

Youth Encounter Project (YEP) Schools
Value for Money Review

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Executive Summary

Chapter 1 – Introduction to the Review

This chapter outlines the background to Value For Money Programme reviews, the terms of reference of the review and the review structure.

Originally entitled Expenditure Reviews, the aim of such reviews is to analyse in a systematic manner the returns achieved on Government expenditure, and thereby to provide a basis for informed decision-making and prioritisation in relation to expenditure programmes and measures to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of future expenditure on such programmes.

Chapter 2 – History of the YEP Schools

The YEP schools have their origins in the 1970's. They were a consequence of revised thinking by the State at the time of the manner in which education and care provision should be made for young people at risk of coming into conflict with authority and of dropping out of school. The new schools provided a non-residential community-based alternative to mainstream schools, they were structurally and pedagogically different, providing personalised education and flexibility in teaching and programmes. Day-to-day running costs and the salaries of teachers d bean an tí were funded by the DES. The Bernard Van Leer Foundation, based in The Hague, funded the salaries of community workers and the cost of an independent evaluation of the schools by the Educational Research Centre in 1984. The Department of Justice seconded a Probation and Welfare Officer to each school.

The original guidelines for teachers drawn up by the DES in 1977 focused on personal development and encouraged schools to avoid “an approach of the traditional kind”. Because of the intensive nature of the education, schools were to enrol no more than twenty-five students each, with a PTR of approximately 8:1. Categories of staff not usually available to schools included counsellors, community workers and mná an tí. All staff shared an educational responsibility, as personal education was seen in broader terms than in mainstream schools. The cultivation of a home environment was seen as central to the YEP school model of intervention.

The 1984 evaluation was the last systematic review of the sector. As well as accepting the need for YEP schools, many of its recommendations shaped subsequent practice.

Chapter 3 - Profile of the YEP Schools

This chapter describes the very disadvantaged background of the students, their poor literacy levels and, in some cases, their addiction to drugs. It highlights the significance of the location of the school buildings in terms of accessibility and the poor standard of much of the accommodation.

At the time of the evaluation, enrolments in the five schools ranged from 20 to 24. The students are typically aged twelve to fifteen years and tend to come to the YEP schools from the same feeder primary schools each year. While the profile of the YEP schools in the wider education community is low, the current demand for places exceeds supply. The staffing complement in the schools is analysed. As might be expected in the case of schools dealing with very high levels of disadvantage, staffing levels are higher and more varied than in mainstream schools. Student teacher ratios are typically 5:1 or better, and a range of non-teaching personnel, including mná/fir an tí, social/community/youth workers, SNAs, secretaries and caretakers is also provided. However, there are variations in the staffing levels and composition across the five schools.

Chapter 4 – Research Methodology

It was decided at the very outset that the review and associated research, analysis and report writing should be carried out within the DES. As a framework for the process, the Programme Logic Model (PLM), which focuses on the interaction between inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes, was selected.

The research and analysis phases comprised two parallel strands: an evaluation by the Inspectorate of the quality of educational structures and provision in the five schools and analysis by the High Support Special Schools Section (HSSSU) of such factors as school staffing, pay and non-pay funding, incidents of aggressive behaviour and student involvement and potential involvement in criminal behaviour.

The Inspectorate evaluation adhered to the *Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting* (DES 2002). It involved data-gathering, a pre-evaluation meeting with the board of management, principal and teaching staff of each school, in-school evaluation and a post-evaluation meeting with the boards and teaching staffs, at which the draft evaluation findings and recommendations were presented and discussed. The HSSSU approach involved the design and administration of a questionnaire, a visit to each school, discussions with school staff and subsequent consolidation and analysis of data. The HSSSU also had responsibility for drafting and editing the report and for procuring the services of an independent quality assessor.

Chapter 5 – Objectives of the YEP Schools

Among other things, this chapter addresses terms of reference 1 and 2 of the review, namely:

- *Identify the programme objectives of the YEP schools.*
- *Examine the current validity of those objectives and their compatibility with and contribution to the Department's overall strategy particularly as set out in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the new action plan for educational inclusion, and the range of programmes to combat educational disadvantage and early school leaving at primary and post primary level.*

While several of the schools are now in existence for thirty years, albeit on a pilot basis, it is difficult to identify their original objectives due to a scarcity of documentary evidence. Over the years, schools tended to develop different objectives and approaches to deal with a similar student cohort. The review process afforded the schools the opportunity to meet with the Steering Group and draw up the following set of common objectives:

- to provide personalised holistic education for young people at risk;
- to retain these young people in the education system; and
- to provide support for these young people towards progression.

These objectives are seen as appropriate and valid in light of the needs and abilities of the students and based on the experience of the schools over three decades. It is apparent, also, that the original objective of returning students to mainstream education, while desirable, is not realistic.

The chapter goes on to refer to the DES's overall strategy for addressing socio-economic disadvantage as expressed in the *DEIS* report (2005). It also refers to the Report of the Task Force for Student Behaviour, which places the YEP schools at level seven of eight levels on a continuum of provision to cater for the educational needs of the most behaviourally challenging students. The chapter concludes by calling for account to be taken of the expertise available in the YEP schools in formulating policy on social inclusion.

Chapter 6 – YEP School – Inputs, Outputs and Efficiency

This chapter deals with terms of reference 3 and 5 namely:

- *Identify the level and trend of costs and staffing resources associated with the YEP schools and comment on the efficiency with which they have achieved their objectives. Evaluate the degree of consistency with regard to resource allocation decisions for each of the five schools.*
- *Define the outputs associated with the programme activity and identify the level and trend of those outputs.*

With regard to inputs, the level and sources of funding within the Education Vote are set out in this chapter. The methodology used by the HSSSU to calculate the pay (non-teacher) and non-pay budgets is outlined. Sources and levels of external funding are also shown. Where applicable, such funding appears to be mostly one-off in nature.

The level and trend of DES funding over the period 2000 – 2006 is analysed. The analysis shows a steady and considerable growth in total funding for the period from c. €1.5m. in 2000 to almost €3m. in 2006. Pay costs, which grew by 140%, account for the bulk of the increase. In

contrast, non-pay increased by only 40% and recent years have seen a levelling off or slight decline in such funding.

The level and trend of funding allocations to the individual schools over the same period is also analysed. The data indicate a degree of consistency in the overall level of funding of three of the schools and significantly higher levels in the case of the other two. Disparities in pay funding are attributed mainly to a variation in numbers of non-teaching staff and in the category, qualifications and experience of staff. The variation points to the need for a degree of standardisation in staffing allocations.

There is variation, also, in the level of non-pay funding. This is attributed to differences in the condition of school premises, the provision in some cases of a summer programme, the provision of meals, transport costs, school administration and staff training. Proposals to address disparities in pay and non-pay funding are made in chapter 9. In this chapter, it is recommended that financial guidelines are drawn up by the DES in consultation with the schools.

With regard to outputs, planning for learning in the YEP schools is based on individual learning plans (ILPs). These are drawn up on the basis of an initial individual assessment and provide a structured progression for each student towards the achievement of realistic goals. The schools reported that ILPs were developed for all students and a review of the plans by the Inspectors in the course of their evaluation found them, for the most part, to be very beneficial.

The educational programmes offered by the schools are fundamental to achieving their objectives. They reflect the needs and abilities of the students, as set out in the ILPs. However, subject choice may be limited by such factors as the availability of specialist subject teachers and of suitable accommodation for practical subjects.

Data gathered by the Steering Group covering the period 2004 – 2006 indicate that a reasonably wide range of subjects is available in the schools. However, there is a significant variation of approach with regard to facilitating students to sit the Junior Certificate examination. Accordingly, it is recommended that the schools should endeavour to maximise student participation in the Junior Certificate examination with a view to certification.

It was noted that the schools provided off-site informal education programmes in such areas as horse riding, go-karting, dry-slope skiing, gardening and camping. Such activities have a beneficial impact on the students' social and life skills. Two of the schools also provide non-academic summer programmes which involve activities such as climbing, fishing and horse riding for part of the month of July each year. These programmes serve to extend the students' period in a school setting and are a further opportunity to develop social skills. Summer programmes are provided in the context of the School Completion Programme (SCP) and it is recommended that the scope for YEP schools to link up locally with such programmes should be explored.

Consideration of the efficiency of the YEP schools is relatively complex by comparison with mainstream schools. Success in State examinations is not the main priority and differing emphases are placed on the delivery of academic programmes. A comparison is made between the unit costs applicable to a mainstream disadvantaged primary school, a children detention school and a YEP school. This indicates that, while per capita expenditure in a YEP school is approximately four times that of a disadvantaged school, it is only 8 – 9% of that of a children detention school. These figures would seem to indicate that investment in YEP schools, where it leads to retention and progression, makes good sense.

Chapter 7 – Effectiveness of the YEP Schools

This chapter addresses term of reference 4:

- *Examine the extent that programme objectives have been achieved and comment on the effectiveness with which they have been achieved.*

In the case of Objective 1, *to provide personal holistic education for young people at risk*, the evaluation carried out by the Inspectors clearly established that, in most of the schools, this was being achieved. However, the approaches taken by the schools vary. Some emphasise basic literacy and numeracy, while more varied formal and informal learning activities are evident in others. Both formal and informal activities are well planned. The latter, which mainly take place outside school, provide the opportunity for students to develop their social skills, discuss issues and try to resolve problems.

With regard to Objective 2, *the retention of these young people in the education system*, the data collected by the Steering Group indicate considerable success by the schools. Over the period 1996 - 2005, the average length of stay in the schools grew from 18 to 35 months. Over the same period, the average age on leaving rose from 14 years and 8 months to 16 years and 1 month. This success has been achieved in spite of poor accommodation in three of the schools and is an indication of the encouragement the schools give to the students to engage in learning, appreciate success and set individual goals.

Average attendance figures were also analysed and the outcome here is not so positive. Overall attendance figures have been dropping consistently in the period 2002 – 2005, from 81% to 70%. Schools indicated that the decline was probably due to such factors as: an increase in the number of students whose life circumstances are severely chaotic, worsening standards of behaviour and compliance with school norms, improved employment opportunities and the manner in which schools are required to maintain students on register in accordance with the Educational Welfare Act, 2000. Schools try to counteract falling attendance by contacting parents through phone or text messages or by using youth or community workers to search the area for the young person.

It was noted that, in the period of attendance decline, 2002 – 2005, non-pay funding provided by the DES has not grown significantly. Some school principals argued that lack of non-pay funding impeded their capacity to provide informal learning activities, a significant means of maintaining student interest. In the circumstances, it is recommended that successful locally-devised strategies for tackling non-attendance should be identified and shared among all YEP schools. Also, an appropriate level of non-pay funding, to facilitate the provision of a range of informal learning activities, should be made available by the DES to each YEP school.

The review established clearly that the schools are achieving Objective 3, i.e., *to provide support for these young people towards progression*. This was evident in the on-going support offered to the students during the school day, in after-school activities and in summer programmes. Interviews were conducted with former students who all reported positively on the impact the schools had on their lives.

Observations by the Inspectors of students' written work identified improvements from very low bases. These improvements are essential for progression. Planning for literacy and numeracy is evident in all of the schools. However, their status as primary schools is a hindrance towards accessing post-primary syllabi in literacy and numeracy, commensurate with the age of the student cohort. Towards that end, it is recommended that best practice in the schools in literacy and numeracy is identified, that appropriate in-service is identified and facilitated by boards of management, that the range of supports provided by the literacy and numeracy co-ordinators under the DEIS scheme should be available to the YEP schools and that teachers should be encouraged to avail of post-graduate in-service and learning support courses.

Data are available on the progression of 333 former students of the five schools between 1996 and 2005. These indicate that approximately 76% of these transferred to further training with FÁS, Youthreach or other local agencies, to employment or, in a very small number of cases, to mainstream schools. This supports the view that, for the majority of students, the model of provision in YEP schools is appropriate and works effectively. It is not possible, however, to determine the long-term impact of the schools on the students' lives. Their family and social environments continue to be severely challenging and they are required to cope without the high levels of support to which they have become accustomed in school.

The achievement of the objectives has led to the following range of positive outcomes:

For students: Improved retention, noticeable improvement in life skills, growth in self-confidence and self-esteem, ability to engage with people, progress in literacy skills, academic achievement and support towards progression.

For school staff: Good internal collaboration and communication.

For the education system: A successful alternative model of provision and the development of significant expertise in the YEP schools. It is recommended that this expertise should be made available to the wider education community.

For parents and the wider community: Positive impact on parental attitude to education and generally positive impact on local community through structured activities outside the classroom.

Chapter 8 – YEP Schools – Other Operational Issues

This chapter provides details of how the YEP schools operate. It considers the management and planning functions, funding and staffing issues, discipline and accommodation.

Each school has a functioning and, in most cases, effective and supportive board of management. The boards, two of which have parental representation, concern themselves appropriately with the business of their schools. At meetings with the boards, the need was raised for appropriate training for board members and school staff. It is recommended that all boards be constituted in accordance with DES requirements.

The schools are, for the most part, effectively administered. Principals play a pivotal role by providing instructional leadership, supporting and guiding members of staff and liaising with a wide range of agencies. In that regard, each of the schools would benefit significantly from full-time secretarial support, which the majority do not have at present. The Inspectors found that the day-to-day experiences of the students are generally positive, due to a considerable degree to the tone set, firstly by the principal, and to the collaboration among staff.

There is evidence that the schools engage professionally in school development planning. The school staffs collaborate in the planning process and, in some cases, there is evidence of patronal and student input. Staff meet regularly to review plans and student progress.

The schools ensure a positive tone and a good balance between formal and informal learning activities. Most students willingly engage in learning and abide by the disciplinary code. However, occasional instances of aggression and violence occur and, for the most part, these are suitably dealt with. The support of parents is crucial. Many staff members have received training in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention, but it is of concern that not all have. Such is the level of experience of some staff that they would be well placed to provide training in behaviour management.

Much of the in-service training available to the schools is designed for mainstream primary schools and is, therefore, largely irrelevant. A common pattern in all high-support schools is the very poor literacy and numeracy skills of the students and a poor disposition towards education. Accordingly, it is recommended that in-service should be provided to address disciplinary issues and for specialised training and support in literacy and numeracy.

Teachers devote a significant amount of time to the preparation of appropriate teaching resources. Much of this is derived from JCSP learning targets and, in some instances, by the content of Junior Certificate syllabi. ILPs are prepared in all schools in which teachers, other staff members and, in some instances, parents collaborate. It is recommended that the practice of involving parents in the regular review of student progress should be expanded in the sector.

The greatest challenge facing the schools is the development among the students of a favourable disposition towards learning. This is compounded by the students' poor literacy and numeracy and their volatile behaviour. Nonetheless, teachers were found to interact positively with their students and to encourage them in their assigned tasks.

Although the schools are similar in structure, very different approaches to teaching and learning were observed. These ranged from almost complete dependence on the delivery of individualised programmes to whole class teaching. There was variation, also, in teachers' expectations of their students. In some cases, it is expected that all students will, as a minimum, experience success in State examinations while, in others, the expectations are somewhat lower. Variations in teacher expectations might best be addressed in the context of a revised in-service model for YEP schools.

The quality of school accommodation has a significant bearing on teaching and learning and, in the case of three of the schools, the standard of accommodation is very poor. The scope to provide a broad range of subjects in those buildings is very limited but the schools are to be commended for the efforts they make to overcome such limitations and to maintain their premises to the best possible standard. It was noted that the Department had provided capital grants to schools in the past and was continuing to address outstanding accommodation issues.

Chapter 9 – YEP Schools: The Appropriate Model

Defining a standard appropriate model of YEP school is difficult for a number of reasons. The existing schools are classified as primary schools and, accordingly, operate the primary school day and school year. Also, curriculum and planning support is offered by providers whose primary focus is on the implementation of the primary curriculum. Yet, most of the students in the schools are of post-primary age and are taught in the main by post-primary-qualified teachers. In addition, there is considerable variation in funding and staffing across the five schools. Nonetheless, the following comments and recommendations are made in support of a general model:

School Day/School Year: The primary school day and school year should be retained. This will help maximise contact with the young people. It will also facilitate the provision of the State examinations, while at the same time allowing younger students to engage in less formal activities.

Size of School: Small numbers have proved effective in delivering on the schools' objectives. Therefore, it is recommended that, as a general rule, enrolment should not exceed the 25-30 range because of the challenging nature of the pupil cohort involved. Within that range, each school should enrol the maximum number of students permitted by available accommodation.

Admissions Policy: The schools should maintain clear, robust admissions policies to help identify whether the YEP school is the most appropriate placement for the individual student.

Age of Student Cohort: The schools provide education and support services for young people generally in the Junior Cycle age group and have developed considerable expertise in that regard. It is recommended that the schools should continue to cater for students up to 16 years of age, with provision for individual students to remain on roll where it is considered by the board of management to be in the individual's best interests and their needs can continue to be met by the school.

Student Teacher Ratio: Class size has a bearing on teaching and learning and the de facto ratio in the schools in the 2006/07 school year, taking account of all teaching support (e.g., resource

hours) but excluding principals, ranged from 4.73:1 to 6.25:1. The Inspectors observed during the course of the evaluations that, in the majority of cases, effective whole class teaching was achieved with smaller class groups. It is considered that the level of demand arising from the needs of the young people in YEP schools is similar to that of the most challenging pupils in the special school environment. Consequently, it is considered that a pupil/teacher ratio of 6:1 would be appropriate to adequately address the needs of the pupils in the YEP schools.

SNA Allocation: It is evident that student behaviour management is helped by having an additional trained adult in the classroom. In that regard, three of the schools avail of SNA support while the other two choose to have none. It is recommended that, as a classroom support, school managements should have the option of being allocated one SNA per class up to a maximum of four SNAs.

Non-Teaching Staff Allocation: In response to local needs, and in absence of guidelines from the Department, the type and number of non-teaching staff varies across the schools. (SNAs are not included in this context). While a measure of flexibility to employ a range of personnel with appropriate training is desirable, the current disparity in non-teaching allocations across the five schools is not sustainable in the longer term. The following allocations, broadly in line with current arrangements, are proposed:

- *Family Support Staff* – Schools should be allocated either a qualified community or social worker to act as an essential link between the young people, their families and relevant agencies.
- *School Support Staff* – Schools should be allocated up to 50 hours support per week to provide secretarial, cleaning and maintenance services.
- *Other Staff* –
 - a) The bean/fear an tí post is essential in nurturing the social skills of the young people and schools should continue to be allocated such a post.

- b) The Steering Group does not consider that the post of youth worker is an essential component in the staffing allocation and, apart from maintaining existing contracts, no such posts should be sanctioned in the future.
- c) One school currently employs a counsellor. Generally, schools should be enabled to provide counselling and the feasibility of extending the model of support currently provided by some VECs should be examined by the DES.
- d) There is a dearth of psychological support in place for the schools. Accordingly, it is recommended that appropriate support is provided, preferably through NEPS.

Non-Pay Allocation: As with the pay allocation, there is considerable disparity in the schools' non-pay budgets. It is recommended, accordingly, that the DES should actively investigate an appropriate and equitable model of non-pay allocation.

Summer Programme: An appropriate summer programme should be considered an optional component of the YEP school model.

Access to Other Support Services: The DES should examine the scope for the YEP schools to avail of services from which they are currently excluded, such as the literacy and numeracy support to be employed under DEIS and the support of the NCSE. The possibility of accessing the psychiatric and counselling services provided by the HSE should also be examined by the DES.

Renaming the YEP Schools: It is recommended that the schools should be renamed Community-Based High Support Schools, as this name most accurately reflects the service being provided by them.

New Designation of Children at Risk: It is considered that the statistical returns of the DES do not take accurate account of the students in the YEP schools. It is therefore recommended that the term *Children at Risk*, reflecting the category of young person with whom the schools work, is used by the DES for all statistical, resource allocation and other purposes.

Chapter 10 - Communications

This chapter deals with term of reference 6:

- *Examine the existing communication channels between a) the five schools and b) the five schools and the Department. Based on this examination, identify how these lines of communication are contributing to the identification of best practice.*

The evaluation established that there is regular formal and informal contact between the principals of the three Dublin schools and that this is used to share information on such matters as: accessing information and funding, addressing student behaviour problems, sourcing teaching materials, tailoring the physical environment to student needs, developing ILPs and organising class groups.

In contrast, there is little or no contact between the principals of the schools outside Dublin or between them and their Dublin colleagues. Contact is even more limited between other teaching and non-teaching staffs. Consequently, good practice evident in the schools cannot effectively be shared and therefore it is recommended that formal inter-YEP school communication channels be established to identify and disseminate best practice.

The schools were generally satisfied regarding communication with the DES, despite occasional lack of clarity regarding appropriate contact points and delays in budget allocation. It is recommended that the schools should be advised of relevant contact points in the DES and as soon as changes of personnel occur. Also, decisions on budget allocations should be communicated to the schools as early as possible each year.

There is frequent telephone contact between the schools and the DES, but this has tended to focus on individual school issues rather than matters of general policy. It is recommended, therefore, that communications between the schools should be facilitated through formal regular meetings.

Chapter 11 – Alternative Approaches to YEP Provision

This chapter addresses term of reference 7:

- *Evaluate the degree to which the objectives warrant the allocation of public funding on a current and ongoing basis and examine the scope for alternative policy or organisational approaches to achieving these objectives on a more efficient and/or effective basis.*

The report provides evidence that the YEP schools are achieving their objectives in the case of many of the young people for whom they are providing a service. However, because the DES has not lead the development of education programmes for the sector, schools have tended to develop different approaches to behaviour management and to place different emphases on academic education.

The objectives of the schools have changed very considerably since they were first founded. Essentially, this was due to a recognition by the schools of the evolving circumstances in which they were operating and the increasingly challenging nature of their students. The YEP schools, acting largely on an individual basis, have developed variations on a particular model of response to the needs of these students. In accordance with the terms of reference, models provided in other jurisdictions are considered in this chapter.

In New Zealand, the “Correspondence School” was originally intended to provide distance learning for students living in geographically-isolated areas, but came to be employed to support students unable to cope in the conventional school setting. This approach has the advantage of providing one-to-one tuition at less cost than school-based provision. However, the arrangement lacks the supportive environment of a school, interaction with teachers, other staff and peers, and the opportunity for group learning and associated personal development.

In England and Wales, education for young people excluded from mainstream schools is provided in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). PRUs may offer education directly or may organise programmes for other providers, such as mainstream schools, further education colleges, employers and voluntary organisations. In some cases, students attend PRUs while remaining on

the registers of mainstream schools. PRUs do not have to teach the full UK curriculum but, nonetheless, offer a balanced and broad-based curriculum in accordance with UK guidelines.

This limited analysis of alternative types of provision for young people at risk suggests that, while models of response may vary from country to country, successful education programmes have certain common characteristics:

- The place where the programme operates engenders a sense of emotional security, encouraging improved attendance and socially-acceptable behaviour.
- The young people are supported and their self-esteem is promoted.
- Relationships are built with the young peoples' families.
- The curriculum tends to be individualised, with a focus on literacy and numeracy and learning based on real life situations.
- The programme providers, inter alia, work collaboratively, on a multi-disciplinary basis, and develop warm and supportive relationships with the young people.

The evidence presented in the report clearly indicates that the YEP schools provide effective alternative education provision in accordance with best practice and thus warrant the allocation of public funds on an ongoing basis.

Chapter 12 – Performance Indicators

This chapter addresses term of reference 8:

- *Specify potential future performance indicators that might be used to better monitor the performance of YEP schools.*

In the compilation of this report, valuable data regarding inputs to and outputs of the YEP schools were collected and an assessment was made of the efficiency with which the former is

converted into the latter. However, this needs to be done on an on-going basis and, accordingly, it is recommended that:

- such data are collected annually;
- details of formal and informal education programmes provided, the results of formal examinations and any other relevant outputs are compiled in an agreed format to facilitate analysis of output trends and efficiency; and
- the DES develops a template to allow comparative analysis of costs in the various types of educational provision for at risk young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In relation to effectiveness, the students are being provided with personalised holistic education, based on the observations of the Inspectors. In that regard, it is recommended that members of the Inspectorate should visit the schools regularly to ensure that the provision of holistic education is being maintained.

Data collected on retention is mostly positive and indicates that the schools' performance in that regard has improved. In order to monitor trends and review policy, it is recommended that details of attendance and enrolment periods in the schools should be collected and monitored by the DES.

The report clearly establishes that, in the short term, the majority of the students progress to structured placements, such as with FÁS or Youthreach. However, no data is available on longer-term progression. To address that gap, it is recommended that an appropriate tracking arrangement is put in place. Young people leaving the YEP schools should be equated with those leaving detention and high support schools in the context of the strategy being developed by the DES for that sector.

Chapter 13 – Conclusion

As a result of the evaluation, the overall view of the Steering Group in regard to YEP schools is very positive. The schools follow appropriate objectives and are largely successful in achieving

them. However, performance on efficiency and effectiveness are uneven and recommendations to maintain and improve performance are made.

The report established that the schools have developed innovative educational and behavioural management strategies, from which other schools dealing with disadvantaged students would benefit. There is a clear demand for such dedicated provision, given that all the schools operate a referral system for new students.

Given the positive and essential role played by the schools, the DES should now consider granting them permanent recognition. This would provide a clear basis for the allocation of capital grants to address essential accommodation needs as they arise.

The report notes that, in 2006, there were 31 centres in 16 counties, mainly in the larger urban areas, in which full-time education was being provided for 12 – 16 year olds sent there so that their behavioural issues might be addressed. Funding for these centres came from various sources, with 16 receiving support from the DES. The existence of these centres indicates that support is being provided for at risk young people outside the YEP schools and other DES-funded initiatives.

It is recommended that the DES should review the range of educational provisions currently in place for learners aged 15 years and younger who have become alienated from mainstream schools. In this regard, the Steering Group notes the recommendation of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools (School Matters) about alternative educational provision in Youth Encounter Project schools and Junior Youthreach. This recommendation should be taken into account in the context of determining an appropriate model, or models, of response

List of Recommendations

MANAGEMENT

1. It is recommended that all YEP boards are constituted in accordance with the provisions of *Boards of Management of National Schools Constitution of Boards and Rules of Procedure* (page 96).

ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

Non Pay Funding

2. The Department should actively investigate an appropriate model for distribution of non pay funding to the YEP schools (page 109).

Teaching Allocation

3. The level of demand arising from the needs of the young people in YEP schools is similar to that of the most challenging pupils in the special school environment. Consequently, it is considered that a pupil/teacher ratio of 6:1 would be appropriate to adequately address the needs of the pupils in the YEP schools. (page 106).

Special Needs Assistants Allocation

4. Each YEP school should, (based on a maximum enrolment of 25 students, and should) school management so choose, be allocated one SNA per class up to a maximum of four SNAs. This is broadly in line with arrangements currently in existence in several of the schools, and should ensure effective classroom management and whole class teaching (page 108).

Family Support Staff

5. Schools should be allocated one staff member to act as the essential link between the young people, their families and other agencies. That person should either be a qualified community worker or a qualified social worker, at the discretion of school management (page 108).

School Support Staff

6. Schools should be enabled to provide secretarial, cleaning and maintenance services through the allocation of up to 50 hours support per week (for indicative purposes, such support might be allocated on the basis of 30 hours secretarial, 10 hours cleaning and 10 hours maintenance). Contracts of employment for existing members of staff should be maintained (page 108).

Others

7. **Bean/Fear an Tí:** The Bean/Fear an Tí has an essential role in supporting and nurturing the social skills of the young people. Accordingly, it is recommended that each school should be allocated a Bean/Fear an Tí post (page 108).
8. **Youth Worker:** This report has identified that not every school employs a youth worker, and it is evident that schools can provide an excellent service without such members of staff. Accordingly, it is recommended that those schools currently employing such persons are allowed to continue to do so. However, future vacancies should not be filled and such posts should not be sanctioned in any YEP schools that might be recognised at a future date (page 108).
9. **Counsellor:** All YEP schools should be enabled to provide counselling support as required. As one option the scope for extending the model of counselling provision currently in place in some VECs to YEP schools, should be investigated by the DES (page 108).

10. **Psychologist** : Access to education psychologists in particular, would constitute a significant support to the schools. In that regard, it is recommended that the Department ensures that appropriate support is provided to all YEP schools. It is considered that this would best be provided through the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). This would also ensure that behaviour management programmes and the preparation of learning targets in literacy and numeracy are supported (page 109).
11. The Department should examine the possibility of the YEP schools availing of services from which they are excluded due to their status as special schools, such as
 - the literacy and numeracy support personnel which will be employed under DEIS;
 - the services of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) (page 110).
12. The Department should also examine the possibility of the schools accessing the psychiatric and counselling services of the Health Service Executive (HSE) (page 110).

FINANCIAL CONTROL

13. It is recommended that financial guidelines for the YEP schools are drawn up by the Department, on a partnership basis with the schools, governing such areas as:
 - Approved areas of expenditure;
 - Financial returns;
 - Internal controls;
 - Allocation of funding and teaching resources;
 - Monitoring of budgets;
 - Banking arrangements, including overdrafts;
 - Payroll;
 - Petty cash.

In this regard, it is noted that existing guidelines for the School Completion Programme (SCP) might act as a useful template for any guidelines devised for the YEP schools (page 72).

SUMMER PROGRAMMES

14. Where a school identifies the need for a summer programme for its students, the possibility of integrating with a local SCP-funded programme should be explored (page 76).
15. An appropriate summer programme should be considered an optional component of the YEP school model (page 110).

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

16. Locally-devised strategies which are successful in tackling the issue of non-attendance should be identified and shared among all YEP schools (page 86).
17. An appropriate level of non-pay funding, to facilitate the provision of a range of informal learning activities, should be made available by the Department to each YEP school (page 86).
18. The expertise of YEP staff in management of students whose previous experience of school was negative, should be made available, through properly-supported structures, to the wider education community (page 92).

STATE EXAMINATIONS

19. All schools should endeavour to maximise student participation in state examinations with a view to certification at junior certificate level, taking into account each student's needs and ability (page 75).

INSERVICE

20. Greater awareness of successful practices across the YEP schools would help address disciplinary issues and should be facilitated (page 99).
21. Specialised training and support in behaviour management and in literacy and numeracy should be provided to teachers. Such training might be identified, in part, through formal inter-YEP school communication (page 99).

22. In order to improve the provision of literacy and numeracy programmes:

- Best practice in the areas of literacy and numeracy should be identified. This might be achieved through a consultation process between the principals of the schools and the Department with the aim of identifying best practice;
- Appropriate training programmes should be similarly identified and facilitated by boards of management;
- The range of supports provided by the literacy and numeracy co-ordinators under the DEIS scheme should be available to the YEP schools;
- Teachers should be encouraged to avail of post-graduate, in-service and learning support courses (pages 87/88).

23. Consideration should be given to the creation of a new form of in-service provision from which these and other schools serving students with similar needs should benefit. While the principals of the schools meet occasionally, the opportunity to create a formal in-service model should be taken. This may take the form of summer in-service or ongoing modular-type courses (page 99).

ACCOMMODATION

24. The replacement of unsuitable YEP accommodation should continue to be accorded a high degree of priority by the Department (page 102).

APPROPRIATE MODEL

25. The most appropriate length of the school day for these schools should be the primary school day, i.e. 5 hours and forty minutes (page 103).

26. The school year should be the primary school year, i.e. not less than 183 days. This offers the school the opportunity to operate the State Examinations, where relevant, and to offer younger students the opportunity to participate in less formal activities during this time (page 104).

27. Contracts of employment for teachers should be continued to be based on the primary school day and year. These arrangements are already in place in the schools and should be maintained (page 104).
28. In order to maintain the intensive delivery of personalised education in a supportive school environment, it is recommended that, as a general rule enrolment should not exceed the 25-30 range because of the challenging nature of the pupil cohort involved.. Within that range, each school should enrol the maximum number of students permitted by available accommodation. (page 104).
29. It is vital that the needs of the young people admitted are best catered for in the YEP school environment, and in that regard, it is recommended that the schools maintain clear and robust admissions policies (page 104).
30. It is recommended that YEP schools continue to cater for students up to 16 years of age. However, where it is clearly identified that it is in the best interests of a young person to remain in a YEP school beyond 16 years of age, and the Board of Management is satisfied that it can provide the services necessary to meet that young person's needs, then that young person should continue to attend (page 105).

DIRECTION OF FUTURE POLICY

31. In formulating policy aimed at promoting social inclusion, it is recommended that the Department takes account of the role of the YEP schools and of the expertise accumulated in the schools. This will assist in the synchronisation of services to achieve optimum outcomes and promote best practice amongst schools dealing with disadvantaged children (page 62).
32. Immediate consideration should be given by the Department of Education and Science to granting permanent recognition to the five existing YEP schools. Among other things, this should enable the evolving accommodation needs of the schools to be addressed (page 126).

33. Should the Department of Education and Science consider the opening of additional YEP schools, very careful analysis of the existing provisions for alternative education in the localities of the proposed schools should be undertaken order to determine that additional services are warranted (page 127).
34. The DES should review the range of educational provisions currently in place for learners aged 15 years and younger who have become alienated from mainstream schools. In this regard, the Steering Group notes the recommendation of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools (School Matters) about alternative educational provision in Youth Encounter Project schools and Junior Youthreach. This recommendation should be taken into account in the context of determining an appropriate model, or models, of response. (page 128).

NEW DESIGNATION FOR SCHOOLS/STUDENTS

35. The schools should be renamed Community-Based High Support Schools. This accurately reflects the service provided by the schools (page 111).
36. The category of student with whom the schools work is children at risk. It is recommended that this category be recognised by the DES for all statistical, resource allocation and other purposes (page 111).

COMMUNICATIONS

37. The involvement of parents in the preparation of ILPs is considered to be a positive development and, accordingly, it is recommended that this practice, and that of involving parents in the regular review of student progress, should be expanded among YEP schools (page 100).
38. Formal inter-YEP school communications channels should be set up in order to identify best practice, provide for its dissemination and act as a support mechanism for teaching and non-teaching staff. It is recommended that the representatives of the principals, all staff of the schools and the Department meet to discuss the best approach to the

organisation of these channels of communication. Any proposals arising from such a meeting would require the sanction of the Department before being implemented (page 113).

39. YEP schools should be advised of the appropriate personnel to contact in regard to the areas in which they have most frequent contact with the Department (i.e. funding and resources, staffing, building requirements, transport). They should also be advised promptly of any changes in personnel, or other organisational changes within the Department, of which they should be aware (page 114).
40. The Department should endeavour to communicate to the schools decisions in regard to budget allocations at the earliest possible opportunity each year (page 114).
41. Communications between the schools and the Department should be facilitated by a formalised system of engagement on a regular basis. As there are currently only five YEP schools, each could be represented in such a forum without making the group so large as to be unworkable (page 114).
42. The Department's Inspectorate should undertake regular visits to the YEP schools to ensure that the provision of holistic education is maintained (page 122).

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

43. The following performance indicators related to outputs are monitored on a regular basis:
 - Number of educational programmes delivered by the YEP schools;
 - Number of students leaving the YEP schools with certified qualifications;
 - Number of students with individual behaviour plans;
 - Number of students with individual learning plans;
 - Number of students leaving with functional literacy and numeracy skills (page 123).
44. That the following performance indicators related to progression are monitored on a regular basis:
 - Number of students proceeding to further education;

- Number of students proceeding to work training programmes;
 - Number of students obtaining employment;
 - Other destinations for students (page 124).
45. That the following performance indicators related to inputs are monitored on a regular basis:
- Teacher, SNA and non-classroom staff funded by the Department;
 - Non-pay financial resources provided by the Department to the YEP schools;
Financial Resources from other sources to the YEP schools (page 121).
46. Detailed expenditure figures should be collated on a sectoral and individual school basis in order to monitor trends in the allocation of Department funds and to facilitate monitoring of the effectiveness of the schools, on an ongoing basis (page 122).
47. The Department and the schools should develop an agreed method of recording the provision of formal and informal education programmes, the results of students taking the state examinations, or any other form of formal examination, and any other suitable outputs identified in the future, in order to facilitate the identification of output trends within the sector and the consideration of the effectiveness of the schools, on an ongoing basis (page 123).
48. The Department should develop a template to facilitate a comparison of the costs in the YEP schools with other forms of educational provision, particularly in relation to young persons from identified disadvantaged locations or resident in children detention schools (page 122).
49. In order to maintain a satisfactory level of student retention in the schools, and to allow the Department and the schools identify trends that require further intervention or a change in policy, YEP schools should forward to the Department of Education and Science, on an annual basis, data in relation to attendance matters, such as details of attendance rates and of periods of enrolment in the YEP schools (page 123/124).

50. A tracking system should be put in place to monitor the progress of each young person following their departure from a YEP school in the medium or long term. Such a tracking system would necessarily involve continued contact over an extended period of time between the YEP school, or a designated person or body, and the young person. The tracking system would be a point of reference for the young person and allow his or her evolving educational needs to be identified and further supports put in place, as appropriate (page 124).
51. As part of the process to be undertaken by the Department to devise a strategy for young people in special care, high support and detention, it is recommended that the Department gives consideration to the position of young people attending YEP schools and uses this process to devise a tracking and support system appropriate to the specific needs and circumstances of the young people following a period of attendance in a YEP schools (page 125).

Key Findings

The principal findings of the review are summarised below:

1. As a result of the evaluation, the overall view of the Steering Group in regard to YEP schools is overwhelmingly positive. The schools follow appropriate objectives and are largely successful in achieving them. However, performance on efficiency and effectiveness is uneven.
2. The YEP schools have their origins in the 1970s. They provided a non-residential community-based alternative to mainstream schools, they were structurally and pedagogically different, providing personalised education and flexibility in teaching and programmes.
3. The original guidelines for teachers drawn up by the DES in 1977 focused on personal development and encouraged schools to avoid “an approach of the traditional kind”.
4. While several of the schools are now in existence for thirty years, albeit on a pilot basis, it is difficult to identify their original objectives due to a scarcity of documentary evidence. In view of a lack of direct engagement with the Department, particularly in regard to issues of policy, schools tended to develop different objectives and approaches to deal with a similar student cohort.
5. The review process afforded the schools the opportunity to meet with the Steering Group and draw up the following set of common objectives:
 - to provide personalised holistic education for young people at risk;
 - to retain these young people in the education system; and
 - to provide support for these young people towards progression.These objectives are seen as appropriate and valid in light of the needs and abilities of the students and based on the experience of the schools over three decades. It is apparent, also, that the original objective of returning students to mainstream education, while desirable, is not realistic.

6. Four of the five YEP schools are located in accommodation that is old and not designed originally for educational purposes. One of these schools was substantially refurbished in recent years. The fifth school is housed in pre-fabricated accommodation, and plans are at an advanced stage for the construction of a new school building in the case of this school.
7. While the existence and work of the YEP schools are well known in the areas in which they are located, in general, the YEP schools have a low profile within the wider education community. Nevertheless, each school has a referral list, indicating that need for places exceeds current supply.
8. There has been a steady and considerable growth in total funding from c. €1.5m. in 2000 to almost €3m. in 2006. Pay costs, which grew by 140%, account for the bulk of the increase. In contrast, non-pay increased by (only) 40% and recent years have seen a levelling off or slight decline in such funding.
9. With regard to outputs, planning for learning in the YEP schools is based on individual learning plans (ILPs). These are drawn up on the basis of an initial individual assessment and provide a structured progression for each student towards the achievement of realistic goals.
10. Data gathered by the Steering Group covering the period 2004 – 2006 indicate that a reasonably wide range of subjects is available in the schools. However, there is a significant variation of approach with regard to facilitating students to sit the Junior Certificate examination.
11. Comparison between the unit costs applicable to a mainstream disadvantaged primary school, a children detention school and a YEP school shows that, while per capita expenditure in a YEP school is approximately four times that of a disadvantaged school, it is only 8 – 9% of that of a children detention school. These figures would seem to indicate that investment in YEP schools, where it leads to retention and progression, makes good sense.

12. The achievement of the programme objectives has led to the following range of positive outcomes:
 - **For students:** Improved retention, noticeable improvement in life skills, growth in self-confidence and self-esteem, ability to engage with people, progress in literacy skills, academic achievement and support towards progression.
 - **For school staff:** Good internal collaboration and communication.
 - **For the education system:** A successful alternative model of provision and the development of significant expertise in the YEP schools.
 - **For parents and the wider community:** Positive impact on parental attitude to education and generally positive impact on local community through structured activities outside the classroom.
13. Each school has a functioning and, in most cases, effective and supportive board of management. The boards, two of which have parental representation, concern themselves appropriately with the business of their schools.
14. The schools are, for the most part, effectively administered. Principals play a pivotal role by providing instructional leadership, supporting and guiding members of staff and liaising with a wide range of agencies.
15. There is evidence that the schools engage professionally in school development planning.
16. The greatest challenge facing the schools is the development among the students of a favourable disposition towards learning. This is compounded by the students' poor literacy and numeracy and their volatile behaviour.
17. The quality of school accommodation has a significant bearing on teaching and learning and, in the case of three of the schools, the standard of accommodation is very poor.
18. Considerable variation exists in staffing and funding levels across the five schools.
19. Teaching and learning are affected in part by the number of students present in a classroom, and most of the schools operate according to an 8:1 student/ classroom teacher

ratio. However, due to a combination of absenteeism, suspensions or, in one instance, an outreach programme, no class was observed to have eight students present during the course of the evaluations. In the majority of cases, effective whole class teaching was observed where there were four or five students present.

20. There is currently considerable disparity in the allocation of non-teaching staff resources to the schools, and this is ultimately unsustainable.
21. There is a dearth of appropriate educational psychological services in place for the schools.
22. Defining a standard appropriate model of YEP school is difficult for a number of reasons. The existing schools are classified as primary schools and, accordingly, operate the primary school day and school year. Also, curriculum and planning support is offered by providers whose primary focus is on the implementation of the primary curriculum.
23. There is regular formal and informal contact between the principals of the three Dublin schools and that this is used to share information on such matters as: accessing information and funding, addressing student behaviour problems, sourcing teaching materials, tailoring the physical environment to student needs, developing ILPs and organising class groups.
24. In contrast, there is little or no contact between the principals of the schools outside Dublin and between them and their Dublin colleagues. Contact is even more limited between other teaching and non-teaching staffs. Consequently, good practice evident in the schools cannot effectively be shared and therefore it is recommended that formal inter-YEP school communication channels be established to identify and disseminate best practice.
25. The schools were generally satisfied regarding communication with the DES, despite occasional lack of clarity regarding appropriate contact points and delays in budget allocation.
26. The YEP school sector has been associated in part with a lack of monitoring of performance by the Department of Education and Science.

27. A limited analysis of alternative types of provision for young people at risk suggests that, while models of response may vary from country to country, successful education programmes have certain common characteristics:
- The place where the programme operates engenders a sense of emotional security, encouraging improved attendance and socially-acceptable behaviour.
 - The young people are supported and their self-esteem is promoted.
 - Relationships are built with the young peoples' families.
 - The curriculum tends to be individualised, with a focus on literacy and numeracy and learning based on real life situations.
 - The programme providers work collaboratively, on a multi-disciplinary basis, and develop warm and supportive relationships with the young people.
28. The Review clearly establishes that, in the short term, the majority of the students progress to structured placements, such as with FÁS or Youthreach. However, no data are available on longer-term progression.
29. The schools have developed innovative educational and behavioural management strategies from which other schools dealing with disadvantaged students would benefit. There is a clear demand for such dedicated provision, given that all the schools operate a referral system for new students.
30. Given the positive and essential role played by the schools, the DES should now consider granting them permanent recognition.
31. In 2006, there were also 31 centres in 16 counties, mainly in the larger urban areas, in which full-time education was being provided for 12 – 16 year olds sent there so that their behavioural issues might be addressed. Funding for these centres came from various sources, with 16 receiving support from the DES. The existence of these centres indicates that support is being provided for at risk young people outside the YEP schools and other DES-funded initiatives.

Chapter 1 Introduction to the Review

1.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the background to the Value for Money (VFM) Review process, following which the Terms of Reference for the Youth Encounter Project (YEP) Schools VFM Review, as agreed by the Steering Group, are listed.

1.2 Background to the VFM Review Process

The Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993, the Strategic Management Initiative and the Public Service Management Act 1997 emphasised the need for increased efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public resources and thus set the background for the VFM Review process. In addition, the Co-ordinating Group of Secretaries, established under the Strategic Management Initiative, recognised in its report a *“need for a systematic analysis of what is actually being achieved by the £12 billion in Government resources spent annually.”* in order to *“provide for a schedule of reviews of expenditure...with the aim of ensuring that each programme of expenditure is subject to a thorough review at least once every three years.”* and to *“report on results achieved against operating plans and the lessons to be drawn for the future”* (Government of Ireland 1996).

In May 1997, the Department of Finance established the Expenditure Review Initiative in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of all Government expenditure. This was to be achieved by carrying out an analysis of the actual achievements of each specific programme and by using the results of that analysis to ensure better decisions were made in future regarding the spending of public monies. As indicated in a 2002 NESC Report, this moved public sector management away from the traditional focus on inputs to an emphasis on outputs and the achievement of results (NESC (2002)). In 2006, the Expenditure Review Initiative was renamed the Value for Money (VFM) Initiative, and it is under this initiative that the Department of Education and Science is carrying out VFM Reviews on several spending programmes. Their aims are:

- (i) to provide a systematic analysis of what is actually being achieved by programme expenditure;
- (ii) to provide a basis for more informed decision-making.

1.3 Steering Committee

Reviews are usually undertaken by spending Departments or Offices under the aegis of a joint steering committee representing the relevant Department/Office and the Department of Finance.

The process is overseen by a Central Steering Committee (CSC), chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of Finance. The VFM Review Initiative is coordinated within the Department of Education and Science by the Central Policy Unit which reports regularly to MAC on progress with reviews and any issues arising.

For this review, a Steering Committee comprising representatives of the YEP schools and various sections of the Department was established (see Appendix 2). The Department of Finance was not in a position to participate. The Steering Committee held its first meeting in December 2005. Following that meeting, terms of reference for the review were prepared in consultation with the Sectoral Policy Division of the Department of Finance and approved by the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science. Further meetings of the Steering Committee were held up to June 2007 to provide specific input and general direction to the review, and to sign off on the final report.

1.4 Quality Assessment Phase

In keeping with procedures for the completion of VFM Reviews, an external consultant for quality assessment was appointed from a panel maintained by the Department of Finance for this purpose. A penultimate draft of this report was submitted to the consultant in June 2007 specifically, the quality assessment addressed the following questions:

- Were the terms of reference appropriate and fully addressed?
- Were the analytical approaches and methodologies employed robust?

- Was the question of potential future performance indicators addressed?
- Did the report contain balanced conclusions and recommendations?
- Was the report clearly structured and presented?

The comments arising from this process were taken into consideration by the Steering Committee in producing the final report.

1.5 Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference agreed (each followed here by relevant review Chapter) were as follows:

1. To identify the programme objectives of the YEP Schools. (*Chapter 5*)
2. To examine the current validity of those objectives and their compatibility with and contribution to the Department's overall strategy particularly as set out in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the current action plan for educational inclusion, and the range of programmes to combat educational disadvantage and early school leaving at primary and post primary level (*Chapter 5*).
3. Define the outputs associated with the programme activity and identify the level and trend of those outputs (*Chapter 6*).
4. Examine the extent to which the programme objectives have been achieved, and comment on the effectiveness with which they have been achieved (*Chapter 7*).
5. Identify the level and trend of costs and staffing resources associated with the YEP schools and comment on the efficiency with which they have achieved their objectives. Evaluate the degree of consistency with regard to resource allocation decisions for each of the five schools (*Chapter 6*).
6. Examine the existing communication channels between a) the five schools, and b) the five schools and the Department. Based on this examination, identify how these lines of communication are contributing to the identification of best practice (*Chapter 10*).
7. Evaluate the degree to which the objectives warrant the allocation of public funding on a current and ongoing basis and examine the scope for alternative policy or organisational

approaches to achieving these objectives on a more efficient and/or effective basis (*Chapter 11*).

8. Specify potential future performance indicators that might be used to better monitor the performance of YEP schools (*Chapter 11*).

Chapter 2- History of the YEP Schools

The origins of the YEP schools lie in the then new thinking of the 1970s, which reflected disenchantment with long-established responses to the problem of young people at risk of falling into vandalism, delinquency, school dropout or expulsion. The Kennedy Report (1970) on the future of reform and industrialised schools opted for long-term prevention of crime and disadvantage rather than to continue the previous policy of containment in the old-fashioned residential institutions. The Task Force on Childcare Services Interim Report (1975) made clear that the increasing number of children who had “abandoned their schools” revealed a gap in the services. Until then there had been no non-residential and community-based alternative to mainstream schools. Since the problem to be resolved posed not only educational but other issues, an interdepartmental steering committee was formed. It included representatives from the departments of education, health and justice.

The outcome of this thinking was a new kind of institution to provide a less formal form of education, namely YEP schools. The first opened in Limerick in 1977, and was followed in the period 1977-78 by three others: two in Dublin, and one in Cork. Young people referred to YEP schools were deemed to be ‘at risk’ (at risk being defined as 'on the fringes of delinquent, anti-social behaviour, in contact and in conflict with authority i.e. Gardaí, and because of learning difficulties, at risk of dropping out of school' (Egan and Hegarty 1984).

These new schools were structurally and pedagogically different: they provided an alternative form of education while working on-site within a tightly-nested community context. Likewise, their staffing and funding were unique. Day-to-day running costs of each school and of the salaries of its teachers and bean a'tí were funded by the Department of Education. The Bernard Van Leer Foundation, based in The Hague, funded the salaries of community workers in the schools and the cost of an independent evaluation carried out in 1984 by the Educational Research Centre at St Patrick's College Dublin (Egan and Hegarty 1984). The Department of Justice seconded a probation and welfare officer for each school.

The original guidelines for teachers (Department of Education 1977) were written from a perspective that prioritised personal development: they encouraged the YEP schools to avoid ‘an approach of the traditional school kind’, to meet the young people’s individual needs, and to ‘re-

orient their development along healthy lines' (Department of Education 1977: page 1). Because of the intensive nature and deeply personalised focus of the intended education, the YEP schools were to enrol no more than twenty-five students each, with a ratio of one teacher to eight approximately. Significantly, the YEP schools were also to employ other categories of staff not usually available to schools, such as: counsellors; probation, welfare and community workers; bean/ fear a'tí, responsible for cooking and meals as an intrinsic aspect of learning social and life skills. All staff shared an educational responsibility. Personal education was seen in much broader terms than would be possible in a mainstream school.

As an intervention to reduce delinquency, the YEP schools took what Egan and Hegarty's evaluation called an 'ecological approach' (Egan and Hegarty 1984: 183). Tracing the origins of this approach back through Fr. Flanagan and Don Bosco to Pestalozzi, the evaluators noted that the notion of a home environment was central to the YEP school intervention. In their view the YEP school aimed to create for the young people an ecosystem of interlocking environments: society at large, the local community, the home, the school, even the miniature environment constituted by a pair of students working together in a corner of a classroom.

The 1984 evaluation report by Egan and Hegarty accepted the need for YEP schools. Many of its recommendations have shaped school practice: for example, each YEP school caters for the maximum degree of disadvantage compatible with its identity as a school, admission procedures are formalised, enrolment is held at 25 students, each student is classified on admission in terms of age and academic ability, diversity of curriculum is maintained in the school programme, and programme objectives are refined to suit individual students (Egan and Hegarty 1984). The Director's/ Principal's¹ written report follows a standardised format at board meetings.

In the period since the 1984 Evaluation report, perhaps the main features of YEP school education are:

- a distinctive identity and style of practice. Typical YEP school practice is centred on principles that include in the words of the Egan and Hegarty evaluation report, 'the idea of making the school environment more like a home environment' (Egan and Hegarty 1984: 201),

¹ Director/Principal was the title originally given to Principals of YEP schools

- Respect and care for the individual student, an ethos founded on positive relationships between staff and students, flexibility in teaching and programmes, and well-defined but judiciously elastic boundaries of behavioural norms and discipline.

The last evaluation of the sector was undertaken in 1984 (Egan and Hegarty 1984). The schools, some of which have been in existence for 30 years, remain sanctioned by the DES on a pilot basis. In that period, members of the Inspectorate would have visited and supported the schools as their workload permitted. Nonetheless, it would be fair to say that the schools have experienced a lack of direct engagement with the Department, particularly in regard to issues of policy. Accordingly, the VFM evaluation represents a long overdue opportunity for the Department of Education and Science in this particular area of education provision for disadvantaged young people.

Chapter 3 Profile of the YEP Schools

3.1 Students

Students attending the YEP schools experience an acute degree of social disadvantage, and it is this disadvantage which most prominently characterises the student population, defines their life experiences and their experiences of education. In turn, the ethos and policies of each school are greatly determined by the nature of the students and their disadvantage, and any observations on the attainment or achievement of students must take account of their backgrounds.

The students in each of the schools present with similar experiences and histories. The vast majority come from the most disadvantaged areas of their respective cities. Their previous experience of school is marked by suspensions, expulsions and poor achievement in literacy and numeracy. Their difficulties in literacy, in particular, present significant challenges to the schools. Some of the schools, for example, find it difficult to carry out even the most basic diagnostic literacy tests on a small number of students, such is their poor level of literacy. Many of the students are known to the Gardaí. In some instances, drug abuse is reportedly ingrained in the culture of the areas in which the students live, and accordingly, addiction of students to drugs, both legal and illegal, is an issue that confronts the schools.

The extent to which the young people in the schools are ‘at risk’ is illustrated by data collected by the inspectors in the course of their evaluation. This data indicates that the young people bring with them the combined consequences of poverty, violence, neglect, bereavement, mental health issues and the consequences of parental or sibling drug use, alcohol misuse, imprisonment, homelessness and suicide. Without exception, students have experienced failure and rejection in the education system. Shows of emotional disturbance on any day can range widely through severe withdrawal, outbursts of aggression, anger, frustration, subtle or overt bullying, or a range of challenging behaviours.

3.2 Location

YEP schools are situated in locations where there is a high demand for the services they provide, and accordingly, four of the five YEP schools are located in city centre areas. The locations of the school buildings are crucial in maximising the attractiveness of the schools to marginalised young people. They are easily accessible and, in relation to certain schools, for those students

whose lives are embedded in particular areas of the cities, schools are located in what is considered to be ‘neutral territory’.

The YEP schools are recognised by the Department as special national schools. The details are as follows:

Table 3.1 – School Details

School	Roll No.	Patron
Henrietta St. School, Dublin 1	20021T	Archbishop of Dublin
St. Augustine’s YEP School, Limerick	19587Q	Bishop of Limerick
St. Kevin’s YEP School, Cork	19788D	Bishop of Cork and Ross
St. Laurence O’Toole’s YEP School, Dublin 1	19819L	Vacant ²
St. Paul’s YEP School, Finglas, and Dublin 11	19594N	Catholic Youth Care

3.3 Accommodation

Four of the five YEP schools are located in accommodation that is old and not designed originally for educational purposes. One of these schools was substantially refurbished in recent years. The fifth school is housed in pre-fabricated accommodation, and plans are at an advanced stage for the construction of a new school building in the case of this school.

Chapter 8 below considers further the quality of school accommodation.

3.4 Enrolments

The maximum enrolment in four of the five YEP schools is twenty-five students and in Henrietta Street School twenty. Actual enrolments in the schools at the time of the evaluation in the 2005/06 school year varied from twenty to twenty-four students. Children attending the schools generally range in age from 12 to 15 years, and may be referred from a number of sources (see Table 3.1 below). Some students enrol in the YEP schools directly from primary and post-primary schools, while others are not in education immediately prior to their enrolments. The

² An application by the Archbishop of Dublin to be patron, but not trustee, of the school has been submitted to the Department.

National Education Welfare Board (NEWB), which has a statutory function to ensure that every child either attends a school or otherwise receives an education, is often involved in the referral process through the local Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Each school operates a referral process which endeavours to identify whether the YEP school is the most suitable school placement for the student. Crucial to this process is the nature of relations between the schools and their feeder schools, both primary and post-primary. In almost all cases, students come to the YEP schools from the same feeder primary schools each year. While the existence and work of the YEP schools are well known in these areas, in general, the YEP schools have a low profile within the wider education community. Nevertheless, each school has a waiting list, indicating that need for places exceeds current supply. Table 3.1 below indicates the referral source for each of the YEP schools in the 2005/06 school year.

Referral Sources

Table 3.2

Referral Source	St. Paul's	St. Laurence O'Toole's	Henrietta St.	St. Augustine's	St. Kevin's	Total	% of Total
Social Worker	0	1	2	1	2	4	5.36
Home Sch. Comm. Liaison Teacher	3	8	0	3	6	20	17.86
Principal	12	0	0	0	9	21	18.75
Parent	0	2	1	6	1	26	8.93
Ed. Welfare Officer	4	7	7	0	3	14	18.75
Visiting Teacher	0	0	0	0	2	2	1.79
Primary School	0	4	7	3	0	7	12.5
Post-Primary School	0	0	4	1	0	1	4.46
Other	1	2	0	10		15	11.61
Total	20	24	21	24	23	112	

3.5 Staffing Complement

The staffing complements in the schools vary. In most cases, schools have three class teachers, supported by a resource teacher and an administrative principal. Most schools also avail of part-time teaching staff (see Table 3.2 below). Schools typically have a mixed teaching staff of

primary and post-primary qualified teachers, which reflects the age profile and particular needs of the student cohort (see Table 3.3 below).

In some schools there are up to four Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), while in other schools there are none. There is significant variety in the range of other support staff available to schools and these may include a community worker, a social worker or a youth worker. Each school has a ‘bean’ or ‘fear a tí’. The availability of secretarial support varies throughout the five schools.

The variation in non-teaching staff across the schools can be put down to:

- the physical limitations of the certain schools;
- the identification at local level of the need for particular resources.

Table 3.3 - Teaching Staff - 2006/07 School Year

School	Principal	Permanent Classroom Teachers	Temporary Classroom Teachers	Temporary Resource Teachers	Part time teacher (WTE) hours	Total
St. Paul's	1	3	0	1	0.86	5.86
St. Laurence O'Toole's	1	0	3	1	0	5
Henrietta St	1	4	0	0	1.89	6.89
St. Augustine's	1	3	0	1	0.57	5.57
St. Kevin's	1	3	0	1	1.29	6.29
Total	5	13	3	4	4.61	29.61

Table 3.4 - Breakdown of Teaching Staff by Qualification - 2006/07 School Year

(Permanent and temporary teachers, including school principals)

School	Primary Qualified	Post Primary Qualified	Other
St Paul's	1	3	1
St. Laurence O'Toole's	4	1	0
Henrietta Street	1	4	0
St Augustine's	3	2	0
St Kevin's	0	5	0
Total	9	15	1

Table 3.5 - Full-Time Non-Teaching Staff - 2006/07 School Year

School	Maint'ce	Clean'r	Sec'ty	Comm. Worker	Social Worker	SNA	Counsellor	Youth Worker	Bean/Fear an Ti	Total Posts
St. Paul's	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	3
St. Laurence O'Toole's	1	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	1	7
Henrietta St	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	3
St. Augustine's	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	5
St. Kevin's	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	2	1	8
Total	2	0	1	3	1	10	0	4	5	26

Table 3.6 - Part-Time Non-Teaching Staff 2006/07 - School Year

School	Maint'ce	Clean'r	Sec'ty	Comm. Worker	Social Worker	SNA	Counsellor	Youth Worker	Bean/Fear an Ti	Total Posts
St. Paul's	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
St. Laurence O'Toole's	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Henrietta St	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Augustine's	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
St. Kevin's	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
Total	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	6

Chapter 4 Research Methodology

4.1 Developing the Programme Logic Model

As a starting point in any evaluation it is necessary to have a clear framework for understanding how the programme being evaluated works. The framework considered most useful by the Department of Finance for VFM reviews is the Programme Logic Model and, accordingly, this method was employed at the outset of the YEP school review.

A Programme Logic Model maps out the shape and logical linkages of a programme. It provides a systematic and visual way to present and share understanding of the cause-effect relationships between inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes. In the case of the YEP schools review, the model was drafted by the steering committee and finalised following consultations with the principals of the schools. The model is included in this report in Appendix 3.

Although it is acknowledged that the Programme Logic Model does not capture in full the complexity of the operation of the YEP schools, it did serve a number of useful functions for the purpose of this review. Firstly, it helped to establish at an early date that the members of the steering committee had a shared understanding of the role that the YEP schools currently fulfil, the activities they undertake and the purpose of their work. Secondly, it highlighted the main inputs, outputs and outcomes associated with the work of the YEP schools that would need to be measured in order to facilitate an evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the schools. In so doing, it helped to provide a framework for the main evaluation questions to be addressed. Finally, the model also served to provide an initial framework on which to base the committee's consideration of potential future performance indicators.

4.2 The Evaluators

A decision was made at senior level to carry out the VFM review using the experience and expertise within the Department. As is required in all VFM reviews (see Chapter 1 above), a steering committee was established, as well as a sub-committee to carry out the day-to-day work of the review.

One of the main roles of the Department's Inspectors, as defined by Section 13(3)(a) of the Education Act (1998), is to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of education provided in schools and to assess the implementation and effectiveness of any programmes of education which have been devised in respect of individual students with special educational needs. Accordingly, it was clear that the expertise within the Department required to undertake an evaluation of the YEP schools from an educational perspective lay within the Inspectorate.

It was also apparent that the HSSSU, the section within the Department with responsibility for the policy and administrative support for the YEP schools, had a clear role to play in the evaluation with regard in particular to matters of policy and funding. The HSSSU, as the section with responsibility for the schools, was also entrusted with the coordination of the evaluation and the preparation of the final report.

4.3 Preparation for the Evaluation

To begin, the Steering Committee conducted an extensive preparation and research exercise, the aim of which was to familiarise itself with the schools and the nature of their work. The evaluation of these schools and the associated research exercise coincided with separate research, training and evaluation work being undertaken by the Inspectors in respect of other centres for education, namely the Youthreach Programme and the Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs). While recognising that there were differences in the nature of the work being undertaken by the YEP schools and these centres for education, it was also true that similarities existed between them. It made sense therefore that the research, training and planning for the evaluation of the Youthreach Programme and the STTCs should inform the Inspectors' evaluation of the YEP schools.

Preparation for the evaluation of the YEP schools involved meetings between the Inspectors and personnel in the HSSSU, as well as meetings of the steering committee. In addition, chairpersons of the boards of management of the schools and the school principals met to discuss issues such as school objectives, staffing structures, learners, funding, accommodation and curricular issues, attendance issues and outcomes.

The relevant education partners were consulted and informed at all times about the planned evaluation of the schools and the procedures to be used.

4.4 The Inspectors' Evaluation

4.4.1 Background

It should be noted that, in undertaking school evaluations, Inspectors are required to adhere to the “Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting”, which formalises the procedures the Department’s Inspectorate follows and seeks to make clear the standards to which the Inspectorate works (Department of Education and Science 2002). The aim is to ensure an evaluation system which is fair and consistent in the manner in which an inspection is carried out. The professional code was followed in the normal fashion by the Inspectors evaluating the YEP schools.

The Inspectors undertook an evaluation of the quality of the school ethos, management, and education provision in all five YEP schools during the period March to May 2006. The intention was to produce an Inspectors’ Evaluation Report on each school, which would inform and provide much of the source material for VFM Evaluation, but which would also stand as a document in its own right.

Each school was notified up to three weeks in advance that it was to be the subject of an evaluation. The inspector made contact with the school principal directly by phone to notify him/her of the evaluation and this was followed up by letter (see Appendix 4). This letter asked the school to supply the relevant inspector with a number of documents in advance of the evaluation visit by the inspector, namely:

- A questionnaire (see Appendix 4) and student data form (see Appendix 5) to be completed by the school principal;
- Copy of the school’s enrolment/admissions policy;
- Copy of school plan (if available);
- List of staff members, copies of all relevant timetables and details of duties associated with any posts of responsibility;

- Copies of timetables for class groups of students attending the YEP school, including list of subject codes (where applicable).

4.4.2 Inspectors' Evaluation: Pre-Evaluation Phase

Following receipt of this documentation from each school, the designated inspector held pre-evaluation meetings with the school's board of management, and with the principal and his or her teaching staff. These pre-evaluation meetings usually took place some four to five days prior to the in-school phase of the evaluation, and gave the inspector an opportunity to present the rationale for the evaluation, clarify the format and procedures of the evaluation and to answer queries on practical elements of the evaluation. Areas discussed at this meeting with the board of management included how the board operated, the role and functions of the board and the communication structures in place between the board and other school personnel and agencies. The board also shared its main concern(s) with the inspector.

4.4.3 Inspectors' Evaluation: In-School Evaluation Phase

The in-school phase of the evaluation was conducted over a period of two or three days, during which time the inspector undertook a number of activities:

(a) Overview/brief tour of the school

A general tour of the YEP school was the first stage of the in-school phase of the evaluation, and usually took place on the morning of the first day of the evaluation. It was important, before meeting various YEP school personnel, that the inspector was familiar with the school in which they worked in terms of its location, layout, rooms, facilities and equipment.

(b) Interview with school principal

Principals were generally unaccompanied during their interviews. Areas discussed included:

- main duties and responsibilities of principals;
- the positive experiences and challenges encountered;
- support systems in place for principals;
- the operation of the school;
- the impact of the school on the lives of students;

- the school's links with the community;
- student drop-out, retention and progression rates ;
- the principal's vision for the future of his or her school;
- how the YEP schools fitted into the wider education system, nationally and locally.

(c) Interview with small group of students

Students were interviewed in groups of, on average, four. Each inspector adhered to a number of guiding principles when conducting interviews, which had previously been developed for other evaluations in conjunction with the National Children's Office. Students were asked for their views on their school, why they left mainstream school, what subjects they liked best, what projects they were involved in, whether they used computers and whether they attended regularly. Students were also asked for their views on what they had got out of being in the school so far, what they would hope to achieve from the rest of their time in their school and, if they were in charge, whether they would make any changes to how the school is run.

(d) Observation of teaching and learning and examination of learners' work

During evaluations, the inspector visited lessons to observe teaching and learning. Where possible, all class groups and all teachers and tutors were visited. When visiting lessons, the inspector availed of opportunities presented to engage in discussion with students about their work. In such cases, the inspector noted the work observed as well as students' comments on their work. Inspectors provided teachers and tutors with oral feedback at the end of lessons observed.

(e) Review of relevant documentation

The inspector reviewed relevant documentation as part of the evaluation, including teachers' and tutors' written lesson preparation. Along with the documentation received in advance of the in-school evaluation phase, the inspector also reviewed, as necessary, other policies, procedures, statements, strategies or codes kept by the school.

4.4.4 Inspectors' Evaluation: Post Evaluation Phase

Post-evaluation meetings were held with each school's board of management and with the school principal and his/her staff. The draft findings and recommendations of the evaluation visit were

presented and discussed at these meetings. Each school was subsequently issued with its own written evaluation report. Each report commented on the school's context and ethos, the quality of school management and planning and the quality of teaching and learning within the school. The report also presented the findings of the evaluation of the work of the school and made recommendations for the further development of the work of that school. Management of each school was given the opportunity to factually verify the contents of each report. Following this factual verification process, school management was also provided with the opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of their report. The Inspectors' evaluation report for each school was published on the Department of Education and Science website in late 2006 (available on *www.education.ie*).

4.5 HSSSU Evaluation

4.5.1 Background

The HSSSU complemented the Inspector's work, specifically seeking and analysing data in regard to terms of reference that were not being addressed by the Inspectors, such as inter-school communications, and the collection of historical data on staffing and funding levels of the schools.

4.5.2 Pre-evaluation phase

A questionnaire was prepared to facilitate the collection of the necessary data (see Appendix 6). In particular, this questionnaire related to such areas as communication between the YEP schools themselves, and between the YEP schools and the Department. In addition, in order to give DES staff a fuller understanding of each school, questions were included on the involvement or potential involvement in criminal behaviour of students and of incidents of aggressive behaviour in the schools, and on practical matters such as transport, insurance arrangements and pay and non-pay costs.

4.5.3 School Visits

Independently of the Inspectors, during May and June 2006, officials from the HSSSU visited each of the five schools to familiarise themselves with the schools, the nature of their work and to administer the questionnaires described in section 4.5.2 above. As part of these visits

Department officials were taken on a brief tour of each school, and afterwards talked to the school principals as well as another member of the school staff. Data from the visits were recorded on the questionnaire completed by the staff during each visit. Principals and staff representative were given the opportunity to ask the Department officials questions in relation to the review or any other issues concerning them.

4.5.4 Post-visit phase

Officials from the HSSSU were involved on an ongoing basis in the detailed work of consolidating, analysing and reviewing the outcomes from the questionnaires and interview processes along with the compilation of financial and resource data on the schools. HSSSU staff also had an editorial and authorship role in relation to the report and the production of the final report itself. In addition, HSSSU sought and processed tenders for a quality assessor, in line with the normal procedures associated with VFM reports, as outlined in Chapter 1.4 above.

Chapter 5- Objectives of the YEP schools

Sections 5.1 and 5.2 of this chapter address term of reference 1:

To identify the programme objectives of the YEP schools.

Section 5.3 addresses term of reference 2:

To examine the current validity of those objectives and their compatibility with and contribution to the Department's overall strategy particularly as set out in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the new action plan for educational inclusion, and the range of programmes to combat educational disadvantage and early school leaving at primary and post primary level.

5.1 Identifying the Objectives

On initial consideration, it might be considered peculiar that the identification, rather than review, of the objectives of the YEP schools was chosen as the first term of reference; YEP schools have existed after all for nearly 30 years and have been funded by the Department of Education and Science for that period. However, as acknowledged in Chapter 2 above, the period since the foundation of the first YEP school has been in part characterised by a lack of direct engagement by the Department with the schools, particularly in relation to the clear identification of the schools' roles and to matters of educational policy within the schools. Indeed, as has already been noted, despite the considerable period of time since the foundation of the first YEP school, they remain sanctioned on a pilot basis only. Given this, it is no surprise that the schools have evolved organically, each developing certain distinctive strategies and policies in order to deal with a similar student cohort.

At this point in time it is difficult to identify precisely the original objectives of the YEP schools, due to a scarcity of documentary evidence. However, in a document for the guidance of YEP school teachers (1977) the Department stated that the aims of the YEP schools were:

- To improve the ability of the children to cope with their environment;

- To foster positive attitudes towards themselves and their communities on the part of both the children and their parents. (Department of Education and Science 1977).

Some early documentation also makes reference to the primary objective of the YEP schools as being the rehabilitation of students in order to enable them to return to the conventional school system in the shortest possible time (Egan and Hegarty 1984). In fact, in the absence of alternatives, these particular objectives have been reproduced in a number of public documents, continuing to recent years (e.g. Department of Education and Science action plan for educational inclusion (Department of Education and Science 2005)).

Accordingly, the undertaking of the VFM Review provided a timely opportunity for a review and identification of the objectives of the schools. The Department's view was that those best positioned to identify the schools' objectives were the practitioners themselves. Accordingly, a meeting was convened in December 2005 of YEP school Principals and representatives of the Boards of Management of each school, facilitated by DES officials, with the aim of identifying the objectives of the YEP schools as they currently are. Following considerable discussion and consideration, the objectives of the YEP schools were identified as:

- (i) Providing personalised holistic education for young people at risk;
- (ii) Retaining these young people in the education system;
- (iii) Providing support for these young people towards progression.

In defining the objectives, school management representatives were in effect articulating a post-facto expression of what the schools were actually doing.

5.2 Comparison of the Original and Current Objectives

On consideration, there appears to be, paradoxically, a degree of both continuity and of divergence between the original objectives, insofar as they can be determined, and the newly-established objectives.

It is reasonable to assume that, as a consequence of the successful pursuit of the new objectives, the children in the schools would exhibit an improved ability to cope in their environment, to foster positive attitudes to themselves and to their communities, as identified in the 1977 document. (These outcomes are supported by the evidence of this report). On the other hand, given the experiences of the schools over the past three decades, it is apparent that, for a number of reasons, returning students to the conventional school system in the shortest possible time was both impractical and unrealistic. What instead was required was the provision of a specific kind of long-term education and personal development of these young people. Accordingly, the return of students to the conventional school system, while a desirable progression option for some, is no longer viewed as a central objective by the school staff and management, nor is it recommended in this report.

5.3 YEP Schools and Social and Educational Inclusion

One of the high-level goals of the Department of Education and Science is to “support, through education, a socially inclusive society with equal opportunity for all” (Department of Education and Science 2005). Deriving from this goal, the Department commits to contributing to the implementation and development of the Government’s Social Inclusion Policy generally, and more specifically to the provision of targeted support programmes for children experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, educational disadvantage and early school leaving. These support programmes typically involve the provision of additional funding and teaching resources.

It was in this context that the Department in 2005 launched DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools). DEIS is an action plan for educational inclusion involving a systematic, targeted and integrated approach to meet the educational needs of disadvantaged children and young people. Its core elements are:

- a standardised system for identifying, and regularly reviewing, levels of disadvantage;
- an integrated School Support Programme (SSP), to bring together, and build upon, existing interventions for schools and school clusters/communities with a concentrated level of educational disadvantage.

The following schemes are, or will be, integrated into the SSP:

- Early Start
- Giving Children an Even Break (incorporating the primary Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and Breaking the Cycle)
- the Support Teacher Project (primary level)
- aspects of the Early Literacy Initiative, including the Reading Recovery initiative and the Junior Certificate School Programme Literacy Strategy and Demonstration Library Project
- the Home/School/Community Liaison Scheme
- the School Completion Programme (which is being funded under the National Development Plan with assistance from the European Social Fund)
- the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme for second-level schools and related projects in second-level schools supporting access to third-level.

DEIS is primarily targeted at disadvantaged students in the mainstream school setting. Indeed, it is likely that the YEP school student has attended a school targeted through one or more of the DEIS initiatives. However, as this report has already illustrated, YEP school students are more marginalised than the majority of disadvantaged students. They bring with them a wide range of negative life experiences and, without exception, they have experienced failure and rejection in the education system (see Chapter 3, page 45). It is the severity of these experiences, and the consequent challenging behaviour, that characterises these students and distinguishes them from their peers in mainstream schools. Accordingly, it is necessary for the YEP schools to provide support at a more intensive level than that available under the DEIS provisions.

The Ladder of Provision

The Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour (Department of Education and Science 2005) identified a continuum of provision (the “ladder of provision”) to cater for the educational needs of the most behaviourally-challenging students. The ladder places the YEP schools at level 7 of eight levels, indicating that the students fall outside the scope of the provision of “on-site” interventions (i.e. interventions based in mainstream schools, represented by levels 1 to 6 on the continuum).



The “ladder” implicitly acknowledges that the behaviours of children vary, and that educational initiatives must be tailored to suit the needs of the children whom they target.

The DEIS report also refers to the continuum of interventions which the Department provides to address disadvantage. The YEP schools in effect form part of this continuum, catering for students whose needs cannot be adequately be met by the DEIS provisions and, in the process, complementing those provisions.

It is essential, therefore, that, in formulating policy to address educational disadvantage, account is taken of the important role of the YEP schools and the strategies developed by them over nearly 30 years of experience in dealing with marginalised young people.

Recommendation: In formulating policy aimed at promoting social inclusion, it is recommended that the Department takes account of the role of the YEP schools and of the expertise accumulated in the schools. This will assist in the synchronisation of services to achieve optimum outcomes and promote best practice amongst schools dealing with disadvantaged children.

Chapter 6 YEP Schools- Inputs, Outputs and Efficiency

This chapter deals with terms of reference 3 and 5:

Identify the level and trend of costs and staffing resources associated with the YEP schools and comment on the efficiency with which they have achieved their objectives. Evaluate the degree of consistency with regard to resource allocation decisions for each of the five schools.

Define the outputs associated with the programme activity and identify the level and trend of those outputs.

6.1 Inputs

6.1.1 Financial Input from the DES- Summary

As the section with primary responsibility for the administration of YEP schools, the HSSSU administers the main financial allocations (subheads) from which funding to the schools is allocated, as follows:

- Subhead C.6.14.1 (Pay): funding for the salaries of non-teaching staff (excluding SNAs and certain Youth Workers) and for some part-time teachers in the school.
- Subhead C.6.14.2 (Non-Pay): funding for non-pay expenditure in the schools, such as light, heat and power, administration costs, staff training and transport.

In addition, the following categories of staff are paid from subheads controlled and administered by Department sections other than the HSSSU:

- Permanent and temporary teachers: paid directly via the primary teachers' payroll .
- SNAs: paid directly via the SNA payroll.
- Some part-time teachers: paid from Special Education subheads.
- Youth Workers in St. Kevin's and St Paul's: paid by VECs from funds provided by Youth Affairs Section subheads.

Each school is also eligible to receive a number of minor grants from the Department. Grants totalling approximately €12,000 were received by each school in 2005.

6.1.2 Allocation of Department Funding to the YEP Schools

(a) Allocation of Funding from the HSSSU Subheads

In order for the Department to determine the appropriate annual budget for the YEP schools, each school furnishes the HSSSU with an estimate of its budgetary requirements for the next calendar year. Projections of non-pay expenditure for the year are submitted under the following headings: class materials; administration costs; light, heat and power; transport; staff training; food and clothing; recreation and rewards; summer programme and sundries. Projected expenditure in each category is given on a monthly basis. Each school is also requested to supply background material to support its estimated expenditure.

A separate estimate is required for each school's projected pay expenditure in respect of non-teaching staff. To aid with this process, the Department provides the schools with details of any pay increases due to non-teaching staff in the schools.

In determining a school's non-pay allocation, the Department applies a nominal inflator, based on the consumer price index, to each school's day-to-day running costs from the previous year. An inflator is not applied to the other non-pay amounts, such as grants issued from other Department sections and once-off expenditure incurred. Consideration is also given to sources of income other than the Department which the schools may have. In addition, comparisons are made between the requests from the five schools and, where there is a sizeable variation, the relevant school is contacted in regard to the matter. In such cases, the school may be required to cut expenditure in certain areas.

Each school's pay budget is determined on the basis of the previous year's spending, taking into account incremental progression and any increases due under national pay agreements. Once determined, a profile of expenditure is prepared by the HSSSU, showing yearly expenditure distributed on a monthly basis. Funds are then issued monthly, directly to each school, to cover pay and non-pay running costs. The annual profile and monthly reconciliation process act as a mechanism to monitor the allocation of funds and to ensure that spending remains on target.

(b) Allocation of Funding from other Department Subheads

Permanent and Temporary Teachers

Appointments of permanent and temporary teachers are sanctioned by the HSSSU and confirmed to Primary Payments Section, which has responsibility for the processing of teachers' salaries. Details of appointees are notified by the schools directly to Primary Payments Section, at which time the appointed teacher is placed on the primary teachers' payroll in order to be paid directly by the Department, in the normal fashion for primary teachers.

SNAs

Appointments of SNAs are sanctioned by the HSSSU and confirmed to SNA Payroll Section, which has responsibility for the administration of SNA salaries. Details of appointees are notified by the schools directly to SNA Payroll Section, at which time the appointed SNA is placed on the SNA Payroll in order to be paid directly by the Department, in the normal fashion for SNAs.

Part-time teachers

Appointments of part-time teachers are sanctioned by the HSSSU from a budget administered by Special Education Section. Part-time teachers are not paid directly by the Department; In some cases the HSSSU issues a grant to a school based on the number of teaching hours sanctioned, and the teacher is paid directly by the school at the agreed hourly rate. In other cases the teachers are paid directly by the school at the agreed annual rate, from the annual budget, sanctioned at by the Department.

It should be noted that funding for part-time teachers in St. Kevin's is provided by City of Cork VEC on the basis of an overall allocation of hours approved by the DES.

Funding from Youth Affairs Section

Certain schools received funding from Youth Affairs Section, under the Special Projects for Youth Scheme, which is aimed at addressing the needs of disadvantaged young people. These funds are channelled to the schools through their local VECs and are used for pay and non-pay purposes.

6.1.3 Sources of Funding Other than the Department of Education and Science

Certain YEP schools also receive funding from sources other than the Department. Details for this funding for 2003 -2005 are given in Table 6.1 below:

Table 6.1 - Funding to YEPs (other than the Department 2003-2005) (in €)

	St. Paul's	St. Laurence O'Toole's	Henrietta St.	St. Augustine's	St. Kevin's	Total
2003	5,704	0	0	0	3000	8,704
2004	3,999	13,000	0	0	3000	19,999
2005	4,406	13,000	0	10,000	36,000	63,406
Total	14,109	26,000	0	10,000	42,000	92,109

Funding is usually provided for particular purposes, and details are given in Table 6.2 below:

Table 6.2 - Source and Use of Other Funding

School	Source of Funding	Frequency of Funding	Use of Funding
St. Paul's	Dublin City Council	Annual/ongoing	Food grant
St. Laurence O'Toole's	Dublin Docklands Development Authority	2004 2005	Staff training, literacy and numeracy programme, library books
	G Tech	2004 once off	IT equipment
Henrietta Street	Nil	n/a	n/a
St. Augustine's	Maureen Gough Trust	2005 once off	Assessments, counselling and art therapy
St. Kevin's	Allied Irish Banks – Better Ireland Awards	2005 –once off	New school kitchen
	Janssen Pharmaceuticals	2005 – once off	Parents/Students and staff support
	Bridging the Gap University College Cork	Annual	Various projects

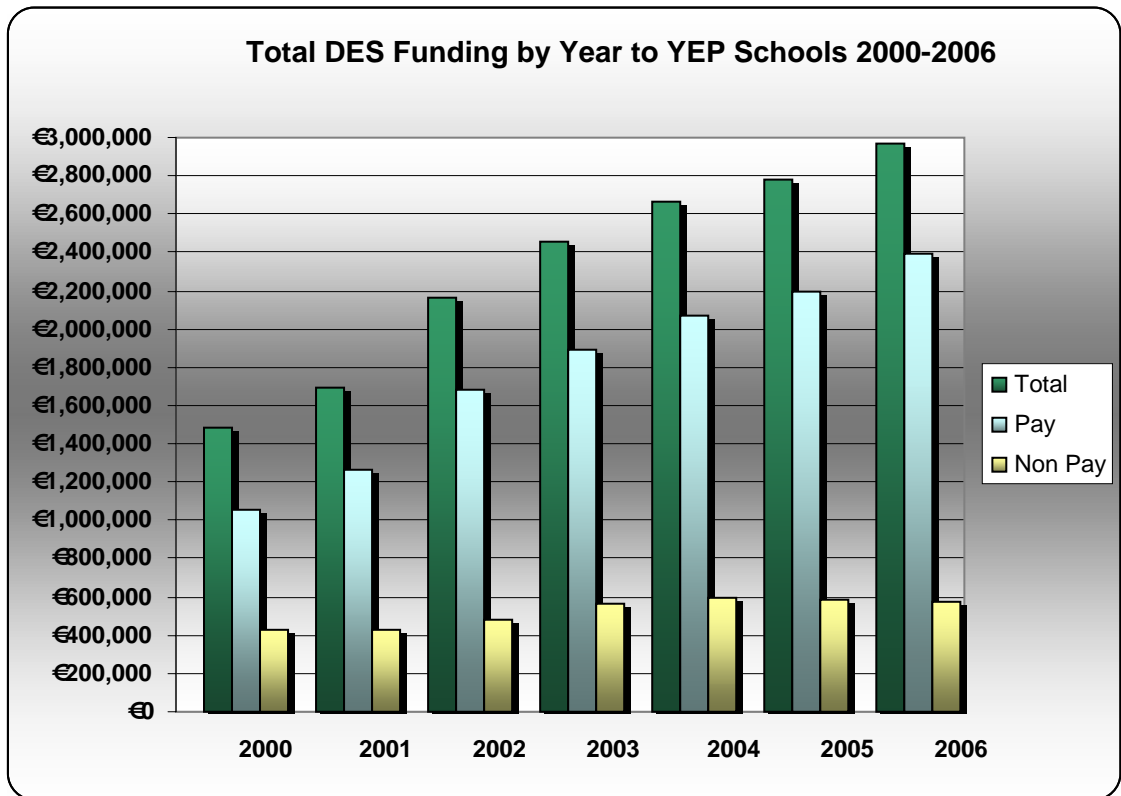
6.1.4 Funding Trends in the YEP School Sector

Chart 6(a) below illustrates a steady and considerable increase in the allocation of funding over 2000-2006. Pay costs account for the bulk of spending in the sector and show an increase of 140% approximately during this period. Non-pay expenditure has increased by approximately 40% in the same period, and has remained static since 2004. In 2000, non-pay accounted for 27% approximately of the total outlay in the sector whereas, in 2006, the corresponding figure was 20%.

Increases in pay expenditure can be accounted for primarily by the implementation of national pay agreements and incremental progression.

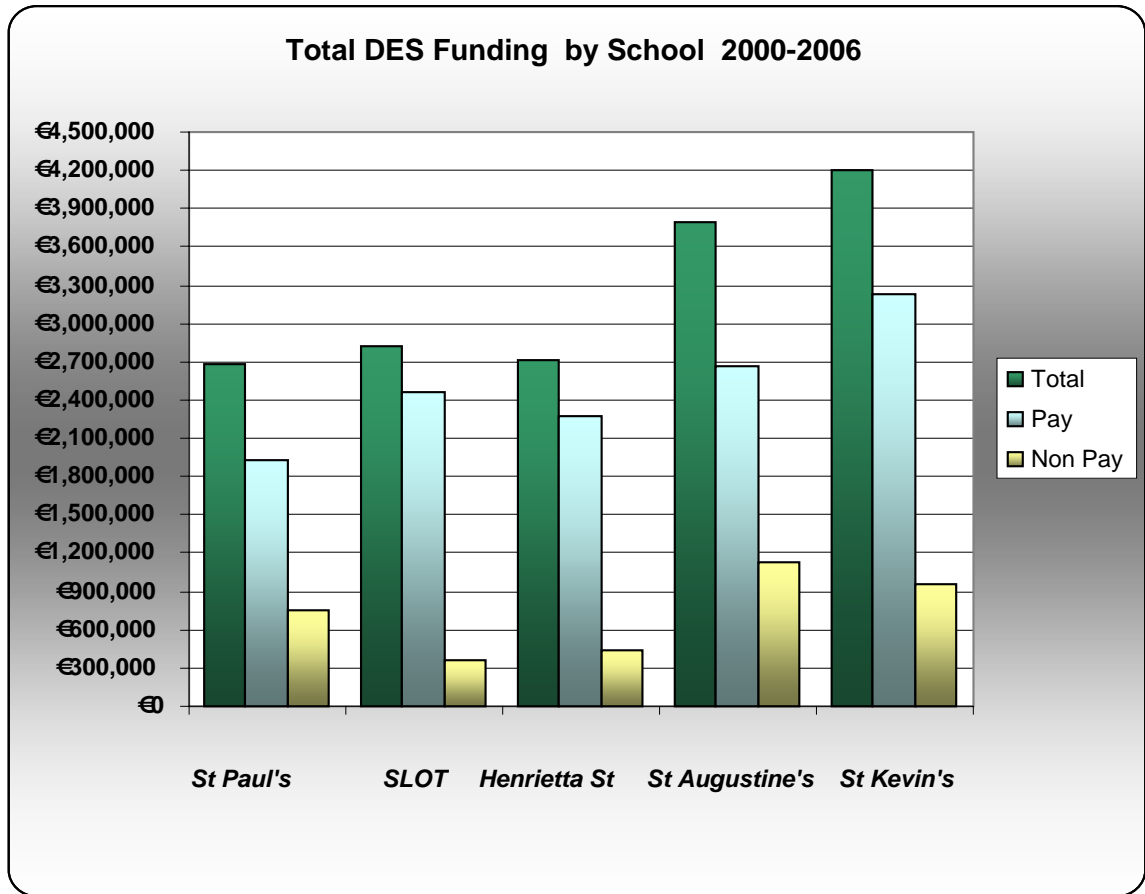
In relation to non-pay, the application of the nominal inflator and the effect of occasional one-off payments, such as maintenance works, account for the increase.

Chart 6(a)



6.1.5 Funding Trends in the Individual YEP Schools

Chart 6(b)



(a) Pay

Tables 3.4 and 3.5 above illustrate the considerable variation in non-teaching staff numbers in the schools. For example, St Kevin's has eight full-time and four part-time non-teaching staff paid for by the Department, whilst Henrietta St. has three full-time and no part time non-teaching staff. Such variations are attributable mainly to local decisions by school management in regard to numbers and types of staff that best serve the needs of the schools and students and the provision of services outside of school hours, and to the Department's response to the resulting request for resources. (In that regard, it should also be recognised that the availability of suitable accommodation in certain of the schools is a variable in the determination of the staffing allocation to each school (see Chapter 8.7).

Chart 6 (c)

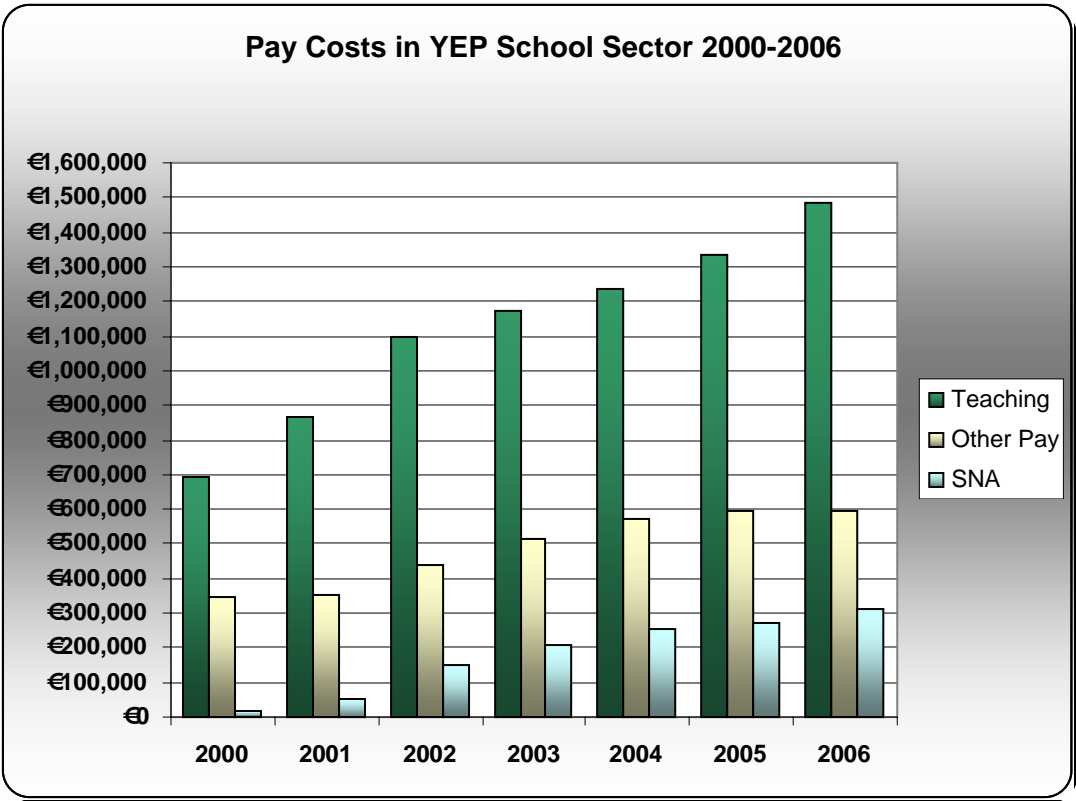
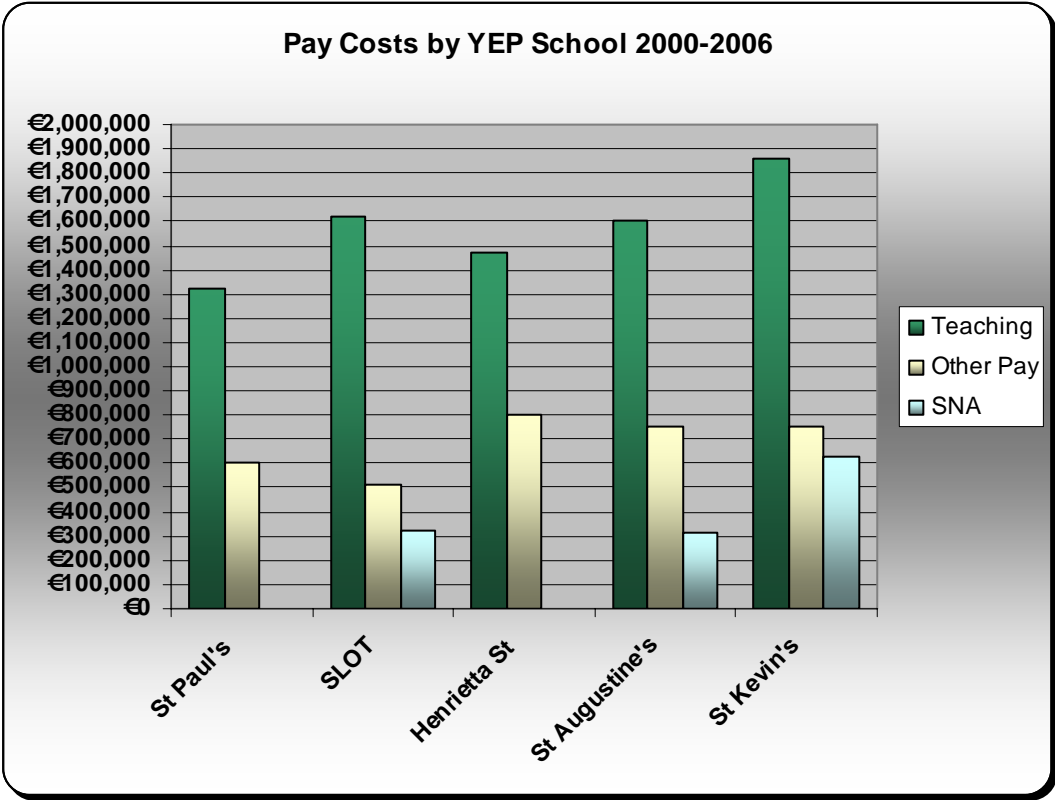


Chart 6(d)



The disparity in pay funding for each school can be attributed primarily to:

- The variation in numbers of non-teaching staff employed in each school
- The variation in category, qualification and experience of staff employed in each school.

A difference in category and experience of staff, rather than simply staffing numbers, may also have consequences for the salary paid to an individual and therefore to the cost incurred by the school. This is illustrated by comparing the non-teaching staff numbers of Henrietta St. to St. Paul's. Although St. Paul's employs four non-teaching staff, as opposed to three in Henrietta St, the cost in St. Paul's is less than that in Henrietta St. (€8,521 compared to €143,864 in 2005).

Such variations serve to illustrate a need for a degree of standardisation of staffing allocations across the five schools. This point is considered further in Chapter 10 below.

(b) Non-pay

There are variations, also, in the level of non-pay funding across the YEP schools. In part this is dictated by the physical circumstances that the schools find themselves in (e.g. the condition of the premises, facilities for the preparation of hot meals and the location of the school). In many respects, it is not possible for the Department to achieve more economies in the short term as, for example, more efficient expenditure on maintenance and transport might well involve the relocation of a school to a new site.

However, decisions made locally by school management in regard to appropriate services for the young people and staff (e.g. provision or otherwise of summer programmes, appropriate training for staff etc.) are within the Department's more immediate control. In these cases, the Department is in a position to ensure a more efficient use of funding, where funding is directed towards such services. Each of these points is considered further below.

The variation in non-pay funding across the sector can be attributed to:

The difference in condition of the various premises occupied by the schools: heating and maintenance costs are greater in the buildings which are in poor condition. This is illustrated by a comparison of the maintenance costs incurred in 2005 by St. Kevin's (€21,660), which is located in one of the poorer buildings, and the costs incurred by St. Laurence O'Toole's (€5,083),

housed in modern prefabricated accommodation. The availability of appropriate accommodation also influences whether certain subjects can be provided to the students on site (e.g., PE). Where this is not the case, the school may choose to locate the teaching of a subject off-site, and in so doing it may incur the additional cost of renting a suitable venue and transporting the students to that venue. The issue of the standard of accommodation for the schools is considered further in Section 8.7 below.

The provision, or otherwise, of a summer programme by the school: two of the YEP schools, St. Augustine's and St. Kevin's, provide summer programmes, involving the provision of activities for students during the month of July each year (see section 7.4. below).

Variation in the costs of providing meals: there is a significant variation in the costs of the provision of meals to the students. One school, St. Augustine's, spent €22,000 to €25,500 approximately per year in the period 2003-2005. In contrast, Henrietta St. spent €12,500 to €14,000 per year in the same period. It is difficult to identify precisely the reasons for this. It may be down to the variation in the type of food provided or due to more efficient sourcing of raw materials. It may also be true that the catering facilities in a school may have a bearing on cost; Henrietta St. does not have the capacity to provide hot meals, and, accordingly, students are provided with a range of cold dishes, including a wide variety of fruit and salads.

Variation in transport costs: Henrietta St, unlike the other four schools, does not possess a minibus and accordingly incurs significantly lower transport costs.

Variation in administration costs for the schools: There is a significant variation in the cost of administration in the schools. St. Augustine's and St. Kevin's each spent in excess of €25,000 annually in 2004 and 2005 in this regard, which is in excess of the combined spending of St. Paul's and Henrietta St. In the case of St. Paul's, the lack of space precludes the appointment of a secretary. In addition, the location of a school, e.g., St Augustine's, can give rise to particular security costs.

Variation in the cost of staff training: St. Kevin's, in the period 2003-2005, spent considerably more than the other four schools in this area.

These variations also raise obvious questions in regard to the relative efficiencies of the schools, a matter which is dealt with subsequently in this chapter.

(c) Financial Allocation and Control

The report is concerned with the ongoing disparity in funding across the schools, particularly in relation to non-pay and pay for non-teaching staff. Chapter 9 seeks to address this disparity through a range of proposals for harmonising resource allocations in the sector. In addition, the significant levels of funding involved call for strict financial management and control.

Recommendation

Accordingly, it is recommended that financial guidelines for the YEP schools are drawn up by the Department, on a partnership basis with the schools, governing such areas as:

- Approved areas of expenditure;
- Financial returns;
- Internal controls;
- Allocation of funding and teaching resources;
- Monitoring of budgets;
- Banking arrangements, including overdrafts;
- Payroll;
- Petty cash.

In this regard, it is noted that existing guidelines for the School Completion Programme (SCP) might serve as a useful template for any guidelines devised for the YEP schools.

6.2 Outputs

6.2.1 Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)

For students attending YEP schools, planning for learning is done in detail by means of individual learning plans. As a result of the referral process and based on initial assessments of each individual student, the schools draw up ILPs for students which are focused on their most significant needs. The plans identify realistic and appropriate goals for each student and allow for a structured progression to the achievement of these goals.

YEP schools report that ILPs are developed for all enrolled students. These were reviewed by the Inspectors in the course of the evaluation and were found, for the most part, to be very beneficial.

6.2.2 Formal Education Programmes

The educational programmes offered by the YEP schools are a core support to the schools in their efforts to achieve the stated objectives: the provision of personalised holistic education; retention in the education system and support towards progression (see Chapter 8 below). In that context, they reflect the needs and abilities of the students, identified on an individual basis and outlined by each student's IEP. It should also be recognised that certain programme choices are governed by a number of other factors, such as the specialist subject teaching available in each school and the availability of appropriate facilities in certain schools for the provision of practical subjects such as woodwork. Programme choice is also dependent on the relative balance between personal, social and academic goals chosen by the individual school.

Table 6.3 below illustrates the range of formal education programmes offered by each school in the 2005/06 school year. Not surprisingly, given the requirements of the students, the core subjects of English and Mathematics are taken by all students attending the YEP schools, reflecting their particular needs of the students in regard to literacy and numeracy.

The schools report that practical subjects appeal to the students. Thus, Art or Crafts is taken by all students. It is probable that the relatively low numbers of students following a woodwork course is attributable to the lack of appropriate facilities in certain schools.

Table 6.3 - Subjects undertaken in the YEP schools and numbers of students following each subject, by school and total 2005/06 school year

Name of Subject	St. Paul's	St. Laurence O'Toole's	Henrietta St.	St. Augustine's	St Kevin's	Total
English	20	24	19	22	22	107
Maths	20	24	19	22	22	107
Art/ Craft/Visual Art	20	24	19	22	22	107
IT	20	24	0	22	0	66
SPHE	0	24	19	22	0	65
P.E.	0	24	19	22	0	65
History	20	1	8	0	22	51
Home Economics	20	0	0	8	22	50
Woodwork	0	8	0	17	22	47
CSPE	0	7	6		14	27
SESE	0	24	0	0	0	24
Geography	20	0	3	0	0	23
Business Studies	0	0	2	10	0	12
Music	0	0	2	4	0	6
Science	0	0	5	0	0	5
Irish	0	0	2	0	0	2
ESS	0	0	1	0	0	1

Table 6.4 below illustrates the different approaches taken by the schools to preparing students for participation in the State examinations. This reflects decisions made at a local level by each school in respect of each individual student, based on the student's needs and abilities, and reflected in that pupil's ILP.

Table 6.4 - Total students who sat the Junior Certificate Exam, 2004-2006, by Subject

Subject	St. Paul's	St. Laurence O'Toole's	Henrietta St.	St. Augustine's ³	St. Kevin's	Total by Subject
English	11	12	24	0	19	66
Maths	10	12	19	0	19	60
Art/ Craft/Vis. Art	0	12	12	0	19	43
Metalwork	0	0	0	0	1	1
History	6	1	2	0	19	28
Woodwork	0	13	0	0	19	32
CSPE	0	12	9	0	19	40
Geography	6	0	2	0	0	8
Business Studies	6	0	2	0	0	8
Irish	0	0	1	0	1	2
ESS	0	0	14	0	0	14
Home Economics	9	0	0	0	19	28
Religious Education	0	0	1	0	0	1

Table 6.5 - Total students who participated in the Junior Certificate Schools Programme in 2006/2007

School	No of Students
St Paul's	27
St Laurence O Toole's	7
Henrietta Street	14
St Augustine's	24
St Kevin's	16

Recommendation

All schools should endeavour to maximise student participation in State examinations with a view to certification at junior certificate level, taking into account each student's needs and ability.

6.2.3 Off-Site Education Programmes

Schools reported that the following informal programmes were provided for the students: horse riding; educational trips, go karting, quad biking, dry slope skiing, shopping; visits to the cinema; gardening; camping; fishing; hiking.

³ No student in a position to sit examination subjects. 4 students sat Junior Cert examinations in June 2007.

The types of informal programmes offered are dependent on the particular skills of individual staff members in the schools and the availability of programmes and appropriate facilities in the locality. The precise nature of programme is not crucial; rather, it is the positive effect that a programme may have on a student's social and life skills that is important. The effectiveness of the integration of the formal and informal learning programmes in order to provide holistic education is dealt with in detail in Chapter 7 below.

6.2.4 Summer Programmes

Two of the YEP schools have identified a requirement for summer programmes, in which the young people take part in non-academic activities such as climbing, fishing and horse-riding for part of the month of July of each year. They are thereby retained for a longer period in the YEP school setting and given additional opportunities to develop social skills.

Some schools have in the past accessed summer programmes organised by third parties. However, difficulties arose in these instances, where the staff facilitating the programmes were unfamiliar with the young people and their particular behavioural issues. Accordingly, the schools perceive that, if a summer programme is to be successful, it needs the involvement of the YEP staff, as they have the best knowledge of the behaviour of the students. In that regard, the availability of staff in the schools to involve themselves in summer programmes is limited, as the summer break is seen as essential in avoiding burnout of school personnel.

Recommendation

This report notes that summer programmes are provided under the auspices of the School Completion Programme, part of the Department of Education and Science's strategy to cater for young people who are at risk of or who are experiencing educational disadvantage. Accordingly, where a school identifies the need for a summer programme for its students, the possibility of integrating with a local SCP-funded programme should be explored.

6.3 Cost Comparison with Other Forms of Educational Provision

In any evaluation, it must always be borne in mind that inputs lead not only to outputs but also to outcomes, and that an examination of outputs alone is not sufficient to measure the true performance of any model of education provision.

This consideration is even more apt in any review of the YEP schools, which are specialised educational organisations dealing with some of the most marginalised and at risk young people. The position in the YEP schools is further complicated by the fact that the objectives of the schools are not reflective of the objectives of typical mainstream schools, in that success in state examinations is not the main priority. Even within the YEP school sector itself, in order to achieve common objectives, different approaches are taken and, accordingly, schools place different emphases on the delivery of academic programmes.

Accordingly, it is the effectiveness of the YEP schools, rather than their efficiency, that is most critical in an evaluation of the sector. Chapter 7 addresses this area, and in doing so, it will be demonstrated that it is not always possible, and often problematic, to quantify outcomes. Nevertheless, although an examination of the effectiveness of the schools could be considered a “crude” exercise, it does allow a fuller portrait of the schools emerge and, consequently, a fuller understanding of how they operate.

In considering efficiency, comparisons are made with the costs of education provision in the following categories of schools:

- YEP schools;
- Mainstream disadvantaged primary schools;
- Children detention schools.

Global figures for the primary sector were not available and, accordingly, for the purposes of this evaluation, an actual mainstream disadvantaged primary school was identified and the pay and non-pay resources allocated to that school quantified, in order to give indicative figures for comparison. It is probable that the majority of the students attending the YEP schools received their early education in such a school, and accordingly, it is argued that a comparison between the YEP schools and mainstream disadvantaged schools is valid.

A cursory examination of the data indicates that per capita expenditure in the mainstream disadvantaged school is 20-25 % of that spent in the YEP school sector. However, as has been noted previously, many of the young people attending YEP schools have been, or possibly are, involved in crime and it is not untypical that the young person's family also has some criminal involvement. Accordingly, without the intervention of the YEP schools, a very real alternative for these young people is their conviction and committal to one of the children detention schools, which cater for young offenders up to age 16.

Unlike the YEP schools, children detention schools are secure residential facilities staffed by care, teaching, administrative and ancillary staff. They operate on a 24-hour basis. Due to the nature of the service they provide, their premises are substantial, and therefore incur considerable ongoing maintenance costs. Accordingly, it is not surprising that an examination of the per capita cost of each category of school (see table 6.6 below) clearly shows that the State's investment in YEP schools runs at approximately 8-9% of expenditure in the children detention school sector, based on the maximum capacity of each type of facility. Accordingly, expenditure on a young person in a YEP school, where that expenditure leads to retention and successful progression, as it seems to do in the majority of cases, represents a comparatively efficient use of public resources and, consequently, a prudent investment on behalf of the State.

Table 6.6 - Per-capita cost (€) of YEP schools, mainstream disadvantaged primary schools and children detention schools 2001-2005

Year	YEP school cost	Mainstream disadvantaged primary school ⁴	Children Detention School (CDS) cost ⁵	Disadvantaged school cost as % of YEP cost	YEP cost as % of CDS cost
2001	14,047	3,612	162,488	25.70	8.6
2002	18,074	3,935	214,221	21.80	8.4
2003	20,424	4,494	212,430	22.00	9.6
2004	22,203	4,856	249,488	21.90	8.9
2005	22,245	5,322	267,119	23.90	8.3

⁴ The per capita cost in mainstream disadvantaged schools is averaged in these schools over the total school enrolment, whereas the actual cost is incurred to support a subset of students. The per capita cost in those schools would be considerably higher if applied to those students only.

⁵ Cost includes 24-hour residential care.

Chapter 7 Effectiveness of the YEP Schools

This chapter addresses term of reference 4:

Examine the extent that the programme objectives have been achieved and comment on the effectiveness with which they have been achieved.

7.1 Objective 1: ‘to provide personalised holistic education for young people at risk’.

On the basis of the evaluations carried out by the Inspectors, there is clear evidence, in almost all of the schools, of the professional delivery of ‘personalised holistic education’ to the young people in their care. Personal development, development of social skills and academic attainment occur within a nurturing, caring, stimulating and structured environment. In most cases, students are seen to be engaged in a positive and productive way in their own learning and in the broader life of the school. Individual learning plans (ILPs) and individual behaviour plans are used as structures to support learning, motivate, encourage and measure achievement. Every aspect of this ‘personalised holistic education’ is planned and executed, for the most part, in a highly professional, structured and flexible manner.

It should be recognised that the degree of success in the delivery of personalised holistic education can vary. On occasion, students exhibit an inability and unwillingness to comply with school rules, designed with their needs and abilities in mind. Such occurrences can impact negatively on a school’s attempts to deliver holistic education. Incidents of intimidation, verbal abuse and violence among students can occasionally occur, affecting the efforts of staff to implement plans for individual students. Nevertheless, even in these circumstances, efforts to promote academic performance are successful. However, it is sometimes the case that further attention would be beneficial in regard to the development of students’ social skills, their ability to interact positively with each other and with their teachers, and their ability to conform to societal norms in terms of their behaviour.

In many respects, the cohort of students in each of the schools is similar in terms of their backgrounds and attainment levels. However, the schools fulfil the objective of providing a personalised holistic education in a variety of ways. In some schools, there is strong focus on the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills along with other academic skills. In other

schools, there is a much greater variety apparent in the provision of formal and informal learning activities. In some schools, the students spend considerable parts of their day engaged in activities outside the school, while, in other schools, fewer opportunities for external activities are provided.

The schools plan successfully for the implementation of the range of formal and informal learning activities they provide. To a significant degree, informal learning activities occur outside the school and are well-planned and managed. They are linked to the provision of holistic education and it is evident that the students appreciate what is offered and participate enthusiastically. In providing these activities, the schools intend to offer the students the opportunity to develop their social skills, to develop a sense of teamwork and also to entice students to participate in activities with which they would not normally engage. In a small number of cases, the provision of these activities facilitates informal contact between individual staff members and students. In having a cup of tea, for example, the student might be encouraged by a staff member to discuss progress or, perhaps, to seek a resolution to a particular problem. Planning documents provided by the schools highlight the importance of incidental learning in these activities. Staff members are suitably encouraged in these documents to recognise the importance of informal learning opportunities.

7.2 Objective 2: ‘the retention of these young people in the education system.’

As the YEP schools have evolved, students have tended to stay longer in the schools. Charts 7(a) & 7(b) and tables 7.1 & 7.2 below illustrate this point.

Chart 7(a)

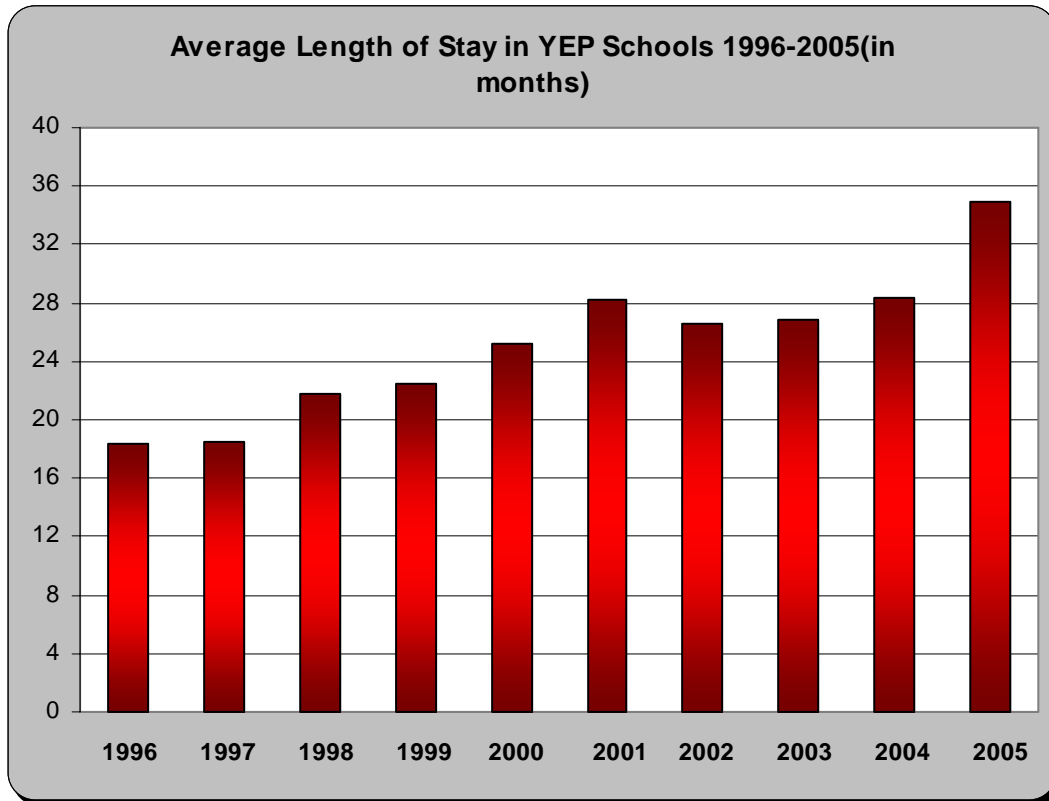


Table 7.1 - Average Length of Stay (in months) in YEP Schools, per school 1996-2005

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	YEP Average 96-05
St Paul's	*	11	34	34	31	36	33	30	27	33	30
St Laurence O'Tooles	*	*	*	*	*	16	30	23	29	21	24
Henrietta Street	7	12	8	13	18	13	16	18	24	28	16
St Augustine's	26	26	25	21	33	52	31	37	42	67	36
St Kevin's	22	25	20	22	19	24	23	26	20	26	23
Average Per year	18	19	22	23	25	28	27	27	28	35	25

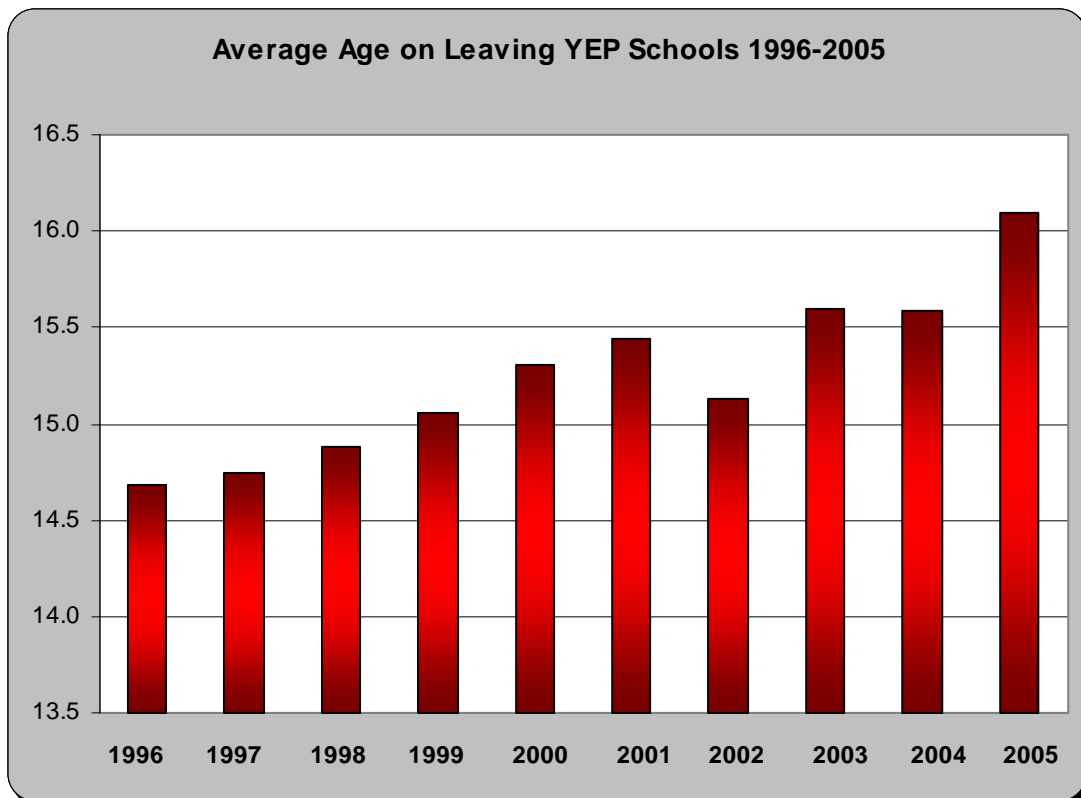
* Data not available

Table 7.2 - Average Age on Leaving YEP Schools, per school, 1996-2005

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	YEP Average 96-05
St Pauls	*	14.1	14.8	15.9	15.0	15.9	15.9	15.9	16.2	16.0	15.5
St Laurence O Toole's	*	*	*	*	*	13.9	14.6	15.5	15.4	15.8	15.0
Henrietta Street	14.6	14.6	14.9	14.9	14.6	14.9	15.0	15.3	15.4	15.8	15.0
St Augustine's	14.8	15.3	15.9	15.2	17.0	17.3	15.7	16.0	16.3	18.0	16.1
St Kevin's	14.7	15.0	14.0	14.3	14.6	15.1	14.5	15.3	14.7	14.9	14.7
Average Per year	14.7	14.7	14.9	15.1	15.3	15.4	15.1	15.6	15.6	16.1	15.3

* Data not available

Chart 7(b)



In 1996, the average age of students leaving YEP schools was 14 years 8 months approximately. In 2005, the average age of leaving was 16 years one month. This is a considerable achievement, particularly when the personal circumstances of the young people and the poor working conditions in a majority of the YEP schools are taken into account (see Chapter 8 below). It is clear that much effort has been made by the schools to encourage students to engage in learning, to appreciate their progress, and to set individual goals. This is supported by the very particular ethos observed in each school and expressed by students and parents alike in terms of the 'respect' shown to each individual student and the significant fact that teachers were perceived to have 'time' for them. The schools provide a caring environment, in which meals are provided, shared by staff and students, students are listened to, new beginnings are frequent, and the students know that someone will 'be there' for them. This environment serves as an indispensable element in the retention of the students and in their engagement with learning. The students' understanding too that their individual needs are being met, particularly in the area of basic literacy, means that they are more willing to stay in school. Given the severity of their needs and the extent to which they encounter hostility and failure, the retention of these young people in these schools is, in itself, a considerable success.

As part of the evaluation process, interviews were conducted with students and parents. A strong sense emerged from these discussions of both groups being cognisant and appreciative of the benefits of holistic education provided by the YEP schools. In a forthright manner, many of the students stated that, in the absence of the YEP school model of education, they would most likely not be in school. Indeed, a number stated that the probability of their committal to a children detention school was high. Parents supported this view independently and stated that the YEP schools were instrumental in ensuring that their children were focused on learning.

The fact that these young people are retained in the education system has brought benefits to their parents. Parents report a lessening of fear in their dealings with schools and teachers. Knowing that their children will be purposefully occupied in school has also enabled many parents to obtain part-time employment. This, reportedly, has resulted in the development of self-esteem among parents, thereby allowing them to deal more effectively with their children.

Average attendance figures were also provided by the YEP schools. When considering such data, it should be recognised that, due to the low numbers of students enrolled in the schools, the

absence of one or two students can cause a noticeable decline in the percentage attendance rate. Nevertheless, it is of some concern that overall attendance figures have been dropping consistently in the period 2002-2005. In 2002, the average attendance figure for the five YEP schools stood at 81%. This figure has declined each year in the intervening period to 70% in 2005 (see Chart 7(c) and Table 7.3 below).

Chart 7(c)

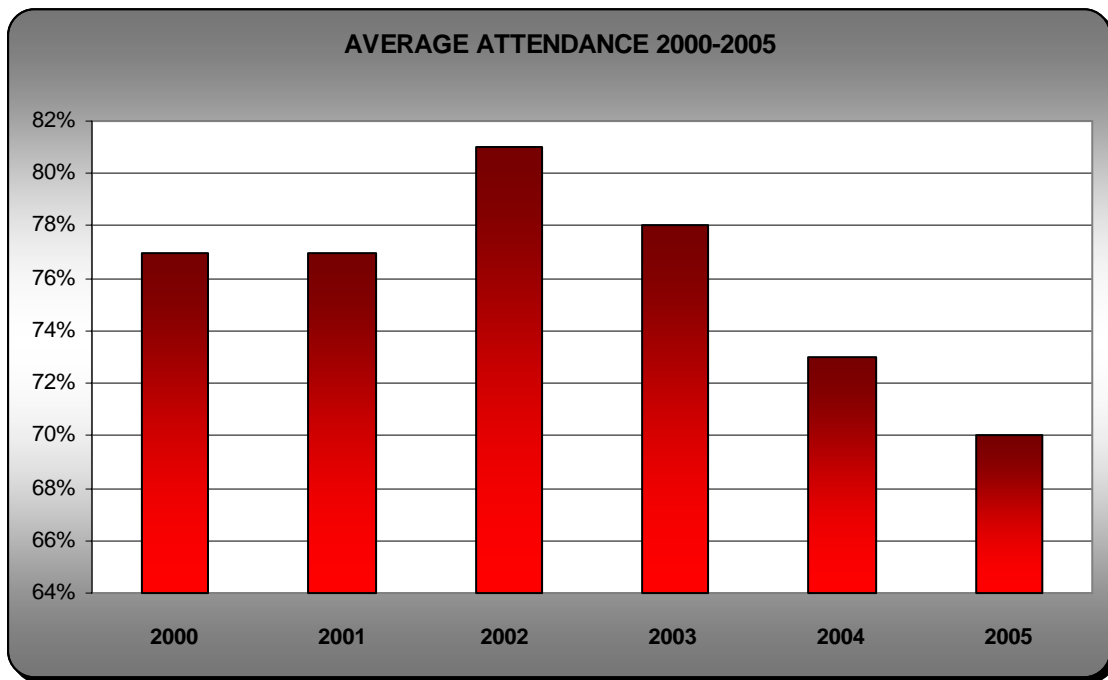


Table 7.3

School	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
	<i>E</i>	<i>A%</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>A%</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>A%</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>A%</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>A%</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>A%</i>
St. Paul's	18	89	22	77	20	85	21	81	24	58	24	67
St. Laurence O'Toole's	22	81	24	79	24	80	24	76	25	84	24	81
Henrietta St.	11	72	20	79	20	83	20	80	20	76	19	71
St. Augustine's	25	74	23	73	25	79	24	77	20	77	21	61
St. Kevin's	20	70	22	76	23	77	24	76	22	68	21	70
Total	96	77	111	77	112	81	113	78	111	73	109	70

E = Enrolment on 1st Dec

A = Average Percentage Attendance

It is difficult to precisely identify the reasons for the reductions in attendance. However, representatives of the schools identified the following as probable reasons for this development:

- An increase in the number of students whose situation of care and life circumstances are severely chaotic;
- The worsening standards of behaviour, and levels of compliance with school norms, as exhibited by the students;
- A lack of appreciation, on the part of the students, of the benefits of education;
- The availability of employment opportunities, where none had previously existed.
- The manner in which schools maintain students on register in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

Generally, staff in the schools considered that, in the past, though still presenting with seriously challenging behaviour, students were more likely to comply with school rules and routines. They were less aggressive and less prone to violent outbursts. It was considered that the growing levels of violence in elements of Irish society, the serious impact of addiction to alcohol and other drugs among parents and some students, and the view that marginalised communities have experienced few of the tangible benefits of the economic boom over the past decade, all reflected themselves in the behaviour and attitude of many of the students.

Also of note is the fact that, where attendance levels have fallen most dramatically in the period 2002-2005 (79% to 61% in the case of one school and 85% to 67% in another), the level of non-pay funding made available by the Department has not grown significantly; indeed, 2005 saw a slight decline. The principals of some schools argue that the decline in funding has impeded their ability to provide as extensive a range of informal learning activities. This in turn, they argue, makes their schools less attractive to students and leads directly to poorer attendance levels. This view is supported by the students in interviews, where they state that the most positive aspect of the school day is the opportunity to attend informal learning activities. In providing these activities, it is argued that the school ensures that the students' interest in their learning will be maintained.

Until recently, Department regulations determined that students who missed 15 consecutive school days were automatically struck off the school roll, which in turn allowed a school enrol a

new student. Since the beginning of the 2003/04 school year, students cannot be struck off roll until they have obtained a place in another school or educational establishment. In the interim, the students are marked absent, even though in reality the likelihood of them returning to the YEP school is remote. In all probability, a combination of the above factors has led to poorer attendance figures.

However, in some schools, attendance rates have been maintained and, in all cases, the schools have been forced to respond imaginatively to increased absenteeism. In some instances, parents receive telephone calls if students do not present for school by a certain time. In other instances, parents receive a telephone text message. In a minority of instances, school staff, usually the school's community worker or youth worker, will search the area in order to locate and bring the student to school. While the issue is not resolved, it can be stated that the YEP schools are endeavouring to address the problem to the best of their abilities.

Recommendations

Locally-devised strategies which are successful in tackling the issue of non-attendance should be identified and shared among all YEP schools.

An appropriate level of non-pay funding, to facilitate the provision of a range of informal learning activities, should be made available by the Department to each YEP school.

7.3 Objective 3: 'to provide support for these young people towards progression'.

Achieving this objective is an integral part of all aspects of the programme in the schools. This is understood by the students who know that the staff members in the school display considerable interest in their well-being and future prospects. This is evident in the support that individual members of staff offer to students during the course of the school day, and in after-school activities and summer programmes. From interviews with former students conducted in the course of the evaluation, the inspectors saw not just that these young people had progressed, but also noted the improved quality of life of these past students arising from their second chance of an education designed to meet their needs. In all cases, the former students reflected on the positive difference the school had made in their lives. In one school, former students are employed in the school, thus giving current students positive role models.

The Inspectors' observations of the students' written work identified improvements in the literacy levels from very low bases. These improvements are some of the most significant successes of the YEP schools, and are key to the progression of the students. In that regard, most of the schools focus intensively on addressing low literacy levels, thus ensuring that the students grow in confidence.

Planning for literacy and numeracy is evident in all of the schools. However, the issue of such planning is linked to the current status of the YEP schools as primary schools and needs to be addressed. Because the schools are officially categorised as primary schools, they are offered support from primary-related support services. These include the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI) and the Primary Curriculum Support Service (PCSS). Since 2006/07, all schools access support provided for the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP). These services also provide a generic model of support. However, the complexity of students' needs in literacy and numeracy, coupled with their behavioural and emotional difficulties, require support not currently available to the schools. Further, the age range of students, all of whom are older than 11 years of age, places further demands on the staff in relation to planning for literacy and numeracy.

In planning for literacy, some schools utilise the strands and the strand units of the English primary curriculum. Further consideration should be given to the appropriateness of this. Most of the students in the schools are aged between twelve and sixteen and, therefore, should be accessing post-primary syllabuses in literacy and numeracy. Their previous experience of school, however, is such that their ability to achieve in age-appropriate tasks is limited. Unlike other teaching situations, there appear to be few, if any, ready-made resources available to teachers in YEP schools which address the literacy and numeracy needs of low-achieving teenagers.

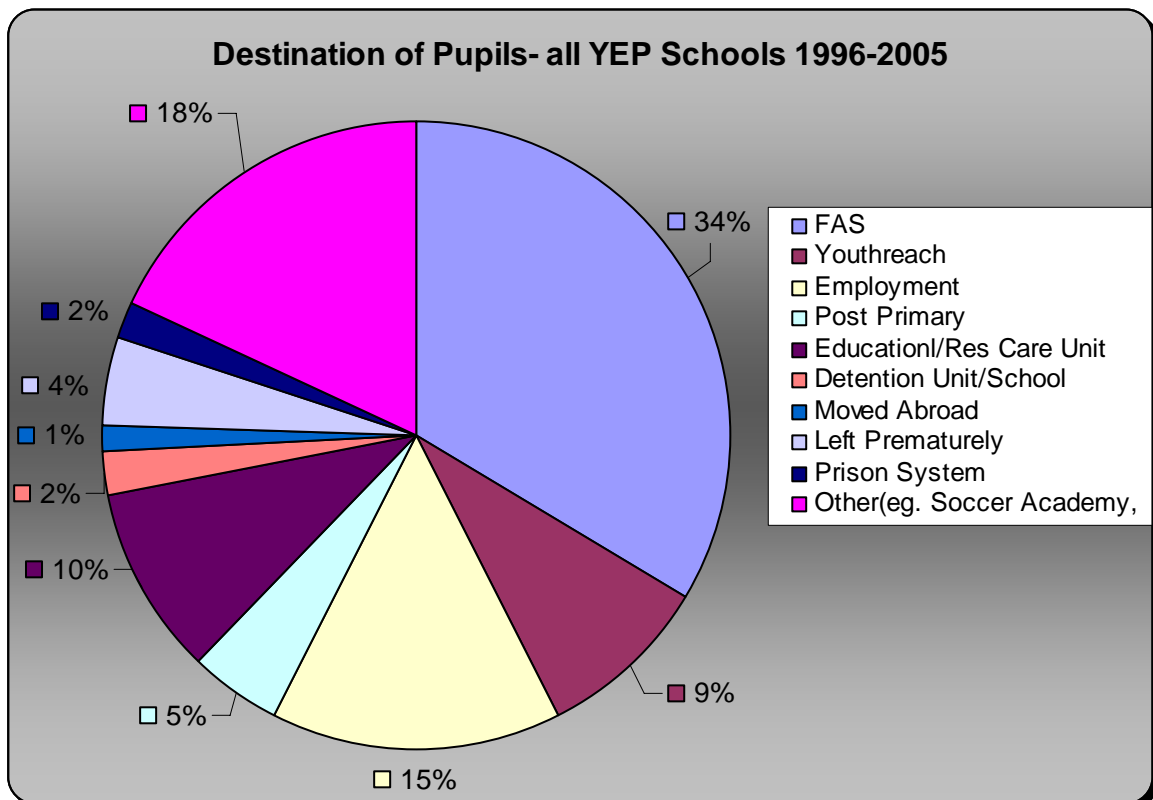
Recommendation: In order to improve the provision of literacy and numeracy programmes:

- Best practice in the areas of literacy and numeracy should be identified. This might be achieved through a consultation process between the principals of the schools and the Department with the aim of identifying best practice.

- Appropriate training programmes should be similarly identified and facilitated by boards of management.
- The range of supports provided by the literacy and numeracy co-ordinators, under the DEIS scheme should be available to the YEPs.
- Teachers should be encouraged to avail of post-graduate, in-service and learning support courses.

Data are available on the progression of 333 former students of the five schools between 1996 and 2005 (see Chart H below). It is worth noting that approximately 76% of these transferred to either further training with FÁS, Youthreach or other local agencies, to employment or, in a very small number of cases, to mainstream schools. This supports the view that, for the majority of students, the model of provision in YEP schools is successful with regard to providing support towards progression.

Chart 7(d)



Of concern is the difficulty in ascertaining the long-term impact of the YEP schools. The degree to which these schools impact in the long-term on the lives of their students is not possible to determine with any degree of accuracy. Given the level of personal and social supports to which these young people have become accustomed in the school, survival in any of these areas is not guaranteed without commensurate supports. Leaving the school at sixteen years of age, the social and family environments of these students continue to pose severe challenges for them. Inability to determine outcomes after the student leaves the school, in the medium and longer term, does not, however, negate the substantial progress being made by them in educational, social and behavioural fields, as observed in the course of this evaluation.

7.4 Summary of Outcomes of the YEP School Programme

The successful achievement of the objectives has led to long-term positive outcomes for students, staff, the education system and the wider communities in which the schools are located.

7.4.1 Outcomes affecting students

Students are likely to benefit considerably from their attendance at a YEP school. The main benefits to the students, and ultimately to their local communities and society, observed in the course of the evaluation are:

- *Improved retention in the educational system:* Described on 7.2 above.
- *Noticeable improvement in life skills, growth in self-confidence and especially in self-esteem:* Where this was taking place, students were able to explain their misbehaviour in previous schooling and understand why they were behaving differently and more appropriately in their current school. A concrete example of this is the manner in which students, teachers and staff prepare and share their meals. Though used by the schools as a means of informal monitoring of student progress, the students themselves interact freely and confidently with the staff. In that regard, not all YEP schools are as successful in developing students' life skills. In most cases, acceptable norms of school behaviour

were maintained; however, occasional outbursts of violent and threatening behaviour were observed during the evaluation process.

- *An ability to engage with people:* The students see themselves as less alienated from society. This is highly significant for students who experience violence and neglect in their home circumstances and whose main responses to these would be either hostility or withdrawal.
- *Progress in literacy skills:* Such progress was observed in a number of ways. For example, students described by themselves and by their teachers some months previously as 'non-reading' were now engaging in reading and writing activities, some were seen to progress through the grades of UK literacy tests, while others were working progressively through an ICT literacy programme with measurable outcomes.

However, there are inherent difficulties in recording and analysing achievement and attainment in the overall literacy levels of learners as a variety of non-coordinated programmes exist. Schools operate in different ways. Individual learning plans with specific strengths, targets, projections and review dates are not always available. Sometimes whole-school procedures are in place and one-to-one support is provided. Many learners present initially with different levels of literacy difficulty. A number of assessment approaches are in operation but many are of an informal or non-standardised nature.

It should be stated, however, that in most of the YEP schools, the issue of expertise in literacy was raised. Personnel in some YEP schools have identified a lack of expertise among second level-trained teachers, in particular in addressing the development of literacy skills among students. A degree of frustration with regard to this issue was expressed by staff members, who felt that more could be done for students if further training was provided in the areas of diagnostic testing and planning for literacy development.

- *Academic Achievement:* In some instances, students progress to the extent that they are in a position to sit the Junior Certificate examination. This level of progression, however, is not in evidence in all of the YEP schools (see Table 6.4).
- *Supports for the student towards progression:* While links with FÁS, Youthreach and other agencies and schools are necessary, the significant work of re-focusing the student towards a future career/training/job, supporting him/her to want to progress and to understand and believe that he/she can do it is the most important and difficult part of this process.
- *Follow-on supports:* To some extent, the schools continue to support students after they leave the YEP school. On an informal basis, former students regularly drop in to the schools to chat to staff. While this is not a key current function of the YEP school, it is, nonetheless, worthwhile.
- *Awareness of the professionals within the Justice System:* Judges are cognisant of the YEP schools and of their potential as an invaluable intervention to support at risk young persons. Accordingly, when making a decision regarding the future placement of a young person presenting before a court, YEP schools are often seen as a viable alternative to the commitment of that person to a children detention school.

7.4.2 Outcomes affecting school staff

- *Cooperative effort:* There is a significant level of collaboration among all members of staff evident in the schools. Good policies and systems, particularly those aimed at ensuring the best possible management of the students' behaviour, facilitate this degree of collaboration. Of most benefit, however, is the sense of teamwork which exists in the schools.
- *Internal communications systems:* Communications systems within the schools are well developed. Individual staff members are aware of students' strengths and weaknesses which are discussed regularly.

7.4.3 Outcomes affecting the education system

Significant benefits accrue to the education system as a result of the existence of the YEP schools. These include:

- *A successful, alternative model of education provision:* Students, who previously would have been categorised as being difficult in the extreme, are in school and working purposefully. The following outlines the story of one student: In an interview, he described how completely different his current experience of formal education was compared to his experiences in his former school. He had been suspended many times and, ultimately, was excluded as a result of an assault on a teacher. He states that he now looks forward to coming to school, how he interacts positively with all concerned and has kept himself out of trouble in school. It must be stated, however, that while this aspect of his life has improved considerably, the reality of his existence outside of school still means regular contact with An Garda Síochána.
- *Development of expertise:* Significant expertise now exists in these schools in the management of students whose previous experience of school was very negative. These management skills encompass the students' behaviour and their learning needs and are used in the drawing up of each student's individual behaviour plan. This expertise has been developed often as a result of dealing with very difficult situations. Staff, in some instances, display remarkable resilience, perseverance and empathy with their students. Crucial to the development of this expertise is the leadership offered by the principals. Their role is complex and demanding. It is evident in most cases, however, that they tackle the complexities of the job with a significant degree of skill, understanding and empathy for both the students and members of staff.

Recommendation: This expertise should be made available, through properly-supported structures, to the wider education community.

7.4.4 Outcomes affecting parents and the wider community

- *Effect on parental attitude to education:* Parents of the students are favourably disposed towards the schools. They recognise and articulate the benefits their children derive from

their attendance at a YEP school. Many parents, in interviews with the inspectors, highlighted how different this was from their previous experiences of schools and education in general. These had almost universally been negative as a result of their children's chronic poor behaviour. This positive regard for the schools among parents is evidenced by the active participation in one instance of parents on a board of management and their stated willingness to come to the school when requested.

- *Effect on the Wider Community:* Relations with the local community are, for the most part, very positive. Students can participate in a number of activities as representatives of the school. If they were acting in an individual capacity, they would be precluded from many of these activities. An example of this is that students from a particular school, accompanied by staff, are allowed into a particular shopping centre to purchase materials, although, individually, many of the students are banned from the centre.

7.5 Achievement of the Objectives: Summary

It is evident that, in most cases, the programme objectives are successfully attained: the YEP schools are providing personalised holistic education for young people at risk, retaining many of these young people in the education system and providing support for them towards progression. Where the objectives are attained a uniformity of purpose is evident, as there are clear expectations among all staff regarding standards and behaviour. In situations where the objectives are not successfully attained, it is clear that there is insufficient focus on the implementation of behaviour management strategies.

The objectives of the YEP schools, as devised in December 2005, are appropriate and the schools are supported in achieving these objectives as a result of having a clearly-defined ethos. In each of the schools the students are made to feel welcome, are supported academically and emotionally and are encouraged to think positively about their futures. Their needs are assessed and appropriate programmes are devised to ensure individualised goals are achieved and progress is affirmed. There is a distinctive structure in the schools which is suited to the needs of the students. While at times presented with extremely challenging behaviour, it appears that

staff morale in the schools is high. There is a good sense of each member of the team working constructively towards bettering the lives of troubled young people.

Chapter 8 YEP Schools: Other Operational Issues

This chapter is intended to provide an understanding of the operation of the YEP schools. It considers the management and planning functions as well as the resource and staffing issues which affect the day-to-day running and determine the quality of education provision in the schools. In that regard, it also considers the issue of student discipline and school accommodation, both of which have a very real bearing on the ability of the schools to function optimally. The findings highlighted in this chapter are supported by the data provided by the schools to the Department, and by the observations of the Department administrative staff and the Inspectors as a result of their visits to the schools.

8.1 Management

8.1.1 Role of the Board of Management

Each of the schools has a functioning and, in most cases, an effective and supportive board of management. The boards meet regularly during the course of the school year. A notable feature of the boards is the commitment of individual members to the educational and emotional welfare of students. The effectiveness of the boards is augmented by the professional expertise and experience of individual members. It is to be welcomed that two boards have parental representation.

Boards of management concern themselves appropriately with the business of their schools. Members of the boards of management, individually and collectively, display considerable understanding of the challenges facing their schools. They play an important role in the planning process, particularly in their consideration of administrative plans and policies. Generally, these are prepared by staff members and are presented to the boards for discussion, amendment and, ultimately, ratification. They receive regular reports on the progress, or otherwise, of individual students. The issue of training for board members, for teachers and for other YEP school personnel was raised at most of the meetings with boards of management. A common theme expressed by three of the five boards of management is the poor standard of accommodation of the school. Each has addressed this issue with the Department, which is actively seeking alternative accommodation for the schools.

Recommendation: It is recommended that all YEP boards are constituted in accordance with the provisions of *Boards of Management of National Schools Constitution of Boards and Rules of Procedure*.

8.1.2 Day-to-Day Operation of the YEP Schools

The schools are, for the most part, effectively administered. The pivotal role of the principal in that regard is very evident. The position is challenging and complex, and demands excellent communication skills. Principals are frequently called on to assist teachers in managing student behaviour, fulfilling in some instances a quasi-counselling role. Excluding teachers, students and parents, a wide range of agencies is regularly consulted in the management of students' progress and welfare. They are also expected to provide instructional leadership in their schools. Each of the five schools could benefit significantly from full-time secretarial support which is currently not available in the majority of the schools.

In almost all cases, the day-to-day experiences of the students are positive. They are encouraged to attend to assigned tasks in a calm and responsible manner. That they do so is due, to a significant degree, to the tone set firstly by the principals of the schools, but also to the collaboration that exists among staff members. The principals are capably supported by the members of their respective staffs. In some instances, clearly-defined roles and responsibilities have been delegated to individual members of staff. Assigned tasks are carried out effectively and efficiently. This is evidenced, for example, in the referral procedures which are in place in the schools. In this scenario, non-teaching staff members are tasked with providing links between the potential student, his or her parents and the student's previous school. They also provide a professional liaison between services and agencies and the school.

8.2 Planning

It is evident that these schools engage professionally in school development planning. There is a good sense of each being aware of its strengths and the challenges it faces. The staff members as a whole work collaboratively towards the compilation of plans and policies suited to the needs of the students and the school in general. The influence of the different patron bodies is evident in some of the schools' planning documents. In some instances, boards of management have

facilitated the planning process by providing external facilitation. Commendably, other schools have involved students in defining the school's mission statements. Staff members meet regularly to discuss the progress of individual students. There is a good balance between whole-staff meetings and smaller group meetings. These planning meetings have regular review and development as central themes.

Other administrative areas are suitably planned for, including health and safety, sexual harassment and the schools' referrals processes. This latter policy, in particular, has been drawn up in schools as a result of previous experiences and the availability of expertise among the staff. In each school, it highlights the benefits of working collaboratively towards meeting the needs of the students and emphasises the role of community, social or youth workers in ensuring a successful transition is made between the students' previous school and the YEP school. For most students, the transition between their previous schools and the YEP school is generally successful. This is the case even where students have been out of school for a prolonged period, which can be as much as two years. Much of the success in this area is due to the careful planning which occurs before the student commences in the YEP school.

8.3 Approach to Student Discipline

Another significant challenge faced by the YEP schools is the management of the students' behaviour. In interviews with the students, many of them pointed out that they were aware of the difficulties their behaviour had caused in their previous schools. For some, causing trouble and being in trouble was the norm. A small number had been involved in serious assaults on fellow students and, in some instances, assaults on teachers. Parents too were cognisant of the serious difficulties their children's behaviour presented to schools and teachers in general. In most cases, the schools very successfully ensure that the tone and atmosphere in the schools is positive, that the students are treated respectfully and that the teachers and staff are treated in a similar manner by the students. In order to ensure a positive tone and atmosphere, there is a good balance evident between formal and informal learning activities in the school. In most of the YEP schools, however, there are occasional instances of aggression, threatening behaviour and violence that must be dealt with. Managing these situations is difficult. The teachers and staff require training and support in that regard. Many of the personnel working in the YEP

schools have benefited from training in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI). It is of concern, however, that this training has not been available to all staff members. A significant degree of expertise and experience exists among the staff in the schools and this should be utilised to the benefit of all working in this area, and, accordingly, the best providers of in-service training for the schools in that regard may be personnel currently working within the schools.

In order to promote acceptable behaviour, the schools have made very significant and worthwhile efforts in defining codes of discipline in the schools. These codes endeavour to promote and reward appropriate behaviour among the students. For the most part, the implementation of these policies is successful. In these circumstances, while there is always the potential among the students to react negatively or even violently to particular circumstances, the majority of interactions between and among students and staff are positive. Most students willingly engage in learning and abide by the schools' codes of discipline. Infractions of the codes of discipline are suitably dealt with. In a very small number of cases, the schools are unable to cope with particular individuals. This may be because of violent behaviour and/or the severity of their social/emotional disabilities. The role of parents and guardians in that regard is crucial. If a YEP school fails to achieve the support of parents and guardians in the management of their children, there is a greater likelihood of the student not engaging with staff members.

8.4 Staffing and Training Issues

Those who work in YEP schools are dedicated and committed professionals who operate in situations which are frequently challenging and difficult. That the vast majority of students engage in assigned tasks co-operatively is testament to the skill, expertise and dedication which individual members of staff bring to the job. Undoubtedly, many of the students are volatile, thus demanding that the teachers and staff remain vigilant and alert. They must possess the ability to recognise triggers which prompt violent or aggressive outbursts and ensure that these are kept to a minimum. In the vast majority of cases, this is successfully achieved.

Much of the in-service training currently provided by the Department and its agencies is designed to meet the needs of mainstream primary schools and, accordingly, the content of many of the seminars is largely irrelevant to the needs of the students, their teachers and the YEP schools in general. One of the greatest challenges facing the teachers is developing the students'

literacy and numeracy levels which, in most instances, are very poor. Allied to this is the fact that many of the teachers have had no training in the development of literacy or numeracy skills. Some hold qualifications in practical and vocational subject areas which bring significant and tangible benefits. However, the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills should be a core objective of every-day teaching in the schools and the teachers require specialised and ongoing support from experts in the area of literacy and numeracy development. All schools can access support provided by the JCSP service. It is worth noting that other high support schools have engaged in similar debates in the recent past. For example, of concern to the school authorities in a school in the children detention school sector is the fact that their students come to the school with very poor literacy and numeracy skills and with negative dispositions towards education. Any decisions made in relation to the nature of in-service provided to the YEP schools could be very relevant to other schools and high support units.

Recommendations:

Greater awareness of successful practices across the YEP schools would help address disciplinary issues and should be facilitated.

Specialised training and support in behaviour management and in literacy and numeracy should be provided to teachers. Such training might be identified, in part, through formal inter-YEP school communications (see Chapter 10 below).

Consideration should be given to the creation of a new form of in-service provision, from which this and other schools serving students with similar needs should benefit. While the principals of the schools meet occasionally, the opportunity to create a formal in-service model should be taken. This may take the form of summer in-service or ongoing modular-type courses.

8.5 Teacher Preparation

Teachers in YEP schools are required to devote significant time to the preparation of teaching resources which are appropriate to the needs of the students.

Teachers provide written preparation for their work. Much of this is derived from JCSP learning targets and, in some instances, is heavily influenced by the content of Junior Certificate

syllabuses. While this is content rich and offers teachers effective targets, further consideration of methodologies is required.

Individual learning plans (ILPs) are provided in all schools. These provide a very effective means of focusing on an individual student's strengths and weaknesses. Teachers, staff members and, in some instances, parents collaborate in preparing these documents.

Recommendation: The involvement of parents in the preparation of ILPs is considered to be a positive development and, accordingly, it is recommended that the practice, and that of involving parents in the regular review of student progress, should be expanded among YEP schools.

8.6 Effective Teaching and Learning

The greatest challenge facing the schools is the development among the students of a favourable disposition to learning. This challenge is made more difficult by the limited ability of students to achieve successfully on standardised or diagnostic assessment tests in literacy and numeracy. Compounding the challenge further is the volatile behaviour of many of the students. Facing these challenges, the teachers work collaboratively and effectively in meeting the students' needs.

Although the structures are similar in the YEP schools, there are very different practices evident in teaching and learning. The approaches adopted in schools range from almost complete dependence on the delivery of individualised programmes to students to whole class teaching. Teachers interact positively with their students and encourage them appropriately to attend to assigned tasks to the best of their abilities. The teachers are cognisant of the literacy and numeracy difficulties with which many of the students present. These students are treated sensitively. In that regard, the subject matter of lessons is tailored appropriately to individual needs.

Teachers' expectations of their students vary in the five schools. In some, it is very evident that the teachers expect, as a minimum, that the students will experience success in State examinations. This, in the future, could constitute the desired goal for all schools where students

spend three years in the school. In other schools, expectations of students are somewhat lower. In these instances, though many of the students attain JCSP learning statement successfully, they fail to progress to completion of the Junior Certificate. The issue of teachers' expectations is one which may best be addressed in the context of a revised in-service model for YEP schools.

The range of programmes followed by the schools is varied. Based on their previous experiences with students, their knowledge of students and available resources, an ILP is compiled. In most instances, this process will involve a range of personnel, including a class teacher, the principal, the community/youth/social worker and parents. Goals are agreed and are regularly reviewed.

8.7 School Accommodation Issues

The quality of accommodation provided in the schools has a significant impact on teaching and learning. Where accommodation is satisfactory, students can follow a range of subjects which include the academic, the technical and the vocational. However, the quality of the accommodation in three of the schools is very poor and, consequently, the potential to offer as broad a range of subjects, some of which would be particularly attractive to many of the students, is very limited. In these instances, good efforts are made to accommodate formal and informal curriculum activities elsewhere. While conditions are far from ideal in these circumstances, the respective boards of management and staffs of all of the schools should be commended for the efforts undertaken to maintain their school buildings to the best possible standards. They are clean and maintained regularly.

It was noted that, in recent years, the Department had provided capital grants for refurbishment works at Henrietta Street School and for the provision of prefabricated replacement accommodation for St Laurence O'Toole School. It was further noted that the Department was in the process of securing alternative accommodation for St Augustine's School and identifying such accommodation for St Paul's and St Kevin's. In the case of St Laurence O'Toole's, the provision of permanent accommodation is being pursued in consultation with the Dublin Docklands Development Authority.

Recommendation: The replacement of unsuitable YEP accommodation should continue to be accorded a high degree of priority by the Department.

Chapter 9 YEP Schools: The Appropriate Model

9.1 Background

It has already been noted that, in many ways, the YEP schools do not fit conveniently into Department school structures. For example, they are officially classified as primary schools and, accordingly, operate for 5 hours and forty minutes a day, 183 days a year. However, the majority of students in the schools are of post-primary age and follow a post-primary curriculum, typically the JCSP/ Junior Certificate. Curriculum and planning support is offered to the schools by service providers whose focus is on the implementation of the primary curriculum; most of the teachers employed in the schools are qualified post-primary teachers. Furthermore, as stated elsewhere in this report, considerable variation exists in staffing and funding levels across the five schools.

Key to the success of the YEP schools is their flexibility to meet the needs of the young persons in their care. This involves a complex amalgam of competence of the principal, competence of the individual teacher, and competence of the team. Where these three are present, the schools run effectively and to the significant benefit of the students. If one, or more, of these is absent or weak, difficulties can arise in relation to behaviour management.

Taking all these factors into account, defining a model for the YEP schools is a challenging exercise.

9.2 School Day and School Year

The YEP schools provide an educational service to young people who are generally of post-primary age within the school day and year normally associated with a primary school. However, these are young people very much at risk and, accordingly, it is greatly to their benefit that contact between them and the school is maximised.

Recommendations:

The most appropriate length of the school day for these schools should be the primary school day, i.e., 5 hours and forty minutes.

The school year should be the primary school year, i.e., not less than 183 days. This offers the school the opportunity to operate the State Examinations, where relevant, and to offer younger students the opportunity to participate in less formal activities during this time.

Contracts of employment for teachers should be continued to be based on the primary school day and year.

These arrangements are already in place in the schools and should be maintained.

9.3 Size of School

The schools operate with small numbers of enrolled students, relative to most mainstream schools, and this has proved most effective in achieving the stated objectives.

Recommendation:

In order to maintain the intensive delivery of personalised education in a supportive school environment, it is recommended that, as a general rule, enrolment should not exceed the 25-30 range because of the challenging nature of the pupil cohort involved. Within that range, each school should enrol the maximum number of students permitted by available accommodation.

9.4 Admissions Policy

The report has identified that each school operates a referral process which endeavours to identify whether the YEP school is the most suitable school placement for the student.

Recommendation:

It is vital that the needs of the young people admitted are best catered for in the YEP school environment, and in that regard, it is recommended that the schools maintain clear and robust admissions policies.

9.5 Age of Students Enrolling and Attending

The YEP schools provide education and support services for young persons, who are generally in the younger post-primary level age group, and the considerable expertise that has grown within the sector is directed towards this age group of young people.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that YEP schools continue to cater for students up to 16 years of age.

However, where it is clearly identified that it is in the best interests of a young person to remain in a YEP school beyond 16 years of age, and the Board of Management is satisfied that it can provide the services necessary to meet that young person's needs, then that young person should continue to attend.

9.6 Student Teacher Ratio

Teaching and learning are affected in part by the number of students present in a classroom, and most of the schools operate according to an 8:1 student/ classroom teacher ratio. However, due to a combination of absenteeism, suspensions or, in one instance, an outreach programme, no class was observed to have eight students present during the course of the evaluations. In the majority of cases, effective whole class teaching was observed where there were four or five students present. Lessons were interesting, good questions were asked of the students and they engaged purposefully in assigned tasks. The students' work was monitored carefully and they were encouraged to participate to the best of their abilities. In many cases, the teachers' work is supported by a resource teacher who endeavours to ensure that, as a minimum, the students progress to become functionally literate.

Actual student teacher ratios in the schools for the 2006/07 school year, based on the maximum enrolment of each school, and including all teaching support (excluding principals) are given in Table 9.1 below. In order to give a fuller understanding of the dynamics of the classroom, a student/ teacher and SNA ratio is also provided.

Table 9.1 - Student Teacher and Classroom Staff Teacher Ratios by School (2006-07)

School	No of classroom teacher equivalents	No of SNAs	Max. Enrolment	Student Teacher Ratio	Student/ Teacher and SNA Ratio
St Paul's	4.86	0	25	5.14	5.14
St. Laurence O'Toole's	4	4	25	6.25	3.13
Henrietta St.	5.89	0	20	3.4	3.4
St. Augustine's	4.57	2	25	5.47	3.81
St. Kevin's	5.29	4	25	4.73	2.69

The observations of the Inspectors clearly indicate that the actual number of students to teacher in a classroom was typically less than 8:1, and that a lower class size ensures that the appropriate level of service is provided to the young people. Each school currently has four teaching teachers on a full-time basis. However, schools have taken different approaches to their requirements for additional hours; Henrietta St. has the equivalent of almost two additional teachers, whereas St. Laurence O'Toole's has none.

Recommendation:

The level of demand arising from the needs of the young people in YEP schools is similar to that of the most challenging pupils in the special school environment. Consequently, it is considered that a pupil/teacher ratio of 6:1 would be appropriate to adequately address the needs of the pupils in the YEP schools.

9.7 SNA Allocation

In regard to SNA support, it is evident that management of the behaviour of the pupils is aided by an additional trained adult in the classroom, and accordingly, three of the schools avail of SNA support (two schools with one SNA per class), while Henrietta St. and St. Paul's choose to have none.

Recommendation

Each YEP school should, if, school management so choose, be allocated one SNA per class up to a maximum of four SNAs. This is broadly in line with arrangements currently in existence in several of the schools, and should ensure effective classroom management and whole class teaching.

9.8 Non-teaching staff allocation

This report has indicated that the allocation in type and number of non-teaching staff varies across the schools (see chapter 3 above), and that this has been in response to identified local needs and in the absence of a clear guidelines agreed by the Department and the schools.

The current position, whereby the YEP schools have the flexibility to employ staff with certain skills and training, in response to the needs of the young people as perceived by a school, is, in principle, to be supported. However, there is currently considerable disparity in the allocation of non-teaching staff resources to the schools, and this is ultimately unsustainable.

For the purposes of this analysis, non-teaching staff (other than SNAs) are categorised as follows:

- Family Support Staff (Community or Social Worker)
- School Support Staff (Secretary, maintenance person or domestic staff)
- Others: Bean/ Fear an Tí, Youth Worker, Counsellor

Recommendation:

(a) Family Support Staff

Schools should be allocated one staff member to act as the essential link between the young people, their families and other agencies. That person should either be a qualified community worker or a qualified social worker, at the discretion of school management.

(b) School support staff

Schools should be enabled to provide secretarial, cleaning and maintenance services through the allocation of up to 50 hours support per week (for indicative purposes, such support might be allocated on the basis of 30 hours secretarial, 10 hours cleaning and 10 hours maintenance). Contracts of employment for existing members of staff should be maintained.

(c) Others

- **Bean/Fear an Tí**

The Bean/Fear an Tí has an essential role in supporting and nurturing the social skills of the young people. Accordingly, it is recommended that each school should be allocated a Bean/Fear an Tí post.

- **Youth Worker**

This report has identified that not every school employs a youth worker, and it is evident that schools can provide an excellent service without such members of staff. Accordingly, it is recommended that those schools currently employing such persons are allowed to continue to do so. However, future vacancies should not be filled and such posts should not be sanctioned in any YEP schools that might be recognised at a future date.

- **Counsellor**

Currently only one school finds it necessary to employ a counsellor directly. However, it is clear from the backgrounds of the young people attending the schools that such a service might be warranted.

Recommendation:

All YEP schools should be enabled to provide counselling support as required. As one option, the scope for extending the model of counselling provision currently in place in some VECs to YEP schools, should be investigated by the DES.

- **Access to psychological services**

This evaluation has argued that some of the most vulnerable young people in society, demonstrating some of the most challenging behaviours, attend the YEP schools. However, despite their evident needs, there is a dearth of appropriate educational psychological services in place for the schools.

Recommendation:

Access to education psychologists in particular, would constitute a significant support to the schools. In that regard, it is recommended that the Department ensure that appropriate support is provided to all YEP schools. It is considered that this would best be provided through the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). This would also ensure that behaviour management programmes and the preparation of learning targets in literacy and numeracy are supported.

9.9 Non-pay allocation

Similar to the allocation of the pay budget, this report has indicated that the allocation of non-pay varies across the schools (see chapter 6 above), and that this has been in response to decisions by individual schools in the absence of clear guidelines. Likewise, there is considerable disparity in the allocation of resources to the schools.

Recommendation:

The Department should actively investigate an appropriate model for distribution of non-pay funding to the YEP schools.

9.10 Summer Programme

An appropriate summer programme should be considered an optional component of the YEP school model (see Chapter 6 above).

9.11 Access to Other Support Services

The YEP schools are considered as special schools and, accordingly, are omitted from certain supports (e.g. DEIS supports) from which they and the young people in their care would benefit were the schools regarded as mainstream. There is, accordingly, a need for the YEP schools to access support services that would greatly benefit the young people but from which they are excluded. In addition, there may be services in other agencies, of which the schools could avail, which would be of benefit to the young people.

Recommendation

The Department should examine the possibility of the YEP schools availing of services from which they are excluded due to their status as special schools, such as

- the literacy and numeracy support personnel which will be employed under DEIS;
- the services of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

The Department should also examine the possibility of the schools accessing the psychiatric and counselling services of the Health Service Executive (HSE).

9.12 Renaming of the YEP Schools

It is not documented how the title ‘Youth Encounter Project’ was decided upon in the 1970s and, in particular, what meaning the word ‘encounter’ held. The title given in the 1993 Special Education Review Committee report was Non-Residential Schools for Pupils at Risk (Youth Encounter Projects). It is agreed by all parties engaged in the review that this is an opportune time to agree a new title for the schools.

Recommendation:

The schools should be renamed Community-Based High Support Schools. This accurately reflects the service provided by the schools.

9.13 New Designation of Children at Risk

The Department's statistical returns do not make accurate provision for the category of student in the YEP schools. (Inappropriate options include students with emotional/behavioural disorders and young offenders). The category of student with whom the schools work is children at risk. It is recommended that this category be recognised by the DES for all statistical, resource allocation and other purposes.

Chapter 10 Communications

Term of Reference 6: Examine the existing communication channels between a) the five schools and b) the five schools and the Department. Based on this examination, identify how these lines of communication are contributing to the identification of best practice.

10.1 Inter YEP School Communication

Communication channels do operate between the schools. In particular, the principals of the three YEP schools located in Dublin, in addition to regular telephone contact, meet once a month in a formal setting, aided by an external facilitator. The Principals identified these meetings as useful fora for discussion of best practice and the sharing of information on topics such as:

- Accessing information and funding;
- Addressing student behaviour problems;
- Sourcing teaching materials;
- Tailoring the physical environment to student needs;
- Developing Individual Education Plans;
- Organising class groups.

In contrast to the principals from the Dublin schools, the Principals from the YEP schools in Cork and Limerick have met only twice in the last two years and they report little communication with their colleagues in Dublin.

The position in relation to the other teaching and non-teaching staff in the schools is that there is little or no communication, outside the occasional chance meeting at in-service courses.

While there is innovative and highly-effective practice evident in the YEP schools, existing channels of communication between the schools do not permit the effective dissemination of the knowledge gained through this practice. It is evident that few, if any, of the staff members in the YEP schools, have been afforded opportunities to meet, and this is one of the most significant weaknesses of current arrangements, as individual staff members would benefit significantly from exploring pertinent issues with their counterparts in other YEP schools. In the particular

circumstances of the YEP schools, where the work is draining and there is a need to manage the potential of the students for aggression, formal channels of communication, if properly used, would greatly enhance the effectiveness of the schools, to the benefit of students and staff.

This point of view is supported by the YEP school staff members themselves. It is clear that all of the YEP schools would like to see an increase in the communications between the five schools and the introduction of a formalised communication system, and they agree that the most preferred means of communications would be face-to-face, at least twice a year. Regular meetings would alleviate the sense of isolation experienced by the YEP schools and provide a sense of being recognised as a group.

Such fora would provide channels for the identification and dissemination of best practice in such areas as:

- Development of students' literacy and numeracy skills;
- Management of students' behaviour;
- Development of student's social and personal skills;
- Curriculum;
- Resources;
- Continuing Professional Development
- Follow-on placements for students when they leave.

Recommendation:

Formal inter-YEP school communication channels should be set up in order to identify best practice, provide for its dissemination and act as a support mechanism for teaching and non-teaching staff. It is recommended that the representatives of teaching and not teaching staff and the Department meet to discuss the best approach to the organisation of these channels of communication. Any proposals arising from such a meeting would require the sanction of the Department before being implemented.

10.2 Communication between the YEP Schools and the Department of Education and Science

In general, the Principals were satisfied with the communications with the Department. The issues most frequently discussed with the Department are:

- funding and resources;
- staffing;
- building requirements – maintenance and repairs;
- transport.

The Principals did, however, indicate some areas of concern in relation to the practicalities of communicating with the Department, including:

- A lack of clarity regarding the appropriate point of contact in the Department on occasion;
- Undue delay on decisions regarding the allocation of budgets.

Recommendations:

YEP schools should be advised of the appropriate personnel to contact in regard to the areas in which they have most frequent contact with the Department (i.e. funding and resources, staffing, building requirements, transport). They should also be advised promptly of any changes in personnel, or other organisational changes within the Department, of which they should be aware.

The Department should endeavour to communicate to the schools decisions in regard to budget allocations at the earliest possible opportunity each year.

Communication with the Department is conducted most frequently by telephone, with all principals reporting that they contacted the Department in this manner on a weekly basis during term time. Face-to-face meetings are rare, but principals expressed the opinion that such meetings on a more regular basis would be welcome.

This report has already come to the view that the Department's input in the YEP school sector in areas such as policy, the ongoing viability of the schools has not been as it should have been, and that it appears the case that the Department has responded to the schools' requests and needs on an individual basis over the past two decades without sufficient regard to an overall strategy and vision for these schools. This viewpoint is also expressed by the principals and board members of the schools themselves and, in that regard, communication lines between the Department and the YEP schools can be improved for the benefit of students and staff in the schools. However, the fact that the evaluations have taken place and that a steering group, representative of the schools, was established as part of this process, is viewed as a positive development by the schools.

Recommendation:

Communications between the schools and the Department should be facilitated by a formalised system of engagement on a regular basis. As there are currently only five YEP schools, each could be represented in such a forum without making the group so large as to be unworkable.

Chapter 11 Alternative Approaches to YEP Provision

This chapter addresses term of reference 7:

Evaluate the degree to which the objectives warrant the allocation of public funding on a current and ongoing basis and examine the scope for alternative policy or organisational approaches to achieving these objectives on a more efficient and/or effective basis.

Evidence provided in this report supports the argument that the YEP schools are providing personalised holistic education for the young people at risk, retaining many of these young people in the education system and providing support for them towards progression. In other words, the schools are achieving their objectives in respect of many of the young people for whom they provide a service.

However, as has been noted previously, the extent of the Department's focus on the YEP sector has been limited; funds have been allocated, teachers and other staff paid since the foundation of the first school, but there has been little input from the Department in areas of policy, or in monitoring the contents of the programmes developed and provided by each school. Accordingly, each school has developed different methods of dealing with behavioural issues and different emphases on academic education.

It has also already been noted that the very objectives of the schools have changed considerably since the first YEP school opened (see Chapter 5 above). This was essentially as a result of a recognition by the schools themselves that the original objectives were no longer realistic in the current circumstances, nor appropriate for the immensely challenging young people now presenting for enrolment.

While acknowledging the undoubted success in many respects of the YEP schools, it is valid to consider alternatives to the YEP school model and, in doing so, to consider how the education of "at risk" young people is provided in other jurisdictions.

11.1 New Zealand: the Correspondence School

In New Zealand the “Correspondence School”, which provides distance learning for students, was one of the first arrangements made for alternative education programmes. Initially intended to cater for the educational needs of young people unable to attend school for reasons such as geographical isolation, this method came to be employed for “some students who are not able to operate effectively within the institutionalised framework of the regular school” (Gerritson, 1999, p.68 in O’Brien, Thesing and Herbert 2001). Under current arrangements, it is still considered to be an option for alienated students whose local schools are unwilling to enrol them or who are unwilling to attend the local schools (New Zealand Ministry of Education 2007).

The Correspondence School, being in effect a one-to-one provision, allows a teacher to focus his or her attention on a particular student, which can have advantages for the young person and the teacher. Tuition does not take place in a conventional school building and, although figures are not available, the non-pay cost associated with such a system are presumably less than in a more conventional arrangement.

However, what is clearly lacking in such circumstances is the supportive environment provided in a group setting, interaction with peers, teachers and other staff and, accordingly, an absence of opportunity for group learning and associated personal development. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive that, without interaction between the young people themselves, and between young people and staff, issues relating to poor behaviour and the enhancement of life skills could be properly dealt with.

In addition, there is an emphasis in the correspondence school, due to its nature, on the written word to the effective exclusion of face-to-face interaction, and this is probably the least effective learning for students at risk (Clark et al, 1996, in O’Brien, Thesing and Herbert 2001).

Accordingly, the correspondence school model might address the academic needs of the young person, but his or her broader social needs are not met.

11.2 England and Wales: the Pupil Referral Unit

In England and Wales, local education authorities are obliged to provide suitable education for all children of compulsory school age, and children who have been excluded from mainstream are catered for in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs).

PRUs may offer education directly, or they may organise packages of educational provision (for pupils of post-primary school age) that involve external providers, such as further education colleges, employers, work-based trainers, and programmes offered by independent schools, voluntary organisations or other agencies. Many PRUs also work jointly with mainstream schools to support vulnerable pupils and pupils at risk of exclusion. They may do this through outreach support to pupils within mainstream settings, or through 'dual registration', whereby pupils attend the PRU (possibly on a part-time basis) but remain registered also with their mainstream school.

PRU staff must be qualified teachers or instructors. The responsible local authority provides support and supervision for staff who may be dealing with pupils with high levels of emotional, social and personal difficulties. PRUs do not have to teach the full UK national curriculum, but offer a balanced and broad-based curriculum in accordance with UK national guidelines.

It should be noted that PRUs provide education for categories of young people other than those for whom the YEP schools provide service; children with medical problems, school-aged mothers, pregnant schoolgirls, and school-phobics are also catered for.

11.3 Alternative Education Models/ Best Practice

This brief examination of alternative models to the YEPs suggests that, were an examination of provision in jurisdictions other than Ireland for young people at risk to be undertaken, no two approaches to the issue would be likely to be identical. However, certain common characteristics are evident in all successful educational programmes for disadvantaged and disaffected young people.

O'Brien, Thesing and Herbert, in their review of literature on alternative education provision, identified that most education providers agreed that there were five areas associated with effective education provision for young people at risk:

- a) *The place where the programme operates*: There is consensus that quality programmes need to be in a compact setting, where students feel a sense of ownership and their voices are heard. A sense of emotional security is fostered, and the personal interests of the young people are reflected in the programme provided and the physical features of their surroundings, thus encouraging improved attendance and socially acceptable behaviour.
- b) *The young people*: young people are supported to commit to the programme. Their achievements are valued and self-esteem promoted.
- c) *The students' families*: families are generally seen to be very important in ensuring programme success and therefore it is deemed important to build a relationship with the family, even if the family itself is a source of disruption in the young person's life.
- d) *The programme curriculum*: curriculum support tends to be individualised. Programmes deliver literacy, numeracy and instruction in other areas of learning in the context of real life situations.
- e) *The programme providers*: the team of providers should:
 - work collectively
 - be involved in a multi-disciplinary approach, providing health, educational, social and emotional support
 - develop warm relationships with the young people
 - help young people with their basic life needs
 - be recruited based on personal attributes, which should be promptly supported by appropriate training.

O'Brien, Thesing and Herbert engaged focus groups comprised of staff of alternative education programmes in order to test the findings of their review of the literature. The results of this process confirmed the accuracy of outcome of the literature review.

The evidence of this report clearly illustrates that the YEP schools conform with the areas identified by O'Brien, Thesing and Herbert as being central to effective alternative education provision.

The previous chapters of this report have given a clear indication that the YEP schools are fulfilling their objectives in support of a vulnerable client group and that they do so by providing intensive, personalised education in a supportive environment. That they seem to do so in accordance with best practice, as identified by O'Brien, Thesing and Herbert, reinforces the view that the YEP schools warrant the allocation of public funding on a current and ongoing basis.

Chapter 12 Performance Indicators

Term of reference 8: Specify potential future performance indicators that might be used to better monitor the performance of YEP schools

12.1 Introduction

In its consideration of the inputs and outputs of the YEP schools, and of their efficiency, the report was able to draw on data relating to funding, educational programmes and comparisons with other educational sectors. However, as has already been mentioned, the YEP school sector has been associated in part with a lack of monitoring of performance by the Department of Education and Science, and the VFM evaluation provided a more than useful opportunity for the Department to focus its attention on the significant contribution the YEP schools make towards the Department's measures to tackle educational exclusion. Now that a start has been made, it is essential that an adequate level of monitoring is maintained in regard to the YEP school sector.

Any future performance indicators used to monitor the performance of the YEP schools can be identified by reference to the Programme Logic Model developed during the course of this evaluation, and categorised as measures of inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes.

12.2 Performance Indicators related to Inputs

Performance indicators related to inputs should measure resources dedicated to or consumed by the YEP programme.

Recommendation

That the following performance indicators related to inputs are monitored on a regular basis:

- Teacher, SNA and non-classroom staff funded by the Department;
- Non-pay financial resources provided by the Department to the YEP schools;
- Financial Resources from other sources to the YEP schools.

It is recommended that, annually, detailed expenditure figures are collated on an individual school and sectoral basis in order to monitor trends in the allocation of Department funds and to facilitate monitoring of the effectiveness of the schools, on an ongoing basis.

It is also recommended that the Department develop a template to facilitate a comparison of the costs in the YEP schools with other forms of educational provision, particularly in relation to young persons from identified disadvantaged locations or resident in children detention schools.

12.3 Performance Indicators Relating to Activities

The activities of the YEP schools are related to what the YEP programme does with the inputs provided in order to pursue the programme objectives. These activities are, by their nature, difficult to quantify and are closely linked with one of the objectives of the schools, the delivery of holistic education.

In discussing the effectiveness of the schools in providing holistic education, “hard” evidence was not available. However, it must be recognised that, as the general debate in relation to school league tables testifies, there is a strong argument against the sole use of quantifiable data to judge the success or otherwise of any school. However, as the report has noted, the view of the Inspectors is also clearly that, based on their observations of the individual schools according to the standard methodology used for school evaluations, the young people are being provided with a personalised holistic education.

Recommendation

The Department’s Inspectors should undertake regular visits to the YEP schools to ensure that the provision of holistic education is maintained.

12.4 Performance Indicators Relating to Outputs

Performance indicators relating to outputs should measure the production of programme activities.

Recommendation

That the following performance indicators related to outputs are monitored on a regular basis:

- Number of students with individual behaviour plans;
- Number of students with individual learning plans;
- Number of educational programmes delivered by the YEP schools;
- Number of students leaving with functional literacy and numeracy skills.
- Number of students leaving the YEP schools with certified qualifications;

In order to facilitate the collection of appropriate data, it is further recommended that the Department and the schools develop an agreed method of recording the provision of formal and informal education programmes, the results of students taking the state examinations, or any other form of formal examination, and any other suitable outputs identified in the future, in order to facilitate the identification of output trends within the sector and the consideration of the effectiveness of the schools, on an ongoing basis.

12.5 Performance Indicators Relating to Outcomes

Performance indicators relating to outcomes should measure the intended impacts of the YEP programme during and after the programme activities, including the retention of the young people in the schools and their subsequent progression.

12.5.1 Performance indicators relating to retention

It should be acknowledged that the report's findings in relation to the schools' success in retaining young people in the education system were mostly positive, and were supported by factual evidence suggesting that, over time, the schools' performance in this area has improved greatly.

Recommendation

In order to maintain a satisfactory level of student retention in the schools, and to allow the Department and the schools to identify trends that require further intervention or a change in

policy, YEP schools should forward to the Department of Education and Science, on an annual basis, data on the following performance indicators:

- Attendance rates in the YEP schools;
- Periods of enrolment in the YEP schools.

12.5.2 Performance indicators relating to progression

Recommendation

The following performance indicators related to progression should be monitored on a regular basis:

- Number of students proceeding to further education;
- Number of students proceeding to work training programmes;
- Number of students obtaining employment;
- Other destinations for students.

It should be noted that a consideration of the effectiveness of the schools in providing support for the young people at risk towards progression reveals particular weaknesses in the system. The report clearly illustrates that the majority of young people progress to a positive placement, typically FAS or Youthreach. However, as has been noted, it is a matter of concern that the impact in the medium and long-term of the YEP schools on the lives of students is not measured, nor is it possible to predict with any degree of accuracy.

Accordingly, it is recommended that a tracking system should be put in place to monitor the progress of each young person following their departure from a YEP school in the medium or long term. Such a tracking system would necessarily involve continued contact over an extended period of time between the YEP school, or a designated person or body, and the young person. The tracking system would be a point of reference for the young person and allow his or her evolving educational needs to be identified and further supports put in place, as appropriate.

It is acknowledged that developing and implementing such a tracking and support system would not be a simple task. In that regard, attention is drawn to a separate undertaking of the Department, whereby it is developing an education strategy for young people attending high

support and special care units and children detention schools. Part of this strategy will address the educational and training needs of these young people following a period of residential care or detention. It is arguable that the needs, behaviours and exposure to risk of the young people attending the YEP schools are similar to those of young people in special care and detention and, accordingly, require the same level of support.

Therefore, as part of the process to be undertaken by the Department to devise a strategy for young people in special care, high support and detention, it is recommended that Department gives consideration to the position of young people attending YEP schools and uses this process to devise a tracking and support system appropriate to the specific needs and circumstances of each young person following a period of his or her attendance in a YEP school.

Chapter 13 Conclusion

13.1 Status of the existing YEP Schools

The overall estimation of this evaluation in regard to the YEP schools is very positive. It has found that the schools display the characteristics of effective provision, that they follow appropriate objectives and are largely successful in achieving these objectives.

They do so with varying degrees of effectiveness and efficiency, and recommendations are made as to how performance might be measured in order to maintain or improve service provision in the future.

Indeed, it is suggested that the educational and behaviour management strategies of the schools are innovative and the sharing of the expertise of the staff in the schools would greatly inform the work practices of professionals working in other areas of education provision for disadvantaged young people.

However, the existence of the YEP schools at all is based on an assumption that there is a sufficient clientele of “at risk” young people displaying extreme need to justify such a dedicated service. Reason suggests that an examination of juvenile crime and poverty rates would indicate that the retention and development of such a service would be greatly beneficial. This argument is supported by the fact that the number of pupils referred each year far outnumbers the places available. For example, in 2006, Henrietta Street School had 21 referrals for 8 places.

Accordingly, it is clear that there is a demand for the services of the five existing YEP schools.

Recommendation:

Immediate consideration should be given by the Department of Education and Science to granting permanent recognition to the five existing YEP schools. Among other things, this should enable the evolving accommodation needs of the schools to be addressed.

13.2 Expansion of the YEP School Model

O'Brien, Thesing and Hegarty suggest that alternative education provision tends to occur organically, i.e., where a need exists, a programme will occur, whether state-sponsored or otherwise.

This view is supported by the report on alternative education centres produced by the Department of Education and Science in May 2006 (Department of Education and Science 2006). The report identified 31 such centres in which full-time education was provided for a year or more, or where young people are sent for a limited period in order that their behavioural issues might be addressed. The majority of centres identified cater for young people in the 12-16 age group. The 31 centres operate in 16 counties of the state, predominantly in the larger urban areas (see table 13.1 below):

Table 13.1 - County Locations of Alternative Education Centres

County	No. of Centres	County	No. of Centres	County	No. of Centres	County	No. of Centres
Cavan	1	Galway	1	Laois	1	Offaly	1
Cork	2	Kerry	1	Limerick	1	Sligo	1
Donegal	1	Kildare	1	Louth	2	Waterford	3
Dublin	10	Kilkenny	1	Monaghan	1	Westmeath	3

Funding sources vary across the centres and for any one centre may be from a number of sources, although it should be noted that 16 of these centres receive funding from the Department of Education and Science. The existence of these centres indicates that certain supports are being provided to at risk young people outside the YEP schools or other schemes managed by the Department of Education and Science.

Recommendations:

Should the Department of Education and Science consider the opening of additional YEP schools, very careful analysis of the existing provisions for alternative education in the localities of the proposed schools should be undertaken order to determine that additional services are warranted.

The DES should review the range of educational provisions currently in place for learners aged 15 years and younger who have become alienated from mainstream schools. In this regard, the Steering Group notes the recommendation of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools (School Matters) about alternative educational provision in Youth Encounter Project schools and Junior Youthreach. This recommendation should be taken into account in the context of determining an appropriate model, or models, of response.

13.3 Next Steps

The Department's Central Policy Unit proposes to develop a central recommendation tracking system to monitor progress on the implementation of the recommendations contained in this and other VFM reviews undertaken by the Department.

APPENDIX 1

CSC	Central Steering Committee
DES	Department of Education and Science
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
HSE	Health Service Executive
HSSSU	High Support Special Schools Unit
ILP	Individual Learning Plan
JCSP	Junior Certificate Schools Programme
NCSE	National Council Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NEWB	National Education Welfare Board
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PLM	Programme Logic Model
SCP	School Completion Programme
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SSP	School Support Programme
STTC	Senior Traveller Training Centres
TCI	Therapeutic Crisis Intervention
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VFM	Value for Money
YEP	Youth Encounter Projects

Steering Committee

Chairman: Liam Hughes Principal Officer, High Support Special Schools Unit

Conor McCourt, Assistant Principal Officer, High Support Special Schools Unit

Caroline Galvin, Higher Executive Officer, High Support Special Schools Unit

Fintan O'Brien, Assistant Principal Officer, Department of Education and Science

Joan Williams, Inspector, Department of Education and Science

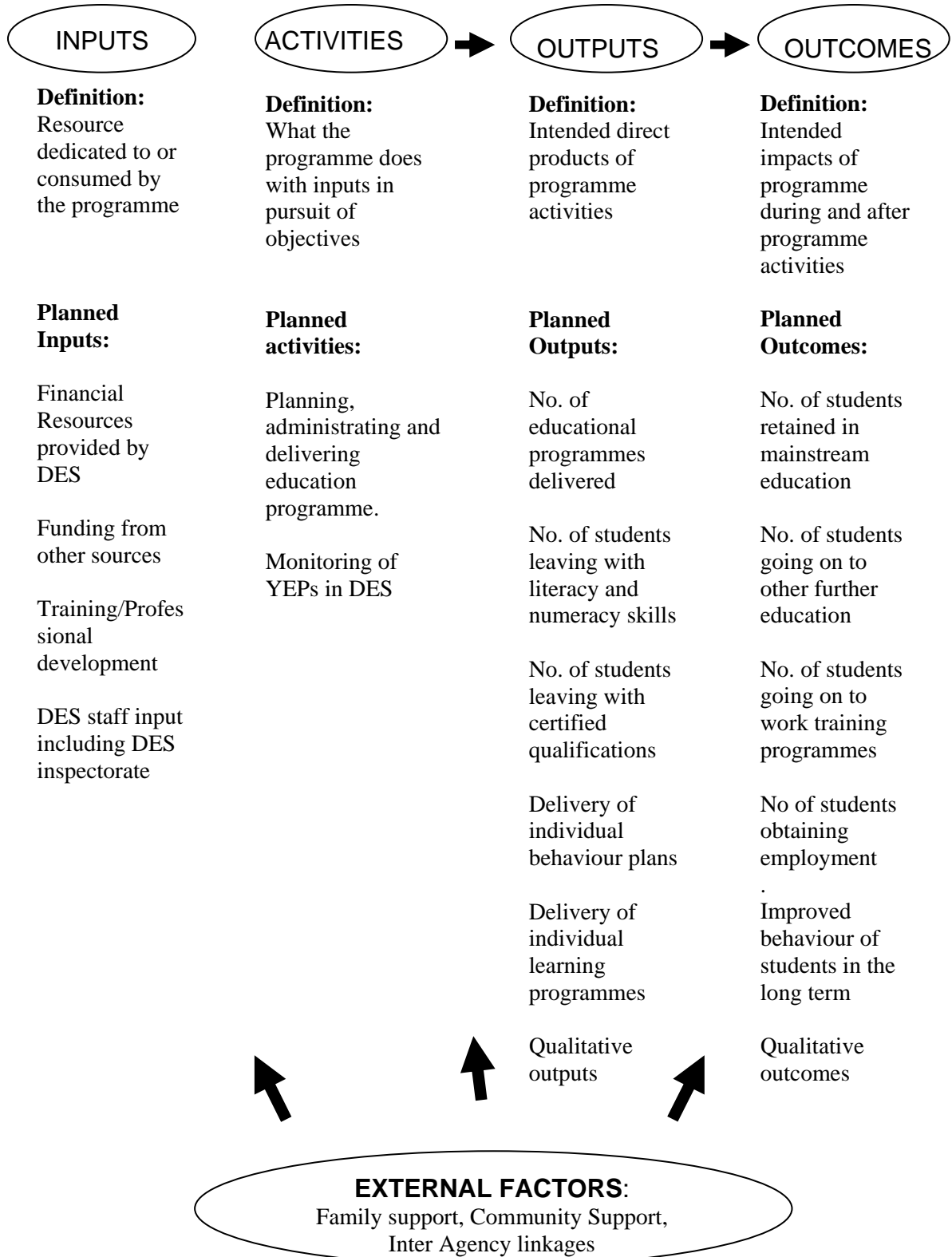
Brendan Doody, Inspector, Department of Education and Science

Prof. Diarmuid Leonard, Chairperson, St Augustine's School, Limerick

Fergus Carpenter, Principal, Henrietta Street School, Dublin

Aidan Savage, National Co-Ordinator School Completion Programme

YEP Schools Programme Logic Model



Chairperson of the BOM
XXXXXXXXXXXXX Youth Encounter Project
XXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXX

XX/XX/ 2006

Invitation to participate in the evaluation of <Insert Name of YEP Here>

Dear Chairperson,

<Insert Name of YEP here> has been selected to participate in an evaluation of Youth Encounter Projects to be carried out by the Inspectorate. It is proposed to include the views of the Board of Management, in an agreed manner, in the case of all Youth Encounter Projects scheduled for an evaluation.

As an evaluation of the above YEP will be carried out on <insert appropriate dates here> your Board of Management is invited to meet formally with the inspector involved. The purpose of the meeting, to be chaired by the Inspector, will be to discuss management aspects of the YEP and to gather views of members of the board on topics of relevance to the YEP. The work of individual teachers/tutors will not be discussed. A standard agenda is attached.

The Principal of the YEP will be in contact with you to assist in making arrangements for the meeting.

The evaluation will be carried out in accordance with the *‘Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting for the Inspectorate* which can be found at www.education.ie. The individual reports will be published in accordance with *Publication of School Inspection Reports – Guidelines*.

Wishing you every success in your continued efforts to support the work of your YEP.

Yours sincerely,

Senior Inspector
Department of Education and Science

Proposed Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Purpose of meeting
3. Explanation of evaluation process
4. Management and operation of the Youth Encounter Project
5. Main Concerns of the Board
6. Close of meeting

An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Evaluation of Youth Encounter Projects

Questionnaire for Principal

(YEP.02)

*Please complete electronically and return as an attachment to
caroline_galvin@education.ie and joan_williams@education.gov.ie
(please cc to joanwilliams@eircom.net)*

**Any queries concerning this questionnaire may be addressed to Caroline Galvin at 0906
483 765**



AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS EOLAÍOCHTA | **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE**

An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta

Department of Education and Science (DES)

Evaluation of Youth Encounter Projects

Questionnaire to be completed by the Principal

Brief History of this Youth Encounter Project:

1. GENERAL DATA

Name of YEP			
Address			
Tel. No. of YEP		Email:	
Name of Principal			
Length of service as Principal of this YEP			
Tel. No. of Principal		Fax No.:	
		Email:	
Name of Chairperson of Board of Management			
Names of Members of Board of Management	Name		Body Represented

2. LOCATION AND CATCHMENT AREA

(i) Location of YEP	
(ii) What is the catchment area of the YEP?	
(iii) Number of referrals in past 12 months	
(iv) Number of new enrolments in past 12 months	

3. ENROLMENT / ATTENDANCE / RETENTION

(i) Enrolment

Please state the number of students enrolled at your YEP on 1st December each year for the past 10 years:

1 st Dec. 2005	1 st Dec. 2004	1 st Dec. 2003	1 st Dec. 2002	1 st Dec. 2001	1 st Dec. 2000	1 st Dec. 1999	1 st Dec. 1998	1 st Dec. 1997	1 st Dec. 1996

(ii) Attendance

- (a) Please state the average student attendance each year for the past 10 years:
(to be expressed as percentage of enrolment)

2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996

(b) How is school attendance monitored?	
(c) What efforts are made to improve attendance?	

(d) Suggested measures to improve attendance	
---	--

(iii) Retention

(a) Please complete the following table in respect of each student who left your YEP in the past 10 years: *(please make a copy of this table if more space is needed and attach with completed questionnaire)*

Student ID/No.	Year and Month when student left	Length of stay in YEP	Age upon leaving YEP	Destination*

* Please insert **E** for employment, **PP** for post-primary school, **FE** for further education, **FAS** for FAS training centre, **W** for JLO workshop, **Y** for Youthreach or **O** for other (if other please specify)

(b) How are retention rates monitored in your YEP?

(c) What efforts are made to improve retention rates in your YEP?

(d) What supports, if any, are specifically provided for past students?

4. ACCOMMODATION AND MATERIAL RESOURCES

(i) Ownership/year of construction of building	
(ii) Are premises being rented? (please tick) If YES, is there a lease in place?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Please comment: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
(iii) Please indicate amount of rent being paid on a monthly basis	
(iv) Are there any plans in place to develop the accommodation?	
(v) Is the present Centre accommodation exclusively for use by the YEP? (Please tick)	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
(vi) If 'NO', who shares the building?	
(vii) Is there sufficient furniture/equipment and what is condition of same?	
(viii) Please comment on the quality of the accommodation.	•

(ix) Please indicate the type and number of rooms available in the YEP:			
Room Details			
Room	Number	Room	Number
(a) Staff room		(h) Computer room	
(b) Kitchen/Canteen		(i) Crèche	
(c) Woodwork workshop		(j) Toilets:	Staff toilets
			Student toilets
(d) Metalwork workshop		(k) Storage room	
(e) Hairdressing room		(l) General classroom	
(f) Counselling/Guidance room		(m) Office space	

(g) Creativity/Art and Craft room		(n) Recreation room
(o) Other <i>(please specify)</i>		

(x) What kinds of material resources were acquired by your YEP since Sept. 2001? <i>(Please tick as appropriate)</i>		
(a) Literacy/Numeracy		(h) Hairdressing equipment
(b) ICT		(i) Furniture (e.g., tables, chairs, lockers, etc.)
(c) Woodwork equipment		(j) Art/Creativity/Art and Craft
(d) Metalwork equipment		(k) Office equipment
(e) Catering/Home Economics equipment		(l) Transport
(f) Personal development		(m) Childcare
(g) Health Education/Sports equipment		
(n) Other <i>(please specify)</i>		

5. TEACHING STAFF

(i) Staff information

Names of teaching staff	No. of years in the YEP	Qualifications	Professional Experience	Subject matter being taught

(ii) Please list any continuing professional development (CPD) courses undertaken by teaching staff in the past three years.	•
(iii) Comment on CPD needs	•

6. NON-TEACHING STAFF

(i) Non-teaching staff information

Names of non-teaching staff	Position	Qualifications / Experience	Employment status	Comment

(ii) Please list any continuing professional development (CPD) courses undertaken by non-teaching staff in the past three years.	•
(ii) Comment on CPD needs	•

7. OBJECTIVES OF YOUTH ENCOUNTER PROJECTS

Please comment briefly on the three objectives of Youth Encounter Projects set out below, with particular regard to your own YEP.
(i) Provide personalised holistic education for young people at risk
(ii) Retain these young people in the education system

(iii) Provide support for these young people towards progression

8. PROGRAMMES / CURRICULUM

(i) Briefly describe the programme on offer in your YEP and how it has evolved

(ii) Please complete the following table with regard to the curriculum on offer in your YEP in the current year (i.e., 2005/2006).

Name of Subject/Module	Year of introduction in your YEP	No. of learners currently studying this subject/module	Type of Certification offered e.g., FETAC, JC, JCSP, LCA, etc

(iii) Life Skills Programme(s)

(a) What programmes are provided in your YEP to improve life skills?	Name of Programme	Year of introduction into your YEP

(b) What programmes are provided in your YEP to assist in behaviour modification?	Name of Programme	Year of introduction into your YEP

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(c) What would you consider are the positive experiences for the students attending your YEP?	
(d) How do the life skills programmes on offer improve the pupil's self esteem?	
(e) How does your YEP ensure a safe, nurturing and respectful environment for students?	

(iv) Therapeutic Programmes

(a) What therapeutic programmes are provided in your YEP?	Name of Programme	Year of introduction into your YEP

(b) If your programme does provide such programmes, please state how these programmes differ from what is provided in mainstream schools?	
(c) Are students receiving support from other professionals, e.g., psychiatric, counselling, etc.?	

(v) Work Experience

Is work experience provided for students within your YEP *(please tick)*

YES NO

If YES, please provide details:

9. MEETINGS

(i) Please outline arrangements in place for Board of Management meetings (e.g., frequency, organisation of agenda, minutes, etc.)

(ii) Please outline arrangements in place for teaching staff and non-teaching staff meetings (e.g., frequency, agenda, minutes, etc.)

(iii) Please outline arrangements in place for parent(guardian)-teacher meetings

(iv) Please outline arrangements in place for other communications with parents/guardians, e.g., regarding YEP events, home visits, reports home, etc.

(v) Does your YEP have a Parents' Council in place? *(please tick)*

YES NO

(v) Does your YEP have a Students' Council in place? *(please tick)*

YES NO

10. PLANNING AND REVIEW

10.1 Teacher Planning

(i) What supports are in place to assist teachers in preparation/planning?

(ii) What arrangements are in place for evaluation/review of teacher planning?

10.2 YEP Development Planning

(iii) Is there any development planning process in place for your YEP? *(please tick)*

YES NO

If YES, who is involved in the development planning process?

(iv) What areas have been developed recently or are currently under development?

(v) What areas have been identified as priorities for future development planning?

11. OFFICIAL RECORDS

(i) Please indicate the type of records kept by your YEP and, for each type, from what year recording commenced.			
	YES <i>(Please tick)</i>	No <i>(Please tick)</i>	Year Records Commenced
(a) Records of enrolment and registration of students			
(b) Records of attendance			
(c) Records of meetings of the Board of Management			
(d) Account Books			
(e) Records of student assessment			
(f) Referrals to HSE/NEPS/counselling			
(g) Students' Progress Reports			
(h) Student Timetables			
(i) Consent Forms			
(j) Fire Drills			
(k) Accident Report Forms			
(l) Waiting Lists			
(m) Cleaning Schedules			
(n) Other <i>(Please specify)</i>			
(o)			
Comment on any aspect of the maintenance of records			

(ii) What Policies/Procedures/Statements/Strategies/Codes does your YEP currently have in place? <i>(Please tick - ✓ - as appropriate)</i>			
(a) Mission statement/aims and objectives		(m) Drugs policy	
(b) Health and safety statement		(n) Bullying policy	
(c) Health and safety policy and procedures		(o) Art/Creativity/Art and Craft	
(d) Code of conduct for staff		(p) Staff development policy	
(e) Code of practice for dealing with sexual harassment, bullying and harassment		(q) Self-evaluation policy and procedures	
(f) Code of behaviour for students, outlining their rights, responsibilities and grievance procedure		(r) Communications policy and procedures	
(g) Equality policy		(s) Policy and procedures for programme delivery and review of programme	
(h) Child Protection Policy		(t) Admission policy and procedures	
(i) Staff recruitment policy and procedures		(u) Policy and procedures for initial assessment of learners	
(j) Policy and procedures on assessment of student achievement		(v) Procedures for establishing and supervising work experience	
(k) Procedures and protocols for the provision of the following supports: Counselling, Guidance, Transport and Childcare		(w) Policy and procedures for transfer and progression	
(l) Policy and procedures reflective of intercultural ethos			
(x) Other <i>(please specify)</i>			

12. MISCELLANEOUS FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Other than grant aid from the Department of Education and Science, please specify amounts of any financial support received during the past three years (<i>specify source and amounts</i>)			
Years	2003	2004	2005
▪ Source A (<i>please specify</i>)			
▪ Source B (<i>please specify</i>)			
▪ Source C (<i>please specify</i>)			
Are your YEP accounts audited on an annual basis? (<i>please tick</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO			

13. CONTACTS WITH OTHER GROUPS/ORGANISATIONS

(i) Describe briefly, where applicable, the contacts which take place between your YEP and the following:	
Parents/Guardians	
Local Schools	
Other YEPs	
FÁS	
Junior Liaison Officer	
Department of Education & Science Inspectors	
High Support Special Schools Section of the Department of Education & Science	
Department of Education and Science Support Services	
Other sections of the Department of Education & Science	
Visiting Teacher for Travellers (VTT)	
Visiting Teacher for the Hearing and Visually Impaired	
National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)	
School Completion Programme (SCP)	
School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI)	

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)	
Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO, attached to NCSE)	
Other	

14. ASSESSMENT AND REFERRALS

(i) Briefly describe the referral process to your YEP?
(ii) Are standardised tests administered in your YEP? <i>(Please tick)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If YES, please provide details:
(iii) Are diagnostic tests administered in your YEP? <i>(Please tick)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If YES, please provide details:
(iv) What other forms of assessment are used in your YEP?
(v) What arrangements are in place for recording learner progress?
(vi) What use is made of student assessment data?

15. EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

(i) Please indicate any extra-curricular activities undertaken at your YEP.

16. VISION

(i) Please describe your vision for your YEP.

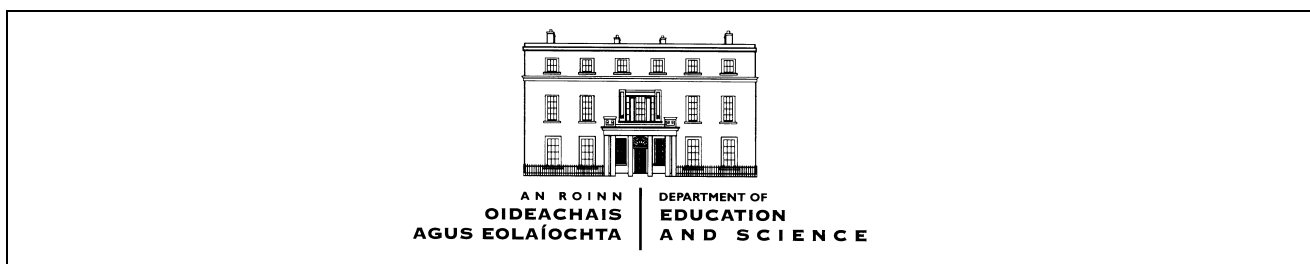
17. ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Signature of Principal:

Signature of Chairperson, Board of Management:

Date:



Evaluation of Youth Encounter Projects

Student Data Form YEP.03

Name of Youth Encounter Project:

Notes

- **The purpose of this form is to collect data about enrolment, attendance and assessment trends among those students currently enrolled.**
- This form should be completed by the Principal of the Centre.
- Please complete **all sections** in respect of **each student** enrolled.

- **Please do not include students' names on this form. However, to assist with completing the form, it may be helpful to include the student's initials in the ID. No. column.**

- **Please return this form electronically to: *joan_williams@education.gov.ie* and *caroline_galvin@education.gov.ie* (cc to *joanwilliams@eircom.net*)**
- When you are returning forms by e-mail, please put the name of your centre in the subject line of the e-mail.
- Please copy this form if your YEP has more than 20 learners enrolled.

Q.1	Q.2	Q.3	Q.4	Q.5	Q.6	Q.7	Q.8	Q.9
Student ID No.	Date of birth	Gender (M / F)	Date of enrolment in this YEP	What programme is the student currently following?	Who enrolled the student? (i)	Did the student discontinue in mainstream primary or post-primary school due to drop-out or exclusion? (ii)	Was the student ever refused admission to a mainstream school or special school/class? If YES, please give details	Did the student ever previously attend a special school or special class? If YES, please give name of school
1								
2								
3								

(i) Select one of the following: **M** for Mother, **F** for Father, **V** for Visiting Teacher, **H** for Home-School-Community Liaison Teacher, **EWO** for Education Welfare Officer, **O** for other and specify

(ii) Select two of the following if appropriate: **D** for drop-out or **E** for exclusion and **P** for primary or **PP** for post-primary

	Q.10	Q.11	Q.12	Q.13	Q.14	Q.15	Q.16	Q.17
	If applicable, what is the approximate length of time this student has spent without a school placement?	If applicable, why in your view did this student drop out of mainstream school?	If applicable, was the NEWB involved in the retention/non attendance of the student when he/she was in mainstream school? Please insert Y for YES or N for No	Was there sharing of information on the student between his/her previous school(s) and your YEP? (Please insert Y or N)	Where does the student reside? (iii)	How does the student travel to the Centre? (iv)	Please indicate student's numeracy level	Please indicate student's literacy level
1								
2								
3								

(iii) Select one of the following: **LA** for local area, **OLA** for outside local area

(iv) Select one of the following: **W** for walks to the centre, **O** for official transport (DES-grant), **P** for parent transport, **B** for public bus, **YEPB** for YEP bus, **O** for other

	Q.18	Q.19	Q.20	Q.21	Q.21	Any other comments?
	Please indicate if the student suffers from any low incidence disability (v)	What special education provision, if applicable, is currently in place for this student?	What further exceptional needs have been identified in the case of this student?	Does the student have an Individual Education Plan (IEP)? (Please insert Y or N)	Briefly, please provide relevant information on the family background of the student	
1						
2						
3						

(v) Select from the following: **PD** for physical disability, **HI** for hearing impairment, **VI** for visual impairment, **ED** for emotional disturbance, **SED** for severe emotional disturbance, **MGLD** for moderate general learning disability, **S/PGLD** for severe/profound general learning disability, **A** for autism/autistic spectrum disorder, **SSLD** for specific speech and language disorder, **AS** for assessed syndrome in conjunction with one of the previous low incidence disabilities, **MD** for multiple disabilities, **ADD** for Attention Deficit Disorder, **ADHD** for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, **O** for other and please specify

An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Evaluation of Youth Encounter Projects

Questionnaire for DES Visit

To

Youth Encounter Project Schools



AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS EOLAÍOCHTA | **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE**

Communications

Inter YEP Communications

Questions for Principal

Complete grids in respect of communications with principals in each of the other four YEP schools

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Less than monthly	Never
Telephone					
E-mail					
Letter					
Meeting with principal					

1. Are the communications formalised (e.g. monthly meetings) or ad hoc?
2. Would you like to see additional communication systems put in place for communications between YEPs
(e.g. a National or local working group, website, newsletter)?
Yes No
3. What benefits, in your opinion, would additional communications systems bring to the YEPs?
4. What would be your preferred means of communication with the other YEPs?
5. What issues would you like to discuss with the other YEPs?

Inter YEP Communications

Questions for Staff

6. Do the staff in your YEP communicate with the staff of the other four YEPs?

Yes

If yes, complete grids for each YEP

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Less than monthly	Never
Telephone					
E-mail					
Letter					
Meeting with principal					

7. Would the staff of your YEP like to see increased communications between the different YEPs?

8. Would the staff of your YEP like to see a formalised communication system put in place for communications between YEPs?

(e.g. a National or local working group, website, newsletter)?

Yes No

9. What benefits, in your opinion, would such a communications system bring to the YEPs?

10. What would be the preferred means of communication with the staff in other YEPs?

11. What issues would you discuss with the other YEPs?

Communications between pupils (question for principal)

Inter YEP Communications

12. Are there currently formal means of communications between the pupils in your YEP and pupils in other YEPs?

Yes No

13. If yes, please outline the nature of these communications:

14. In your opinion, what are the advantages/ disadvantages in encouraging communications between the pupils attending the different YEPs?

Internal Student Communications

Student Council

For schools which **have** a student council (check that these questions have not already been asked by Cig):

15. How many students are on the council?

16. How are the council members chosen?

17. What is the role of the student council in your YEP?

18. What are the advantages of operating the student council?

19. What are the disadvantages of operating the student council?

For schools which **do not** have a student council

20. Would you consider the formation of a student council?

Yes

No

21. If yes, what would you envisage the role of the council to be?

22. If no, for what reasons would you not consider the formation of a student council?

23. What, in your opinion, might the benefits of such a council be?

24. In your opinion, might be the disadvantages of such a council?

Communications between the YEPS and the DES

Complete Communications Grid

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Less than monthly	Never
Telephone					
E-mail					
Letter					
Meetings with Department Officials					

25. Are you satisfied with the operation of the channels of communications between your YEP and the DES?

26. Can you suggest methods of improving communications between your YEP and the DES?

27. What issues do you most frequently communicate about?

Involvement/ potential involvement in criminal behaviour (Questions for Principal)

1. Do any pupils currently attending your YEP have a criminal conviction?

Yes No

If yes, how many pupils?

If yes, for what types of crime?

What evidence do you have to support this view?

2. In your opinion, are any pupils attending your YEP at risk of becoming involved in crime?

Yes No

If yes, how many pupils?

If yes, for what types of crime?

What evidence do you have to support this view?

3. To your knowledge, are there pupils in your YEP who are involved in crime but have no conviction?

Yes No

If yes, how many pupils?

If yes, for what types of crime?

What evidence do you have to support this view?

4. Have any of the pupils currently attending your YEP spent time in a Children's Detention School?

Yes No

If yes, how many:

Are you aware of any pupils in your YEP whose families have an involvement in crime?

Yes No

If yes, how many pupils?

What evidence do you have to support this view?

Aggressive Behaviour of Pupils (Questions for Principals)

1. Do incidents of aggressive behaviour occur in your school?

If yes, please give examples of such incidents

If yes, Of your current pupils, how many would display this behaviour

If yes, how often would incidents of aggressive behaviour occur?

Daily Weekly More than Weekly Very Rarely

Miscellaneous Questions

The following are samples of the miscellaneous questions put to the schools.

1. Transport

Describe school transport arrangements?

Are the current transport arrangements satisfactory?

Could they be improved?

Do pupils contribute to the costs of travel?

2. Attendance at YEPs

(a) Why, in your opinion, is a pupil more likely to attend a YEP in preference to a mainstream school?

(b) Are there any incentives use to maximise attendance? If so please give details?

3. Progression of pupils

(a) What, in your opinion, is the reason for the apparent failure in many placements (post YEP)?

(b) What is your view on the supports provided by other agencies to past pupils of YEPs?

(c) Would it be appropriate for the YEPs to actively promote the integration/re-integration of pupils into mainstream post primary education?

4. Insurance

(a) What insurance arrangements are in place for the school?

(b) Are you aware of any additional loading based on the nature of the school and its pupils?

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