



**An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna**
Department of
Education and Skills

Department of Education and Skills Language Scheme 2020 - 2023

Under Section 15 of the Official
Languages Act 2003

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

1. Introduction

The Official Languages Act 2003 (“the Act”) provides for the preparation by public bodies of a language scheme detailing the services which they will provide:

- through the medium of Irish,
- through the medium of English, and
- through the medium of Irish and English

and the measures to be adopted in order to provide services through Irish.

In accordance with section 14(3) of the Act, language schemes remain in force for a period of 3 years or until such time as a new scheme is confirmed by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

2. Preparation and content of the scheme

The Department’s scheme has been prepared in the context of the [Guidelines](#) issued by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, which were prepared under section 12 of the Act.

In addition, there has been a process of consultation with relevant stakeholders. In June 2019 the Department published a notice in an online Irish language media website, inviting submissions. In addition to this notice, which was published in accordance with section 12 of the Act, the Department also posted a notice on its website. This scheme has been informed by the submissions received and also takes account of the views and suggestions expressed by Departmental staff through the development of a designated departmental Official Languages Act Network (OLAN).

The Department of Education and Skills is guided by the principle that the provision of Irish language services should be based on:

- the underlying level of demand for specific services in the Irish language,
- the importance of a proactive approach to the provision of such services as required, and
- the resources, including human and financial resources, and the capacity of the Department to develop or access the necessary language capability.

This scheme complements the principles of Quality Customer Service and our Customer Charter. It has been formulated with the intention of ensuring that all relevant obligations under the Official Languages Act by the Department of Education and Skills will be fully addressed on an incremental basis, through this and future schemes.

This scheme has been developed within the policy context of the 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030. It takes account of the particular mandate that the Department has in terms of supporting the extension and growth in the use of the Irish language in the education system.

The Department recognises the importance of having a number of staff fluent in and capable of providing a service in Irish. In this context, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) has indicated that they have a requirement for bilingual Educational Psychologists in certain regional locations and have provided training for their psychologists.

The Inspectorate continues to appoint inspectors at recruitment grade level with a view to enhancing the delivery of service through Irish. As part of its Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme, the Inspectorate continues to build the capacity of its staff to provide inspection services through Irish. Immersion courses are provided annually in a Gaeltacht area. The CPD programme also includes centrally-located language courses which focus on the development of accuracy and fluency in Irish to support the development of inspectors' proficiency to carry out inspections through Irish.

3. Previous confirmed schemes

The commitments which were made in the Department's previous three schemes, to improve the level of its services through Irish, have been delivered. The Department's Irish Language Scheme 2016 - 2019 contained a range of commitments with regard to the provision of an acceptable level of service through Irish. It is a requirement of the Official Languages Act that documents setting out public policy proposals, annual reports, statements of strategy, and matters considered to be of major public importance, are communicated by Government Departments in both Irish and English and this is current practice. A dedicated telephone number for queries in Irish continues to operate, providing an Irish language first point of contact for Irish language speakers.

- The Department's Staff Training and Development Unit (STDU) provides appropriate Irish language training for all staff to meet priority business needs.
- The Department's Irish Translation Service continues to operate to ensure that English-to-Irish and Irish-to-English translations are available in a timely manner, to a specified standard, at an agreed rate.
- During 2018, the Inspectorate provided school self-evaluation support visits through Irish in approximately four fifths of Gaeltacht or all-Irish schools at primary level and almost all Gaeltacht all-Irish medium schools at post-primary level. The Inspectorate carried out inspections in approximately one third of Gaeltacht or Irish-medium primary schools and in over half of Gaeltacht or Irish-medium post-primary schools.

The focus and priority of the preceding schemes was to ensure that the Department provided a good service, in both official languages, to the general public over the period of the schemes, taking account of the principles of quality customer service and in the context of available resources.

4. Commencement date of the Scheme

This fourth scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. It commences with effect from 01 February 2020 and shall remain in force for a period of 3 years or until a new scheme has been confirmed, whichever is the later.

Chapter 2: Overview of Department of Education and Skills

1. Mission and Objectives

The mission of the Department of Education and Skills is to facilitate individuals through learning, to:

- achieve their full potential, and
- contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development.

In pursuit of our mission, the Department has the following high-level goals:

- Goal 1: We will shape a responsive education and training system that meets the needs and raises the aspirations of all learners.
- Goal 2: We will advance the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special educational needs in order to support them to achieve their potential.
- Goal 3: We will equip education and training providers with the skills and support to provide a quality learning experience.
- Goal 4: We will intensify the relationships between education and the wider community, society and the economy.
- Goal 5: We will lead in the delivery of strategic direction and supportive systems in partnership with key stakeholders in education and training.

2. Departmental Customers

The Department is committed to delivering quality services to all of its customers, consistent with the service commitments contained in its Customer Charter and in its Customer Service Action Plan. Both of these documents can be accessed at www.education.ie.

The Department's Customer Charter and Action Plan include the following commitments in relation to the provision of services through Irish:

- We will reply in Irish to correspondence received in Irish.
- We will respond in Irish to callers who wish to speak in Irish, where possible, or offer to have the call returned within **1 working day** by a member of staff who can deal with queries in Irish.
- We will ensure that if you wish to conduct your business in Irish you can do so.
- We will publish corporate publications in Irish and English.
- We will ensure that services are delivered in accordance with the Official Languages Act 2003 and our Irish Language scheme.
- We will continue to operate the Irish Line (01) 889 6780.
- We will provide information to staff on the requirements of the Official Languages Act 2003 and their responsibilities under the Department's Irish Language Scheme.

The Department's largest customer bases for services in Irish are the primary and post-primary school sectors and in particular schools where instruction is carried out through the medium of Irish.

3. Key Services

The Department's main offices are located in Athlone, Tullamore and Dublin. The main telephone numbers and other contact details for the Department are available on the Department's website www.education.ie. The Department provides a range of services to schools, teachers, learners and the general public. Detailed information on the activities of each functional area and unit of the Department is available on the Department's website at www.education.ie and in the Department's Publication Scheme, made pursuant to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014, which is available on the Department's website via the following link www.education.ie

Detailed information in relation to customer services can be found in the Department's Customer Service Action Plan. The actions planned in the Department's Customer Service Action Plan and its Customer Charter will support the implementation of the language service improvements planned in this scheme.

Chapter 3: Summary of Irish Language Services and Improvements Planned for 2020-2023

The Department is committed to providing the best quality services possible in both official languages to its customers. This chapter sets out the measures and actions the Department will undertake over the next three years in order to consolidate and build on the progress that was made on the development of its bilingual services over the period of the previous three schemes.

In accordance with regulations made pursuant to the provisions of section 9(1) of the Official Languages Act 2003, the Department will continue to comply with its statutory obligations.

1. Recorded oral announcements

The following recorded oral announcements will be in Irish or bilingual:

- (a) Recorded oral announcements provided on the telephone when the offices of the public body are closed;
- (b) Recorded oral announcements created and transmitted by means of a computerised messaging system or a computerised telephone answering system.

This provision relates to 'recorded' announcements rather than 'live announcements'.

2. Stationery

Headings of stationery, including notepaper, compliment slips, fax cover sheets, file covers and other folders, labels and envelopes are provided in Irish or bilingually. Where an automated response generates from a shared email account, the footer will contain information in both the Irish and English languages. The Department's e-mail disclaimer will also generate automatically in English and Irish.

3. Signage

All signage in the Department of Education and Skills will be in Irish or bilingual, in accordance with the regulations (S.I. No.391/2008) made pursuant to the provisions of section 9(1) of the Official Languages Act 2003.

4. Communications and Publications

In accordance with the provisions of sections 9(2) and 9(3) of the Official Languages Act 2003,

- Where a person communicates in writing or by electronic mail in an official language with the Department, we will reply in the same language.
- Where the Department communicates in writing or by electronic mail with the general public or a class of the general public for the purpose of furnishing information to the

public or the class, the Department will ensure that the communication is in the Irish language or in the English and Irish languages.

In accordance with the provisions of section 10 of the Official Languages Act 2003, the Department publishes in each of the official languages **simultaneously**:

- a) any document setting out public policy proposals;
- b) any annual report;
- c) any audited account or financial statement;
- d) any Statement of Strategy required to be prepared under section 5 of the Public Service Management Act 1997.

In the event that the Government prescribes – under the provisions of section 10(e) of the Official Languages Act 2003 – any document of a description or class to be of major public importance then the Minister for Education and Skills will publish that document simultaneously in both official languages.

The Department also provides a wide range of services in both Irish and English, some of which are to the general public – or a class of the general public – and others in support of the education system generally.

5. Services provided by the Department

5.1 Written and Oral Communications with the Public and with Schools

The following Departmental communications will be made available in both English and Irish:

- Circulars for primary schools
- All curriculum-related circulars for schools
- All external staff-related circulars to primary and post-primary schools
- Information leaflets and brochures for primary schools
- Non-technical documents circulated to primary schools
- Application forms relating to primary administration services
- Application forms for primary and post-primary payroll services
- Application forms for teaching and non-teaching staff at primary level
- All corporate publications – e.g Annual Report, Statement of Strategy
- Inspection Reports for Irish-medium schools (primary and post-primary)
- Inspection Reports on Irish-medium pre-schools
- Press releases which announce new schemes or policy changes (see page 12 also)
- Tweets which announce new schemes or policy changes (see page 12 also)
- All new appropriate static information posted on the Department's website. (see page 12 also)

Specialised internal instruction manuals or documents of a technical nature produced for other public bodies or in support of the planning and provision of school accommodation, will be available in **English only** as appropriate.

Where appropriate, the commitments in relation to the translation of documents relating to primary level will be extended to similar documents relating to post-primary level.

The Department will ensure that where application forms and information leaflets are provided as separate Irish and English language versions, equal prominence is given to both versions and the Irish language version will be as readily accessible as the English language version.

5.2 Payroll Services to Teaching Staff and Non-Teaching Staff

The Payroll Division of the Department will issue payslips, and other correspondence in Irish to payees on the following payrolls on request;

- 1 Primary Teachers Payroll,
- 2 Post Primary Payroll,
- 3 Non -Teaching Staff Payroll,
- 4 Retirees Payroll.

When a new appointment is set up on the serving teaching and non-teaching staff payrolls the appointees are offered the opportunity to request correspondence through Irish.

5.3 Correspondence, placenames and other compliance obligations

Under the provisions of the Department's Customer Charter and Action Plan the Department will continue to respond in Irish to all written correspondence received in Irish. In addition, the Department will respond to telephone calls within one working day by a member of staff who can deal with queries in Irish.

Staff will be reminded to use the official Placenames of Gaeltacht areas, as declared by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when issuing correspondence.

6. Media – Press Releases

6.1 Press Releases

We will continue to issue Irish versions of press releases which announce new schemes or policy changes.¹

6.2 Social Media

Social media engagement is used as a tool to refer traffic to relevant press releases, website pages and so forth, where more detailed information is available in both official languages where appropriate. Tweets which announce new schemes or policy changes will be sent in English and Irish simultaneously.

¹ Please note, due to the deadlines involved it is not possible to guarantee publication of Irish press releases simultaneously with their English versions.

7. Information Technology

7.1 Web Site

The Department will ensure that all appropriate web pages contained within the main structure of www.education.ie will be bilingual; this does not necessarily include documents or other sites linked to these pages². (It is not appropriate in certain cases to provide an Irish page, for example, in the case of speeches, press releases, or schemes that are specific to a particular group of customers, the English Assistants Scheme, the Scheme for Foreign Language Assistants, technical instruction information for building professionals). Where Irish versions of information leaflets, brochures, corporate publications, application forms and circulars are produced simultaneously they will be made available on the Department's website, however, in cases where both versions are not available simultaneously we will publish both versions as soon as they become available.

The static content of any new public websites managed directly by the Department introduced during the course of this scheme will be bilingual.

The Department interprets 'static content' as the following persistent elements of the website:

- The framework elements of the home page
- The framework elements of the landing pages
- Zonal titles
- Website Branding

The commitment applies to public websites and content managed directly by the Department – this commitment is not made on behalf of websites managed by agencies under the aegis of the Department or any websites fully or part-funded by Department.

7.2 Information Technology – I.T. Systems

Over the course of the third scheme, several IT systems with full bilingual functionality were developed, and existing services further enhanced. These include:

- IMIS (Inspectorate Managed Information System)
- Student Grant Appeals
- Student Transport Appeals
- Online Claims System (OLCS)

The Department is committed to ensuring that all new interactive IT systems have a bilingual functionality/capability to the extent that schools may use either official language when making returns to the Department. Schools already have the option of accessing ESINET,

² In some cases, it is not appropriate to have an Irish language page – e.g. Speeches, Press Releases, or schemes targeted at particular customer groups, English Language Assistant Scheme, Foreign Language Assistant Scheme, technical guidance information for building professionals.

the Department's online data input system, in either English or Irish when submitting data, including returns regarding the deployment of teaching resources, to the Department.

Any new interactive systems being introduced during the course of the scheme will be introduced simultaneously in both Irish and English.

In accordance with the commitment in the preceding schemes, the Department will also continue to ensure that as individual existing computer systems come to the end of their life cycle and have to be replaced, they will be replaced by systems which are capable of handling the Irish language. For the duration of this scheme it will be ensured that any names and addresses of members of the public which have been provided in Irish, will be inputted to any new software and computer system developed by the Department, or on its behalf.

7.3 Telephone communications with the public

The Department, in accordance with the commitments made in the preceding schemes, continues to operate a dedicated telephone number for queries in Irish (01) 8896780. The purpose of this service is to provide an Irish language first point of contact for Irish language speakers. The provision of this service will continue.

The Department also continues to operate an automated attendant service for the Department's main office numbers in Athlone, Dublin and Tullamore. This system provides for callers to access menu greeting options in Irish. As receptionist/switchboard operators are often the first human points of contact with the public, the Department will continue to ensure that all receptionists/switchboard staff:

- Will give the name of the Department in both Irish and English, and
- Are at least familiar with the basic greetings in Irish.

Arrangements are in place so that switchboard operators and other Departmental staff can refer customers with queries in Irish to staff who staff the dedicated Irish telephone number. A one to one telephone service through Irish is and will continue to be available from the Teacher Education Section, subject to relevant personnel being available.

8. Inspectorate Services

8.1 Inspection, Evaluation and Quality Assurance

The Inspectorate of the Department carries out evaluation and advisory work in a range of education settings. These include recognised primary and post-primary schools, centres for education which offer the Youthreach programme, agricultural colleges and, since late 2015 in early-years settings that participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme.

The Inspectorate work to improve the quality of learning and teaching that children and young people experience in early-years settings, schools, centres for education and other

settings, and to support the development of the Irish educational system. It does this through providing high quality evaluation, analysis, support and advice in relation to educational provision mainly at early years, primary and post-primary levels. The Inspectorate also has a significant role in contributing to and supporting policy development.

8.2 Inspectorate Services through Irish

The Inspectorate provides a bilingual evaluation and advisory service to early-years settings that participate in ECCE, to all recognised schools at primary level, and all primary and post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht and all Irish-medium schools. While it is expected that Irish is the medium of communication in schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and in all Irish-medium schools, Irish will be the language of communication used by the Inspectorate in these settings. At post-primary level, the Inspectorate provides a service in the inspection of the Irish language. Where there is capacity, inspectors will provide a service through Irish in all subject areas for post-primary schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and in all-Irish schools. The English language is used when inspecting the subject English.

8.3 Bilingual Inspection Service for Schools

To continue to enhance the provision of a bilingual inspection service, and as resources permit, the Department, through the Public Appointments Service, will appoint inspectors at the recruitment grade level who will further enhance the delivery of a service through Irish. The Department will continue to include proficiency in Irish among the criteria used in the selection and appointments processes to the Inspectorate at recruitment grade level with a view to:

- Enhancing the capacity of the Inspectorate to deliver an inspection service through Irish
- Requiring a higher level of proficiency in Irish for deployment in Gaeltacht areas and to promote the use of Irish in interactions with Irish-medium schools
- Ensuring that a high-level of subject knowledge will remain the chief consideration in the selection of inspectors at post-primary, while also awarding a competitive advantage to candidates who can function with proficiency in both official languages.

The Inspectorate will continue to support the Department's provision of services through Irish for early-years settings, Irish-medium and Gaeltacht schools. It will continue to identify contacts among post-primary inspectors for the provision of Irish services to Irish-medium and Gaeltacht schools. In addition, the Inspectorate will continue to develop the capacity of its staff to evaluate primary and post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools by ensuring that appropriate professional development opportunities are provided on a regular basis.

8.4 Inspectorate Publications

Reports arising from inspections in English-medium schools will be published in English, while reports or sections of these reports that deal with the teaching of Irish will continue to

be published in both Irish and in English. Reports arising from inspections in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht schools will continue to be published in Irish and translations of these reports will be published to ensure maximum accessibility to the reports; for all evaluations conducted from 1st September 2010, reports or sections of these reports referring to the inspection of English in these schools have been and will continue to be published in both English and Irish. The Inspectorate will continue to enhance its existing provision of a bilingual inspection service and its capacity to deliver an inspection service in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht schools and early-years settings through Irish. Inspection reports on Irish-medium pre-schools are published in Irish, with a translation in English attached for the use of parents and others.

8.5 The Inspectorate and further enhancement of the provision of Irish Language services

As part of its Continuing Professional Development programme, the Inspectorate continues to build the capacity of its staff to provide inspection services in Irish. In recent years, between 10 and 20 percent of the Inspectorate CPD budget is spent upskilling inspectors in Irish. A large number of inspectors have attended Irish language courses designed to support the development of their competence to communicate in Irish and to carry out inspections through Irish. This will continue throughout the duration of this scheme and beyond. Irish courses offered to inspectors are of varying duration. Some are a day long and include intensive grammar courses, and some are immersion type courses provided over a three day period in the Gaeltacht.

8.5.1 Cúrsa Cruinnis/Cúrsa Gaeilge

In 2016, it was decided that the Cúrsa Cruinnis would be made compulsory for all primary inspectors, to improve the fluency and accuracy of inspectors in Irish. Since 2017, a blended learning programme is provided in Irish for all primary inspectors and interested post-primary and early-years inspectors. The focus of the blended learning programme in 2017 and 2018 was on spoken Irish. Inspectors attended three full day sessions to improve oral accuracy during this time. In 2019, a blended learning programme on writing inspection reports through the medium of Irish was rolled out. Inspectors also have access to a CPD webinar through the medium of Irish on the Primary Language Curriculum.

8.5.2 Gaeltacht immersion courses

Since 2016, the Gaeltacht immersion course is provided for newly recruited inspectors in all three sectors - early years, primary and post-primary - who have committed to evaluation work through the medium of Irish. Interested colleagues from the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in Northern Ireland are also invited to attend the immersion course.

8.5.3 Training for evaluators of Coláiste Gaeilge

Primary and post-primary inspectors evaluate provision in Coláistí Gaeilge on an annual basis on behalf of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The purpose of these evaluations is to:

- monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the Irish-language courses
- monitor the quality of Irish-language and cultural experiences for students
- comment on the management, organisation and operation of Irish-language courses and the progress made by the Irish-language colleges in implementing the recommendations of previous inspections

- provide advice to principals, teachers, and steering committees about the quality of the education provided in individual courses provided by Irish-language colleges.

A training event for all inspectors who evaluate Coláistí Gaeilge is provided annually.

8.5.4 Scéim Tacaíochta Teanga

In 2016, the Scéim Tacaíochta Teanga was established to support newly-recruited inspectors in developing competence in Irish and to maintain and increase the Inspectorate's presence in Irish medium and Gaeltacht schools.

As part of the Scéim, newly recruited inspectors are supported for their first year in improving their linguistic competence in Irish in a number of different ways:

- All new primary inspectors and the post-primary inspectors of Irish are expected to take part in the existing provision of Irish language courses in the Gaeltacht or provided in the Department. Participating early-years and post-primary inspectors (i.e. those who have expressed an interest in working through Irish) are invited to take part in this provision of courses.
- Depending on resources, inspectors may also in some cases access additional courses, for which they may access some funding.
- Inspectors involved in the scheme are assigned an Irish-speaking mentor and all expected communication between mentor and mentee will take place through Irish.
- Inspectors will spend at least one week work-shadowing an inspector who is conducting evaluations in the Irish language. In this way, the inspector will be able to spend a week immersed in the language and will be able to observe and engage with schools through Irish. The inspector may wish to gain some experience in report writing in Irish by writing one or some sections of a report. All new primary inspectors will be expected to write some sections of a report in Irish.

9. An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta (Gaeltacht Education Unit)

9.1 Gaeltacht Education Unit Services through Irish

In early 2017, the Gaeltacht Education Unit was established in the Department of Education and Skills to oversee and support the implementation of the *Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022*. The unit is comprised of administrative staff and inspectors who can deliver a bilingual service to schools seeking recognition as Gaeltacht schools and their communities. The service provided include the provision of guides, targeted resources and inspectorate advisory visits to primary and post-primary schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme. An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) also has a key role in supporting the implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education and supports the Gaeltacht Education Unit in the delivery of services through the medium of Irish.

9.2 Gaeltacht Education Unit Publications

Gaeltacht Education Unit publications are published in Irish or bilingually as appropriate.

10. National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

10.1 NEPS Personnel

NEPS currently has a complement of 27 educational psychologists who are proficient in the Irish language and who deliver professional services in Irish. Support services to teachers, parents and learners would include schools in Gaeltacht areas and Irish-medium schools elsewhere.

10.2 NEPS Publications – Guidelines, Resource Packs for Schools, Teachers and Parents

Guidelines for Teachers and Resource Packs for Teachers are made available in Irish and English, at both Primary and Post-Primary level, in respect of special educational needs, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

Additionally, Guidelines are available in both Irish and English to assist with Critical Incidents (e.g. death through illness, road accident or sometimes the suicide of a pupil). The Guidelines and accompanying Resource Materials for Schools include sample letters and checklists in both English and Irish.

Guidelines on Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools, (for mental health promotion and suicide prevention), are available in both English and Irish. These Guidelines have been produced in conjunction with the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

NEPS also provide an Information Leaflet for parents, in both Irish and English.

At present, diagnostic tests and tests of cognitive ability are not available in the Irish language. NEPS psychologists may opt to use cognitive tests of non-verbal ability for children whose first language is not English.

Application forms associated with certain resource requests, (i.e. whether initiated by a parent or by a school), will be made available in the Irish and English languages where appropriate.

Since 2017, NEPS, in collaboration with COGG, has developed and rolled out training for all Gaeltacht primary schools and Gaelscoileanna in the recently developed NEPS Irish literacy resource: **Cur Chuige Cothromaithe i Leith na Litearthachta i mBunranganna na Bunscoile** (Balanced Approach to Literacy Development in the Early Years). This resource is not just a translation of a previously existing English resource, but a resource that is wholly tailored to the teaching of literacy in the Irish language, with a focus of those children who receive their education through the medium of Irish. The resource can be used by class teachers and it may also be helpful to schools who want to improve reading standards in a systematic way.

10.3 NEPS Service Provision at interdepartmental and inter-agency level

NEPS also engages with a range of other public bodies – such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG), State Examinations Commission (SEC) and the Education Research Centre (ERC) – in respect of matters such as NEPS staff training; issues of concern to NEPS in the SPHE curriculum and related curricular developments; assessment of numeracy and literacy attainment; critical incidents during exams, and related matters.

Where appropriate or necessary NEPS arranges for a member of their professional staff to engage in the provision of support services in both official languages.

Chapter 4: Improving the Department's Irish Language Capability

1. Recruitment

The recruitment of staff with the appropriate level of competence in the Irish language in each area of work of the Department will be the primary means of optimising the availability of services through Irish. Our recruitment policy, which is subject to the framework of agreed national recruitment procedures, will have regard to the need to improve Irish language capability on an incremental basis.

All new staff are provided with an induction pack containing a copy of our agreed scheme in order to ensure that they are made aware of our commitments under the legislation.

2. Training and Development

The Department's Staff Training and Development Unit (STDU) provides appropriate training and development opportunities, including Irish Language training, for all staff with a view to meeting priority business needs. STDU facilitates staff to develop their Irish proficiency, and in cases where it is an essential part of their official functions, access to Irish language training is provided through appropriately accredited Irish language training courses. All staff are regularly advised of facilities/opportunities to improve their competency in Irish.

3. Irish Language Capability

Having regard to Government policy for enhancing the provision of services in Irish in 2016, the Department identified line sections where it was essential to deliver services through the Irish language. The Department acquired staff with proficiency in the Irish language to provide a resource to these sections. Holders of the positions concerned have attained accredited standards in the Irish language which enables them to conduct their official duties through Irish when necessary.

At primary level inspectors are recruited with expertise and competency in the Irish language and this will continue. At post-primary level, inspectors are subject specialists. These specialists work in English-medium and Irish-medium schools. Currently, there are insufficient numbers of post-primary inspectors with the competence to deliver all inspection services in Irish-medium post-primary schools. Attempts are being made to address these gaps through recruitment and internal upskilling.

In the event in the future it transpires that there are insufficient professional staff to deliver services to schools in Gaeltacht areas or Gaelscoileanna, a recruitment campaign to engage professional staff with proficiency in the Irish language will be undertaken through the Public Appointments Service (PAS). The same will apply in the event there is a shortage of proficiency among staff at administrative level.

The Department has developed a questionnaire that new staff are requested to complete in relation to their Irish language proficiency.

4. Irish Translation Service

The Department, having regard to Government and EU procurement policy rules, put in place a Framework Agreement for the provision of translation services. The system consists of 15 Framework Members who are offered translation jobs via an automatic system of rotation.

The system provides for English to Irish and Irish to English translation services. It ensures consistency in approach to the engagement of Irish language translation services. Staff are required to redact sensitive personal information on material being translated; Framework Members are required to maintain strict standards of confidentiality. Framework Members are also required to maintain quality control standards, in terms of proof-reading, and to use consistent and appropriate terminology, particularly in the case of documents where there is widespread use of the same technical terms e.g. circulars, school inspection reports and psychological reports. Standardised official language (Caighdeán Oifigiúil) must be used when translating material unless otherwise specified. There are instances where simplified terminology, or the vernacular, may be required depending on the target audience. The translation service has greatly enhanced the capability of staff to engage with an appropriate level of formality, depending upon whether the correspondence is with parents, learners or education professionals.

The Department will continue to ensure that arrangements are in place for staff to access an Irish language translation service as required. Up-to-date guidance and advice on the procedures and practices to be followed in the engagement of these services will continue to be provided to all staff as required.

Chapter 5: Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of management within line sections to oversee the implementation of commitments relating to their section, while the ongoing monitoring and assessment of the implementation of the scheme will be undertaken by the Corporate Services Division.

The Management Board (MB) are made aware of any matters arising relating to the language scheme by way of a weekly report. The Official Languages Act Network (OLAN) meets on a quarterly basis, to ensure that commitments made within the scheme are being met. Through this network, line sections are supported and any challenges arising can be discussed and brought to the Department's MB, as necessary. The Department intends for this method of monitoring to remain in place for the duration of the new scheme.

The level of demand for Irish language telephone services will be monitored by way of analysing phone data in relation to the Department's dedicated Irish line, 01 889 6980.

The Department will continue to consider such additional measures as may be necessary to improve the level of service provided by it in light of demand, available resources and the findings of the progress reports produced.

Each section of the Department will continue to be required to reflect any particular responsibilities which it might have in relation to compliance with the Official Languages Act 2003 and the Department's Irish Language Scheme in its annual Business Plan.

In addition, members of staff of the Department will continue to be informed of their responsibilities in respect of the Official Languages Act 2003. Detailed guidance and instructions have been made available to those who may be required to implement specific Irish language measures.

Staff will be made aware of their responsibilities under the scheme through a variety of means such as:

- Office Notices
- The Department's Quality Customer Charter and Quality Customer Service Action Plan
- Inclusion of information regarding our Irish language commitments in the Department's Induction and Customer Service training.

Chapter 6: Publicising of Agreed Scheme

This scheme will be publicised both internally and externally, through a press release initially. A bilingual version of the scheme will be made available on our website and circulated to all staff and appropriate agencies.

In addition, the Department will take every opportunity in our day to day interaction with customers to promote and publicise the services we provide in Irish through the following means:

- directly informing customers on a proactive basis of the option of conducting business with us through Irish, for example, by indicating on the website that Irish language services are available;
- prominently listing these services on our website, including a 'Gaeilge' tab in the header of every English language page on our website;
- signifying on selected guidelines, leaflets and application forms that these documents are also available in Irish, unless presented bilingually;
- giving equal prominence to Irish and English language materials wherever possible.

A copy of the agreed scheme will be forwarded to the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.