essential.

**Sequencing curriculum reform and continuous professional development for teachers**

The Department is currently undertaking an exercise to identify the impact of major policy and other changes on schools arising from the 2016 – 2019 Action Plan for Education. Curriculum reform and the associated programme of Continuous Professional Development for teachers impact on schools in a significant way during this period. The output of this work will inform future policy sequencing and resourcing decisions by the Department.

**Transition to higher education**

The role of the Leaving Certificate in selecting school leavers for admission to higher education has increased the stakes and pressures involved on students. This has a negative impact on teaching and learning practices at second level.

In April 2015 the then Minister published a report entitled “Supporting a Better Transition from Second Level to Higher Education – Implementation and Next Steps”, which set out a package of reforms developed by the stakeholders involved and which are designed to improve the transition experience of students moving from second level to higher education.

Those reforms are as follows:

- Introduce a new grading scheme for the Leaving Certificate, which will reduce the number of grade bands from 14 to 8 at each level;
- Introduce a revised Common Points Scale;
- Preserve the relative value of achievement at Ordinary level in relation to achievement at Higher level that applies in the current common points scale;
- Minimise the use of random selection that may result from too many students achieving the same points score, particularly at Higher level; and
- Encourage the take-up of Higher level subjects at Leaving Certificate by awarding points to the new H7 grade (30-40%).

The new grading and points system will be introduced for the first time in respect of those students sitting the Leaving Certificate in 2017.
School Governance and Management

The current school governance arrangements are highly devolved and low cost. School boards and to a lesser extent patrons discharge the day to day management functions of schools. The system depends on a high level of volunteerism in relation to the composition of boards. This underpins the relatively low level of expenditure on administration as a percentage of overall spend. The total staffing in the Schools Division deployed on general school governance issues (at 8.5) is an indicator of the reliance of the Department on the local structures for delivery across 4000 schools. While a management body exists in each of the sectors and sub-sectors, the exchequer funding to support those bodies is quite low and they face constraints in consequence.

Over the period of fiscal consolidation there were no increases in the funding grants provided to management bodies that enable them from day-to-day to provide support, advice and guidance to schools. There is an inevitability that pressure will mount for significantly increased levels of exchequer funding. The drivers of this will be the reduced capacity of Catholic dioceses to provide funding and personnel locally to engage in management activities, the withdrawal of religious personnel and the trust boards established to replace them in time running out of funding provided from the religious orders. Historically the Department has not funded patrons directly and relevant management bodies are identified and supported by the relevant patrons.

The lack of management capacity in the system is a constraint not just in relation to resource management but also in supporting principals and schools in improving school performance and accountability. In systemic terms the large number of relatively small primary schools and in consequence the reliance on the sourcing of a considerable voluntary resource to serve on boards presents a challenge. This is exacerbated by the increasing complexity, particularly in the employer space, of school governance and the responsibilities placed on boards. Small schools have teaching principals which impact on school leadership and on the effective deployment across the system of resources both generally and specific resources for special needs etc.

Any diminution in the number of small schools through amalgamations will help but where this does not prove possible and schools have to be sustained, a potential alternative in order to strengthen governance is the development of a “federal board” responsible for a number of schools in a parish or locality. The manner in which local communities wish to maintain the status quo should not be underestimated in trying to deliver on such a change which logically should be perceived as less threatening than school closures or mergers.

The Irish education system is untypical of the manner in which the education system is structured in many other OECD countries with the virtual absence of middle or local tier of
government between school and central government. It is questionable whether it is feasible to continue to maintain the system and enhance quality without providing for better local or regional management structures, though still allowing necessary autonomy at school level. A key strategic objective of the Department in relation to the merger of VECs to form Education and Training Boards was to position the sector to be in a position to provide management supports to schools across patronage types and in cases of patron withdrawal to be available to take on patronage if necessary. To that end, the Education and Training Boards Act 2013 makes provision for the boards to provide services to all schools in their area. These are very much enabling statutory provisions and are not mandatory on schools. Put simply it will be lawful for an ETB to provide services provided the school(s) want to obtain from them the service or support in question.

School Leadership
The professional development of teachers and school leaders is central to realising our ambition to have the best education and training system in Europe by 2026. The Action Plan for Education 2018 highlights the significant strategic reform programme underway in education and training. A key focus is to continue to build leadership capacity and actively support a professional workforce, i.e. helping those delivering Education Services to continually improve.

The quality of leadership is second only to the quality of teaching in determining positive learning outcomes for students. It is therefore essential that we develop excellent leadership in our schools. High-quality professional learning is key to achieving leadership excellence.

Since the introduction of the Centre for School Leadership in 2015, the Department of Education and Skills has funded a range of new initiatives to support schools across the continuum of school leadership. These initiatives include:

- Post Graduate Diploma for Aspiring School Leaders
- Mentoring
- Coaching
- Leadership Continuum
- Quality Assurance
- Evaluation and Research

Investment to date

The investment to the end of 2017 in CSL is €3.2m. In 2018 the Department has made provision for expenditure of a further €2million for the continuation of the initiatives outlined above. This investment is in addition to leadership supports also available to schools through Department funded support services PDST and JCT.
Group Mentoring
Group Mentoring commenced in Sept 2017 under the auspices of IPPN and NAPD and funded by DES.

Leadership Clusters
To assist schools to further develop their leadership capacity, the Department of Education and Skills will soon invite schools to participate in a pilot scheme designed to facilitate schools in harnessing and optimising internal leadership, management capacity and collaboration at all levels, in order to:

- improve learning experiences for students and pupils;
- strengthen school planning;
- build leadership capacity of teams in schools;
- enable schools to engage with the school community through exchanging ideas, sharing experiences and innovative practice, and fostering external partnerships.

It is envisaged that the scheme will comprise a national programme of projects operating at a local level. There will be scope for up to 42 clusters nationwide with each cluster containing between a minimum of three and a maximum of six schools.

Each project will explore approaches to school leadership and management which involve and empower all members of the leadership teams in the participating schools. Therefore schools will be invited to engage in innovative clusters with a shared vision for school improvement.

The scheme will initially be introduced on a pilot basis. The pilot, including the application stage, will commence from early November 2018 with a view to implementation of the projects in February 2019. The pilot phase will run until June 2020.

The pilot scheme will be subject to an external evaluation, which will require the active participation of all cluster members. The evaluation will run for the project duration, with a report expected to issue by July 2020.

Priority will be given to applicant clusters containing at least one DEIS school.

Team Coaching
In early 2017, CSL introduced a professional coaching service for school principals. There is an upper limit of 400 principals that can access the service in each year.
School staffing and capitation resource restoration

Capitation grants are the main funding instrument for schools. In the period 2011-2015 school capitation and related grants were reduced by just over 11% in aggregate.

Some improvements were made to grant funding in 2016, 2017 and 2018 to enable schools to implement pay increases for ancillary staff (arbitration pay increases in respect of grant-funded school secretaries and caretakers and also unwinding of FEMPI legislation in respect of other ancillary staff).

Restoring capitation over a 3 year period as resources permit is one of the actions in the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019. Schools will receive a 5% increase in capitation from September 2019. Over the course of the school year 2019/20, an additional €10 million will be allocated to primary and post primary schools, of which €4 million will be allocated in 2019. This increase is the beginning of the process for the restoration of capitation which is one of the actions included in the Action Plan for Education. Due to competing priorities for available funding it was not possible to restore capitation funding in any one school year. Full restoration would bring schools to pre-20111 capitation levels but would not take account of any inflation since 2011. The full restoration of the standard capitation grant rate would amount to €30 per pupil at primary level and €49 per student at post-primary level at an overall cost of circa. €35.6m in any one year.

The level of capitation funding has an influence on the degree to which schools would seek voluntary contributions from parents.

Ancillary staffing levels (secretaries, caretakers and cleaners) are determined at individual school level in the primary and voluntary secondary schools sector based on the funding provided via Department grants. A small improvement was made to these grants in 2016, 2017 and 2018 in order to enable schools implement a recent arbitration finding in relation to the pay of grant funded secretaries and caretakers.

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

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

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

**School Admissions**

The Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 was passed by the Oireachtas on 4th July 2018 and signed by the President on the 18th July 2018.

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

The approach taken, aims to strike the right balance between school autonomy and fairness in our education system. The provisions of the Act apply to all recognised schools.

**The main provisions of the Act include measures to:**

- Ensure that where a school is not oversubscribed (which relates to 80% of schools) it must admit all students applying.
- Ban waiting lists, thus ending the discrimination against parents who move in to a new area.
- Ban fees relating to admissions in non-fee paying schools.
- Require all schools to publish their admissions policies.
- Provide for the National Council for Special Education and Tusla (Child and Family Agency) to designate a school place for the child.
- Replace section 29 of the Education Act (Appeals) with a new section to align the legislation with actual practice and procedures as they have developed over the years and to increase the efficiency of the processes involved.
- Provide the Minister with a power to compel a school to make additional provision in respect of children with special educational needs i.e. open a special class or
classes, where the National Council for Special Education has identified a need for such provision within an area.

- Allow Irish medium schools (where it is their policy to do so) to give priority in admission to students who have attained a level of oral fluency in the Irish language, and where such fluency would be at risk of regressing if the student were not admitted to an Irish medium school.

Commencement of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018

The first stage of commencement on 3rd October 2018 brought the following sections of the Act into operation.

Section 11 - Provision amending the Equal Status Act 2000 to remove the existing provision permitting schools to use religion as a selection criteria in school admissions.

Under this provision no school can use religion as a criteria for admission. The Act also contains a protection to ensure that a child of a minority faith, can still access a school of their faith.

Section 9 – (new section 64) School Fees

This provision in the Act sets out an explicit prohibition on the charging of fees or seeking payment or contributions for admission to or for continued enrolment in a school. Exceptions are included in relation to fee charging secondary schools, the boarding element in Boarding Schools and admission to post leaving or further education courses run by post-primary schools.

Section 9 (new section 66) Co-operation of Boards

This section provides the Minister with the power to require schools to co-operate in relation to admissions. This section provides that the Minister may direct 2 or more schools to co-operate with each other in the admission processes of the schools concerned. It also provides for schools, for the purposes of facilitating the efficient admission of students, to share information with each other in respect of applications received, offers made and offers accepted.

Section 8 - Special Classes

This section provides the Minister with a power, after a process of consultation with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the Board of Management and the Patron of a school, to compel a school to make additional provision for the education of children with special educational needs i.e. open a special class or classes, where the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has identified a need for such provision within an area. This power will come into effect on Monday 3rd December 2018.
Commencement of the Remaining Sections of the Act

Consultation is required with the Education Partners for the purposes of drawing up regulations and procedures before the remaining sections can be commenced. The remaining sections of the Act are to be commenced in time for admission to the 2020/2021 school year.

Parent and Student Charter

The Education Act 1998 makes certain provisions that can guide and influence the relationship between a school and its students and their parents. However it does not provide any cohesive approach or strategy to enhance how students and parents are served by schools.

There are no measures to set out how schools should work to ensure that school practice and the relationship between school and parents and students individually, eliminate to the greatest extent possible reliance on grievance procedures to resolve problems. The alternative is to take a legislative approach that could foster a culture change in schools in terms of student and parent engagement and where schools as reflective and learning organisations seek continually to address parent and student concerns.

On 5 December 2016, the Minister for Education and Skills published the General Scheme of an Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill 2016, under which every school will be required to consult with parents and students, and publish and operate a Parent and Student Charter.

Under the proposed legislation, the Minister will set out national guidelines which schools will follow when drawing up their own charter. Each charter will require a school to, for example, consult students and parents regularly in relation to school costs, provide a fair and accessible mechanism for resolving complaints and provide information about school management, school policies and school performance.

Following publication, the General Scheme was submitted to the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills for pre-legislative scrutiny. The Committee considered the General Scheme alongside a Private Member’s Bill, brought forward by Deputy Jim Daly, which proposed the establishment of an Office of Education Ombudsman. The Oireachtas Committee held three public sessions with a range of education stakeholders and in November 2017 the Committee published its report. The report favoured the approach in the General Scheme rather than the concept of a separate Ombudsman for education. Having regard to the Committee’s report, Government approval for the drafting of the Bill, in conjunction with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) was obtained in January 2018.
The Bill itself will be a relatively short piece of legislation that enables the development of more detailed statutory guidelines by the Minister and which sets out the overarching principles on which those guidelines and individual school charters must be based. In that regard, the approach is similar to that taken in the Children First Act in respect of the Children First National Guidance.

**Key provisions of the Bill:**
The Bill includes provisions that:

- Define the principles that will guide how schools will engage with students and parents;
- Require schools to have a Parent and Student Charter;
- Set out in law the principles on which the Parent and Student Charter will be based;
- Allow the Minister to publish guidelines by which the Parent and Student Charter shall be prepared, published and operated in accordance with;
- Provide a power to enable the Minister to direct School Boards to comply with the guidelines;
- Allow the Minister publish information on the directions issued;
- Allow the Minister revoke a direction given to a School Board;
- Expand the role of the Ombudsman for Children to investigate a school in connection with any functions required of a school under the new Section 28 of the Education Act, 1998;
- Amend Section 9 of the Education Act 1998 to include among the functions of a school a requirement that a school must promote the involvement of parents and students in the education provided to students and
- Amend Section 27 of the Education Act 1998 to change the requirement on a student council from one of promoting the interest of the school to the promoting of the interests of the students of the school having regard to the characteristic spirit and polices of the school and the principles set out in Section 28.

***************REDACTED TEXT***************

**School patronage issues**

**School patronage in the establishment of new schools**

A new system was introduced from June 2011 for establishing the patronage of new schools. In areas where the population is growing, there are opportunities for consideration of new schools with patronage reflecting the parental demand for increased availability of different types of schools such as those providing Irish medium and multi-denominational education.
A patronage process is run after it has been decided, based on demographic analysis, that a new school is required. This patronage process is open to all patron bodies and prospective patrons. Parental preferences for each patron and in relation to the language of instruction of the new school, from parents of children who reside in the school planning areas concerned, together with the extent of diversity currently available in these areas, are key to decisions in relation to the outcome of this process.

The Department compiles patronage reports for the consideration of the New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG), an external independent advisory group which oversees the patronage process. Following their consideration of the Department’s assessment reports, the NSEG submits a report with recommendations to the Minister for consideration and final decision. The assessment reports and the NSEG recommendations for all such patronage processes are made available on the Department’s website.

An Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) has been developed by the Department to provide objective information to all parents which will allow them to make an informed choice about their preferred model of patronage and language of instruction for their child’s education. Parental preferences were previously collected based on direct engagement with patron bodies. The Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) opened in June 2018 for the four post-primary schools to be established in 2019. The Department is currently preparing assessment reports for the NSEG and it is anticipated that the successful patrons will be announced later in October 2018. It is envisaged that in tandem with the announcement of the outcome of that process that prospective patrons will be invited to apply to be included on the OPPS for the primary schools to be established in 2019.

Reconfiguration of existing primary schools for diversity

At primary school level, 90% of schools are under the patronage of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has itself highlighted the necessity for a greater plurality of provision to respond effectively to the changing social needs. The possibility of the Catholic Church divesting itself of the patronage of certain primary schools was raised by Catholic Church authorities initially.

The report of the Advisory Group to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector examined how demand for different types of patronage could be met in areas of stable population by divesting patronage of existing schools where there is evidence of parental demand for change. As part of an action plan published in June 2012 in response to the report it was announced that the Department would undertake surveys of parental preferences in 44 geographic areas. The aim of the surveys was to establish the level of parental demand for a wider choice in the patronage of primary schools within these areas. The areas concerned had relatively stable populations and in these circumstances there is little prospect
that new schools will be established there over the next number of years for demographic reasons. Therefore, the only mechanism for alternative patrons to become involved in school provision in these areas is through the possible divestment of some existing school provision in the areas provided there was sufficient parental demand for wider choice of patronage.

Sufficient parental demand for a wider choice of school patron emerged in 28 areas to support change in the patronage of schools. To date, eleven new schools have opened under the patronage divesting process between 2013 and 2018.

In January 2017, Minister Bruton announced new plans aimed at providing more multi-denominational and non-denominational schools across the country, in line with the choices of families and school communities. This was in line with the Programme for Government commitment to increasing the number of multi-denominational and non-denominational schools with a view to reaching 400 by 2030.

The new Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process drew important lessons from previous model, which had delivered a total of eleven transfers to multi-denominational patrons. Those lessons included:

- The importance of working with the current landowner, school staff, school communities and local communities on a collaborative and open basis
- The downsides of amalgamation, closure and opening a new school as a model, given all the complexities, including legal complexities, that can be involved
- The possibilities of live transfers, whereby a school continues in being, with staff, pupils and the majority of the board of management remaining in place (if they wish) but transfers from the patronage of one organisation to another
- The value of a lease arrangement from the current landowner to the new patron, removing the need for complicated property transfer.

There are two Phases to the new process – the Identification Phase and the Implementation Phase.

The Identification Phase is currently underway in 16 areas nationwide. The Education and Training Boards (ETBs), as the State’s statutory local education authorities, manage the Identification Phase. Each of the 16 ETBs have selected an initial pilot area within their functional area, which they consider, based on census data and local knowledge, there exists a demand for more diversity in educational provision. Surveys of parents of pre-school children have been carried out in these areas by the relevant City/County Childcare Committee on behalf of the ETBs. ETBs, having analysed the survey results, draw up comprehensive reports on the position in relation to each of the 16 pilot areas. This forms the basis of discussions with the most prevalent patron/landowner in the area (the Catholic Bishop in most cases) concerning the transfer of patronage of an existing school(s) to meet that demand. The response by the landowner/patron to any identified demand for greater
diversity is included in the report prepared by the ETB, for submission to the Department, who will subsequently publish the reports.

Detailed protocols for the Identification Phase have been drawn up and agreed by the Identification Phase Working Group, which is chaired by the Department and on which the ETBI and Childcare Committees Ireland is represented.

Following the publication of the first round of reports, the Schools Reconfiguration process will move into the Implementation Phase. Where the Identification Phase report reveals a level of demand for multi-/non-denominational schools sufficient to justify transfer of at least one school from denominational to multi-/non-denominational patronage, the implementation phase process commences. This Phase is managed by the existing patron (the Catholic Bishop in most cases) and involves consultation with local school communities on accommodating demand for diversity by transferring patronage of an existing school to a new multi-/non-denominational patron. In most cases, it is envisaged that transfer would be by way of voluntary live school transfer, rather than the amalgamation and closure model which was followed previously under the patronage divesting process, with all of the complications and legal difficulties and time delays involved. It is expected that in many cases the school property will be leased from the existing patron/landowner.

Draft protocols for the Implementation Phase have been drawn by the Implementation Phase Working Group, which is chaired by the Department and on which the Irish Episcopal Conference is represented. These Protocols are at an advanced stage of development and consultation with Catholic Church representatives is ongoing.

Phase 1 pilot 16 areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education and Training Board</th>
<th>Area Identified for Pre-School Survey</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longford and Westmeath ETB</td>
<td>Athlone, Co. Westmeath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Dublin ETB</td>
<td>Dublin 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilkenny and Carlow ETB</td>
<td>Tullow, Co. Carlow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cork ETB</td>
<td>Kinsale, Co. Cork</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louth and Meath ETB</td>
<td>Laytown/Bettystown/Mornington/Donacarney, Co. Meath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway and Roscommon ETB</td>
<td>Athenry, Co. Galway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry ETB</td>
<td>Kenmare/Sneem, Co. Kerry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The early movers element of the Schools Reconfiguration process enables school communities which have already decided to seek a transfer of patronage (independent of the survey process) to request their existing patron to apply to the Minister for a direct transfer under Section 8 of the Education Act 1998. The Department advises school communities which are seeking an early transfer of patronage to contact their patron in this regard.

**Community National Schools (CNS)**

Since 2008, a new model of primary school patronage, Community National Schools (CNS) has been piloted in response to the increasing demand for parental choice in the patronage of primary schools. The distinguishing feature of CNSs is that they are multi-denominational schools which allow for the provision of belief nurturing during the school day. The aim of the model is to cater for the diversity present within the community in a single school setting, rather than in more than one school. There are now fourteen such schools.

The Community National Schools were established under the interim patronage of the Minister for Education and Skills. Patronage has transferred to the Education and Training Boards and Boards of Management will be established in all the schools by September 2017.

**Religious Education in Community National Schools**

The CNS schools are multi-belief and welcome and respect children of all faiths and none. They recognise and aim to accommodate the wishes of parents to have their children learn
about different faiths and beliefs while at the same time nurturing children in their own beliefs within the school day. This commitment, within a multi-belief environment, is an important distinguishing feature of the model. A programme providing for the delivery of religious education and faith nurturing, *Goodness Me, Goodness You* (GMGY), in the new schools has been developed by the NCCA on an action research basis and will be launched on Monday October 22.

**Religious Education syllabus and Religious Instruction in ETB and Community Post Primary Schools**

Circular 0013/2018 was published in February 2018. It set out an approach to the arrangements that were to be made for religious instruction and worship in Education and Training Board (ETB) and Post Primary Community schools. This arose from concerns that multidenominational ETB schools were requiring attendance at classes with Catholic religious instruction. Section 4 of Circular 0013/2018 provided that the school is required to ascertain parental wishes in respect of their child’s attendance at such religious instruction and where a parent did not want religious instruction, the school was required to provide an alternative subject. Where there was any practice of combining or including religious instruction and formation or worship in the same class periods as the NCCA Religious Education syllabus, parents were made aware of this fact so that they could make an informed decision to withdraw from that class if that was their wish.

A follow up Circular 0062/2018 was published on 5th October 2018 and contains two key clarifications. Firstly it clarifies in Section 3 that withdrawal with an offer of an alternative subject does not arise in relation to the NCCA Religious syllabus where there is no religious instruction or faith formation. In future the NCCA Religious Education syllabus cannot be delivered by schools containing any element of religious instruction, formation, indoctrination or worship of any individual religion forming any part of class activity. This clear separation of religious instruction from the NCCA Religious Education syllabus has the effect of ensuring that withdrawal does not arise for students studying that subject where the school provides that subject as part of its normal range of subjects. The NCCA Religious Education syllabus is about learning about a range of religious beliefs and worldviews, regardless of background.

Secondly, Circular 0062/2018 also clarifies that where a school intends to provide religious instruction classes in accordance with their legal Instruments (catholic instruction in reality), they can still do so. Where a school wishes to run a Religious Instruction class, a parent must choose admission to the Religious Class for their child. This means that opt out does not arise because the parent has requested a place in the religious instruction class.
Inspection: Developments in Inspection of early years settings, schools, and other educational provision, including school self-evaluation

Research-informed approach to quality assurance

The Department’s approach to quality assurance of provision in the early years and schools sector is informed by international research, much of it produced under the auspices of the OECD and the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates:

- The Department’s approach recognises that one of the key contributors to quality is the quality of the teacher and the standards of teaching and learning in classrooms and other settings. Studies have shown consistently that by attracting high calibre candidates into the teaching profession, by providing them with high quality initial and continuing professional development, and by retaining them in the profession, the quality of students’ learning is significantly enhanced.

- The Department acknowledges that a range of complementary policies is needed to ensure quality of learning for students, including
  - well-designed, relevant curricula that are suited to the needs of learners now and in their lives as adults
  - assessment arrangements that monitor and report on students’ learning but do not distort learning
  - external inspection and internal self-evaluation in early-years settings and schools that complement each other to encourage improvement and provide adequate accountability to the management of settings, schools, parents and the public
  - effective national and international monitoring to ensure that standards in Ireland are maintained and improved, and that these standards bear comparison with best international practice.

- The Department recognises that parents and the public need and deserve good information about the quality of the work of schools and the learning of students, and the need to ensure that the ways in which this information is provided should be clear, easily accessible and should minimise any adverse effects that inappropriate use of data may generate.

The Department has been implementing a number of actions in line with the approach above. Some, such as curricular and assessment changes, and developments in the initial and continuing professional development of teachers, are dealt with elsewhere in this Overview Brief and in the General Briefing document.
Education inspections in early-years settings

It is widely accepted that the quality of early years education and care has a profound effect on the quality of children’s development and their long-term success in all phases of education. In 2016, the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills commenced early years education inspections in settings funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs under the free preschool in early childhood care and education (ECCE) programme. These inspections were introduced at the request of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and the Minister for Education and Skills as part of a suite of quality improvement measures in the early years sector. An extensive consultation was conducted with the early years sector as part of the development of inspections. The inspections focus on the quality of the provision and outcomes for children’s learning and development in the early years settings and are designed to support improvement in the sector. The inspections complement the regulatory inspections carried out by TUSLA (the Child and Family Agency) and the arrangements for self-evaluation (called Síolta) in the early years sector.

A team of 17 early years’ inspectors has been employed (mainly funded by transfers of monies from DCYA) and over 1600 inspections have taken place since the inspections were introduced in April 2016. As promised at the introduction of these inspections, a full consultation with stakeholders in the sector was completed in Q4 2017 to review the effectiveness of the inspections. Insights and Future Developments – a report on the review – was published in January 2018 and identified a very positive welcome by all stakeholders and partners in the Early Years sector. It also highlighted the challenges and opportunities in the provision of early years education to provide all children with the best start on their educational journeys. The report stated that positive action would be necessary into the future to ensure that the workforce in early education settings are suitably qualified and supported to deliver high quality early education. The importance of seamless transitions from early years settings into primary school and onwards in the education system in order to promote continuity in learning and development was also a strong theme.

A revised Guide to Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) was published in June 2018. This guide incorporated minor changes to the EYEI Model to elaborate more details of inspection processes in the full range of diverse early years settings nationally.

It is important that the inspections conducted by the DES Inspectorate complement fully the regulatory and registration inspections conducted by the TUSLA Inspectorate. Both Inspectorates participate in an Early Years Operational Systems Alignment group, established by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to ensure that the inspections are properly coordinated.
Next steps

At present, the early years education inspections are confined to ECCE settings which serve children from 2 years 8 months of age. DCYA has asked the DES Inspectorate to develop the Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) Model to cover the full range of early years provision for children aged 0-6 years.

Work will also continue to ensure the alignment of the inspections conducted by the DES Inspectorate and the TUSLA Inspectorate. Both Inspectorates will participate in a DCYA-led research project in 2019 which will explore further possible synergies and alignment across the TUSLA and DES Inspection models.

Inspection and self-evaluation in schools

Under Section 13 of the Education Act, 1998, the Inspectorate of the Department is responsible for the evaluation of primary and post-primary schools and centres for education and for the provision of advice to the education system and policy makers. It also has responsibility for the inspection of a range of other educational provision, including aspects of early childhood education. The Inspectorate also has a significant responsibility to assist officials in providing policy advice to Ministers on a number of issues.

Publication of “A Quality Framework for Schools”

The Inspectorate has developed and published a single quality framework for schools. Put simply, this Quality Framework provides a single, comprehensive yet accessible description of the standards to which schools should aspire. The framework underpins both inspections and school self-evaluation; it is also being used by the Centre for School Leadership to underpin their work on supporting principals. The Framework supports a shared understanding of what effective education is and provides parents and others with a clear guide to help them understand published inspection reports. The introduction of the Framework has been supported by holding a range of regional seminars and by the organisation of workshops and presentations for school leaders at the major conferences of the national professional organisations. An extensive number of advisory visits have also been conducted in schools.
Using a range of inspection models, including follow-up inspections

Work in the DES Inspectorate over recent years has sought to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the school inspection programme and to introduce school self-evaluation practices into the work of schools, as recommended by OECD and other research.

Traditionally, in Ireland, all schools were inspected in much the same way – the main model of inspection, used at primary and post-primary levels since 2003, was Whole-School Evaluation. These inspections normally took place in a cyclical fashion.

However, the more modern approaches to inspection that have been implemented since 2010, involve inspectors using a range of different inspection models. These range from short unannounced inspections, through more detailed inspections (for example of subject departments or the teaching of a curricular area or programme) to intensive examinations of teaching, learning, leadership and management practices in schools in different types of whole-school type inspections. Follow-through inspections have also been introduced: these are scheduled in a sample number of schools where different types of inspections have taken place previously. They are proving to be highly effective in ensuring that schools act on the recommendations arising from inspections.

Having a range of inspection models means that inspections occur more frequently in schools; schools in which there is a greater risk to the learning of students are identified more quickly; and a proportion of more intensive inspections can be focussed where the need for improvement is likely to be greatest. Having follow-through inspections also provides added flexibility that helps to increase the impact of inspection for improvement.

The full range of new and revised inspection models was introduced in September 2016 following extensive development and consultation processes. The range of inspection models is described in the main briefing document and summarised in the table below.
The introduction of the revised inspection models was also accompanied by changes to the notice period for notified inspections (a number of notice periods were shortened) and a reduction in the documentation required of schools during the inspections.

Steps have also been taken to make reports more accessible for the general reader. Each published report begins with guidance on how to read the report and each section of the reports contains a clear evaluative statement about the quality of provision under that heading. A grid is appended to each report showing the Quality Continuum and descriptive terms that inspectors use in reporting their judgements. The introductory section of all

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length/intensity</th>
<th>Inspections in primary schools</th>
<th>Inspections in post-primary schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short, unannounced inspections <em>(one in-school day)</em></td>
<td>Incidental inspection</td>
<td>Incidental inspection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-scale inspections, covering an aspect of the work of the school <em>(typically one or two in-school days)</em></td>
<td>Curriculum evaluation</td>
<td>Subject inspection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation of provision for pupils with special educational needs</td>
<td>Subject inspection of special education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Programme evaluation (TY, LCA, LCVP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whole-School Evaluation</td>
<td>Whole-School Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation of action planning for improvement in DEIS schools</td>
<td>Evaluation of action planning for improvement in DEIS schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation of Centres for Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inspection of Schools in High Support Units, Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(normally, two in-school days)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up inspections <em>(typically one or two in-school days)</em></td>
<td>Follow-through Inspections</td>
<td>Follow-through Inspections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
published inspection reports also includes a statement regarding the school’s compliance with requirements under the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools 2017*.

**Inspection models currently under development**

Two new inspection models are currently being developed for use in schools and centres for education:

- The Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection Model
- The Evaluation of Provision for Students with Special Educational Needs in Post-Primary Schools

1. **Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections**

**Background**

The Department of Education and Skills published new *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017* in December 2017, following the commencement of all sections of the *Children First Act 2015* and the introduction of mandatory reporting for teachers. The new procedures incorporated a significantly increased level of oversight for child protection at the level of the individual school (e.g. by the principal, the designated liaison person, the board of management and the patron) and within the Department and Inspectorate.

As part of the Department’s oversight measures, the Inspectorate checks on compliance with the key aspects of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017* during all school inspections. Currently, inspectors conduct two levels of checks, depending on the type of inspection being conducted:

- **Level one checks** are undertaken in the course of incidental inspections, curriculum evaluations, subject inspections, programme evaluations, evaluations of provision for pupils with special educational needs and follow-through inspections.
- **Level two checks** are undertaken in the course of whole-school evaluations (WSE), WSE- MLLs, Evaluation of Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS Schools, Evaluation of Centres for Education (Youthreach) and Evaluation of Schools Attached to Special Care Units.

The **Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections** under development are a third element of the Inspectorate’s oversight measures. These inspections (described as a **level 3 check**) are a specialised, stand-alone type of child protection inspection. They are designed to look in an in-depth way at a school’s compliance with the 2017 child protection procedures. These inspections will be conducted as part of the Inspectorate’s annual programme of inspection in a small sample of primary and post-primary schools, Youthreach Centres, Special Schools, and Schools attached to Special Care Units. The aims of these specialised inspections are:
• To monitor the implementation of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017)* in a sample of schools
• To publish written reports on the implementation of *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017)* in a sample of schools
• To report to the Schools Division and to the Child Protection Oversight Group (CPOG) of the Department of Education and Skills on the extent to which the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017)* are implemented in a sample of schools
• To gather information to inform the development of child protection and safeguarding requirements by the Department of Education and Skills and by other government departments and agencies involved in child protection

**Current position**

The Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection (CPSI) model is being trialled in the period September to November 2018. The trials are taking place in a total of nineteen education settings. These comprise nine primary schools, seven post-primary schools, one school attached to a special care unit, one special school, and one Youthreach centre. A number of briefing sessions on the model (April 2018, September 2018) have been held with the education partners.

**Next steps**

Additional briefing of the education partners will take place in November 2018 and it is intended that formal consultation with the education partners (as required under Section 13(8) of the Education Act 1998) will take place in December 2018. Subsequent to that, the model will be ready for Ministerial approval and sign-off with a view to its implementation from early 2019.

It is clear that schools and education partner bodies have anxieties concerning the level of child protection requirements placed on schools by the Children First legislation implemented in 2017, and it is likely that the Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections will give rise to similar anxieties. For this reason, and to assist schools in their implementation of the requirements, the Inspectorate plans to hold additional briefings for schools and other education settings at a series of national seminars to take place in early 2019.

In line with the usual procedures for implementing new inspection models, the CPSI model will be reviewed after one year of its implementation.

2. **Special Education Needs Evaluation (Post-Primary) [SEN-PP]**

**Background**

This is a post-primary inspection model. It is being developed to ensure consistency and coherence between the evaluation of provision for students with additional and special educational needs and the new special education teaching allocation model for schools which
was introduced in September 2017. In this context, particular attention is paid to the school’s use of the Continuum of Support and its adherence to the principles and actions outlined in Guidelines for Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Post-Primary Schools (September 2017). The model also reflects Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Post Primary Schools, which was published by the Department in September 2016.

The evaluation focus is on:

- The quality of students’ **learning outcomes and learning experiences**
- The school’s **use of resources** it receives for students with additional and special educational needs
- The structures and systems that the school has in place in fostering the inclusion, equality of opportunity and holistic development of students with additional and special educational needs.

**Current position**

The model is being trialled in nine post-primary schools in the period October to December 2018. A number of briefing sessions on the model (April 2018, September 2018) have been held with the education partners.

**Next steps**

Consultation with the education partners will take place in December 2018 and, following Ministerial sign-off, the model will be formally established from January 2019. In line with the usual procedures for implementing new inspection models, the SEN-PP model will be reviewed after one year of its implementation.

**Inspection data to support Department strategies**

Inspection criteria are being developed to focus in an in-depth way and to facilitate the gathering of additional evaluative information on the following:

- Digital learning (primary and post-primary schools and early-years settings)
- Modern Foreign Languages (primary and post-primary schools and early-years settings)
- STEM (primary and post-primary schools and early-years settings)
- Creative Ireland (primary and post-primary schools and early years settings)

It is planned to incorporate these evaluation criteria into inspection instruments from January 2019.
In addition, the Inspectorate will be conducting a small number of incidental inspections in primary schools (junior infants to second class) that will be focusing on the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum (November 2018).

School Self-Evaluation (SSE)

Background

School self-evaluation is a process in which schools examine critically aspects of their own work, identify where this can be improved, and plan and implement improvements. International evidence shows that creating a self-evaluation culture in schools can have very positive impacts on student achievement and can make schools more responsive to parents and students’ needs, especially when complemented by external inspection. However, there is also clear evidence that where schools believe that school self-evaluation is mainly for external accountability purposes, the process is not effective and may even be misleading.

The Department made school self-evaluation mandatory in 2012 and insisted that the topics to be examined in schools in the initial phase had to be aspects of their teaching and learning and include literacy and numeracy. The Department deliberately made the “initial ask” regarding school self-evaluation a modest one, so as not to overwhelm schools and school leaders in the early stages. It has also emphasised the goal of school improvement over that of accountability.

New requirements for school self-evaluation in the period 2016-2020 were prescribed in Department circulars in 2016. These requirements continue the focus on teaching and learning but provide greater flexibility to each school to select issues that are of relevance to the school’s context. In addition, reporting arrangements (that had not proved practicable in the period 2012-16) were simplified and schools were encouraged to use SSE to assist the implementation of major initiatives such as the introduction of the new Primary Languages Curriculum and Junior Cycle Reform.

Current position

During 2018, the Inspectorate is conducting a programme of advisory visits to schools to support improvement and self-evaluation. These include:

- **A general programme of advisory visits focused on SSE**

These visits are designed to support the implementation of SSE in schools. Advisory visits have been offered to schools and priority is being given to schools that have requested a visit and those that the Inspectorate believes may be encountering difficulty. The visits conducted to date as part of the general programme of advisory visits focused on SSE are:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SSE advisory visits completed in Primary Schools (Jan 1 – Oct 14 2018)</th>
<th>504</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSE advisory visits completed in Post-Primary Schools (Jan 1 – Oct 14 2018)</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Year to date)</strong></td>
<td><strong>732</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The target for 2018 is 800 visits across primary and post-primary schools.

In addition, the Inspectorate during the school year 2017/18 held four post-primary regional seminars and nine primary regional seminars at which learning about SSE was shared with principals and other school leaders.

The Inspectorate also publishes twice yearly an online SSE Update for primary and post-primary schools.

**Next steps**

- In the period November to December 2018, the Inspectorate will hold two post-primary regional seminars and five primary regional seminars on SSE
- SSE Update 12 for primary and post-primary schools will be published in December 2018
- As new policy or educational priorities are identified (for example, the digital strategy, modern foreign languages, Creative Ireland, STEM) schools will be encouraged to use the SSE process to prepare for implementation and change in such areas.

**Key Findings on data for Quality of Teaching and Learning**

*The Chief Inspector’s Report* summarises the findings from nearly 5,000 inspections in schools and centres for education during the period January 2013 to June 2016. The Report also summarises findings from inspections of Early Years provision made in 2015 and 2016. In the period covered by the report inspectors found learning in primary schools to be satisfactory or better in 89% to 96% of the settings visited, depending on the model of inspection used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Less than satisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole-School Evaluation</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSE-MLL</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidental Inspection</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In post-primary schools inspectors found learning to be good or very good in 85% to 91% of the settings visited, depending on the model used.
The positive findings from inspections are consistent with outcomes achieved by Irish students in national and international tests. While these can only measure a restricted range of student skills, they are a useful benchmark against which we can assess the progress Irish students are making in schools.

For example, the Performance Report of the National Assessments of English Reading and Mathematics (NAERM) 2014 showed significant improvement in Reading and Mathematics among our young people, and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2015 found that at primary level, Irish pupils’ mean score in Mathematics was significantly higher in 2015 than in 2011 or in 1995. In the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2015 Irish 15-year olds scored above the international average in Mathematics and Science and at an exceptionally high level in Reading.

Inspections also gather information about satisfaction with schools in confidential student and parental questionnaires. Both sets of data show high levels of satisfaction with several aspects of school provision.

Other priorities for inspection and evaluation in early years settings and schools
The current priorities related to inspection and self-evaluation in early years settings and schools include:

School Excellence Fund

- Minister Bruton announced the introduction of the School Excellence Fund (SEF) in 2017, initially for schools involved in the DEIS programme. There are now several strands to the SEF initiative; SEF-DEIS, SEF-STEM (encouraging improvements in science, mathematics and technologies) SEF-Step UP (which is targeted at improving teaching in a range of junior cycle subjects), SEF-Digital (supporting the digital strategy) and, most recently, SEF-Leadership. Common to each of the strands of the SEF is the creation of clusters of schools locally and the adoption of innovative and creative practices aimed at improving learner outcomes.
- As part of the Excellence initiative, the inspectorate is currently working with a number of schools in excellence and improvement visits to challenge and support school leaders and teachers in their efforts to develop innovative approaches and to improve standards.
School Excellence Fund-DEIS

- The Inspectorate leads the SEF-DEIS initiative and is currently working with more than 50 schools to support, advise and challenge them in their adoption of innovative practices. These schools, arranged in clusters that must include at least one DEIS school, are involved in a range of projects for which additional funding is provided. The advisory and challenge visits are designed to assist schools with target setting, planning and identifying actions to be taken and monitoring progress.
- Applications for a second phase of schools to join SEF-DEIS were recently reviewed.

School Excellence Fund – Step Up Project

- The overarching aim of the Step-Up Project is to support schools already at an effective level of implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) to move to a highly effective level in implementing the Framework in the areas of English, Business Studies and Science.
- Nine schools from across the country are participating in the project. The initial pilot phase of the Step Up Project was officially launched on Friday 21 September 2018. Teachers attended an opening seminar in Athlone where they collaborated to develop their thinking and worked with members of JCT and the Inspectorate to refine their Step Up Project plan for the year ahead. A pre-launch seminar for school leaders was held on 10 September.
- In addition to the support provided by the JCT, the Inspectorate will also support participating teachers on their Step Up journey by provided advisory visits to schools. Inspectors, acting as critical friends, will provide support, advice and challenge to projects by engaging in co-professional dialogue with key personnel in the schools.
- The initial pilot phase will continue for a two-year period: it is envisaged that phase two of the Step Up Project will commence in the school year 2020/21.

Gaeltacht School Recognition Programme

- The Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme, launched in April 2017, is a key action to encourage participating schools to provide a high quality Irish-medium education for students and to increase the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht school communities. This will be achieved by implementing specific language-based criteria and a total-immersion approach using an action-planning development process. 106 primary schools (79%) and 28 post-primary schools (97%) in the Gaeltacht have opted to participate in the Scheme. All participating schools have engaged in an action-planning for improvement process and are supported by a small team of inspectors through the provision of advisory visits to support schools, monitor progress made, identify good practice, and prompt schools to address challenges on their journey towards achieving recognition as a Gaeltacht school. Guides for Schools have been published to inform this work.
STEM Modern Languages and Digital Learning

- A particular emphasis will be placed on STEM and modern languages in our inspection plans for primary schools and post-primary schools. We will also explore how we can gather evidence in relation to STEM during our Early-Years Inspections.
- In whole-school evaluations we will enquire into how schools are engaging with the Digital Plan for Schools with an aim to gathering evidence and reporting on the quality of digital learning in schools.

Teacher Supply

- The question of teacher supply is a particular priority for the system at present, for this reason, an additional area of enquiry, related to the engagement of schools with Initial Teacher Education Programmes will be included in whole-school evaluations from September 2018.

Policy support work

- The Evaluation Support and Research Unit (ESRU) of the Inspectorate is engaged in a research project aimed at enhancing Student Voice in our evaluations
- We are also developing a range of good practice guides in areas relating to STEM, Foreign Languages, Digital Learning and Immersion Education in Gaeltacht schools.
- Our Inclusion Policy Unit is helping to finalise the Department’s response to the Evaluation Report on Education Settings in Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROC) centres and it is be developing an evaluation of schools attached to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) Units, to be carried out early in 2019.
- A major piece of work for our Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit is the publication of a research papers, draft circulars and a consultation paper on exemptions from Irish.
- At a corporate level we are currently reviewing and updating all our data management procedures to ensure that they are fully in line with GDPR requirements.

National and International assessments

The Inspectorate assists the Educational research Centre with the collection of data for national and international assessments of student achievement in Ireland. It also helps in the analysis of such data within the Department as an aide to policy development.

For example, earlier this year (2018) the Inspectorate assisted in the administration of PISA 2018 tests in post-primary schools and further PISA testing will occur in schools in this autumn. Data from this survey will be available from the OECD by December 2019.
Inspection Numbers And Coverage 2015 – 2017 and 2018 planned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspection/evaluation activity</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018 Planned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early-Years Education-focused Inspections (EYEIs) (incl. Pilot)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspections in primary schools*</td>
<td>2,803</td>
<td>4,001</td>
<td>4,171</td>
<td>3,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspections in post-primary schools and centres for education</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other inspections of provision for students and young people</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total inspections in early years settings, schools and centres for education</td>
<td>3,591</td>
<td>5,375</td>
<td>5,824</td>
<td>5,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total school self-evaluation advisory visits</td>
<td>787</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total schools in which the Inspectorate administered or quality assured national or international achievement tests</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In recent years, the overall numbers of visits in primary schools have been greatly increased by the growth in teacher numbers, as all newly appointed teachers had to be inspected by the DES Inspectorate during their probationary period. This requirement distorted the inspection programme in schools and meant that the frequency of school inspections was unsatisfactory. The requirement for probationary inspections is being gradually removed by the introduction of Droichead a supported induction programme for teachers, operated under the auspices of the Teaching Council. This will allow for a more balanced programme of school inspections and advisory visits to schools.

Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022

The Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 was published in October 2016 following extensive consultation with a range of educational and Irish-language stakeholders. The overarching goal of the Policy is to ensure the availability of high quality Irish-medium education in Gaeltacht areas to support the use of Irish as the main language of Gaeltacht communities.

The Policy recognises the uniqueness of the Gaeltacht as a linguistic and cultural entity, and the increasingly fragile status of Irish in Gaeltacht areas and schools. Gaeltacht schools face considerable sociolinguistic challenges including varied levels of Irish-language proficiency and increasing use of English in Gaeltacht communities.

The five-year time-frame for the implementation of the Policy takes account of the need for immediate action if the Gaeltacht, as an Irish speaking entity, is to survive. The implementation of the Policy is being co-ordinated and led by An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta (the Department’s Gaeltacht Education Unit,) which was established in January 2017. Significant progress has been made in implementing the Policy since the establishment of the Aonad/Unit. An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscoilíochta (COGG) has also been assigned a central role in Policy.
implementation. The Advisory Committee for the Policy on Gaeltacht Education, which is comprised of a wide range of stakeholders from Irish-language organisations and representatives from agencies, also to support the Gaeltacht Education Unit in its work.

**Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme**

A key commitment in the Policy is the implementation of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme in primary and post-primary schools. The Scheme, which was launched in April 2017, provides schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas with the option to seek recognition as Gaeltacht schools on the basis of implementing specific language-based criteria and on condition that they are participating in the language-planning processes provided for under the Gaeltacht Act, 2012.

Each school participating in the Scheme have submitted an action plan for improvement for review by the Gaeltacht Education Unit and feedback was provided to each school to inform the continuing development of plans in the journey towards achieving recognition as a Gaeltacht school. A package of supports, including access to a grant for the purchase of Irish-medium teaching resources, additional language support teaching hours, additional continuing professional development delivered by COGG and additional Inspectorate support via advisory visits is being provided to schools participating in the Scheme.

Participation rates by Gaeltacht schools in the Scheme are high. To date 106 (79%) primary schools and 28 (97%) post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht have opted to participate in the Scheme. The ongoing participation by schools in the Scheme will be dependent on the availability of resources. Schools that are not yet in the Scheme will be provided with a further opportunity to opt in to the Scheme in 2019. Encouraging the participation of remaining schools into the Scheme will be challenging as they have already declined two opportunities to participate.

**E-hub Pilot Project**

The purpose of this three-year pilot project is to utilise online delivery to extend the subject range available through the medium of Irish to students in isolated post-primary Gaeltacht schools, starting with Higher Level Leaving Certificate Physics. The implementation of the e-hub pilot project in Gaeltacht post-primary schools commenced in September 2018.

A consultancy firm will assist the Gaeltacht Education Unit in managing and co-ordinating this complex digital project through its next phases. Challenges in implementing the e-hub pilot project will be to ensure quality in online curriculum materials and delivery, and to achieve buy-in from participating students and their parents. The ongoing implementation of the project will be dependent on the availability of resources.

**Forás Pilot Project**

Following an application process, two post-primary Gaeltacht schools have recently been selected, on the basis of specified criteria, to participate in a language development programme called *Forás*. This pilot programme will involve the allocation of one additional whole-time equivalent teacher to each of the two selected post-primary schools to assist junior cycle students who have an evident need to develop their Irish-language skills over a transitional period to enable them to engage beneficially with the school’s curriculum through the medium of Irish. The ongoing implementation of the project will be dependent on the availability of resources.
Increasing the supply of teachers who can deliver high quality Irish-medium education

A key aim of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 is to increase the supply of teachers who can deliver high quality Irish-medium education in primary and post-primary schools.

New Irish-medium Teacher Education Programmes:

Following a procurement process, which was managed by the Gaeltacht Education Unit and supported by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP), contracts have been awarded for the implementation of two new Irish-medium teacher education programmes, which will provide up to 60 new Irish medium teacher education places annually.

Mary Immaculate College commenced the delivery of a part-time blended learning Irish-medium Masters in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht Education (M.Ed.) for primary and post-primary teachers, including principals, in September 2018, while Marino Institute of Education will deliver a 4-year Irish-medium Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) initial teacher education course for primary teachers commencing in 2019.

Additional Entry and Exit requirements to the new Irish-medium teacher education programmes

On entry, candidates for these new Irish-medium teacher education programmes are required to have reached an Irish-language proficiency standard of “independent user” Level B1 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages CEFRL) across all Irish-language competences, following.

On exit from each of the two Irish-medium programmes, students must demonstrate that they have attained “proficient user” Level C1 (CEFRL) standard across all Irish-language competences.

These additional entry and exit requirements are not applied in the case of other teacher education programmes. They have been put in place ensure that candidates are sufficiently proficient in the Irish language to enable them to engage fully with the programmes and to ensure that the programmes are meeting their objectives via the production graduates who are suitably proficient in the Irish language. The ongoing delivery of these Irish-medium teacher education programmes will be dependent on demand and the availability of resources.

Secondment of two Teaching Posts to NUIG

Two additional teaching posts have been provided to the Máistir Gairmiúil san Oideachas (Professional Masters in Education) teacher education programme at the National University Ireland, Galway (NUIG) via secondment arrangements. The objective of these two additional posts is to work towards increasing the number of post-primary teachers who can deliver a range of subjects through the medium of Irish. The ongoing implementation of this secondment arrangement will be dependent on the availability of resources.

Package of additional supports for island post-primary schools

The Department is aware of the significant and unique challenges faced by island schools and the importance which these schools play in the vitality and preservation of island communities. In
recognition of these unique challenges and the importance of island schools, the Department has provided an additional package of supports for every island post-primary school. This package of supports, which is additional to the supports being provided under the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme, and which is being provided as part of the implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education, includes:

- Increased teacher allocation for each of the island post-primary schools from its present allocation of 1 whole-time equivalent post to 1.5 whole-time equivalent posts from September 2018
- An additional ring-fenced budget of €15,000 per annum for each post-primary island school to cover their additional operational costs
- The establishment of Coláiste Naomh Eoin, previously designated as a Language Unit (Aonad), as an independent stand-alone post-primary school on Inis Meáin, Co Galway. This change in status will result in the appointment of a principal and deputy principal, the establishment of a board of management for Coláiste Naomh Eoin, and the allocation of standard capitation and other grants to Galway/Roscommon ETB for the school.

There are five post-primary schools located on islands in the Gaeltacht in Counties Galway and Donegal. All five post-primary schools are under the patronage of Galway/Roscommon ETB and Donegal ETB. Each ETB is required to adopt a co-ordinated and strategic approach in the management and allocation of these additional resources for island post-primary schools.

**Digital strategy**

The “Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020, Enhancing Teaching, Learning and Assessment” was published in October 2015. The Strategy is the result of extensive research and consultation and reflects the views of education stakeholders including young people. It supports the overall strategy of the Department in a number of key areas including curriculum implementation, skills development, teacher education and learner outcomes.

The Strategy sets out a clear vision that is focussed on realising the potential of digital technologies to transform the learning experiences of students by helping them become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens who participate fully in society and the economy. It is underpinned by five key principles:

- A Constructivist Pedagogical Orientation underpins the embedding of ICT in schools. This involves the use of more active teaching methodologies in schools.
- The use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment can enhance the learning experience of all students
- The use of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment is embedded in school curricula, Department policies and teacher education
- ICT is used in an ethical and responsible manner
- ICT Planning is required to ensure ICT integration in teaching, learning and assessment.
These principles are designed to ensure that the Department together with its relevant agencies and support services, schools, colleges of education and other key stakeholders play a proactive role in enhancing teaching, learning and assessment through the use of digital technologies.

The Strategy is organised around four key themes:

1. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Using ICT;
2. Teacher Professional Learning;
3. Leadership, Research and Policy; and
4. ICT Infrastructure.

Arising from the strategy the Department is currently implementing the Digital Strategy Action Plan 2018. Progress of this Plan is being monitored by the Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) which includes representation from the Department, Industry, Academic experts, Practitioners/Teachers and the tech voluntary sector.

The Digital Strategy, in recognising that schools ICT infrastructure required updating and investment provides for a fund of €210m in the form of an ICT grant. To date an investment of €60m has been distributed to schools to help them update their equipment and implement the Digital Strategy, the balance of the funds will be distributed over the remaining period of the Strategy.

A Digital Learning Framework for teachers and an eLearning planning resource for schools has been developed to assist and guide schools on the embedding of digital technologies in teaching and learning. The dissemination of the Digital Learning Framework to all schools is currently underway supported by a range of CPD, including national seminars and other resources. An external evaluation of the framework, which was trialed during 2017/2018 school year, showed very positive feedback. All schools are now required to implement the Digital Learning Framework and as part of their planning process prepare a digital learning plan. A three year longitudinal study of the Framework has been commissioned and will be conducted by the Educational Research Centre (ERC).

Embedding of digital technologies is the focus of the School Excellent Fund (SEF) – Digital. A range of projects are underway in 32 clusters involving 190 schools and supported by €1m funding. The aim of this project is to support and facilitate schools to collaborate on innovative use of digital technologies. Learning outcomes from the clusters will be disseminated to the wider system to assist other schools.

Broadband connectivity remains varied across the school system. All post-primary schools are provided with minimum connectivity of 100Mbp/s. Significant barriers remain for some primary schools through poor broadband connectivity. The Department under its Schools Broadband Access Scheme continues to seek to improve broadband services to primary schools. Some 1,100 primary schools are currently on speeds on 30Mbps or greater, this will
grow to 1,400 by end of 2018. To progress improved broadband services to primary schools, the Department has established an interdepartmental/interagency working group. The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment is part of this group in the context of its remit for the National Broadband Plan and the State Intervention Programme.

The **Action Plan for On-Line Safety** was launched by the Government in July 2018 and sets out the actions across Government Departments and agencies that are being taken to protect children and adults in their online engagement in what is a particularly dynamic environment. The Department of Education & Skills will chair the group for the duration of the Action Plan (2018-2019), however, overall responsibility for the implementation of the Action Plan, and to deliver within agreed timelines, rests with each lead Department, and their agency/support service who will be accountable to the Oireachtas for implementation. Political oversight will be by way of a Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Taoiseach with membership comprising relevant Ministers.

**Teacher Education**

The relationship between good education outcomes and teacher quality is well attested in international research literature. Key steps in ensuring teacher quality relate to both initial teacher education (ITE) and ongoing professional renewal in the form of continuing professional development (CPD).

The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020 recommended changes to initial teacher education. These were incorporated into the Teaching Council’s Policy Paper on the Continuum of Teacher Education (2011) and Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers published in 2011 and revised in 2017.

The reconfigured 4-year Bachelor of Education (Primary) programme commenced in September 2012. The reconfigured and extended 2 year primary and post primary post graduate programmes commenced in September 2014. The post graduate programmes, including the post primary “H.Dip”, are now awarded at Masters level. The majority of the reconfigured extended post primary concurrent degree programmes commenced in September 2013.

All reconfigured programmes now include substantial periods of school placement as central to student teacher development (at least one year in total in the case of primary teachers) and a number of mandatory elements, such as literacy, numeracy and inclusive education.

Funding of €7.95m under the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy has been allocated for the reconfigured ITE programmes in 2018.
The Teaching Council is currently undertaking a review of the impact of the reconfigured ITE programmes, with a view to revising its Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers before it commences the next cycle of review and accreditation of programme providers from 2020.

**Changes to Minimum Entry Requirements in Irish, English and Maths to Primary Programmes of Initial Teacher Education**

The Department, in consultation with the Teaching Council, has responsibility for setting the minimum entry requirements in the core subjects: Maths, English and Irish for entry to primary programmes of initial teacher education. This is to ensure that primary teachers have the capacity to lead in these significant areas of student learning.

In October 2017 changes were announced to the minimum entry requirements, as follows:

- **Entry 2019** - Irish: H4, English: H7/O4, Maths: H7/O4

Further changes to the minimum entry requirements from 2021 onwards will be considered in the light of experience, relevant policy developments and following consultation with relevant stakeholders.

A further change to the Minimum Entry Requirements has been agreed, in 2018, so that students with a hearing impairment who have a high level of competence in Irish Sign Language will be able to access places on a primary teacher training course to be run by DCU in 2019, subject to accreditation from the Teaching Council.

**Reconfiguration of ITE providers**

The changes to initial teacher education structures, following from the 2012 Report of the International Review Panel on the Structure of Initial Teacher Education (headed by Pasi Sahlberg), involved 19 state funded providers of ITE being reconfigured to 6 centres of teacher education. Significant progress has been made in addressing these recommendations. Three incorporations are complete: (a) Froebel - Maynooth University; (b) DCU - St Patricks' College, Drumcondra - Mater Dei - Church of Ireland College of Education; St Angela’s College and (c) University College Cork and CIT. Work is ongoing in the context of the planned incorporation of St Angela’s College Sligo into NUI Galway.

REDACTED TEXT

Professor Pasi Sahlberg, with the support of the HEA, has completed a formal review of the implementation of the 2012 Report and a report is currently being considered by the Department.
Continuing Professional Development for Teachers

The Department promotes the quality of teaching and learning through the provision of continuing professional development (CPD) and supports for teachers and principals. The professional development needs of serving teachers in recent years have been addressed through the provision of an induction programme for newly-qualified teachers, dedicated support for principals, national in-service for curricular and policy reform, and ongoing support for teachers. The Department ensures that a range of high-quality models of CPD is provided to teachers and school leaders through its support services, the national network of Education Centres and appropriate groups, bodies and institutions who are empowered to design, develop and deliver CPD programmes. Provision for CPD in curricular reform takes cognisance of the needs identified by education partners.

The Teaching Council published Cosán, its policy on teacher learning, in March 2016. The development phase of Cosán began in April 2016 and is planned to conclude in 2019, in advance of national implementation in 2020. The development of Cosán will pave the way for the commencement of Section 39 of the Teaching Council Act 2001, which will enable the Teaching Council to review and accredit programmes of CPD.

Impact of curriculum reform and continuous professional development

The Department is currently undertaking an exercise to identify the impact of major policy and other changes on schools arising from the 2016 – 2019 Action Plan for Education. Curriculum reform and the associated programme of Continuous Professional Development for teachers impact on schools in a significant way during this period. The output of this work will inform future policy sequencing and resourcing decisions by the Department.

Teacher Supply

Management bodies and schools have, in recent school years, reported difficulties in recruiting teachers. At primary level this relates mainly to the recruitment of substitute teachers. For post-primary schools, recruiting teachers in particular subject specialisms is the issue. Subject areas of difficulty include STEM, modern foreign languages, Irish and Home Economics.

Technical Working Group report on Teacher Supply

Prior to the difficulties currently being reported, the Teaching Council was asked, in accordance with its statutory remit, to advise the Minister on the matter of teacher supply. In this regard a Technical Working Group (TWG) was set up to undertake an analysis of arrangements for the planning of the teacher workforce.

The final report of the Technical Working Group on teacher supply, ‘Striking the Balance’ was published on 9th June 2017. The report focussed on the development of a model of
primary teacher supply, while outlining the work which will be required to establish a sustainable long term model of post primary teacher supply.

**Teacher Supply Planning Structures**

To address the various issues, in March 2018 the Minister established a Steering Group on Teacher Supply.

An Implementation Group supports the work of the Steering Group and a number of working groups have been established to consider and report on particular issues. The working groups report to the Implementation Group.

Consultation with partners and stakeholders is a central feature of the process.

**Steering Group on Teacher Supply**

The Steering Group is leading on the identification of the issues, the development of a programme of actions on teacher supply and the oversight of its implementation. The Group held its first meeting on 26 March 2018.

**Terms of reference of Steering Group**

The Steering Group will:

- Evaluate Policy initiatives both for short-term and longer term implementation to respond to constraints in the system which have been already identified, and others which it identifies in the course of its work on teacher supply and demand
- Oversee a programme of actions for implementation by the Department of Education & Skills, its agencies and Higher Education Institutions together with identified targets, outcomes and timeframes.
- Provide direction and governance for the programme of actions and be the escalation point for the resolution of any difficulties
- Provide a forum for the discussion of significant issues which impact on demand and supply and how these can be best progressed
- Develop a consultation and communication strategy

The Steering Group is chaired by the Secretary General of the Department with membership drawn from members of the Department’s Management Board, the CEO of the HEA, the Director of the Teaching Council, nominees from the HEIs and management bodies, as well as an independent expert.

**Implementation Group**

The Implementation Group reports to the Steering Group and has the following functions:

- Identifying the issues that impact on teacher supply and demand and developing a programme of actions for approval together with information on resource and/or other policy implications
• Being the clearing house for proposals
• Ensuring that the programme of actions approved is being implemented & reporting on same
• Identification of matters that require escalation
• Identification of significant matters for analysis and discussion
• Creation and oversight of working groups established in accordance with the programme of actions approved by the Steering Group.
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• Ensuring that the programme of actions approved is being implemented & reporting on same
• Identification of matters that require escalation
• Identification of significant matters for analysis and discussion
• Creation and oversight of working groups established in accordance with the programme of actions approved by the Steering Group.

The Implementation Group is chaired by the Secretary General of the Department with membership comprising senior officials of the Department from relevant policy areas and nominees from the HEA and the Teaching Council.

**Working Groups**

The following working groups have been established:

• Data/Research Group to establish baseline data on demand and supply to support future planning/provide ongoing statistical and data analysis support. Membership mainly DES and its agencies
• Higher Education Policy; policy, provision, teacher placement, funding. Membership to include Higher Education Institutions, DES, HEA, Teaching Council;
• Communications strategy for the promotion of the teaching profession. Membership to include DES, Teaching Council, school management bodies.
• Policies and arrangements for schools and teachers that impact on teacher supply and demand. Membership to include DES, school management bodies

Three of the working groups are chaired by members of the Department’s Management Board and one (Communications WG) by the Director of the Teaching Council. Working Group members include nominees of the Department, the Teaching Council, the HEA and school management bodies as appropriate.
Consultative Strand

The first meeting of the consultative forum is planned for 8 November 2018. Its purpose is to ensure that all stakeholders are kept aware of the measures being considered and implemented and to facilitate their input and participation. It is envisaged that the forum will be convened twice annually or otherwise as required. A number of regional forums are also planned before end 2018.

In addition, the Department is directly engaging with the teacher unions to keep them informed of teacher supply developments.

Action Plan

An action plan has been developed under the four policy headings: Data/Research; Higher Education; Communications; Policies and arrangements impacting on teacher supply.

Education Support Centres

There are 21 full-time Education Centres and 9 part time Education Centres. The nationwide network are essential partners in the provision of CPD and deliver national programmes of teacher professional development at a local level in areas such as School Self Evaluation (SSE), Literacy and Numeracy (L&N) and curricular reform (e.g. Junior Cycle) as well as local courses.

Each Centre is headed by a Director who is either a teacher on secondment from a primary or a post primary school or from the Department inspectorate. Education Centres are statutory bodies under Section 37 of the Education Act (1998) and are managed by voluntary Management Committees elected annually.

Droichead

The Teaching Council is the statutory body with responsibility for professional standards at all stages of the teaching career. In 2013 the Teaching Council established and introduced a new model of induction and probation for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) under the name of Droichead. Droichead is a period of post-qualification professional practice for both primary and post primary teachers. It is designed to reflect the importance of induction for new teachers when they are formally welcomed into the profession. It is grounded in the belief that the people best placed to conduct that formal welcome are experienced colleagues who know what is involved in teaching and learning in their school. These fellow professionals are themselves supported through the provision of a range of structures and resources provided by the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT).
Following a review, the Teaching Council approved a revised Droichead Policy in December 2016. The Council approved the implementation of the Policy in May 2017. Under the revised Policy:

- It is clear and explicit that the nature of *Droichead* is as a non-evaluative professional induction process.
- There is more flexibility around the way the *Droichead* model can operate in different schools and the size of the PST. In addition there is flexibility where there is the usage of an external PST member to act as a mentor where necessary.
- JobBridge or similar schemes cannot be used to access the *Droichead* programme.
- There is an extended 5 year growth phase whereby *Droichead* will now be the sole route of induction for all NQTs by 2020/21 as opposed previously to 2018/19. The growth phase is in year 3 with primary schools that have 16+ teachers and post primary schools with 400+ students in Droichead for the 2018/19 school year.

At the end of September 2018, there were 643 primary schools and 498 post primary schools offering Droichead.

The Department has committed to providing in-school release time and a range of other supports via the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) to support schools as they engage in the process.

In 2018 provision has been made for a programme budget of almost €1.7m for the NIPT. Secondment costs and substitution costs contribute to a further c€1.8m for 2018.

The Teaching Council

The Teaching Council is the independent statutory regulatory body for the teaching profession, established in March 2006 under the Teaching Council Act 2001.

The Council was established to:

- promote teaching as a profession;
- promote the professional development of teachers;
- maintain and improve the quality of teaching in the State;
- provide for the establishment of standards, policies and procedures for the education and training of teachers; and
- provide for the registration and regulation of teachers and to enhance professional standards and competence.
The Council is self-financing, funded by teacher registration fees. The Council is also responsible for advising the Minister on entry requirements to Initial Teacher Education programmes and for the review and accreditation of those programmes.

Requirement for a teacher to be registered

Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act 2001 was amended in the Education (Amendment) Act 2012 to provide for regulations to be made by the Minister to circumscribe the circumstances in which an unregistered teacher may be paid from public funds.

Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act was commenced on 1 November 2013 and took effect on 28 January 2014. From then, all teachers in recognised schools must be registered with the Teaching Council, the professional standards body for teachers, in order to be paid by the State.

This is in the best interests of our children and our education system as a whole. The role of the Teaching Council is strengthened through this move which is a further step towards full regulation of the teaching profession. At the same time Statutory Instrument 32 of 2014 made regulations to enable a school or ETB, in urgent or unforeseen circumstances e.g. to avoid closure of a school or cancellation of classes, to employ, for up to five consecutive days at a time, a person who is not registered as a teacher with the Teaching Council.

The Teaching Council (Amendment) Act 2015 was enacted in July 2015 and underpins the central role of the Teaching Council in the vetting of teachers and allows, on a statutory basis, the Teaching Council to implement Part 5, the fitness to teach provisions. Certain provisions of the Act are designed to act in tandem with the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 and were commenced in tandem with that Act (see separate section on Garda vetting of teachers under School Governance).

Fitness to Teach

On 25 July 2016 Part 5 of the Teaching Council Act 2001 (Fitness to Teach) was commenced. From then, any person any person, including a member of the public, an employer or a teacher is able to make a complaint to the Teaching Council about a registered teacher. Complaints are possible under a number of headings, including professional misconduct or poor professional performance.

The Council may hold an inquiry and impose a wider range of sanctions such as advice, admonishment and censure. Other than where the lowest level of sanction has been applied, the teacher may apply to the High Court for an annulment of the Council’s decision. The first decision of the High Court following from an inquiry was made in August 2018.

The Council’s fitness to teach processes are not intended to replace the procedures that are already in place in schools to deal with issues of professional conduct and competence.
(introduced in 2009 under the Education Act (Section 24) for schools and Education and Training Boards (then VECs), as employers). Underperformance or misconduct should be dealt with first at school level and these procedures exhausted before any inquiry by the Teaching Council takes place.

**Review of the Teaching Council**

It is intended that a review will be undertaken of the shared understanding of the role of the Chair and members of the Council in the context of the existing legislation, workload and broader public sector governance and accountability. Terms of reference for the review are currently being developed.

**Legislation**

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The Council’s fitness to teach processes are not intended to replace the procedures that are already in place in schools to deal with issues of professional conduct and competence (introduced in 2009 under the Education Act (Section 24) for schools and Education and Training Boards (then VECs), as employers). Underperformance or misconduct should be dealt with first at school level and these procedures exhausted before any inquiry by the Teaching Council takes place.

**Child Protection in schools**

In all matters relating to child protection the Department is required to operate under and in accordance with national policy. National policy is fundamentally expressed in Children First and the Children First Act of 2015, and is also given expression in a legislative context through the measures contained in vetting legislation and the legislation on withholding information. The Departments of Children and Youth Affairs and Justice and Equality are the lead Departments with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs having overall policy responsibility for child protection. Using the terminology used in relation to Government’s Emergency Planning, An Garda Síochána and TUSLA - The Child and Family Agency (CFA) and are the “blue light” agencies of the child protection system. For example Government has determined that investigation of a “child protection concern” (in reality akin to an allegation) are a matter for the CFA in relation to child protection and An Garda Síochána in relation to the investigation of alleged criminal behaviour. The CFA refer to such investigations as “assessments”. An Garda Síochána also has a particular additional responsibility to safeguard a child where a report is made that a child is in immediate danger.

Child protection concerns reported to the Department or that come to the Department’s attention are not investigated (or assessed) by the Department either by line division officials or by the Inspectorate. Under the Department’s internal child protection procedures there is duty on all Department officials (including staff of the Minister’s office where all correspondence is checked for child protection concerns) to comply with the internal reporting arrangements, whereby the concern is passed to the CFA or An Garda Síochána without any judgement being exercised in relation to it. There is a risk that this approach may be misconstrued publicly as being hands off. Quite the contrary it is grounded on the need to have absolute clarity throughout the organisation that information provided should not be
second guessed and should simply be conveyed as received to the CFA. Furthermore where the subject of an allegation is a school employee, the Minister is not the employer and disciplinary procedures in schools in relation to misconduct are based on the role of the Board of Management as employer.

Changes have been underway in recent years in relation to what is described as the national child protection architecture. The Inter-Departmental Group on Children First which has been in place for a number of years was recently put on a statutory footing in 2016 and reviews child protection obligations and compliance across Government Departments.

The Department has an oversight responsibility for the education sector in relation to compliance with Children First. This oversight role is distributed through the sector and the degree of direct action by the Department varies within the sector. For example in relation to bodies under the aegis of the Department (e.g. SOLAS, SEC, NCSE, HEA.) the Department requires the agencies to provide assurance that they are compliant with requirements of Children First. In the case of the third level sector the HEA seeks assurance from institutions that they are compliant. This is done in tandem with other assurances in relation to governance. The Department is more “hands on” in relation to the school sector where specific and detailed guidance is provided. For example working with the partners the Department provides guidelines to schools that effectively translate the generality of Children First into specific requirements for schools.

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

The Children First Act 2015 was fully commenced by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on 11 December 2017 and has put elements of the Children First National Guidelines on a statutory footing.

The Department following consultation with the relevant education stakeholders, updated the Child Protection Procedures for schools. The aim is to complete this work before the start of the new school year (2017/2018) so as to have allow time for schools to make the necessary preparations for implementation and for training to be developed and made available to the sector prior to the Act’s commencement.
Following publication of the new schools procedures and prior to the Act’s requirement’s becoming operational, schools will also require time to adapt their existing policies and procedures at local school level to meet the new requirements.

The new “Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017” were published in December 2017. The purpose of the procedures is to give clear direction and guidance to school authorities and to school personnel in relation to meeting the statutory obligations under the Children First Act, 2015 and in the continued implementation within the school setting of the best practice guidance set out in the updated Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017. These procedures apply to both primary and post primary schools and replace previous procedures issued in 2011.

Schools were permitted to take two half days or one full day school closure during the 2017/2018 school year to allow time, as a school community, to engage with the procedures and to access the supports available. Supports continue to be available to schools as required and include:

a) the universal e-learning training programme developed by Túsla
b) 2 further e-learning resource guides for all staff. These modules compromise the following:

A) Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017 - eLearning Programme for All School Personnel (duration 1.5 hours)
This webinar for all school personnel will look at:

- Legislation
- The role of Mandated Persons
- The role of Designated Liaison Person (DLP)
- Reporting and recording, and
- Handling a disclosure.

And

B) Risk Assessment and the Development of Child Safeguarding Statement (duration 1 hour).
These webinars are available on PDST’s website under the heading Child Protection.

Also, in addition to the above, the PDST, over the course of 2018 will roll out one full-day, face-to-face seminar for all Designated Liaison Persons (DLPs) and Deputy Designated Liaison Persons.
**Vetting**

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

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

When the Vetting Act was commenced in April 2016, the Department published a circular for schools outlining the new statutory vetting requirements. The circular set out the new vetting requirements in respect of teaching and non-teaching staff and others involved with working with children in schools such as volunteers, sports coaches etc.

In February 2017, a further circular was published setting out the Act’s requirements in relation to the retrospective vetting of any persons working with children or vulnerable adults and who have not been vetted previously. Under the Vetting Act, such vetting had to be carried out by the end of April 2018 (the deadline was first set by the Minister for Justice & Equality as end December 2017 but was later extended to April 2018).

The Teaching Council Amendment Act 2015 was enacted in July 2015. The Act is designed, inter alia, to underpin the central role of the Teaching Council in the vetting of teachers and will operate in tandem with the Vetting Act. It has also provided a statutory basis for the retrospective vetting and periodic re-vetting of all registered teachers in the context of their annual renewal of registration. This has ensured that in the case of registered teachers retrospective vetting was done at the point of annual renewal of teacher registration by the Teaching Council rather than requiring the school employer to do so. The 2015 Act also ensures that there is a robust statutory basis for the Teaching Council to consider, in the case of any teacher who is the subject of an adverse vetting disclosure whether or not the teacher’s registration should be renewed.

In January 2017, the Council commenced its programme of retrospective vetting of un-vetted teachers in the context of their annual renewal of registration. At that time, circa 32,500 of...
the then 92,000 teachers on the register had not previously been vetted. This cohort of teachers were typically permanent teachers who were in the same school since the non-statutory vetting arrangements were introduced in 2006 and had not moved to a new appointment in a different school. The cohort also included teachers who were retired or had left employment but had continued their registration with the Teaching Council.

The programme of retrospective vetting has now been completed by the Council and in recent weeks the Council has commenced a re-vetting programme. While the Minister for Justice and Equality has not prescribed re-vetting timelines for employers such as schools, the Council is undertaking this re-vetting programme in the context of teacher registration. It is firstly re-vetting those teachers who were previously vetted under the non-statutory vetting arrangements in place prior to 2016.

It is important to note that it was the existence of the Teaching Council, as a statutory body with a statutory role in the registration of registered teachers that enabled the Minister for Education and Skills to put in place the current statutory provisions in respect of the vetting arrangements for registered teachers. The amendments to the Teaching Council Act enacted in 2015 have also enabled the putting in place of an electronic streamlined mechanism for school employers to meet the requirements of the Vetting Act in respect of registered teachers.

School Transport

School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department. During the 2017/18 school year in the region of 117,000 children, including over 12,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in approximately 4,500 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

The Programme for Government included a commitment to review the concessionary charges and rules element of the School Transport Scheme (i.e. for those not eligible but availing of spare places). The review commenced in June 2016 and was published in December 2016. With regard to the charges for concessionary places, the recommended course of action was to continue with the current position whereby charges remain in place for those in receipt of concessionary places. The report also recommended that the number of concessionary places should be reduced in line with the rules introduced in 2012 on a phased basis. However, Minister Halligan decided that there should be no planned programme of downsizing in the coming year except in line with normal operational decisions within the current scheme.
The Programme for Government also included a commitment to review the criteria and guidelines for the School Transport Appeals Board. The review has also been completed and published on the Department's website.

The compliance of Ireland’s school transport scheme arrangements with European Union procurement rules has been upheld by the Irish High Court, Court of Appeal and Supreme Court following judicial review proceedings challenging the current arrangements.

This judicial review challenged the long-standing accounting arrangements since 1968, amended in 1975, in relation to the school transport scheme between this Department and Bus Éireann under EU procurement and remedies directives. The Applicant alleged that the arrangements between Bus Éireann and the Department were a contract which is reviewable by the High Court (Commercial), and that it was awarded in breach of the public contracts directive. Judgement was delivered in favour of the Minister by the Supreme Court in October 2016.

**Special Education**

There are a number of processes underway within the Department to review and update our main programmes for targeted supports to schools to support children with special educational needs, including in relation to the provision of Special Needs Assistants and Special Education Teachers.

**Special Education Provision**

The Special Education Section is responsible for overseeing the development of Departmental policy for children with special educational needs, as well as managing a range of initiatives aimed at supporting children with special educational needs, and developing comprehensive, efficient and effective services for such children.

Department of Education and Skills funding for special education provision in 2018 will amount to some €1.78 billion, up 43% since 2011 and equivalent to 18.7% of the gross overall current allocation for education and training.

This funding provides for a range of supports and services including additional learning and special education teaching support, Special Needs Assistant support, special transport arrangements, building adaptations, enhanced capitation, funding for the purchase of specialised equipment, services of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), enhanced levels of capitation in Special Schools and Special Classes and additional teacher training.

This provision ensures that all children with special education needs can be included within the education system. The policy of the Department is that children with special educational needs
should be included where possible and appropriate in mainstream placements with additional supports provided. In circumstances where children with special educational need require more specialised interventions, special school or special class places are provided for.

**Special Needs Assistant Scheme**

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of locally based Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), allocates Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support to schools to cater for the care needs of students with a diagnosed disability. SNAs are a school based resource and the assessed care needs of each individual student underpins the allocation of SNA support to a school.

Budget 2019 provided an additional 950 SNA posts, at a cost of €7.44m, to meet additional demand arising for 2019, bringing the total number of Special Needs Assistant posts to 15,950 which represents an increase of 51% over the number allocated in 2011.

This is a higher level of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support than ever before, which will ensure that children with special educational needs can continue to participate in education and be supported in a manner appropriate to their needs.

**Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme**

In September 2016, the Minister for Education and Skills requested the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) to lead a comprehensive review of the SNA scheme, in consultation with other relevant Departments and State Agencies. The request followed a Government decision that a review would be carried out to ensure that the scheme continues to meet its objectives and that resources are being utilised effectively and efficiently, in line with guidelines.

The NCSE published the Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme on 30 May 2018 and concluded that a better model of support was required. They consider that what is needed is the right support at the right time provided by a range of personnel with relevant qualifications and skill-sets.

A Working Group comprising representatives of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform; Department of Education and Skills; Department of Health; NCSE and HSE was established to engage in the development of proposals for implementation of the recommendations.

The NCSE proposed that, given the significant changes involved, implementation of the recommendations would be subject to wide consultation with parents, schools, and other
relevant stakeholders to clearly outline the proposed new model of support. The NCSE also recommended a phased introduction of the new model.

An implementation plan for 2019 will be developed by the Working Group and there will be continuing engagement with key Departments and agencies, including the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Special Education Teaching Allocations

A new model for allocating special education teachers to mainstream schools was introduced for all schools with effect from September 2017. This model was recommended by the National Council for Special Education.

The revised allocation model replaced

1. A generalised allocation process at primary and post primary school level for learning support and
2. A National Council for Special Education allocation process which had provided additional resource teaching supports to schools, to support pupils assessed as having Low Incidence disabilities.

The new Special Education Teaching allocation model provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on each school’s educational profile. Schools profiles are designed to identify the extent of needs evidenced in the school, with reference to key indicators. The Special allocation is additional to the schools allocation of mainstream class teachers.

School Profiles take account of:

- A Baseline component provided to every mainstream school based on the number of enrolments that each school has. This is designed to support inclusion, prevention of learning difficulties and early intervention.

A school educational profile component; which includes:

- The number of pupils with complex needs
- The learning support needs in schools as evidenced by attainment levels in standardized test results
- The social context of the school including disadvantage and gender
Under the new model schools are frontloaded with resources, based on each school’s profile, to provide supports immediately to those pupils who need it without delay.

This reduces the administrative burden on schools as schools no longer have to complete an application process annually and apply for newly enrolled pupils who require resource hours.

Children who need support can have that support provided immediately rather than having to wait for a diagnosis. Schools therefore no longer have to make applications, for newly enrolled pupils for whom resource teaching hours may have been provided under the old model, or for pupils who have received a new diagnosis, as schools now receive a single allocation for all of their special education teaching needs, based on their school size and profile.

The new model also gives greater freedom to schools to give extra teaching help to the pupils who most need it, regardless of their diagnosis.

Significant additional resources were made available to provide extra Special Education Teaching posts for allocation to schools from September 2017. An additional 900 teaching posts were provided to support the introduction of this new allocation model.

The additional provision ensured that no school received an allocation of special education teaching resources, arising from the introduction of the new allocation model, which was less than the allocation the school for the 2016/17 school year.

Schools who received increased allocations from September 2017, under the revised model, retain these allocations until the next re profiling takes place. This is scheduled for September 2019 and work is already advanced in preparation for that.

There are currently over 13,300 Special Education Teachers allocated to schools, an increase of over 36% since 2011.

Comprehensive Guidelines for Schools and Parents on the organisation, deployment and use of special education teachers to address the need of pupils with special educational needs have been provided to schools and parents to assist them in implementing the new allocation system.

**Review of Allocations**

The allocations which were made for schools in 2017 have remained in place for the 2017/18 and 2018/19 school years, with some adjustments made over the course of the model for schools which achieved developing status, or where exceptional circumstances had arisen in their schools.
DES Circulars 0013 and 0014 2017, which introduced the model, advised that the allocations being made will initially remain in place for a minimum of two years, following which, revised profiled allocations will be due to be made to schools from September 2019.

DES Circulars 0013 and 0014 stated that any future adjustments to the allocations for schools will take place on a graduated basis, which will take account of changes to school enrolments, and the pupil population, including the number of pupils in the complex needs category, since the initial allocations were developed.

Data is now being collected and applied to update school profiles with a view to making new allocations to schools in spring 2019, which will take with effect from September 2019, subject to Government approval.

Review of the allocations will be challenging as there was no demographic provision made for special education teaching posts for 2019. This means that the demand for new and rapidly developing schools, and appeals in exceptional circumstances, will need to be met through existing resources. This will require schools with a retained element to their allocation (i.e. an allocation retained on introduction of the new model but which is above what the new allocation model would indicate is their profiled need) having their allocation adjusted in order to apply those resources to schools with resources below their profiled need.

Consultations with education partners will take place as part of this review process.

**DEIS Plan 2017**

DEIS is the Departments main policy initiative for tackling educational disadvantage. Following an extensive consultation and discourse with all relevant stakeholders, a Report on the Review of DEIS and DEIS Plan 2017 were published in February 2017. DEIS Plan 2017 is based on 5 key goal which include:

- The implementation of a more robust and responsive assessment framework for the identification of schools and effective resource allocation,
- To improve learning experiences and outcomes for pupils in DEIS schools,
- To improve the capacity of school leaders and teachers to engage, plan and deploy resources to their best advantage,
- To support and foster best practice through inter-agency collaboration,
- To support the work of schools by providing research, information and evaluation and feedback.

The Plan identities in excess of 100 actions to ensure that the targets as set out in the Plan are met. Areas which have specific targets include literacy and numeracy rates, pupil retention rates and progression to further and higher education.
A key aspect of DEIS Plan 2017 was the identification of schools using a new methodology developed as part of the Review process. This new assessment process uses centrally held DES data from the Primary and Post Primary Online Databases and CSO data from the National Census of Population as represented in the Pobal HP Index for Small Areas to provide information on the relative level of concentrated disadvantage present in the pupil cohort of individual schools. This resulted in the inclusion of 79 additional schools into the DEIS Programme for the 2017/18 school year.

Work is continuing on the implementation of the various Actions under DEIS with a focus on targeting extra resources as closely as possible at those students with the greatest level of need. Work has commenced on identifying such interventions that are having the greatest impact on tackling educational disadvantage. This will involve testing new approaches in groups of schools and working closely with schools in school self-evaluation and planning improvements.

National Educational Psychological Service

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), a constituent section of the DES, provides a school-based, educational psychology service to all schools, through the application of psychological theory and practice, to support the wellbeing, and the academic, social and emotional development of all learners, having particular regard for the inclusion of children with special educational needs (SEN) and those at risk of marginalisation due to disadvantage. In addition, NEPS plays a central role in supporting the promotion of Wellbeing in all schools. The scope of the NEPS service is broad and requires NEPS to work in a cross-cutting, collaborative manner with different sections of the DES and its agencies, and with service providers external to the DES.

NEPS achieves its objective through the provision of a tiered service delivery model encompassing:

- Case-work (including consultation/assessment), working with individual learners and/or their teachers and parents, to maximise positive outcomes for the children and young people in our schools with greatest need
- Systemic work – working to improve outcomes for all learners through:
  a. The provision of advice, support and consultation to teachers and parents
  b. The delivery of training for teachers in the provision of universal and targeted evidence-informed approaches and early intervention and
  c. Working with school communities to develop support structures and processes to maximise their capacity to respond to the needs of all learners and those with particular needs.
- Engagement in the development of policy with relevant sections of the Department, as appropriate.
• Liaison with DOH/HSE and DCYA/TUSLA to ensure coordinated cross-departmental service
delivery to children/young people at risk of marginalisation due to disability, mental
health difficulties, social inclusion factors and/or other significant risk factors.

NEPS psychologists provide support to schools in the event of Critical Incidents (such as
bereavement or death by suicide) and supports the State Examinations Commission (SEC) in
relation to the Reasonable Accommodation in Certificate Examinations (RACE) scheme by way
of upskilling teachers and advising with regard to quality assurance.

NEPS has represented the Department on the Youth Mental Health Task Force, a cross-
departmental group that was led by the Department of Health, and convened to consider how
best to introduce and teach resilience, coping mechanisms, greater awareness and how to
access support services voluntarily from a young age. The recommendations of the Task Force
report are expected to be implemented by the Youth Mental Health Pathfinder Project, a
cross-Government initiative to coordinate identified actions relevant to youth mental health
in the context of the Connecting for Life Strategy (2015-2020). NEPS represents the
Department on the Pathfinder Project and the Connecting for Life Steering Committee.

NEPS has supported the Department’s introduction of the Special Education Teacher (SET)
Allocation Model and was centrally involved in the review of the SNA scheme, conducted by
the NCSE in 2017/18. NEPS is also centrally involved in the development of policy relating to
the support which this Department provides to schools in the DEIS scheme.

The Programme for Partnership Government (2016-2018) included a commitment to increase
the number of NEPS psychologists by 65 to 238. NEPS sanctioned psychologist numbers have
grown from a base of 172 whole-time equivalents (w.t.e.) in 2016 through the intervening
Budget increases in 2017 and 2018 to 194 w.t.e and including an increase of ten posts from
the start of this academic year. Currently NEPS has 177 w.t.e. psychologists in place with 13
vacancies and nine new posts to fill from the new panels formed following a recent
recruitment competition. Budget 2019 allows for a further increase of ten psychologist posts
to the service bringing approved numbers from 194 w.t.e to 204 w.t.e. in the course of the
coming year. The effect of this increase will expand NEPS’ capacity to respond to the
broadening and ever more diverse needs of children within the education community, to
growing demands from schools due to upward demographic trends and to support the
implementation of the Department’s Wellbeing Policy (2018-2023) both for and within
schools. This expansion will also allow NEPS to further prioritise support for especially
vulnerable children and young people, to include the provision of more tailored responses to
supporting and meeting need within the school system.
Student Wellbeing

The Department of Education and Skills has a key role to play in the promotion of the wellbeing of children and young people in Ireland, in collaboration with the Departments of Health and Children and Youth Affairs, and with other Government Departments and Agencies. The promotion of wellbeing in the Education community is a priority for the Department of Education and Skills. Within this Department, wellbeing promotion is an element of the work of many divisions, and requires coordination to promote clarity and coherence to facilitate interface with the external partners.

The Department of Education and Skills Action Plan for Education (2016-2019) sets out a number of objectives and proposed actions specifically targeting the promotion of wellbeing and positive mental health in our school communities. The Action Plan for Education (2018) includes the following actions in relation to Wellbeing Promotion:

- Finalise and publish the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice for schools
- Issue revised circulars, providing more comprehensive and strengthened guidance to schools on the effective use of external programmes and facilitators relating to Wellbeing
- Develop a process through which schools will be supported in the embedding of the Wellbeing Policy and Framework for Practice
- Expand the Student Support Team project to Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) post-primary schools
- Implement the new Junior Cycle area of learning entitled Wellbeing, which will build on work to date in post-primary schools to support students’ Wellbeing.
- Extend the rollout of teacher programmes to DEIS schools that build capacity to promote social and emotional competence, resilience and school connectedness in all learners
- Commence recruitment of a further 10 NEPS psychologists for the academic year 2018/19 to enhance access to the NEPS service and increase the range of NEPS in-school supports, to build school capacity to support the wellbeing and the personal, social and educational development of all children
- Deliver training to 600 teachers in 300 post-primary schools on the revised NEPS Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resources for Schools, by end of 2018.
- Work closely with the Department of Health and other Departments to implement the recommendations of the National Taskforce on Youth Mental Health, the Youth Mental Health Pathfinder Project and the Connecting for Life Strategy (2015-2020).
- Work with the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) to support learners to manage their educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices so that they reach their full potential, through the implementation of an enhanced
Guidance Counselling Framework to maximise the benefits from the restoration of 500 guidance posts.

- Compete a review of the Life skills Survey and its function, with a view to informing recommendations on its future direction.

The Department’s Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018-2023) was launched in July 2018, providing an overarching structure encompassing existing, ongoing and developing work in the area of Wellbeing Promotion. The policy outlines a multicomponent, whole school preventative approach to the promotion of wellbeing with interventions at both universal and targeted levels. This policy requires that a Wellbeing Promotion Process is developed and implemented, through the use of the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process, in all schools by 2023. A briefing was provided for the partners in education in October 2018 and feedback on implementation gathered.

A Wellbeing Policy Implementation Plan, which has specified seven high level goals, has been agreed for achievement over the next five years. The seven high level goals are as follows:

- Strengthen and align current structures within the Department and between the Department and other relevant Departments to ensure the coordinated implementation of this Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.
- Plan and provide for the national roll-out of a professional development process to facilitate all schools and centres for education to engage with and embed a Wellbeing Promotion Process which builds professional capacity and collaborative cultures from 2018-2023.
- Provide for an aligned, comprehensive and easily-accessible programme of support for all schools and centres for education to address school-identified wellbeing promotion needs.
- Consider how the system is meeting current and future teachers’ learning needs relating to wellbeing promotion.
- Develop a research based framework for the evaluation of wellbeing promotion in schools.
- Improve use of supports for children and young people at key points of transition within and between education settings.
- Promote the wellbeing of school and centre of education personnel.

Coordinated activity with other Departments will be facilitated as appropriate, through the Wellbeing Policy Implementation Steering Group mechanisms, and through the Pathfinder Project structures when progressed. The Department collaborates in the implementation of Healthy Ireland 2013-2025, Connecting for Life Strategy (2015-2020) and Better Outcomes Better Futures 2014-2020.
Redress and Caranua

In this note “the Department” means the Department of Education and Skills unless the context otherwise requires.

I. Introduction

The purpose of this note is to give an overview of key issues for the Department of Education and Skills in the area of Redress. The work of the Department has two components:

First, matters relating to the abuse that took place in children’s residential institutions that were subject to State inspection, etc. and which was reported on in the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse’s (CICA) Ryan Report and redress scheme established by the State under the Residential Institutions Redress Act 2002 and operated by the Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB). This area includes seeking contributions of cash and property from religious congregations towards the cost incurred by the State and Caranua (the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund).

Secondly, matters relating to sexual abuse in Day Schools and issues which flow from the ECtHR judgment in the Louise O’Keeffe (LOK) case.

Key issues in both areas are summarised below:

PART ONE - Residential Institutions

2. 2002 Indemnity Agreement

The €128 million due on foot of this indemnity agreement has in effect been realised. The entire cash and counselling components amounting to some €65m have been received in full and the Department is in the process of securing the transfer of title of five remaining properties. However the properties are in State use currently so this is a legal formality. 55 properties valued at €58.7m have been fully transferred.

3. Voluntary Offers

In response to the call for further contributions following the publication of the Ryan Report, the congregations offered additional contributions, including cash and property, which they valued at €352m in 2009. Government policy is to pursue a sharing of the costs of the response on a 50:50 basis between the taxpayer and those responsible for the management of the institutions. On the basis of a final spend of €1.45bn on the redress response, a contribution of €725m would be due from the management bodies. Apart from one congregation that believes its contribution represents its 50% share, the remaining congregations have either declined to comment on the appropriateness of, or disagree with the 50:50 principle. The contributions offered in 2002 and 2009, as valued by the congregations, amount to some €480m, a shortfall of some €250m on the target 50% share of the costs. The bulk of the property offers comprise Christian Brothers’ school playing fields valued at €127m and 48 Sisters of Mercy properties valued at €107.5m. The Government agreed an approach to the property offers in July 2013, following which the then Minister for Education and Skills wrote to each of the congregations. Engagement with the congregations in continuing with the focus being...
on the completion of cash contributions and property transfers, however there has been no change in the positions adopted by individual congregations.

This position was challenged at the PAC where calls were made for the orders to complete the property transfers and to provide the balance of the funds due from the voluntary offer.

All of the committed cash contributions bar €8.8m due from the Christian Brothers have been received while 9 of the properties offered voluntarily in 2009 have fully transferred and the remaining transfers are being progressed.

4. Retention of Records Bill 2018

While it was originally intended that the records of the CICA and RIRB would be kept confidential and in time the bulk of them destroyed, the Government subsequently decided that the records are of such potential historical significance that they should be retained and sealed in the National Archives. However, mindful of the ramifications of this, it has been decided that the records should remain sealed for a period of at least 75 years.

The Bill is significant as the bodies cannot be dissolved until the matter of the final destiny of their records is resolved.

5. Residential Institutions Statutory Fund: Caranua

The RISF was established to disburse up to €110 million of funds supplied by certain religious congregations which were involved in the running of the residential institutions (essentially the cash component of the 2009 voluntary offers). To qualify for assistance from Caranua one must have received an award from the RIRB or an equivalent court award or settlement.

The recently published Caranua Eligibility Review demonstrated that there is no case for widening eligibility to the fund since, taking account of applications on hand and those expected, the fund is close to exhaustion. In light of the review, Caranua announced a cessation date (1 August) for applications. An extensive publicity campaign took place, targeted particularly at survivors who had not benefited from the fund before that date.

10. Memorial

The Ryan Report recommended that there should be a memorial for those who, as children, suffered in the residential institutions. The Department pursued this but the proposed memorial for the Garden of Remembrance was refused planning permission and because it was intrinsically linked to the form of the garden it cannot be reproduced elsewhere.
PART TWO – Day School Sexual Abuse

10. Louise O’Keeffe (LOK) Case (2014)

Prior to the LOK case to the ECtHR, the domestic courts up to and including the Supreme Court had found that the state had no liability for day school abuse as it was not the owner or manager of the schools and, while it paid school teachers, it did not employ them.

The CTthR ruled differently and did find that the State had a responsibility for the abuse of LOK on the basis that it should have known of the threat posed by her abuser LH and, consequently, taken steps to protect children (including LOK) from abuse.

The vicarious liability established in LOK only extends to 1991/1992 when the Child Protection Guidelines were put in place in primary/post primary schools, respectively.

On foot of LOK the Department put in place (in 2015 on an administrative basis) an ex gratia scheme managed by the State Claims Agency. The criteria for admission are:

- They had instituted legal proceedings against the Minister for Education in respect of school child sexual abuse and that those proceedings were not barred under the Statute of Limitations prior to their being discontinued; and

- They were sexually abused while at school by a primary or post-primary school employee in respect of whom there was a prior complaint of sexual abuse to the school authority (or a school authority in which the employee had previously worked) prior to the issue of the Department of Education child protection guidelines to primary and post-primary schools in 1991/92.

11. Prior Complaint Test

The latter criterion has caused difficult and has been challenged by day school survivors. This has manifested itself in two key ways:

- The Independent Assessor to the Scheme who was appointed in late 2017 has asked the Minister for a submission as to whether the requirement for a prior complaint is a correct interpretation of the LOK judgment.

- Before the Summer Recess, Fianna Fail moved a motion calling for those whose abuser had been criminally convicted to be admitted to the scheme on that criterion alone.

The Minister put forward an amended motion on the grounds that (a) a criminal conviction does not establish liability on the part of the State and (b) the proposed approach is fundamentally flawed on constitutional grounds with respect to equality. The Minister’s motion was, nevertheless, defeated and the FF motion carried.

In relation to the Independent Assessor, Mr Justice Iarfhlaith O’Neill, the assessor sought submissions from a number of parties including solicitors for survivor groups, the UCC law school and the Irish Human Rights Commission. He forwarded those submissions to the Minister and asked for a further submission.
The Minister responded to the Assessor at end of September with a submission which comprehensively stated the reasons why the State is interpreting the ECtHR judgment correctly.

12. Civil Proceedings

Survivors of Day School Abuse are pursuing cases through the civil courts and are regularly receiving settlements, either through the courts or on an out of court basis. To a very great extent, the judgments have been secured against the actual abuser and/or the school management/patron. In the latter case these have generally been religious congregations.
**Part 3 Further Education and Training and Higher Education**

**Structure and Governance**

Further Education and Training (FET) comprises programmes leading to awards of levels 1 to 6 of the National Framework of Qualifications. It is primarily delivered or contracted by the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) under the funding and strategic direction of SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority. FET includes both labour market focused programmes and programmes with a strong social inclusion dimension.

FET programmes can be full time or part time and are delivered in a wide range of ETB settings including Post Leaving Certificate and Further Education Colleges, Youthreach and adult education centres and training centres. They are also provided through community and voluntary groups, commercial training providers and in workplaces.

Over €800 million is invested in FET each year, both from the Exchequer and through the National Training Fund and annual provision is set out in service plans developed by SOLAS and the ETBs. Some 250,000 people will start FET programmes in 2018, with almost 340,000 people participating in a FET programme at some point during the year. An overall development and reform programme for the FET sector is set out in the FET Strategy 2014-19, drafted by SOLAS and approved by the Minister.

Higher Education in Ireland is provided mainly by 7 Universities and 14 Institutes of Technology. There are a number of specialist colleges and private colleges also providing programme. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is the statutory planning and development body for publicly-funded higher education and research in Ireland. The HEA has wide advisory powers throughout the higher education sector. In addition it is the funding authority for the universities, institutes of technology and other designated higher education institutions.

**Implementation of the FET Strategy 2014 – 2019**

A significant programme of reform of the Further Education and Training (FET) sector has been undertaken in recent years. The former national training agency FÁS was disbanded and its training functions were transferred to the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). The ETBs were formed from the rationalisation of the 33 former Vocational Education Committees (the ETBs also provide mainstream second level education and in some cases primary education). SOLAS was established as a new oversight and funding body for the FET sector. The reform process has been successfully managed without interference with the provision of further education and training to learners.
In accordance with its founding legislation, SOLAS was required to develop a 5 year strategy for the Further Education and Training sector. The strategy, which was approved by Government, was published in May 2014. It has five strategic goals under the headings

- Skills for the Economy;
- Active Inclusion;
- Quality Provision;
- Integrated Planning and Funding; and
- Standing of FET.

The implementation of the strategy involves a series of actions over the five year period from a range of actors including the DES, SOLAS, ETBs, QQI, DSP as well as other bodies such as AONTAS and NALA. Implementation is overseen by an advisory committee chaired by the Department.

A key aspect of the strategy is to deliver quality education and training that responds to employers’ existing and evolving skill needs while providing a good basis for learners to manage their careers and ongoing learning.

The strategy also provides for the development and implementation of a number of coordinated sub-strategies including forging strong partnerships between employers, employees, trade unions and training providers along with development and publication of a FET employee development strategy, a professional development strategy and a technology enhanced learning strategy as well as an integrated guidance strategy.

Since the publication of the strategy, significant improvements have been made in putting in place a framework for improved planning and funding of the FET sector overall. The annual FET Services Plans agreed between SOLAS and the 16 ETBs provide details on FET provision to be funded along with numbers, costs and estimated outputs. To date, SOLAS has published five annual FET services plans for the years 2014 to 2018.

The annual planning process involves a focus on a range of factors, including emerging employment opportunities, skill shortages and vacancy trends in the local and national labour markets to inform annual provision in each ETB area.

It includes a top-down and bottom up approach with SOLAS providing detailed funding parameters to ETBs at the outset that set out deliverables and priorities based on Departmental and Government strategies, programmes and action plans, and ETBs providing information on requirements gathered from detailed local consultation with employers and other stakeholders and engagement with partners on the Regional Skills Fora.

It is also informed by high quality labour market data and analysis of regional and local skill needs, provided by the SOLAS Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) to ensure that
the skill needs of learners and enterprise are addressed and provided for at national and regional level.

Since last year the process was significantly enhanced through the full integration of the new data system, the Programme and Learner Support System’ (PLSS) and, which from 2018, will enable much enhanced tracking of learner outcomes and more informed funding decisions using a national FET Course calendar and programme and learner databases. The new data system also enhances the series of FET programme evaluations that are currently underway.

This year SOLAS and the ETBs further enhanced the planning of FET through the implementation of a strategic dialogue process that has led to strategic performance agreements between SOLAS and each of the 16 ETBs. The agreements set out targets for each ETB that contribute to the overall targets for the sector contained in the SOLAS Corporate Plan 2017-2019.

A progress review of the FET Strategy was published in Q2 2018. Commissioned by SOLAS, it was conducted by an independent consultancy. The review assessed the appropriateness, priority and continued relevance of the goals and actions set out in the Strategy Implementation Plan for the FET Strategy, having regard to the significant reform of the sector, Government policy in the area (including the National Skills Strategy (2025), the Action Plan for Education, the Action Plan for Jobs, Pathways to Work 2016-20) and the wider economic and labour market developments since the strategy was first published in 2014. The review produced a number of recommendations that will be taken forward in the development of the next FET strategy, which will cover the period 2019-2023.

The term of four members of the SOLAS Board which include the chairperson is due to expire in late October 2018. All four have indicated that they would not be seeking a second term on the Board. As a result, all 4 positions were advertised with stateboards.ie on 12th October 2018, with a closing date of 2 November 2018. SOLAS Board appointments are made by the Minister in accordance with the Further Education and Training Act 2013.

**Review of Apprenticeship System and introduction of New Apprenticeships**

A key recommendation of a review of apprenticeships carried out in late 2013 by an independent review group was that an Apprenticeship Council should be established to oversee a call for proposals for new apprenticeships.

The Apprenticeship Council was established in 2014 and has since had two open calls for apprenticeship proposals in 2015 and 2018. Following these two calls, a total of 58 new programmes have been approved for further development into apprenticeship programmes.
The Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020 was published in January 2017 and it sets out a series of detailed actions and annual targets and sets a roadmap for the period to 2020.

Annual targets for both apprenticeship registrations and new programmes contained in the Action Plan are set out below. The 2016 apprenticeship registration target of 3,472 was exceeded, with 3,821 apprentices registered in the year. Although the upward trend continued in 2017 with a total of 4,843 new registrations (4,508 craft and 335 new), we did not reach our target of 800 new registrations on a total of 15 new apprenticeships. However, we do have a strong pipeline of apprenticeships in development to meet the Action Plan targets for future years. In addition, the two programmes with a second intake in 2017 both showed increased registrations over their year one figures. This pattern of initiating programmes with smaller numbers and building registrations in subsequent years is likely to continue and provides a solid basis to meet registration targets as the programme base grows. Registrations in craft apprenticeships were ahead of target in 2017 with a total of 4,508 new registrations.

As at the end of September there were 3,914 new apprentices registered in 2018, comprising 3,504 registrations on craft apprenticeships and 410 registrations on new apprenticeship programmes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Craft-based apprenticeships</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of apprenticeship programmes</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forecast new registrations per annum*</td>
<td>3,390</td>
<td>4,147</td>
<td>4,697</td>
<td>5,087</td>
<td>5,587</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New apprenticeships</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planned number of apprenticeship programmes (cumulative)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned new registrations per annum</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>2,297</td>
<td>3,413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total target apprentice registrations p.a.</td>
<td>3,472</td>
<td>4,947</td>
<td>6,197</td>
<td>7,384</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To date 16 new apprenticeship programmes have been developed and are operational following the Apprenticeship Council’s two calls for proposals. They are Insurance Practice, Industrial Electrical Engineering, Polymer Processing Technology, Manufacturing Technology, Manufacturing Engineer, Accounting Technician, Commis Chef, Chef de Partie, two programmes in International Financial Services (Associate & Specialist), two programmes in ICT (Network Engineer and Software Developer), Auctioneering and Property Services, Logistics Associate and Laboratory Technician and Analyst. Unlike the craft apprenticeship programmes, these new apprenticeships vary in National Framework of Qualifications level, duration, pattern of delivery, education and training provider arrangements and basis of
industry partnership. This flexibility and responsiveness is critical in making these apprenticeships attractive to employers and learners.

In addition, an apprenticeship programme in butchery will get underway in the coming weeks and a further three programmes, Sous Chef, OEM Engineer, and Manufacturing Data Integration Engineering are due to be rolled out by the end of the year with further new apprenticeships scheduled to get underway in 2019.

A number of key considerations need to be borne in mind in relation to new apprenticeships. Firstly, they need to be sustainable – if we are to persuade young people (and their parents) that new apprenticeships are an attractive alternative to higher education they need to know that they will get a sustainable job and career through this route. Secondly, apprenticeships are employer led – an apprenticeship is a contract of employment. An apprenticeship cannot succeed without the commitment of employers who give contracts of employment to apprentices. Employers have to contribute to the development of the curricula for new apprenticeships and must be in a position to put in place arrangements to deliver the on the job training. Thirdly, funding will be required for expansion into new apprenticeships. The 2019 Budget allocation to apprenticeship training has been increased by an additional €20m to €142m which represents an increase of over 16% on the 2018 allocation of €122m

**Reform of the National Training Fund**

The National Training Fund (NTF) was established by the National Training Fund Act, 2000, as a dedicated fund to support the training of those in employment, and those seeking employment. The Act also provides for the funding of research to provide information on existing and likely future skills requirements of the economy.

The creation of the fund was announced in Budget 2000 by the then Minister for Finance to raise the skills of those in employment, to give jobseekers relevant skills and to facilitate lifelong learning. The NTF replaced the Apprenticeship Levy which was set up under The Industrial Training (Apprenticeship Levy) Act 1994. In May 2010, responsibility for the NTF was transferred from the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation to the Minister for Education and Skills.

Following a consultation process, the Government, as part of Budget 2018, decided to raise the rate of the National Training Fund (NTF) levy by 0.1% in 2018 to 0.8% and by a further 0.1% in both 2019 and 2020 on the basis of the implementation of planned reforms. Government have approved the increases for 2019 and 2020 as part of Budget 2019 on the basis of these reforms which are being undertaken to the NTF, including those arising from the Independent Review of the National Training Fund, carried out by Indecon and published earlier this year by the Minister for Education and Skills. The independent review examines
the existing operation of the NTF and provides recommendations to inform its future direction.

An Implementation Plan to deliver these recommendations was published as part of Budget 2019 along with details of a new advisory group to the National Skills Council in order to strengthen governance and oversight and to secure employer input into the strategic direction of the Fund. This advisory group will be chaired by a member of the National Skills Council and will include representatives from the Enterprise sector.

Implementation of National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030

Higher education policy is focused on implementation of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, which was published in January 2011. The Strategy sets out a comprehensive roadmap for reform of the higher education system, with the aim that the system becomes more performance-oriented and more flexible and responsive, while the diversity of mission is retained and enhanced.

Key elements of the Higher Education Reform Programme include the introduction of the System Performance Framework aligned with performance funding, which sets out national priorities and system objectives for the higher education system against which higher education institutions (HEIs) will be monitored and which forms the basis for the agreement of compacts between the HEA and the HEIs which provide for targets and actions related to enhanced teaching, learning and engagement; system development and restructuring including; mergers; regional clusters and reform of the initial teacher education system.

The implementation of the System Performance Framework, Strategic Dialogue and agreement of compacts between the HEA and HEIs underpins a changed relationship between the State and the higher education system and provides for a new level of accountability for public funding against national objectives for the public funded higher education system. The first System Performance Report was published in June 2014 and the second in December 2016. A review of the System Performance Framework is being undertaken and a new System Performance Framework for 2017-2021 is being developed.

System Development and Restructuring

Changes to the system infrastructure to support and drive change across the sector have also been progressed. In 2013, the then Minister set out his response to the HEA advice on the future configuration of the higher education system, particularly in relation to the establishment of regional clusters and the expressions of interest in technological university status. The Minister’s policy direction is now being implemented, with particular focus under the current Government on the development of technological universities.
The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 recommended consolidation within the Institute of Technology sector and a pathway of evolution for consolidated IoTs to allow them to demonstrate significant progress against stated performance criteria and to apply to become multi-campus technological universities. Legislation underpinning technological universities, including the eligibility criteria and application process, is provided in the Technological Universities Act 2018, signed into law on 19 March 2018. Relevant sections of the Act came into operation by Ministerial order on 24 April 2018.

The Minister for Education and Skills announced on 17 July 2018 that the first application for technological university status from a consortium of three Institutes of Technology – Dublin Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown and Institute of Technology Tallaght - would be granted. The new technological university will be named Technological University Dublin and will be established by Ministerial order on 1 January 2019 following simultaneous dissolution of the relevant IoTs.

Three other consortia are progressing their development proposals for TU designation. Technological University for South East Ireland consortium (TUSEI), comprising the Waterford and Carlow Institutes, of Technology, is seeking to deliver the first university in the south-east region and is aiming to make an application for TU designation by end 2018. The Munster Technological University (MTU) consortium is seeking to ensure the Cork and Tralee Institutes of Technology combine to become a major regional development hub and catalyst in the south and south-west, also with the aim of making an application in 2018. The Connacht Ulster Alliance (CUA) consortium representing Galway-Mayo, IT Sligo and Letterkenny IT aims to meet the relevant eligibility criteria required to make an application for TU designation in 2020.

Regional Clusters
Arising from the National Strategy for Education to 2030 regional clusters of institutions in identified regions were formed to work on a collaborative basis to deliver jointly on agreed strategic objectives. All seven universities, colleges of education and 14 ITs are grouped as follows:

- Dublin I (UCD, TCD, IADT, NCAD, MIE);
- Dublin II (DCU, MDI, SPD, NUIM, AIT, IT Dundalk;
  - TU4Dublin (DIT, ITB, ITT)
- Mid-West (UL, LIT, MIC);
- West/North-West (NUIG, GMIT, LKIT, IT Sligo, St. Angela’s College); and
- South (UCC, CIT, IT Tralee, WIT, IT Carlow).

The clusters have focused in the first instance on shared academic planning and student transfer and progression pathways. Further work is being undertaken by the Department and the HEA to review and develop policy in this area, including in the context of developments
such as the Regional Skills Fora, the establishment of technological universities and wider landscape restructuring in the higher education landscape.

**Higher education: Teaching, Learning and Engagement**

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

The National Forum is working on a number of projects including the development of a professional development framework for those who teach in higher education. An external review of the National Forum is nearing completion and it is expected that recommendations arising from the review will commence this year.

**Transitions from School to Higher Education**

A Transitions Steering Group, chaired by the Secretary General, with membership from the Department, NCCA, HEA, SEC, QQI, IUA and THEA, oversees a process to improve the transitions from school to higher education.

A package of reforms was announced in April 2016, which first applied to students who sat their Leaving Certificate in 2017. Reforms that have been implemented to date include:

- The introduction of a new grading scheme for the Leaving Certificate reducing the number of grade bands from 14 to 8 at each level
- The introduction of a revised Common Points Scale

These reforms were designed with the intention of minimising the use of random selection that may result from too many students achieving the same points score, particularly at Higher level and to encourage the take-up of higher level subjects at Leaving Certificate by awarding points to the new H7 grade (30-40%).

A study on the ‘Early impact of the changes to the leaving certificate grading bands’ has been carried out. The report is due for publication in the coming weeks, interim analysis of the data collected suggests the following:
• Students found that the new grading system had no significant impact on them, while there was some confusion surrounding the H7 grade, students seem to find there is less risk involved in taking the higher paper.
• More students are taking higher level in the subjects selected for analysis (Irish, English and Maths).
• Preliminary input from the SEC appears to suggest that there has been a decrease in propensity to drop from higher level to ordinary level. Public commentary will be available when full entry and sit data has been completed.
• There was more than a 50% decrease in instances of random selection in 2017 compared to 2016.

As the package of reforms to the Leaving Certificate have bedded into the system, it is now intended that the focus of this group will now shift to the transition from Further Education to Higher Education. A Further-Education to Higher-Education subgroup has been convened and work is underway in this area.

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

Further developments
Implementation of the HE Strategy provides for a number of other governance, funding and structural reforms which need to be enabled through legislation.

A number of reforms are being provided for in the General Scheme for the Higher Education Reform Bill. This includes university governing body reform and reform of the Higher Education Authority. Priority issues for inclusion in the Bill are currently being reviewed.

Pay compliance and strategic HR issues at third level
There is an issue regarding non-compliance with Government Pay Policy in the university sector. This issue is focused on specific cases (many of which have been addressed) rather than being systemic. It did, however, present real issues at a time of general public service pay cuts, and it did illustrate a limitation in the Government’s capacity to direct pay policy in the university sector in the way that it can in other areas. In some (but by no means all) instances it is argued that universities require greater pay flexibility to achieve nationally desirable targets in areas such as Research; but for the most part issues of this nature can be addressed successfully by engagement between the universities and the Department. Recognising the lack of regulatory capacity in this important area of public service
employment and pay policy, the Government decided (in 2012 and 2015) to proceed with legislation giving the Minister significantly greater powers of investigation and intervention in situations of non-compliance in the university sector. This legislation is in the process of being drafted and the appropriate next steps will need to be discussed with the Minister.

Governance Issues in the Higher Education Sector

A number of issues have recently arisen in relation to aspects of governance in some higher education institutions. These issues were raised by the Public Accounts Committee and an RTE Primetime Investigates programme. The Department of Education and Skills and the HEA have been working closely together to strengthen governance arrangements in the higher education sector in recent years.

In order to address the issues raised by the PAC and Primetime the Department and the HEA have taken a number of specific steps.

At the request of the University of Limerick, the Department, in consultation with the HEA and the University of Limerick (UL), agreed to conduct an independent review into the governance, HR and financial practices and procedures at the University of Limerick. This decision arises from a number of protected disclosures and other complaints received from employees and former employees of the University. The ‘Thorn’ reports (1 and 2) were completed in 2017. There were 10 recommendations arising from the reports. These have been accepted by the University of Limerick and are currently being implemented. The HEA are monitoring implementation.

The C&AG has separately undertaken a review of ‘Handling of Remuneration for Certain Senior Staff in the University of Limerick (UL) and Institute of Technology Sligo (IT Sligo)’. The C&AG submitted the final draft of the Report to the Department on 30th August 2018. Under Section 11 of the Comptroller & Auditor (Amendment) Act 1993, the Minister is required to publish the Special Report no later than three months of the date of submission to him. It is the Department’s intention to seek to publish the report within the next few weeks.

Following discussions at the Public Accounts Committee in December 2015 about spin out companies of WIT, the Chairperson of WIT undertook an internal review of the issues raised in 2016. Arising from the WIT internal review the Chairperson of WIT wrote to the HEA in April 2017 requesting that it appoint an external expert in the field of commercialisation to validate the review. The Department and the HEA agreed that given the need for further assurance around conflicts of interest in WIT in respect of commercialisation, an external review is required. It was therefore agreed that an external reviewer would be appointed by
the HEA to examine these issues in the context of national policy and initiatives in this area. Subsequently, the HEA appointed Mr Michael McLoone, former County Manager in Donegal, to carry out the review. Arrangements are currently being made to finalise this review.

Separately, the C&AG has undertaken a review of the spin out of Feedhenry by WIT. The C&AG is expected to submit the final version of this review to the Department in the near future.

The CEO of the HEA recently indicated his intention to resign his position, which will take effect from 19th October. The CEO and the Chair of the HEA have been invited to attend the PAC on 18th October to discuss this issue, along with the Secretary General.

The HEA and the Department confirmed to the PAC that a wider review of Intellectual Property in the Higher Education Sector would be undertaken. This Review, which was published in February 2018, made ten recommendations, primarily in relation to conflicts of interest and spin-out companies. There has been significant engagement between HEA, KTI and other relevant stakeholders with the aim of strengthening IP policies and procedures. KTI established an IP Policy Working Group to enhance practical guidance for the Higher Education Institutions on issues, such as - minimum requirements to be included in HEI IP policies; description of actual and potential conflicts of interest; decision making and approval processes; dispute resolution processes and key components of revenue share policy.

These were issued to the sector in May 2018. The HEA will embed the recommendations of both the Review and the Working Group into the existing oversight processes to monitor their implementation. This will form part of the ongoing process of revision and updating of the Annual Statement of Governance and Internal Control from HEIs to the HEA.

**Research in the Higher Education Sector**

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

€40.6 million p.a. in research funding is allocated across the following three main areas:

- The Irish Research Council’s (€34.15m) remit is to support and enhance human capital development, in particular at postgraduate and early stage postdoctoral researcher levels, and to encourage independent exploratory research. Its remit covers the full range of disciplines spanning the humanities, social sciences, business, law, sciences, engineering and technology.
• HEAnet (€5.45m) is Ireland’s National Education and Research Network, providing internet connectivity and associated ICT services to higher education and research organisations throughout Ireland. It also provides e-infrastructure to all schools. It connects approximately 1,000,000 students, researchers and staff across first, second and third level education.

• The Irish Centre for High End Computing (ICHEC) (€1m) is Ireland's national high performance computer centre, providing high-performance computing services, support, education and training for researchers in HEIs and Irish enterprise.

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

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

The Innovation 2020 Implementation Group has responsibility for overseeing the progress of the various actions under the Strategy. Funding has been sought in the mid-term capital review to enable the Actions under Innovation 2020 to be progressed.

Additional funding of €7 million is being allocated to the subhead from 2019, predominantly to the Irish Research Council. However, this level of funding is insufficient to meet the targets under Innovation 2020.

**Future Funding of Higher Education**

In recognition of funding pressures in the higher education sector, an Expert Group chaired by Peter Cassells was established in 2014 to examine funding arrangements for higher education and to identify a range of approaches that, combined, will achieve a sustainable funding base for the future.

The Group engaged in a thorough process of analysis and consultation – both national and international. It published three consultation papers over the last year and held a range of stakeholder consultations and discussion fora with HEIs, students, staff, employers, other parts of the education and training system, Government Departments and agencies, community and voluntary groups and public representatives.
The Group submitted its report to the Minister in March 2016 and it was published in July 2016 and then referred to the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills.

The Group made recommendations in three broad areas:

- Increased investment for higher education institutions to take account of increasing demographics, capital needs and restoration of staff: student ratios. It calls for a 50% increase in current funding by 2030, delivered incrementally, and a capital investment programme of €5.5 billion.
- Enhanced financial supports for students, including an increase in the value of payments, introduction of a capital assets test, and an extension of supports to part-time and postgraduate students.
- Complementary reforms to ensure a more flexible, effective and responsive system providing high quality, relevant provision to all learners.

The Report puts forward three funding options for consideration to underpin a sustainable funding model through which this increased investment and reform can be delivered. These centre on the balance of cost sharing between the state and the student:

- **A predominately state funded system**: This involves significantly increased core grant to institutions and the abolition of the Student Contribution. Higher education would be free at the point of entry for all first-time EU students and for part-time learners with the possibility of extending free tuition to post-graduate students.
- **Increased State funding with continuing student fees**: This sees a considerable increase in State funding with retention of the current upfront Student Contribution and continuing fees for postgraduate students.
- **Increased State funding with deferred payment of fees through income contingent loans**: This option allows for the abolition of the Student Contribution to be replaced by a system of income contingent loans provided by the State. Increased State funding will still be required.

In order to build a political consensus regarding a future approach to funding the higher Education Sector the Minister for Education and Skills referred the expert group report to the Parliamentary Committee on Education for their consideration.

After a period of 18 months, the Committee wrote back to the Minister in January 2018 requesting that the Ministry of Education and Skills undertake an economic examination of the three policy options proposed by the expert group to assist the Committee in forming its view of the most appropriate option.
The Department is currently liaising with the EU Commission to examine the potential for the support of the Structural Reform Support Programme 2017-2020 in undertaking this economic analysis of the three policy options identified by the expert group. Having this evaluation undertaken through the Commission’s Structural Reform Support Programme will provide the type of international expertise, analysis, and objectivity that would be beneficial to a major evaluation of this nature.

**Funding measures**

In Budget 2017 the Ministers for Education and Skills and Public Expenditure and Reform announced a consultation process on the design and operation of an Exchequer-Employer investment mechanism to operate from 2018 onwards. A consultation paper was launched on 10 March 2017 proposing an investment mechanism for higher education and further education and training through an increase the National Training Fund levy from 0.7% of the reckonable earnings of Class A and H employees within the PRSI system to 0.8% in 2018, 0.9% in 2019 and 1% in 2020. These increases, it is estimated, could raise an additional annual €200m by the end of 2020 over the 2015 levy yield.

The levy was increased to 0.8% in Budget 2018, and by a further 0.1% to 0.9% in budget 2019. It is estimated that the levy will provide a projected additional €69m in 2019 as part of the Exchequer-Employer Funding Mechanism. It is estimated that the increases to the levy form 2018 to 2020 will create additional fiscal space of a cumulative €186.5m by 2020. (47.5m (2018) + 69m (2019) + 70m (2020) = 186.5m).

In total, Budget 2019 has delivered an investment package of €57.4m in new funding for higher education. This does not include funding for pay restoration and superannuation which has also been provided. This additional funding will be provided for the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: HE expenditure</th>
<th>€m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springboard</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE Demographics (previously agreed by DPER)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation and Performance Awards</td>
<td>10.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching and Learning Capacity</td>
<td>5.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Funds for IOTs</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time / flexible learning</td>
<td>4.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management and Leadership</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEA support staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other policy measures</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>57.40</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, a new **Human Capital Initiative** was announced as part of Budget 2019. This will involve investment of €300m over the 5 year period 2020-2024, with €60m being made available in each of those years. This investment will be funded by the NTF surplus. This would respond to the relevant recommendation in the NTF Review.

A major objective of the Initiative consistent with the Expert Group’s Report is to incentivise continued reform and innovation drawing on international best practice through such mechanisms as graduate conversion, accelerated course completion, flexible and blended learning, intensified focus on employability and strengthened linkages and relationships with enterprise. These needs are being identified through the operation of the detailed framework now in place under the National Skills Council.

The HCI represents a significant response to projected demographic pressures impacting on the HE sector over the next five years, as highlighted in the Expert Group Report on Future Funding.

It will also be essential to ensure that the Initiative responds appropriately to the challenges created for the economy and for the sustainability of particular sectors likely to be impacted disproportionately by Brexit. It will also reinforce the achievement of key regional development objectives set out in National Development Plan and Project Ireland 2040.

A consultative process will be initiated by end-year on the design and implementation of the new fund and it is envisaged that an initial call for proposals will be undertaken in Q. 2 2019.

In Q4 2018 the Department will also be undertaking analysis of how the additional funding which has been called for by the Expert Group can positively impact on learners; the most appropriate mix of apprenticeship programmes and upskilling programmes for those in work and how that impacts on demand and funding models; and how responsiveness to skills gaps can best be secured.

**Reform of the funding model for higher education**

An independent expert panel review of the current funding allocation model for higher education was published in January 2018. The Panel made 33 recommendations to reform the model by which funding is currently allocated to higher education institutions. The reforms being proposed will ensure effective use of public investment in higher education.

The independent panel’s Review provides a roadmap for transitioning towards a reformed funding model that is more transparent, consistent across higher education institutions, that incentivises actions in key strategic areas such as research and STEM provision, and supports improved accountability while also respecting institutional autonomy. This will ensure that
the additional funding that has been made available for higher education is targeted effectively and that institutions are held accountable for how they use public resources.

These reforms complement the additional investment in higher education in Budget 2019. It will ensure that the additional funding that has been made available for higher education is targeted effectively and that institutions are held accountable for how they use public resources.

A multi departmental and stakeholder Implementation Group monitor the design and progress of the recommendations. This group is chaired by the HEA.

Important reforms being prioritised in 2018 & 2019 include:

- Increasing the proportion of funding that is allocated to universities on the basis of research performance from 5% to 10% in 2018.
- Establishment of a National Working Group on Research Funding to agree an approach to funding research overheads and agree metrics for future research funding
- The provision of additional funding of €250,000 for institutions with multiple campuses that meet criteria that have been identified by the Review Panel
- The identification within the funding model of specific public and private sector skills channels to strengthen transparency and assist in meeting future skill needs and workforce planning requirements
- Consultation by the HEA with relevant stakeholders on a potential rewards based approach to performance funding to incentivise and reward institutions who excel in particular areas. Up to €7.2 million has been allocated between Budgets 2018 &2019 for this measure.
- Design and introduction of a financial penalty system for serious breaches of governance
- Targeted investments in building governing body, management and leadership capacity across the higher education sector. An additional €5.5 million is allocated in Budget 2019 to implement this measure.
- Establishment of a competitive fund to support innovative or transformative proposals from institutions with potential systemic application and impact. Up to €10 million was allocated between Budgets 2018 & 2019
- Development of an online tool to clearly communicate how funding is allocated, outcomes generated and how it supports the range of objectives set for higher education
   An interdepartmental and stakeholder Implementation Group was established in early 2018 to assist the design of recommendations, provide expert advice and monitor progress of particular recommendations.

The Systems Performance Framework and Review of the Funding Model for Higher Education together seek to ensure that there is clarity on expected outcomes in higher education to 2020 and on how funding will be delivered accordingly in support of those objectives.
Gender Equality

In November 2017 Minister Mitchell O’Connor established a Gender Equality Taskforce, to identify significant measures that could accelerate progress in responding to the high degree of gender inequality in the higher education sector. The Taskforce has prepared a three year action plan, and oversaw a systems review of the recruitment and promotion policies and practices currently in place in higher education institutions, with a view to identifying good-practice and highlighting areas that need improvement.

This Report is expected to be launched in the next week or so.

Implementation of the National Access Plan for Higher Education

The third National Access Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2015 – 2019) was launched in December 2015. The Plan contains 5 key goals and more than 30 actions that are intended to strengthen participation in higher education for target groups such as those from semi-skilled and unskilled socio-economic groups, lone parents, teen parents, some ethnic minorities, students with disabilities and Irish Travellers.

Recent progress includes the following:

- The allocation of €2.7m over three years to provide for increased diversity in initial teacher education. This funding was allocated under the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH), following a competitive call for proposals. The funding is being allocated over a 3 year period and will support a range of new initiatives and partnerships.

- **PATH 2** provides €6m to be invested in “The 1916 Bursaries Fund” over three years for the **most socio economically disadvantaged students from under-represented target groups**. Lone Parents and ethnic minorities including Travellers will also be a target group for this fund. Bursaries will be awarded to 600 students in the 3 academic years who have been identified by their HEI as being the most socio-economically disadvantaged students in the target groups. At least 20% of the 1916 bursaries are reserved for lone parents.

- **PATH 3** will provide €7.5m over three years to a **Higher Education Access Fund** which is intended to support regional clusters of higher education institutions to attract 2,000 additional students from groups currently under-represented in higher education, including Lone Parents and Travellers. The Higher Education Access Fund is being allocated on a competitive basis to the regional clusters of Higher Education Institution. Initiatives within clusters are expected to target the sub groups mentioned in the National Access Plan: namely, lone parents and ethnic minorities (including recently arrived programme refugees). **At least 10% of all places will be targeted at**
**lone parents.** Funding of €2.5 million per annum is available for PATH Strand 3 for the next three years. This amounts to funding of €7.5m over the three year period. To date €6.7m has been allocated to five of the six regional clusters of Higher Education Institutions.

- The Student Assistance Fund (SAF) provides financial assistance to students experiencing financial difficulties while attending third level. Students can be assisted towards the rent, childcare costs, transport costs and books/class materials. An additional €1m was added to the Fund in 2017 which is specifically ring-fenced for part-time students who are lone-parents or members of the other access target groups. Prior to that the fund supported full-time students only.

- The Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) supports participation by students with a disability in full-time programme of further and higher education. The aim is to ensure that these students can participate fully in education, or an equal basis with their peers. A review of the FSD was finalised late last year and the recommendations from the Review are being considered.

- A Data Plan for Access to Higher Education was published in May. The Implementation Group has been set up and has met once. The Access Data Plan will support the collection and use of more accurate data on equity of access to higher education. This will have a multitude of benefits in terms of evidence-based policy making and in the funding of HEIs. This data will be used to inform the equity of access metrics used in the HEA recurrent grant allocation model.

*Report on the barriers to lone parents accessing higher education*

An Independent Review to *Identify the Supports and Barriers for Lone Parents in Accessing Higher Education and to Examine Measures to Increase Participation* overseen by a steering committee chaired by the Department of Education and Skills has recently been completed. There are no budgetary implications associated with this as money has either already been provided through Budget 2017, or planned activities can be met from within existing allocations. The Steering Committee was established to progress the recommendations in the report and met twice. The supports that have been put in place and being monitored by the committee will ensure that there is positive progress with regard to lone parents participating in higher education.

**BREXIT CO-ORDINATION AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION**

In discharging its Brexit-related functions, the International Cooperation Unit of the Department participates in the Inter-Departmental Senior Officials Group, chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which coordinates the whole-of-Government response to the outcome of the UK referendum, and supports the Cabinet Committee on
Brexit. This is further underpinned by the Sections’ active engagement with other Departments in Brexit Workgroups on the Economy and Trade; the Common Travel Area; and European Union Programmes - three of the six sectoral workgroups established to provide key sectoral or thematic advices to the Cabinet Committee and Government. The Unit also chairs the Education and Research Subgroup under the Economy and Trade strand of coordination. The Subgroup includes relevant areas within the Department and relevant Agencies of the Department and other Departments/Agencies.

**Stakeholder Consultations**

The Department held an Education Sector Forum on Brexit on 14 November 2016 to outline plans for the Departments ongoing engagement with the sector in its preparations for the Brexit negotiation phase. Following the plenary event the Department convened separate consultative fora for higher education and the further education and training sectors in December 2016 and for the schools sector in January 2017. These events facilitated the widest possible involvement of stakeholders across our education system and will help us achieve a fuller understanding of their issues and concerns as we continue to plan for the UK’s exit from the EU.

The Skills Agenda

The Further Education and Training Unit and the Higher Education Division have close working relationships with the Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation in relation to Action Plan for Jobs (job creation strategy) and with the Department of Social Protection in relation to Pathways to Work (activation strategy).

**National Skills Strategy 2025 and Employer Engagement in Further and Higher Education**

The National Skills Strategy (NSS) was launched in January 2016 to provide a framework for skills development that will help drive Ireland’s growth both economically and societally over the next decade. The availability of a well-skilled labour force is key to Ireland’s continued recovery and return to economic growth. The availability of “talent” is a key selling point for Ireland in attracting foreign direct investment to locate in Ireland. The quality of the education and training system is also one of the “quality of life” factors impacting on our ability to attract highly-skilled individuals to live and work in Ireland.

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

The NSS sets out a wide range of actions to be delivered across all areas of the Department as well as by other Government Departments and agencies, under six key objectives aimed at improving the development, supply and use of skills over the next decade.

**Skills Planning and Enterprise Engagement Unit (SPEE)**

This Unit was established in 2016 to support the implementation of the National Skills Strategy 2025 in a manner that links Further Education, Higher Education and skills issues involving the wider Department. The Unit also seeks to facilitate co-operation across all Government Departments that have responsibility for specific aspects of the measures outlined in the National Skills Strategy. The SPEE Unit has a particular focus on enterprise engagement and actively co-operates with all of the enterprise agencies as well as sectors across industry that have specific skills needs. The ambition is to provide a co-ordinated response to skills needs across the different sectors of education and training in partnership with all relevant stakeholders.

**The Unit has responsibility for the following:**

- Monitoring Implementation of the National Skills Strategy 2025
- Developing the National and Regional Skills Architecture (National Skills Council and Regional Skills Fora)
- Interdepartmental Engagement on Skills Issues
- EU Coordination on Skills Issues
- Coordinate Springboard+
- Engage on National and Sectoral Strategy Implementation
- Review of Career Guidance
- Future Jobs (formerly Action Plan for Jobs)

**National Skills Council**

The National Skills Council provides a mechanism to mediate demands across the full range of needs identified through the research and analysis conducted under its direction and by the network of Regional Skills Fora. The Council was launched on 27 April 2017, and had its first meeting on 15 May 2017. It is an advisory, non-statutory body under the remit of the Department of Education and Skills. The members of the Council are drawn from senior levels in the public and private sector.

The Council oversees research from a number of sources including, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit in SOLAS and the Regional Skills Fora.
The most recent meeting of the Council took place on the 16th of July 2018 and to date in 2018 the Strategic Discussion Items at Council meetings, as agreed by Council, have been “Lifelong Learning”, the National Training Fund and “The Workplace of the Future”. The next meeting of the Council will take place in November and the main Strategic Discussion Item will be “Work Ready Graduates and Career Pathways”

**Regional Skills Fora**

The purpose of the nine Regional Skills Fora is to help foster stronger links between employers and the Further and Higher Education and training sector within each region. The work plan within each region is driven by key stakeholders in the region including employers, enterprises and education and training providers thereby ensuring that the responses developed are tailored to identified skills needs.

A team of 9 Regional Skills Forum Managers are the key contact points and lead the work of the Forum in each Region. There are currently two vacant posts but recruitment is at an advanced stage and appointments are expected shortly.

- In 2017, the Fora engaged with over 700 companies (approx. 100,000 employees).
- Over 66% of these companies were SMEs or micro enterprises.
- Apart from the essential work of building collaborative relationships between Enterprise and Education and Training, the Fora have also played a key role in:
  - Signposting to existing provision and services
  - Course creation – Higher and Further education
  - Apprenticeship/traineeship development
  - Course modification – Higher Education and Further Education

**Review of Career Guidance**

The Unit has responsibility for delivery of the Review of Career Guidance. The National Skills Strategy 2025 and the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019, provides for a Career Guidance Review that would include recommendations on changes to improve the existing career guidance tools and career information for post-primary/further education/higher education students and adults, currently in place across the education and training system in Ireland. The Steering Group for the Review had its final meeting on the 9th October 2018. The independent review which began earlier this year and was carried out by Indecon Economic Consultants is almost complete and a report will be presented to the Department in November 2018.

**High-Level ICT Skills Action Plan**

A demand forecasting was conducted by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) in 2017/2018 which projected a shortfall of nearly 18,000 high-level ICT graduates per annum by 2022. High-level ICT skills are those required for researching, developing, designing,
strategic planning, managing, producing, marketing, selling, integrating, installing, administering, maintaining, supporting and servicing ICT systems.

We are currently delivering over 7,400 high-level ICT graduates per annum at level 6 and above of the NFQ. If no intervention was put in place, we would deliver an additional 1,800 high-level ICT graduates by 2022. The High-Level ICT Skills Action Plan 2018-2022 will seek to deliver up to 3,300 additional graduates during its lifetime. This builds on significant reform since the first ICT Skills Action Plan was published in 2012.

The High-Level ICT skills Action Plan is due to be finalised and submitted to the Minister and the High-Level Steering Group. The Action Plan is due to be submitted for information to the National Skills Council, chaired by the Minister for Education and Skills on

In addition to supporting the current levels of provision at higher education, this Plan now places a strategic focus on fully utilising the range of learning opportunities available across the education and training system to deliver a range of pathways to meet high-level ICT skill needs now and into the future.

Entrepreneurship Education

The National Skills Strategy includes a commitment to the development of an Entrepreneurship Education Policy Statement and guidelines to schools which will build on and consolidate the work being done in this area. The Action Plan for Education 2016 – 2019 contains a number of specific actions with the objective of creating a stronger focus in the education system on entrepreneurship.

In terms of progress to date in relation to these actions, the OECD report Supporting Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Higher Education in Ireland was published in October 2017 a new Systems Performance Framework for the period 2018 – 2020 has been put in place which, as set out further below, includes a number of elements to support entrepreneurship in education. In addition:-

- a €250,000 annual ring-fenced investment which is providing nearly 1,000 places on summer camps to second level students in entrepreneurship, creativity, design skills and innovation in 20 higher education institutions across the country;
- the further education sector has identified and is promoting Best Practice in Entrepreneurship Education and Training in the FET Sector (2016);
• a number of initiatives are underway in and comprising networks across individual Higher Education Institutions to promote and develop entrepreneurship within the HE system.

An expert group is being convened at the current time (Mid October) with the objective of identifying a set of specific, practical and impactful actions that would be designed to underpin the adoption of better knowledge, understanding actual experience and a stronger focus on entrepreneurship across all sectors of the education system.

It is envisaged that the relevant actions would be identified including from initiatives already in place in Ireland, proposals and approaches contained in existing policy statements and research as well as international experience. The group will also ascertain the specific areas within the sector where these priority actions will be located and the locus of responsibility and accountability for each priority action.

Measures appearing to have a strong potential to drive the entrepreneurship in education agenda forward could be implemented on a pilot basis. Where these actions are successful examination can be given to mainstreaming them within the education sector.

Entrepreneurship Education Guidelines for schools are also in preparation. These guidelines will aim to reposition entrepreneurship education in Irish schools, encouraging and enabling the embedding of entrepreneurship across all of school life in a transversal and cross curricular manner.
**Part 4  Infrastructure**

**Overview**

The Department’s Planning and Building Division, based in Tullamore, has responsibility for the delivery of the schools and higher education capital programmes. These programmes are framed within the overall context of the National Development Plan 2018-27, published earlier this year, which foresees a capital envelope of €11.9 billion for education infrastructure over the coming decade. The education priorities under the NDP were set out at a launch event on 14 September.

The key features of the NDP from an education perspective are:

- A 70% increase in schools capital funding compared to the past decade (€4.9 billion to €8.4 billion). Investment will rise to €1 billion in 2027, compared to €540 million investment in 2018.
- A close to trebling of the Higher Education sector capital budget compared to the past decade (€0.8 billion to €2.2 billion). This will result in an annual average investment of circa. €300 million in the second half of the Project Ireland 2040 period compared to the €30 million investment in 2018.
- A new dedicated capital budget line for the Further Education and Training sector of €300 million for the 10 year Project Ireland 2040 period.

However, as for other Departments, the significant ramp-up in funding takes place mainly in the second half of the decade; therefore, the capital budget will remain under considerable pressure in the near to medium term. The school building budget is increasing from €540m in 2018 to €622m in 2019.

**Schools Capital Programme**

*Demographics*

In a context of limited resources, the Department’s schools capital programme is strongly focused on generating the additional school places required to cater for demographics.

Primary enrolments, which have already risen substantially in recent years, are projected to rise by an additional 4,360 pupils by 2018, reaching a peak of over 567,800 this year, before beginning to reduce. This peak figure is reflective of primary enrolment levels last seen in Ireland in the mid-1980s. Post-primary enrolments are also projected to rise substantially by over 6,087 by 2018 and to continue to rise until 2024, at which point enrolments at second level are expected to be in excess of 402,176 pupils for the first time in the history of the State.

It is important to note that these national demographic trends and projections of enrolments are not evenly spread across the country and include significant local and regional variations.
In order to account for such local variations and plan accordingly, the Department conducts its detailed demographic analysis at the level of 314 individual school planning areas; this analysis also factors in available information on new housing developments. The enrolments in some school planning areas are projected to decline faster than the national trend, while other areas are projected to experience continued growth, even after the national demand figure falls.

This means that, notwithstanding the fact that primary level enrolments are projected to peak this year, there will be a requirement to continue providing additional primary school places in certain areas. Indeed, some 25% of school planning areas (mainly urban or developing areas) will continue to experience some level of demographic growth at primary level over the coming five years.

**School Building Programme**

The Department’s published target for 2018 is to deliver an estimated 18,900 permanent school places, including 17,000 additional school places. In 2019, it is projected that an additional 23,000 permanent school places, including 18,000 additional places, will be delivered. These figures will be reviewed closer to the end of the year when there is a clear picture of projects delivered. The NDP targets an annual average of 20,000 permanent school places over the medium term.

Overall, 359 large scale projects are being delivered as part of the Department’s existing school building programme. These projects are set out in a single list on the Department’s website and updated on a monthly basis to reflect their progression through architectural design, tender and construction. Construction activity in 2018 and 2019 will involve approximately 130 large-scale projects.

In addition, in April of this year, it was announced that 42 new schools would be established between 2019 and 2022 in areas of population growth.

Large scale projects are delivered by a variety of methods including:

- The **traditional** method involves a design team appointed by the school progressing the project stage by stage with input and assistance by the Department. Progression to each stage is contingent on the satisfactory completion of the previous stage.
- The **devolved** approach involves assigning responsibility for project delivery to an outside Agency, such as the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) or Education and Training Boards (ETBs). This will become an increasingly important method of delivery in the context of increased funding and limited internal capacity.
- The **Design & Build “Rapid”** Programme involves a fast track approach to the construction of high quality, cost effective permanent, school buildings on suitable green-field sites, through the use of modern building technologies involving elements of off-site construction. Projects are tendered to a framework of Design & Build
contractors and use a different form of contract. This will be the main delivery mechanism for providing permanent accommodation for the 42 new schools announced in April 2018.

- Under **Public Private Partnership (PPP)** arrangements, the private partner designs, builds and finances the construction of the building, then maintains it over a 25 year period. The private side is then remunerated by the Department via monthly Unitary Charge payments over 25 years. The final bundle of PPP schools, Schools Bundle 5, is now close to completion and there are currently no further PPP school bundles in the pipeline.

The **Additional Accommodation Scheme** is a key mechanism for putting smaller-scale permanent accommodation solutions in place in existing schools (e.g. an additional classroom or classrooms). The delivery of these extensions is devolved to the schools and also contributes to the generation of essential additional school places.

The Planning and Building Division also operates the following schemes:

- **The Summer Works Scheme** allows schools to carry out essential small-scale projects such as gas, electrical and mechanical works, roof replacements and repairs, window replacement, toilet upgrades, structural improvements and universal access works. Under the NDP, the Department has committed to an annual Summer Works Scheme allocation. The Summer Works Scheme in 2019 will focus on the remaining categories of projects from the previous scheme (i.e. windows, curricular requirement projects, other structural improvements and external environment projects). A new application process will be initiated in early 2019 for Summer Works Scheme projects for delivery from Summer 2020 onwards.

- **The Emergency Works Scheme** allows schools to carry out emergency capital works.

- **The Minor Works Grant** provides funding to primary schools for minor works and upgrades. Under the NDP, the Department has committed to providing the Minor Works Grant on an annual basis in either December or early January.

- In addition, the Division runs a major programme of **site acquisitions** to support the development of new schools.

An integrated approach is being taken to the **Prefab Replacement Scheme**, through the replacement of prefabs as part of large-scale projects or as part of new projects approved under the Additional Accommodation Scheme. Construction work on these projects in 2018 and 2019 will facilitate the replacement of over 600 prefabs.

**Other NDP themes**

While the building programme will continue to have a strong focus on catering for demographics over the medium term, our NDP priorities point to a number of other areas
that will also be advanced through the building programme as additional resources become available:

- **As part of our commitment to curricular development and reform, the next phase of the summer works scheme will facilitate a school laboratory modernisation programme**, with schools being able to make applications in 2019.

- **A deep energy retrofit of primary and post-primary schools built prior to 2008** will be progressed, with a view to optimum energy use and conservation in school buildings. A pilot for such works has taken place already, in conjunction with SEAI, seeing participating schools benefitting from increased comfort levels and reduced energy bills. The next phase of the pilot scheme is being undertaken this year and in 2019. Both pilots will inform a rolling national programme of works to begin in earnest in 2022.

- **A PE Hall build and modernisation programme** will be advanced, starting in the second half of the Project Ireland 2040 period, that ensures that students in all post-primary schools have access to state of the art facilities to support PE provision, particularly also in the context of the roll-out of PE as a leaving certificate subject.

Under the NDP, the Department is also committed to investing **€420 million in the Digital Strategy for Schools** to further embed technology and digital learning. This investment in ICT in schools will help underpin new subjects and curricular reform, including Computer Science at leaving cert and coding throughout the curriculum.

**Fire Safety**

A programme of fire safety assessments in 55 schools was initiated in Q4 2017. This involved all (30) schools constructed by Western Building Systems (WBS) under Design and Build contracts and a representative sample of 25 other schools constructed over the last 20 years. This programme of fire safety assessments followed on from the identification of a number of issues in respect of compliance by a number of schools constructed by WBS with their fire safety certificates.

The following is a summary update in relation to the programme of fire safety assessments:

1. Fire Safety Consultants have visited all 55 schools. To date, the Department is in receipt of 46 fire safety assessment reports. 6 are final reports and 40 are initial reports which require further work from the Consultants (e.g. further opening up works are proposed but were not initially carried out). All of the reports received by the Department have been provided to the School Authorities, Patrons and Fire Officers.

2. The reports identify various housekeeping, maintenance and remedial works to be addressed and use a matrix to determine priority and timelines for same. The Department has engaged the services of KSN Project Managers with a full technical
team including Architects, Engineers and Fire Safety Consultants, to organize and oversee any necessary remedial works.

3. The 3 main categories of issues that have emerged to date are:

a. **Housekeeping and maintenance issues** were identified in all of the schools. These issues typically relate to no fire safety manual, incomplete or absence of records for servicing fire alarms and emergency lighting, fire doors being wedged open, incomplete or absence of evacuation drawings, storage underneath escape stairs and excessive posters/notices on corridor walls etc. School authorities have been advised to ensure that these issues are addressed as a matter of urgency.

b. **Small-scale remedial issues** were identified in many schools and typically relate to the absence of appropriate maintenance and refurbishment of fire doors, inadequate or absence of fire stopping around fire doors and services etc.

c. **More extensive remedial issues** were identified in some schools (currently around 8 D&B schools built between 2009 and 2013). These issues typically relate to inadequate fire protection around emergency escape routes (e.g. glazing on stairwells not fire rated and openable) inadequate or absence of fire stopping in wall cavities, inadequate fire alarm or emergency lighting systems etc. The opportunity is also being taken to investigate and address any other issues with these buildings that emerges as part of fire safety investigations and opening up works. All of these schools were built under the Design and Build programme between 2009 and 2013 (i.e. before enhanced building control regulations (BCAR) were introduced in 2014).

As an added precaution, since 2017 all new D&B schools are independently fire risk assessed before being accepted by the Department. Also since 2017 clerks of works are appointed to all D&B and large scale traditional projects.

4. Initial inspections undertaken to date have focused on ensuring that fire alarm and emergency lighting systems are all working correctly. Testing of these systems is now being completed.

5. Tender competitions were advertised on the Government’s e-tenders website on 3 October 2018 with a return date of 18 October. This is to enable contractors to be appointed under a drawdown contract facility to deal with any of the remedial works that are not already being dealt with by the original contractors within the defects liability period. This approach provides maximum flexibility given that the full extent of works in individual schools will not be finalised until any necessary opening up works are completed and reports finalised. It is envisaged that contractors will be
appointed under these drawdown contracts from November 2018 onwards with most of the works being done out of school hours during evenings, weekends and school holiday periods.

6. The following are other key actions being taken in relation to fire safety matters:

a) Guidance will be provided to all primary and post-primary schools on the key issues identified from the fire safety assessment programme. This will focus on the importance of managing and prioritising fire safety – particularly in the context of funding provided under the minor works grant to all primary schools. It is envisaged that this guidance will be provided to schools in Q1 2019 and the Department will be consulting with the school management bodies before finalising the guidance.

b) The Chief State Solicitors Office (CSSO) is advising the Department in relation to legal actions against contractors arising from defects identified under the fire safety assessment programme.

**Higher Education Capital Programme**

The NDP signals a significant increase in capital funding for higher education - a sector which was disproportionately impacted by the fall off in capital investment arising from the recession. A funding envelope of **€2.2 billion for higher education infrastructure** over the decade has been pledged. When funding for PPP repayments and research is included, the total is **€2.8 billion**.

However, as for other sectors, the funding increase will be gradual and there will continue to be significant constraints in the first half of the NDP period.

The key drivers of capital investment in higher education are as follows:

- Catering for a significantly expanded student body as demographics feed through from post-primary level – enrolments forecast to grow 20% in next decade
- Supporting the ambitions of Project Ireland 2040 with regard to a more balanced population and employment growth across Ireland’s regions
- Developing and sustaining the skills and research base necessary to underpin Ireland’s competitiveness
- Supporting modern, innovative and flexible approaches to teaching and learning, including online provision
Three further major strands of investment were announced in September, as follows:

**Major refurbishment and upgrade programme: €112m**

- Three projects already confirmed: €11.6m for LIT engineering campus at Coonagh; €18.5m for upgrade of North and South Blocks of Dundalk IT; €2m for GMIT Mayo campus building fabric upgrades
- Further €80m to be allocated in coming months – proposals currently being reviewed and prioritised by HEA taking account of both strategic impact and health and safety considerations

**Co-funding of HE Strategic Infrastructure: €117m**

- Aims to deliver at least same amount again in non-Exchequer funding
- Two projects already confirmed: €24m for DCU Future Tech Building; €7.7m for IT Tallaght Sports Science, Health and Recreation Building
- €6m approved for redevelopment of Royal Irish Academy of Music (plus €3m from D/CHG)
- Further €80m to be allocated following a call for proposals to the sector. The parameters of this call are currently being finalised with the HEA, decisions are targeted for Q1 2019.

**Devolved Grant/Review of Capital Grant Mechanism**

- €10m Devolved Grant to IoT sector for minor works and equipment confirmed for 2018/19 academic year
- Review to be commissioned to provide recommendations in relation to the model for ongoing capital funding of minor works and equipment as the capital funding envelope gradually increases. This will consider expanding the grant beyond the IoT sector to also include universities and other colleges, and will consider whether grants should be fully devolved or ring-fenced for certain strategic priorities (e.g. digitisation, STEM).

These initiatives are in addition to are in addition to other significant capital projects previously announced and currently being progressed across the higher education sector including:

- **Grangegorman development** – two significant academic buildings to facilitate the move of 10,000 DIT students to the Grangegorman site were procured as PPPs and are now under construction. The next phase of the development will be funded with a mix of Exchequer funding and the proceeds from the disposal of DIT properties.

- **TCD E3 building** - Exchequer funding of €15m for the €60m development of the E3 Institute in TCD was announced earlier this year. This project is also being supported by a generous donation of €25m from the Naughton Foundation.
• **Modernisation of apprenticeship provision** - €8m in Exchequer capital funding for apprenticeship delivery in Institutes of Technology, benefiting 13 trades and supporting an estimated 2,300 additional apprentices, was announced earlier this year. This was in addition to €8m also committed in 2017.

**Further Education and Training (FET) Capital Programme**

For the first time, the NDP provides for a dedicated capital programme for the FET sector, amounting to €300m over the decade. This funding will support the consolidation of FET provision in modern, fit for purpose facilities, and will also support ambitious apprenticeship targets.

**Capital Budget**

Unlike current budgets, capital budgets are agreed on a multi-annual basis. The Department of Education and Skills has the third largest capital budget (after transport and housing). The Department’s capital budget over the coming five years has been confirmed and is as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CAPITAL SUBHEAD</th>
<th>2018 (€m)</th>
<th>2019 (€m)</th>
<th>2020 (€m)</th>
<th>2021 (€m)</th>
<th>2022 (€m)</th>
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*Table as submitted to DPER 05/09/18*

While the NDP provides indicative envelopes for the period out to 2027, annual budgets will be decided on a rolling basis. The 2023 budget allocation will be subject to negotiation with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

*Construction Inflation:*

Construction inflation is having, and will continue to have, a significant impact on the number and scale of projects which can be delivered within the Department’s capital allocation.
The €8.4 billion investment in school buildings represents an increase of €3.5 billion over the €4.9 billion provided for the previous 10 year period.

**Student Accommodation**

Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness was published in July 2016 and laid out an action oriented approach to addressing the national accommodation crisis. Pillar four of Rebuilding Ireland focussed on the supply of rented accommodation. Actions included the implementation of affordable renting initiatives as well as encouraging build-to-rent developments to enhance the supply of student accommodation (among others). The inclusion of student accommodation was designed to both supply housing to students and to free up space in the traditional rental sector. The National Student Accommodation Strategy was launched in July 2017. A target of 7,000 additional purpose built student accommodation (PBSA) bed spaces to be delivered by end 2019 was set. This target will be exceeded, with 10,225 bed spaces either completed or on site as of October 2018.

**Progress on delivery of Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA)**

As of the end of Q3, 2018, a total of 5,531 bed spaces have been completed. Further to this, there are 4,825 bed spaces on site and plans have been approved for an additional 7,901 bed spaces. Plans have been applied for an additional 472 bed spaces. This represents a total of 18,729 bed spaces either complete or in the planning process at the end of Q3 2018.

**Challenges for Student Accommodation in Institute of Technology (IoT) sector**

As IOT borrowing would be considered to form part of general government debt, there has been no sanction forthcoming for an agreed borrowing framework for IOTs. This restricts their ability to borrow to fund the building of student accommodation, even where the projects will have a guaranteed income stream available to fund repayments.

The NSAS includes actions to deliver an off-balance sheet solution to allow IoTs to access funding for the development of purpose built student accommodation.

There is one student accommodation project in the IoT sector being progressed as part of a PPP project and this relates to the provision of student accommodation in the DIT Grangegorman development.

**Student Accommodation Bed Spaces in Private Family Homes (DIGS)**

The Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government co-fund the USI #HomesForStudy campaign to the amount of €160,000 in 2017 and 2018.
The USI Student Housing Report National Student Housing Survey (Sept 2017) reported that 7% of students surveyed were living in digs accommodation – indicating that in the region of 15,000 students may be availing of digs style housing. 2,000 students accessed digs accommodation directly as a result of the campaign spearheaded by USI in 2017. The 2018 campaign ran from July to the end of September and a report is currently being drafted.

**Rent predictability measures in PBSA**
Two privately owned and run purpose built student accommodation (PBSA) complexes, one close to DCU and one in Galway, increased their rents by up to 27% in March and April of this year.

Two Private Members Bills were subsequently tabled, the first of which - Sinn Féin’s Residential Tenancies (student rents, rights and protections) Bill 2018 – was heard at second stage on Tuesday May 29. It seeks to assign the full remit of tenancy rights to students living in PBSA. A Fianna Fail Bill, which is at Stage 1, seeks to include licensees under Rent Pressure Zones.

******************************REDACTED TEXT******************************.

End of Briefing Document.