

[REDACTED]
By email
[REDACTED]

20 October 2016

Freedom of Information Request No: 2016/343

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your request for access to records held by the Department of Education and Skills under the Freedom of Information Act, 2014.

I will be addressing questions ordered 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 per your amended request.

I have copied each question in bold below, with the reply following each:

1. The total number of staff working in the Department of Education nationally
There are currently 1,229.36 whole time equivalent staff employed in the Department of Education and Skills. Doc. 1 enclosed sets out details in this regard.

- 4. How many staff members have undertaken Irish language courses in the years 2014, 2015 and this year and at what level were the courses offered**
- 5. How much has the Department paid for these courses for staff, and who provides these courses**

Doc. 2 enclosed sets out details of the number of staff who have undertaken courses in this area in 2014, 2015 and to date in 2016, the courses undertaken, course providers and the cost of courses undertaken. Courses undertaken during the academic year are presented in that calendar format, ie 2013/14, 2014/15 etc.

- 6. What resources are available in the Irish language for staff in the Staff Training and Development Unit**

A range of Irish language training which is funded by the Staff Training and Development Unit is made available to staff of the Department of Education and Skills.

Irish language awareness is incorporated into staff induction training. Staff are made aware of responsibilities in this area under the Official Languages Act and the Department's Customer Charter. Staff are also made aware of supports which are available to improve their level of proficiency, such as the Department's Refund of Fees Scheme and courses offered by providers such as Gaelchultúr, for example.

Irish language training is made available to staff where a business need is identified for such training. In such circumstances, the business need is identified by the business area and attendance at a suitable course is facilitated.

Staff can also avail of funding for courses pursued in the area of Irish language through the Department's Advance Payment of Fees and Refund of Fees schemes. Staff who wish to pursue third level qualifications that are relevant to their duties as a Civil Servant through the Advanced Payment of Fees and the Refunds of Fees schemes can apply to the Staff Training

Unit for reimbursement of academic fees. A number of staff have pursued undergraduate and postgraduate studies in this area in recent years under the Refund of Fees scheme, per Document 2 enclosed.

Provision for Inspectorate Training

As part of its Continuing Professional Development programme, the Inspectorate continues to build the capacity of its staff to provide inspection services in Irish. Immersion courses in the Gaeltacht are provided, as are centrally-located language and editing courses which focus on the development of accurate and effective communication in Irish. Other training courses through Irish are also provided for inspectors to support the development of the Inspectorate team's ability to communicate in Irish and to carry out inspections through Irish.

Specialised Training Programmes in the Irish language are provided to enable inspectors to meet their responsibilities in relation to the provision of support and advice to schools, to promote the Irish language in the education system and in relation to Irish policy matters. These courses also focus on the skills necessary to conduct evaluations in schools through the medium of Irish. Irish courses are provided centrally or in Gaeltacht locations and are tailored to the different linguistic levels and needs of Inspectors. Details of three-day residential courses attended by Department Inspectors in 2014 and 2016 are set out in Document 2 enclosed.

Each year, a Cúrsa Cruinnis (generally an intensive grammar course) is organised centrally for all inspectors who wish to upskill in Irish for the purpose of inspection. This course is organised and delivered, in the main, by inspectors who are proficient in Irish. Details of this course for 2014, 2015 and 2016 are set out in Document 2 enclosed.

Finally, in preparation for the annual programme of evaluation of Coláistí Gaeilge, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is organised for inspectors who will be conducting these evaluations. This year the cost of this CPD was €511.

Supporting New Inspectors in the Irish language

In order to support new inspectors in the Irish language the following provisions are made:

- All new primary inspectors will take part in existing provision of Irish language courses, in the Gaeltacht or provided locally in Dublin. Post-primary inspectors who are prepared to conduct evaluations through the medium of Irish will also be invited to take part in these courses
- New inspectors who will be evaluating through the medium of Irish will be assigned an Irish speaking mentor. All communication between that mentor and the inductee will take place through Irish. Mentors will have regular meetings with the new inspector to ensure continued opportunities for communication through Irish, where feasible. In addition, these inspectors will spend at least one week of their induction 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 in expected activities in schools or early-years settings as appropriate through Irish. All new primary inspectors will be expected to write some sections of a report in Irish.

7. How much have these resources cost since 2013-present

Costs associated with provision of training are set out in Doc. 2 attached. Induction training and certain Inspectorate CPD events are not included in this table as they are provided from within internal resources on a cost-neutral basis.

8. Please provide a list of all other (non-Irish language) courses, programmes, training, that staff at the Department can avail of, that is covered by the Department

The Department's Staff Training and Development Unit is responsible for the provision of training and development for all Department staff including Administrative staff, the Department's Inspectorate, the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) and Technical staff.

There is no exhaustive list as requested by you in your FOI request, as training is provided in accordance with evolving business demands. I can advise however that training provided includes:

- Management/ Leadership development
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for members of the Inspectorate, NEPS and Technical staff
- Targeted training in priority areas such as Project Management and Business Process Improvement
- Financial Management Training
- IT training and technical training for IT specialist staff
- Freedom of Information training

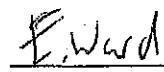
The Department also aims to foster a learning culture by providing support for staff who pursue academic programs in their own time through the Scheme for the Advance Payment and Refund of Academic Fees. Courses funded must be relevant to the public service employment of the staff member.

I hope the above information is of assistance to you. However, if you are not satisfied with the outcome of this request, then you are entitled to seek an internal review under Section 14(7) of the Act. You must submit a request for an internal review within four weeks of the date of this letter.

To submit a request for an internal review, please write to:

Ms Kathleen McAuliffe
FOI Unit
Department of Education & Skills
Marlborough St
Dublin 1.

Yours sincerely,


Eamonn Ward
Decision Maker