



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Ireland's Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033: Every Learner from Birth to Young Adulthood



Ministers' Foreword

Literacy, numeracy and digital literacy are fundamental skills. We are fortunate in Ireland to have remarkably high levels of numeracy and literacy, but it is vital to maintain investment and ambition in this area and to further digital literacy skills.

Ireland's Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033: Every Learner from Birth to Young Adulthood sets out a clear vision and a comprehensive approach to supporting all children and young adults in developing these skills. The pivotal role played by early years educators, childminders, teachers, early learning and care setting and school leaders, parents and the wider community will be central to the strategy's success. This strategy builds on the successes of the previous strategy and has been grounded in extensive research and consultation.

Much has changed in Ireland since the 2011 strategy was first launched, both in the education system and in society more broadly. In the ensuing years, early learning and care has experienced unprecedented development in Ireland, amidst widely held and mounting recognition of the significance of early childhood experiences in laying the foundations for lifelong learning.

There has also been an unprecedented programme of curriculum and assessment reform at primary and post-primary level. Continuity and progression in the development of literacy, numeracy and digital skills is now supported by the enhanced alignment of curriculum frameworks across all stages of education. Teacher education has also been reformed since 2011, and the early learning and care workforce is going through a rapid process of growth and professional development.

We now live in a thriving multilingual society where over 200 home languages are spoken. Irish Sign Language is recognised as a native and independent language and the Irish language and Irish-medium education remains a priority focus at all stages of the education system. Technology, its role in society and in education, is advancing at a rapid pace, presenting both enormous opportunity and uncharted challenges.

As we look towards the next ten years, we seek to maintain the progress made in the last decade and build on it. We will have a renewed focus on reducing achievement gaps, ensuring that all our learners have opportunities to develop the skills and competences necessary in each of the strategic areas. This will be progressed while supporting learner wellbeing and equipping learners with the necessary analytical, creativity and critical thinking skills to support them to adapt and thrive in rapidly changing environments.

This key national strategy will underpin the work of both our Departments for the next decade. While the two Departments will lead on the strategy, implementation will be through a cross-governmental approach and in close collaboration with early learning and care settings, schools, further and higher education institutions, local authorities, families, communities and others.



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Summary

Ireland's Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033: Every Learner from Birth to Young Adulthood (the strategy) seeks to extend and build on the ambition and achievements of the previous strategy *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020 (the 2011 strategy)*.

The strategy was developed through cross-departmental collaboration between the Department of Education (DE) and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). The strategy is set across all stages of the learner's journey from early learning and care (ELC) to post-primary school. It aims to promote the development of essential literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skills, knowledge, and dispositions, including successfully navigating an ever-evolving digital world.

Central to the strategy, is the recognition of the importance of early intervention and support in establishing a strong foundation in literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy during a child's formative years. Accordingly, the strategy prioritises development in ELC to ensure that all children have access to high-quality learning experiences that promote skills development from an early age.

As learners progress beyond early childhood, the strategy outlines the importance of providing tailored interventions at primary and post-primary school level. This includes initiatives aimed at enhancing teaching practices, curriculum development, and assessment methodologies to better support literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skill development.

The strategy seeks to prioritise and develop high-quality professional learning for early years educators¹, childminders, teachers², and ELC setting and school leaders. It also promotes the more effective use of assessment in offering greater challenge to all learners.

Additionally, the strategy emphasises the importance of fostering supportive learning environments that value diversity, promote inclusivity, and celebrates the unique strengths and abilities of every learner. Collaboration and partnership among various stakeholders, including early years educators, childminders and teachers, families, communities, and policymakers, are deemed essential to realising the vision outlined in the strategy.

¹ Early years educator refers to all those who work with children in centre-based ELC as defined by 'Nurturing Skills: The Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare, 2022-2028'

² Teacher includes teaching staff from both primary and post-primary schools

The strategy, informed by rigorous research, together with a wide ranging and extensive consultation process, provides definitions of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. It also details how the learner will experience literacy, numeracy and digital literacy at each level from ELC to post-primary school.

It sets out objectives under five key pillars:

Pillar 1 Enabling parents and communities to support learners' literacy, numeracy and digital literacy

Pillar 2 Supporting the professional practice of early years educators, childminders and teachers

Pillar 3 Supporting leadership in early learning and care and in the school system

Pillar 4 Improving the learner experience through curriculum, pedagogy and assessment

Pillar 5 Supporting diverse learners to achieve their potential

Overall, the strategy in recognising the interconnectedness of literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy aims to empower every learner to reach their full potential, contribute meaningfully to society, and to lead a fulfilling life.



Introduction

1.1 Setting the context

The Government of Ireland has the ambition that every learner should have the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills to thrive in today's rapidly changing society. These skills serve as the foundation for personal and educational achievement, providing the means to access knowledge, information, and opportunities. A strategy aimed at nurturing and enhancing these skills from birth to young adulthood is essential for ensuring wellbeing, equitable access to education, promoting lifelong learning, and facilitating social, cultural and economic development. The crucial role of the home and wider community is also recognised. The strategy benefits from cross-departmental collaboration between the Department of Education and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

1.2 Why a new national strategy is needed

The 2011 strategy set out actions and national improvement targets for literacy and numeracy in ELC settings, primary and post-primary schools. The *National Strategy: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020: Interim Review: 2011 – 2016* (the 2017 interim review), published in 2017, recognised the considerable progress achieved towards the attainment of the 2011 targets. It highlighted the need for an increased focus on ELC provision, numeracy, educational disadvantage, provision for learners that are more able, literacy in Irish and digital literacy. The 2017 interim review set new targets and actions in these areas.

Section

1



Since 2011, the education landscape has evolved significantly, driven by political, and societal needs, advancements in technology, and pedagogical understandings. These changes reflect a broader understanding that education must be adaptable, comprehensive, and forward-looking to prepare individuals to thrive in an ever-changing world. The changes include the following:

- ELC settings and school communities have embraced learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- The ELC sector has advanced significantly in scale, public investment, and professional learning.
- Primary and post-primary classrooms have increased the use of digital technologies.
- There is growing recognition of the importance of emotional and social learning and integrating skills that prepare learners academically and for the complexities of modern life.
- There is a more widespread awareness of the need for learners to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital skills.
- Educational policies and practices recognise the need for educators to provide for the diverse needs of learners, thus promoting inclusivity and equity in learning opportunities.



There is growing awareness of the importance of learner voice, agency and participation. The involvement of parents and communities in policy development and educational provision has developed significantly since 2011. There is a greater emphasis on collaboration and partnership between ELC settings, schools, families, and communities, leading to more inclusive and effective approaches to supporting children's learning and development.³

The education system continues to adapt to new challenges, such as those posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. While in ELC settings temporary closures were minimised, babies and young children were impacted by constrained physical contact and limitations placed on certain learning experiences. At both primary and post-primary level, the closure of schools and the resulting disruption to learning affected learners' progress across several areas of the curriculum. These closures disproportionately impacted the education of particular cohorts of learners. Furthermore, school closures impacted negatively on learners' social and emotional skills and on their overall wellbeing.

³ Parents refers to mothers, fathers, and those with parental responsibility in different parenting relationships. This may include foster parents, adoptive parents, step-parents, legal guardians, and carers.

1.3 Achievements in literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy since 2011

The 2011 strategy and the 2017 interim review established a positive and ambitious path towards enhancing literacy and numeracy outcomes for all learners with an increased emphasis on digital literacy since 2017. The actions and targets were far-reaching, enabling effective monitoring of progress made over the lifetime of the strategy. Some of the achievements (see Appendix 3 for more details), since 2011 include the following:



- The early learning and care landscape has transformed.
- The performance of learners in Ireland in reading and mathematics has improved.
- There has been significant curriculum change across all levels.
- Supports for early years educators, ELC setting leaders, teachers, and school leaders have increased.
- Opportunities for learners to engage with digital literacy in the classroom and through the curriculum have increased.
- Inclusion and equity in educational provision continue to be a priority.
- Supports for learning outside of formal educational settings has increased.
- There have been significant developments in Irish-medium education and further Irish language supports have also been provided for English-medium schools.

While there have been many achievements since 2011, the strategy aims to build upon these and continue advancing literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy for learners.

1.4 Building on the solid foundations of the 2011 strategy

The strategy aims to create a more cohesive and effective approach to education in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. Rather than adding to the workload of early years educators, childminders and teachers, and ELC setting and school leaders it seeks to streamline and strengthen existing initiatives, ensuring that support and resources are available to ELC settings and schools.

A range of education policies and strategies has been published in Ireland over the past decade. This strategy aims to align with those relevant to literacy, numeracy and digital literacy (see Figure 1 below and Appendix 4) which includes *National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030*, and how Literacy, Numeracy and Digital competences can support SDG Target 4.7⁴. This alignment across strategies and policies will assist ELC settings and schools to establish appropriate linkages across different but dependent policy areas.



⁴ By 2030, all learners have the knowledge and skills needed to promote Sustainable Development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Equal Start	National Action Plan for Childminding 2021 - 2028	Partnership for the Public Good: A New Funding	
Young Ireland: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028	Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027	Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018- 2025	
20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 – 2030	Ireland's Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033: Every Learner from Birth to Young Adulthood	Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017 - 2022	
Key Competencies in Senior Cycle		DEIS Plan (2017)	
Transition Year Programme Statement		The Creative Youth Plan 2023-2027	
Framework for Junior Cycle 2015		Forthcoming National Traveller and Roma Education Strategy	
Primary Curriculum Framework For Primary and Special Schools		STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026	Languages Connect Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017 -2026
Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework		Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making	2nd National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development - Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 4.7
National Siolta Aistear Initiative		First 5- A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028	Nurturing Skills: The Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare, 2022-2028

Figure 1 Key strategies and policies

Towards a new literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy strategy

The development of the strategy was informed by extensive research and consultation. This ensured a comprehensive understanding of the current educational landscape and the evolving needs of learners and educators at all levels. The key themes that emerged from the process informed the strategy's formulation.



Section 2

Figure 2 Research and consultation process

2.1 Research

In May 2021, the Department of Education commissioned a review in relation to literacy (including digital literacy) and numeracy as part of the strategy development process. The research was undertaken by the Institute of Education, Dublin City University. The review encompassed:

- Evaluation of outcomes from the 2011 strategy across ELC, primary, and post-primary levels.
- Analysis of curriculum and teacher education advancements since 2011.
- Examination of research spanning ELC, primary, and post-primary sectors in literacy (including digital literacy) and numeracy.
- Review of past, present, and proposed literacy and numeracy strategies in various countries.
- Formulation of suggested recommendations/actions.



Twenty-eight separate systematic reviews were completed with the addition of the report *Outcomes of the National Literacy Strategy in Relation to DEIS in Early Childhood Education, Primary and Post-Primary* (Shiel, French, Kennedy & McCormack, 2023). The systematic reviews explored pedagogical strategies, approaches and methodologies to support literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. They also acknowledged the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning, including learner voice and agency.

The final report, *Towards a New Literacy, Numeracy, and Digital Literacy Strategy: A Review of Literature*, combines the key research findings. It addresses literacy, digital literacy, numeracy, assessment dimensions, support mechanisms for diverse learners across the curriculum, professional learning, leadership, and family and community engagement.

2.2 Consultation Process

The consultation process was initiated in December 2022 with the aim of seeking a range of views on what literacy, numeracy and digital literacy mean in a modern society. The findings from the research report informed the development of the consultation process which included:

- **Public consultation** - The views of public stakeholders were captured via an online survey, which generated 1,044 responses. In addition, thirty-five detailed written submissions from stakeholder organisations and other public and voluntary bodies were received.
- **Series of targeted consultations with key stakeholders** - Fifteen online focus groups were completed. The participants included children and young people from primary and post-primary schools, early years educators and ELC setting leaders, teachers and school leaders, parents and other relevant education stakeholders and partners.
- **Final stakeholder consultation event** - The consultation process culminated in a stakeholder consultation event in the Croke Park Conference Centre in May 2023. The event had close to 150 participants who explored some of the key observations that emerged from the consultation process.

This approach set the solid foundation for a dynamic and responsive strategy, ready to address the varied challenges and opportunities for learners in literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy in the 21st century.

Early childhood experiences and relationships are important.	Parents and communities play a critical role in nurturing and supporting children's learning.	A renewed focus on numeracy is required.
Effective transitions that progress learning in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy are needed.	Key themes for literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy	Increased focus on digital literacy is needed.
High-quality professional learning should be prioritised and developed.		Assessment needs to be used more effectively.
Greater challenge is required for higher-achieving learners.		Learning experiences and outcomes in the Irish language need to be enhanced.
Supports for diverse learners need to be enhanced.		Inclusive plurilingual and pluricultural practices should be developed.
	Gender achievement differences in literacy and numeracy need to be addressed.	

2.3. Key themes for literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy

The research findings, consultation outcomes, curriculum reform, and existing strategies and policies identified several key themes for nurturing competence in literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy. As education continues to evolve, these themes become paramount for early years educators, childminders and setting leaders, teachers and school leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders alike.

The implementation of targeted responses to these key themes will ensure that learners receive a comprehensive education that equips them with the skills necessary for success. From foundational literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills to proficiency in these areas, efforts must be strategic and inclusive, fostering a learning environment where every learner can thrive and contribute meaningfully to society.

- **Early childhood experiences and relationships are important.**
Early childhood is a significant and distinct time in life that must be nurtured, respected, valued and supported in its own right, while also shaping the foundations of all future learning. Relationships with adults and warm responsive interactions play a central role in children's development during this period. Prioritising early literacy, such as shared reading programmes and language-rich environments, fosters language acquisition, vocabulary development, and pre-reading skills essential for later life. Introducing early numeracy concepts through play-based experiences develops spatial reasoning, number sense and problem-solving abilities.

- **Parents and communities play a critical role in nurturing and supporting children's learning.**

Recognising the vital role of parents, families and communities in children's learning is essential. Parents shape literacy, numeracy, and digital skills as the primary educators. Ongoing parental involvement supports learners' confidence and achievement, reinforcing the value of education. Strong partnerships between families, ELC settings and schools promote lifelong learning. Community resources such as libraries and after-school programmes foster a supportive learning environment and reinforce education's importance in society.

- **A renewed focus on numeracy is required.**

Numeracy development and promoting positive dispositions must be prioritised from early childhood to post-primary level. Teaching age-appropriate concepts that advance with learners is essential. Integrated learning, child-led approaches, and play are key in early numeracy. At all levels, emphasis on concepts like shape and space⁵ and data builds mathematical awareness. At primary and post-primary levels, integrating numeracy into other subjects enables practical application and comprehensive understanding for learners. Additionally, incorporating digital literacy skills can greatly enhance numeracy learning, offering interactive tools, simulations, and real-world applications that engage learners and deepen their understanding of numeracy.

- **Increased focus on digital literacy is needed.**

There is a need to prioritise digital literacy, as appropriate, as technology continues to play an increasingly central role in society. With the rapid advancements in digital technologies, including social media, the increasing number of online information sources, and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, learners need enhanced digital literacy skills to function and participate fully in a digital world. Digital literacy includes understanding digital citizenship, data privacy, and online safety. Equipping learners with these skills empowers them to navigate the digital landscape responsibly and critically while addressing challenges that may arise.

- **Assessment needs to be used more effectively.**

Early years educators, childminders and teachers use ongoing assessment to gather, record, interpret and communicate on the learning process. Assessment methods vary between early childhood, primary, and post-primary levels. In early childhood, assessment involves the development of rich portraits of babies and young children to support and enhance their learning. Assessment helps to identify learners' strengths and areas for improvement, supporting continuous progress as they move through the school system. Ultimately this leads to certification of achievement at post-primary level. Effective assessment, that includes the learner and has an appropriately formative focus, helps teachers and school leaders identify challenges and successes, promoting engagement and positive learning experiences. There is a need to further advance learners' skills in self-assessment, which will give them ownership of their learning and help them see their progress more clearly. The further development of an understanding of effective assessment in both ELC settings and schools is a priority.

⁵ Shape and space has been identified as an area of weakness over a number of cycles in national and international testing at primary and post-primary level

- **Learning experiences and outcomes in the Irish language need to be enhanced.**

Improving learning experiences and outcomes in the Irish language is essential for all learners. There is a need for an increased focus on the development of communication skills in Irish. The continued development of targeted supports for Irish-medium settings acknowledges the unique challenges faced by their learners. Support for Irish in English-medium settings is also required. Prioritising these needs promotes inclusivity and empowers learners to develop their competence in the Irish language and to appreciate Irish culture.

- **Inclusive plurilingual and pluricultural practices should be developed.**

Plurilingualism and pluriculturalism emphasise using multiple languages and cultural knowledge in everyday practice, highlighting their interconnectedness. Embracing plurilingualism and pluriculturalism supports inclusivity and enhances educational outcomes. It enriches learning by promoting cross-cultural communication and understanding. Tailored literacy and numeracy approaches that consider linguistic and cultural diversity are essential. There is a need to recognise the benefits of learning multiple languages and to appreciate learners' native languages and cultures in order to foster inclusive education.

- **Gender achievement differences in literacy and numeracy need to be addressed.**

Societal expectations and stereotypes influence academic performance between genders. Addressing gender differences in literacy and numeracy achievement is essential for equitable learning environments where learners of all genders feel valued and supported. Specific interventions targeting improvements in reading for males and mathematics for females are required.

- **Supports for diverse learners need to be enhanced.**

Continuing to improve supports for diverse learners is fundamental in an inclusive education system. Tailored support systems must recognise and address the unique backgrounds of learners including those at risk of educational disadvantage, their identities and abilities. Supporting diverse needs fosters respect, promotes equity and empowers learners.

- **Greater challenge is required for higher-achieving learners.**

Ensuring appropriate challenge for higher-achieving learners is essential to realise their full capabilities. Offering enrichment and advanced opportunities keeps learners engaged and motivated, allowing them to excel and reach their full potential in a climate of inclusivity and equity. This benefits both individual learners and enhances the classroom environment, promoting collaboration and peer learning.

- **High-quality professional learning should be prioritised and developed.**

Developing high-quality professional learning for early years educators, childminders and teachers is required. Enhancing their learning experiences and providing practical guidance is essential for effectively supporting learners. Increased access to targeted professional learning strengthens early years educators', childminders and teachers' skills and confidence, empowering them to equip learners with essential literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skills.

- **Effective transitions that progress learning in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy are needed.**

Smooth transitions⁶ that support and promote learning in literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy are crucial for continuous progress of all learners. Providing targeted support during these transitions helps learners navigate new challenges and supports learning across different contexts and settings.

In addition to these key themes, there is also a need to consider other areas identified in the research, and during the consultation process. These include the need for clarity around the definitions of literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy; approaches to developing literacy and numeracy competencies and dispositions; as well as the requirement for a range of supports to implement the strategy effectively. Monitoring and evaluation of the strategy are deemed necessary to ensure its success and impact.



⁶ Transitions can be between the home and the ELC setting or school, within and between daily routines, and from one setting to another. Additionally, transitions can be between home and other places where learners spend time, ELC settings and primary school, primary to post-primary school and between classes at each school level



Vision

The vision for this strategy has emerged from the consultation process and in conjunction with the deliberation of the steering group. It captures the overarching purpose and desired outcomes of the strategy. It is intended to inspire action and foster a shared commitment to achieving its objectives. The vision for this strategy is that:

Every learner, from birth to young adulthood, develops the necessary literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skills to thrive and flourish as an individual, to engage and contribute fully as an ethical, active member of society and to live a satisfying and rewarding life.

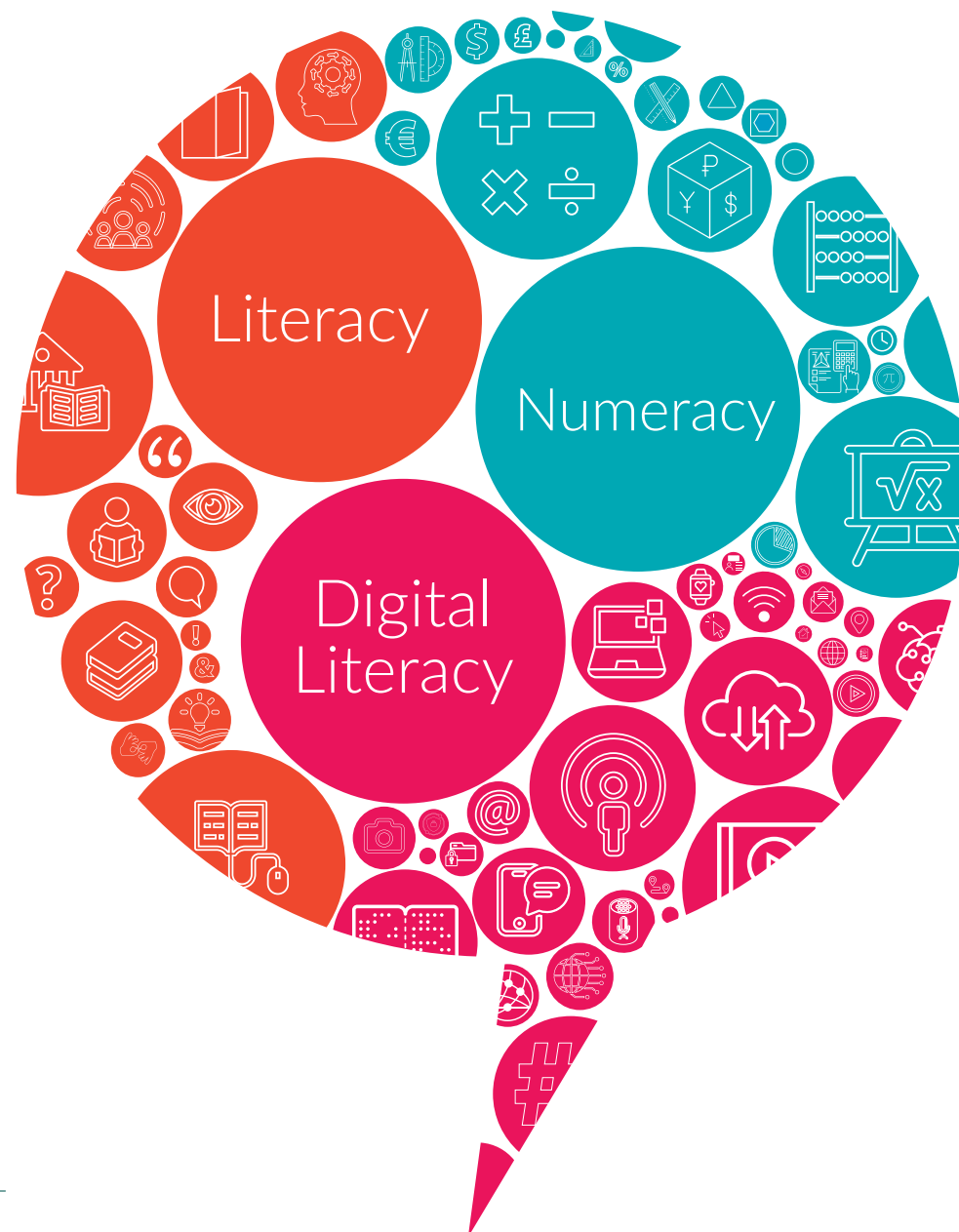
The interconnectedness of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy and their profound impact on individual wellbeing, social cohesion, and economic prosperity is recognised. In striving towards the enactment of this vision, clarity on what is meant by literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy and what these encompass at each stage of the learner's journey is important.



Section 4

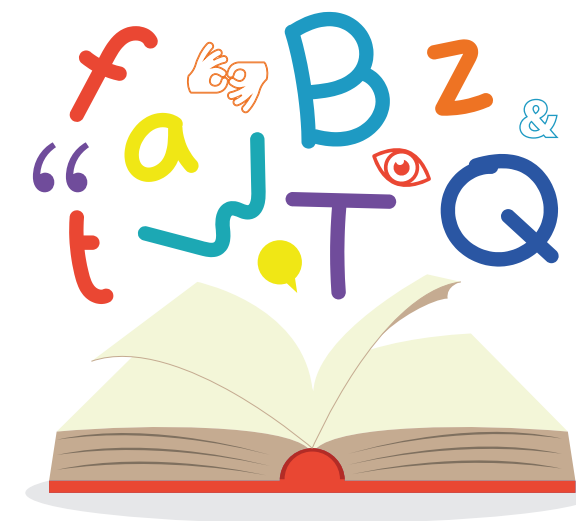
Definitions of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy and how they feature in learning in early childhood, primary and post-primary settings

The definitions of literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy serve as the foundation upon which the strategy is built, offering clarity, guidance, and a common understanding of the key concepts. By providing precise definitions and a clear understanding of what literacy, numeracy and digital literacy encompasses in early childhood, primary and post-primary, all stakeholders can navigate the strategy with confidence, ensuring alignment of efforts and effective implementation of objectives.



4.1 Literacy

Literacy is the capacity to use, read, understand, reflect on, evaluate, engage, create and critically appreciate various forms of communication including eye gaze, gesture, babbling, spoken language, printed text, visual texts, broadcast media, and digital media in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to participate in society.



Early childhood: Literacy in early childhood involves the development of communication and language and the exploration and development of literacy skills, concepts, knowledge and understanding. *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (2009)*, supports all children's learning and development from birth to six years. Babies and young children learn best through play and play-based, active, hands-on experiences that are relevant and meaningful to them. They learn many different things at the same time. What they learn is connected to where, how and with whom they learn.



In early childhood literacy encompasses:

- Developing an awareness of sound and the structure of language.
- Listening skills, such as sound discrimination, aural attention span, auditory memory, communication exchanges and taking turns in communication and in conversation.
- Multiple forms of communication by which children share their interests, needs and understanding which may include gesture, posture, expression, tone, eye-gaze, Irish Sign Language (ISL), Lámh, Braille, assistive technologies, and augmentative and alternative communication.
- Communicating in home languages and having an awareness and appreciation of the languages of others.
- Using and understanding expressive and receptive language, and the development of an expanding vocabulary of words and phrases, rhymes, and stories.
- Using language to give and receive information, ask questions, request, refuse, negotiate, problem-solve, clarify, and share thinking, ideas, and feelings.
- Exploring movement which promotes the development of literacy skills (for example holding a book and turning a page).
- Becoming print aware and using a variety of print, books, literacy props and mark-making materials in an enjoyable and meaningful way.
- Identifying and understanding symbols and their purpose and using symbols in play.
- Exploring real-world digital tools and resources to enhance developmentally appropriate literacy learning experiences.
- Developing positive learning dispositions such as independence, creativity, imagination, wanting to communicate and learn, being a good listener and cooperating with others.



Primary: Children continue their literacy learning journey from home and/or ELC settings in primary school. The primary curriculum supports all children to progress in literacy at a rate and a pace appropriate to their abilities. The diversity of learners' needs is recognised and supported through differentiated approaches to literacy learning in the inclusive primary classroom. Being a communicator and using language is one of seven key competencies in the *Primary Curriculum Framework (2023)*. While literacy is interlinked with the other competencies and embedded across all curriculum areas and subjects, this competency specifically fosters children's:

- Appreciation of the usefulness and beauty of literacy, in its broadest sense.
- Understanding and appreciation, of words, language, and all forms of communication through playful and engaging interactions.
- Ability to understand, interpret, and creatively use different forms of communication, including gesture, expression, language (which can include English, Irish, ISL, Lámh, Braille, and other languages), printed text, broadcast media, and digital media, and harness their expressive language, imagination, creative thinking and expression. This may include the use of assistive technologies and augmentative and alternative communications as necessary.
- Confidence to explore texts and read for enjoyment, and with critical understanding.
- Purposeful engagement in the creation and exploration of different text types for different purposes and for a variety of audiences.
- Enthusiasm to communicate and connect with others, to participate in wider society, share meaning, and to develop new knowledge in a responsible and respectful way.
- Curiosity, creativity, confidence, and criticality in using a range of media/digital technology and methods of communication suited to different purposes and audiences.
- Curiosity and imagination to learn how to share their experiences, thoughts, ideas, and feelings in a variety of ways.
- Reflexivity in learning how to observe, listen to, question, and interpret, and show respect for the perspectives of others.
- Confidence to utilise digital technologies to develop their literacy knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and dispositions effectively, safely, and ethically.
- Existing knowledge, experience, and awareness of languages, and celebrate linguistic and cultural diversity within and beyond the school.
- Literacy skills to contribute positively to the world around them.



Post-Primary: Learners continue their literacy journey from primary school in post-primary education. At post-primary level, literacy encompasses an understanding of the unique literacy practices and needs of adolescent learners. This is reflected through the inclusion of 'Being Literate' as a key skill of the junior cycle, while the key skills in senior cycle also reflect numerous aspects of literacy including analysing and interpreting texts, engaging in dialogue, listening attentively and composing.

A number of points are relevant in considering learners' literacy development in post-primary education:

- Literacy is inclusive and multifaceted, with relevance in all curricular areas.
- Literacy encompasses both cognitive and technical skills/foundational skills.
- Literacy is not limited to reading and writing, it involves engagement with communication in all its forms.
- Literacy as a concept is inclusive and meets the needs of all learners. It fosters learners' ability to understand, interpret, and creatively use different forms of communication, including gesture, expression, language (which can include English, Irish, ISL, Lámh, Braille, and other languages). This may include the use of assistive technologies and augmentative and alternative communication, as necessary.
- Oracy, reading, and writing have a reciprocal relationship: language skills develop well when each element is taught in an integrated way.
- Every teacher is a teacher of literacy.
- As learners move into post-primary education, there is a greater focus on disciplinary literacy. Prioritising subject-specific literacy and language skills across the curriculum is integral to learners' understanding as they appreciate how to think effectively in each discipline.
- Appropriate links with learners' out-of-school literacy practices support their engagement with disciplinary literacy.
- Learner motivation is a key element in developing adolescent literacy.
- The development of learners' literacy, and particularly critical literacy, is a key component in their development as informed individuals who contribute positively to society.

4.2 Numeracy

Numeracy is the ability to observe, explore and manipulate objects, and hear mathematical language. It involves using mathematical understanding and skills in a variety of contexts to describe, predict and explain phenomena, recognising the role that mathematics plays in the world. A numerate learner applies mathematical skills and makes the well-founded judgements and decisions needed by constructive, engaged, and reflective members of society.



Early childhood: Numeracy in early childhood involves the exploration and development of mathematical skills, concepts, knowledge and understanding. *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (2009)*, supports all children's learning and development from birth to six years. Babies and young children learn best through play and play-based, active, hands-on experiences that are relevant and meaningful to them as part of their everyday routines and interactions. Children understand mathematics as important and useful. What they learn is connected to where, how and with whom they learn. They learn many different things at the same time.



In early childhood numeracy encompasses:

- Observing, feeling, manipulating, comparing a variety of materials with differing textures, smells, weights, and sizes, recognising when things are the same and different.
- Hearing mathematical talk and labelling and using mathematical language for measurement (for example more, fewer, shorter, longer, higher, lower, older, and younger), language for position (for example, beside, between), language for direction (for example up and down), and language for movement (for example, turn and slide).
- Being supported to make connections in learning through interpreting and analysing information, investigating, problem-solving, negotiating, reasoning, and critical thinking. In time, managing this independently.
- Exploring space, shape (2D, 3D), measurement, quantity, time, pattern, and number.
- Collecting, sorting, sequencing, ordering, and identifying and creating patterns.
- Developing skills such as counting, doing calculations (adding subtracting, multiplying, and dividing), measuring (weight, length, height, capacity, volume, money, time), estimating, and predicting.
- Recognising and using symbols and engaging in mathematical mark making.
- Engaging with music and movement to support mathematical thinking.
- Exploring movement which promotes the development of mathematical skills (for example balancing, exploring speed and trajectory, and manipulating objects).
- Exploring mathematical communication and representation through finger play, songs, rhymes, puppets, stories, and picture books.
- Exploring real-world digital tools and resources (calculators, weighing scales) to enhance developmentally appropriate numeracy learning experiences.
- Developing positive learning dispositions such as perseverance, concentration, curiosity, self-confidence, creativity, being interested in things, enjoying problem-solving, assessing and taking risks.

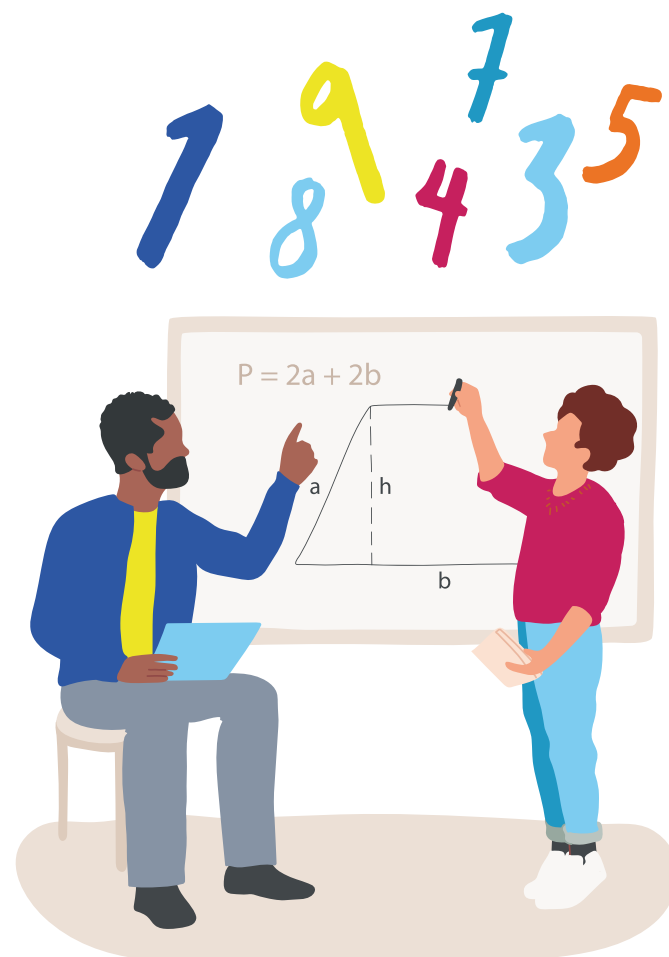


Primary: At primary level, children continue their mathematical and numeracy learning journeys from home and/or early learning and care settings. The *Primary Mathematics Curriculum (2023)* sees every child as having an innate, intuitive, and instinctive sense of mathematics and numeracy, capable of engaging with mathematical concepts and ideas from birth and deepening and developing their numeracy learning over time. Mathematics and numeracy help learners to better function in, critically engage with and navigate the world around them.

Being mathematical is one of seven key competencies in the *Primary Curriculum Framework (2023)*. While the competencies are interlinked, this competency specifically develops numeracy and supports children to:



- Understand the usefulness and beauty of numeracy and mathematics.
- Develop and apply mathematical thinking and logic to solve a range of problems and make sense of the world.
- Have the confidence and skill to recognise and use mathematics flexibly in all aspects of life and to communicate, clarify and justify decisions using appropriate mathematical language, data, and digital technology.
- Be mathematical and draw on a range of knowledge, skills (observing, estimating, predicting, and calculating), concepts, attitudes, values, and dispositions as they recognise, interpret, and apply real-world information presented mathematically.
- Think and communicate quantitatively, to reason, to make sense of, critically engage with and evaluate data and recognise relationships, trends, connections, and patterns.
- Have spatial awareness and to understand patterns and sequences.
- Transfer their numeracy knowledge, skills, and logic to other curriculum areas and the wider world, enriching their experiences.
- Utilise digital technologies to creatively, effectively, safely and ethically develop their knowledge and understanding of numeracy, skills, attitudes, values, and dispositions through problem-solving, experimenting, creating, justifying and communicating.
- Use their numeracy and mathematical skills to contribute positively to the world around them.



Post-Primary: Students continue their numeracy journey from the primary school in second-level education. This is reflected through the inclusion of 'Being Numerate' as a key skill of the junior cycle where it is intrinsic to the framework and all subject specifications. In senior cycle, numeracy is represented in the key skills⁷, which support communication, problem-solving, and accessing and selecting information.

Numeracy is not limited to applying number, knowledge and skills. Rather, it is best described as critically understanding how mathematics is used in the real world, day-to-day life and being able to competently and flexibly apply it to make the best possible decisions. Numeracy in the post-primary school means being able to:

- Analyse patterns and relationships in information and ideas.
- Use skills of investigation, reasoning and problem-solving.
- Hypothesise and make predictions through the examination of evidence.
- Analyse and make good arguments.
- Access information from a range of sources and in different formats, gathering, interpreting, critiquing and representing data.
- Express ideas mathematically.
- Estimate, predict and calculate.
- Adopt a positive disposition and attitude towards numeracy.
- Link numeracy learning to experiences across the curriculum, in the real world and outside of school.

⁷ The Senior Cycle Key Skills Framework will be replaced by the Key competencies in senior cycle

4.3 Digital Literacy

Digital literacy is the ability to access, explore, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate, create, and disseminate information safely and appropriately through digital technologies. It includes critical thinking, using ICT safely, responsibly and ethically, collaboration and creativity, finding real information, and respectful online communication.



Early childhood: In early childhood, the meaning of digital literacy and the use of digital technologies are complex, particularly in the birth to three age cohort. Parents, early years educators and childminders are often presented with conflicting information. The DCEDIY has identified the need for more clarity in this area, a need strongly echoed within the public consultation carried out in the development of this strategy. The DCEDIY has committed to carry out a public consultation and develop a policy statement on the use of digital technologies in ELC.

While Aistear does not set specific expectations for digital literacy, it does suggest possible opportunities for parents, early years educators and childminders to integrate digital technologies into children's learning experiences. Through active, playful and enquiry-led engagement, young children are supported to acquire the foundations for digital learning that are deepened and refined as they move through the education system. (Digital Learning 2019, DE Inspectorate)

Primary: Children continue their digital literacy learning journey from home and/or early learning and care settings in primary school. Being a digital learner is one of seven key competencies in the *Primary Curriculum Framework (2023)*.

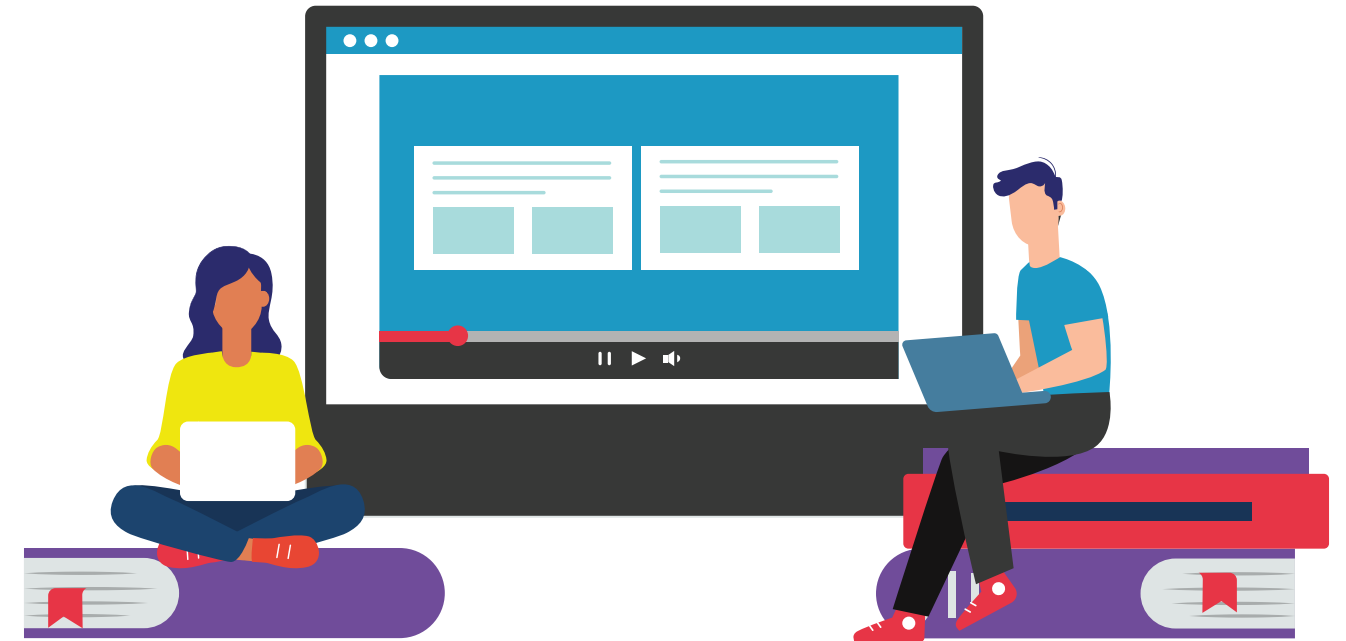
While it is interlinked with the other competencies and embedded across all curriculum areas and subjects, this competency specifically supports children to:



- Become curious, creative, confident, and critical users of digital technology.
- Communicate, collaborate and thrive in a world increasingly immersed in technology.
- Develop their knowledge, skills, concepts, attitudes, values, and dispositions through content creation, problem-solving, and creativity using digital technology.
- Increase their confidence in using a range of digital technologies, including emerging technologies, to harness their imagination and expand their creative thinking and creative expression.
- Become active digital citizens, developing responsible, respectful, safe, critical and ethical use of digital technology.
- Critically engage and contribute in a digitally connected and interdependent world.
- Accessing, analysing, and managing content using digital technology.

Post-Primary: Learners continue their digital literacy journey in post-primary education. Digital literacy at both primary and post-primary level incorporates a particular set of competencies that allows the learner to function and participate incrementally in a digital world. Each key skill in Junior Cycle includes digital elements, while the key skills for senior cycle incorporate numerous elements of digital literacy. The redevelopment of senior cycle will continue and further develop a focus on learners' digital literacy skills.

For learners in post-primary education digital literacy includes the ability to:



- Source, critique, and manage information in digital environments and reflect on their learning, while recognising their own rights and the rights of others.
- Respectfully communicate, collaborate, and co-create knowledge through active engagement in appropriate public discourse and civic participation.
- Use technology to express themselves and work creatively.
- Evaluate online information and content by sourcing, collating, analysing, and managing online information and content effectively.
- Compare and critically evaluate the credibility and reliability of information and its sources.
- Engage safely and ethically online and become digital citizens.
- Be media literate, recognising and counteracting misinformation/disinformation.
- Recognise how copyright and licences apply to digital content and how to reference sources and attributable licences.

Objectives across five pillars in the education system

This section outlines the objectives for the strategy that have emerged from key themes that were identified from the research and the consultation findings. The objectives are set out across five key pillars. As with its predecessor in 2011, this strategy will be the focal point within the education system for improving literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy outcomes to 2033. Actions relating to each of the pillars are outlined in the accompanying implementation plan.

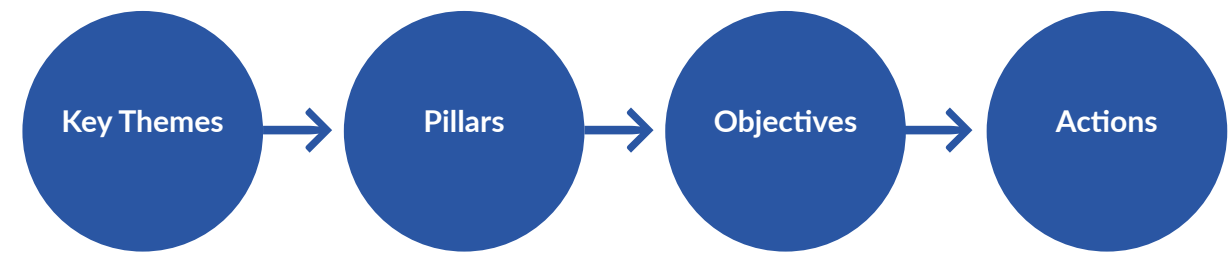


Figure 3



The five pillars are:

- **Pillar 1** Enabling parents and communities to support learners' literacy, numeracy and digital literacy
- **Pillar 2** Supporting the professional practice of early years educators, childminders and teachers
- **Pillar 3** Supporting leadership in early learning and care and in the school system
- **Pillar 4** Improving the learner experience through curriculum, pedagogy and assessment
- **Pillar 5** Supporting diverse learners to achieve their potential

The objectives outlined in this ten-year strategy highlight the strong dedication to improving outcomes and encouraging ongoing progress within ELC settings and schools. Through targeted initiatives and collaborative efforts, the aim is to create environments that promote innovation, excellence, and inclusivity across literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy.

Section 5



Pillar 1: Enabling parents and communities to support learners' literacy, numeracy and digital literacy

There is a need to empower parents and communities to actively support learners' literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy. Parents as the primary educators, play a crucial role in helping their children to develop essential skills such as language and literacy, including reading and writing, as well as numeracy and digital literacy skills. Fostering partnerships with parents and families is key to nurturing a child's development and laying the groundwork for future learning in ELC settings, primary and post-primary schools. There is also a need to recognise that additional support and consideration may be required to engage with some parents and families where there may be language, literacy, digital literacy, disability, cultural or historic barriers to engagement with the education system.

Communities where children live and grow also have a major role in supporting literacy, numeracy and digital literacy development. Strengthening community support is necessary to facilitate an integrated approach to the national initiative for improving learning in literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy. Through collaborative efforts and a shared commitment to educational enrichment, efforts aim to cultivate environments that nurture linguistic diversity, cultural appreciation, and inclusive learning opportunities for all learners.

Objectives over the ten-year strategy:

- Further support parents in promoting and encouraging their children's literacy, numeracy and digital literacy learning.
- Foster and promote the Irish language by facilitating parents and communities in supporting children's language learning and acquisition.
- Enhance learners' literacy, numeracy and digital literacy outcomes by utilising community supports.



Pillar 2: Supporting the professional practice of early years educators, childminders and teachers

The professional practice of early years educators, childminders and teachers is essential in foundation for lifelong learning. They play a pivotal role in shaping and creating high-quality learning experiences that nurture and support all learners. These experiences enable learners to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to engage fully and effectively in ELC, school, life, and society. In recognising the significance of the role of early years educators, childminders and teachers, it is essential to provide robust support and continuous professional learning to enhance their skills, knowledge, and pedagogical approaches.

To support the evolving demands of the linguistic and cultural landscape, professional learning experiences will be provided to promote plurilingual and pluricultural awareness and practices. Specifically, in order to address the improvement of learning experiences and outcomes in the Irish language, supports will be provided to enhance the Irish language competence of early years educators, childminders and teachers. Recognising the importance of numeracy and digital literacy, a similar emphasis will be placed on providing professional learning opportunities tailored to these domains.

In addition, comprehensive support and guidance are necessary to aid early years educators, childminders and teachers in employing diverse forms of assessment practices. These practices include listening to the learner's voice and data-informed approaches, through which valuable insights are gained into individual learning needs. By providing tailored professional learning opportunities, coaching, mentoring, resources and supports, the strategy aims to empower early years educators, childminders and teachers to continuously improve and inspire a love of learning for all learners.

Objectives over the ten-year strategy:

- Ensure a range of professional learning experiences in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy are provided for early years educators, childminders and teachers.
- Engage with initial professional education (IPE) and initial teacher education (ITE) on the inclusion of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy in all ELC, primary and post-primary programmes.
- Provide professional learning experiences to address needs in the areas of Irish language competence and best practice in the teaching, learning and assessment of and through Irish.
- Provide professional learning experiences and supports to embrace plurilingual and pluricultural diversity and practices.

**Pillar 3: Supporting leadership in early learning and care and in the school system**

The strategy recognises the pivotal role that ELC setting and school leadership teams play in fostering a nurturing, inclusive, learner-centred, and effective educational environment for all learners. Looking at Our School (DE, 2022) recognises the inseparable nature of leadership and management in primary and post-primary schools, and their impact on learning.

Strong leadership fosters a cohesive approach to curriculum alignment, decision-making, planning, instructional strategies, and assessment practices, ensuring that literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy are integrated seamlessly into the learning experience for all learners.

Effective leadership also promotes collaboration among early years educators, teachers, and external stakeholders such as parents and communities, enabling the sharing of best practices and the implementation of innovative approaches to learning and teaching.

There is a need to continue to empower ELC setting and school leaders with the necessary skills and knowledge to continue to drive positive change and innovation in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy within their settings and schools. Providing development programmes, professional learning, tailored supports and resources is essential to support this change and innovation. These initiatives aim to create an environment conducive to improved outcomes for all learners.

Objectives over the ten-year strategy:

- Further support leadership teams in sustaining collaborative cultures that encourage literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy learning, teaching and assessment.
- Further support leaders' capacity to monitor and evaluate learner experiences and outcomes in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.
- Strengthen continuity in the literacy, numeracy and digital literacy learning journey of children and young people.



Pillar 4: Improving the learner experience through curriculum, pedagogy and assessment

Continuity of experience in learner's development of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills from early childhood to young adulthood is essential. Babies and young children learn through play and through hands-on experiences that are relevant to them. As children and young people develop, the ways in which they learn change, as they move along their learning journeys from home to ELC, to primary and on to post-primary school. Early years educators, childminders and teachers, as skilled professionals, enact the curriculum by making decisions around pedagogy and by making decisions about what, when, why and how to teach. They do this while considering the learner's strengths, needs, interests, and individuality.

The aim of Government is to consistently improve the quality of learning and teaching practices in ELC settings and schools. Early years educators, childminders and teachers are committed to creating inclusive learning environments where diversity is embraced and every learner feels valued and supported. Central to this is the provision of curricula that foster deep understanding, critical thinking, and lifelong learning skills.

In ELC settings, primary and post-primary schools a strong emphasis is placed on pedagogy that is responsive and learner centred, fostering an inclusive learning environment where individual needs are met. Through a variety of relational, playful, and instructional strategies, differentiation techniques, and technology-enhanced learning tools, active participation is ensured, learning experiences are guided, and learners are empowered. These approaches also guarantee that the diverse needs of all learners will be met. There is also the need for ongoing assessment of learner progress and achievement. Assessment should be authentic, formative, and aligned with learning goals. It should provide learners with timely feedback and opportunities for reflection and growth. A balanced assessment system, that includes a variety of assessment methods, which capture the richness and complexity of learning experiences is required. This will inform decision-making at every stage of the learning journey.

Objectives over the ten-year strategy:

- Ensure continuity and progression in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy for all learners by supporting early years educators, childminders and teachers in their understanding and implementation of the curriculum frameworks.
- Improve learners' language skills and outcomes in Irish by enhancing learning experiences.
- Continue to support learners in their safe and ethical use of digital technologies in a confident and competent manner.
- Promote learner engagement and motivation in their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy learning journey.
- Provide learner experiences that address gender differences in attitudes, confidence and achievement, and in identified areas of focus in mathematics and literacy.
- Consider how different assessment methods can enhance learner experience in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.



Pillar 5: Supporting diverse learners to achieve their potential

This strategy has a commitment to inclusive education which aims to improve literacy, numeracy and digital literacy outcomes for all learners. There is a recognition that diverse learners within ELC settings and schools have unique strengths, challenges, and learning styles and that learners need different levels of support. The term 'diverse learners' is intentionally broad to encompass the many ways children can be at risk of experiencing educational disadvantage. The term includes learners who experience specific learning disabilities, including disabilities specific to literacy, numeracy and language⁸, as well as learners with additional educational needs, including the exceptionally able. The term also encompasses learners for whom English is a second language, and those from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including the Traveller and Roma communities. Moreover, the strategy recognises that the intersectionality of different forms of disadvantage can further compound the challenges that learners may face.

The goal is for all learners, regardless of background, to leave education with the necessary skills to live independent and fulfilling lives. Differentiated supports may be required to help diverse learners to reach their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy potential.

It is necessary to foster a supportive and inclusive learning community where all learners feel valued, respected, and supported. Promotion of a culture of acceptance, understanding, and support for diverse learners within the broader ELC setting and school community is required. This can be achieved through the collaboration of early years educators, teachers, parents, learners, specialists, and other relevant stakeholders. By embracing diversity, fostering inclusion, and providing tailored support and resources, all learners can be empowered to become active participants in shaping their own learning journeys and in contributing positively to society.

Objectives over the ten-year strategy:

- Enable diverse learners to access quality learning experiences in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.
- Provide high-quality professional learning opportunities for early years educators, childminders and teachers in effective approaches that support diverse learners in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.
- Continue to improve supports for those at risk of educational disadvantage including learners from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, to enhance outcomes and minimise achievement gaps in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.
- Provide more opportunities for integrated learning of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills to promote independence for diverse learners.
- Support learners for whom English is an additional language to fully participate in the curriculum by recognising their social, cognitive, and academic language needs.
- Ensure that exceptionally able learners are challenged and supported appropriately, particularly in the areas of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

⁸ To include Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Dysgraphia

Implementation and measuring success

This key national strategy will underpin the work of both departments for the next decade. Progress towards the achievement of the strategy objectives and its overall ambition will be realised through a strategic planning process which will require sustained effort and focus across each part of the education system. A partnership approach that includes learners, early years educators, childminders and ELC setting leaders, teachers and school leaders, parents, policy makers and other relevant education stakeholders and partners will support this process.

Measuring the success of the strategy will be a continuous process involving the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data and feedback from a broad range of sources. These will include DE and DCEDIY data, information and feedback from key stakeholders including learners, and results of national and international testing at primary and post-primary school levels. In addition, indicators over the lifetime of the strategy have been identified. These sources of data will all serve as benchmarks for assessing progress and identifying areas of improvement through the lifetime of the strategy.

Indicators	Pillars				
	1	2	3	4	5
Increased number of books, including library books, babies and young children have access to in their home	√				
Increased percentage of babies and young children in the birth to five age cohort with library membership	√				
Increased percentage of babies and young children whose parents often engaged in (a) literacy or (b) numeracy activities with them before starting first class	√				
Increased overall participation rates in the ECCE programme, including rates of groups with lower participation, in particular Traveller children and Roma children				√	√
Increased participation rates in ELC among one-three year olds				√	√
Increased percentage of unique services that have completed the proposed literacy, numeracy and digital literacy professional learning under NSAI (Language and Literacy, Stem & the Arts, Assessment, Children's Participation in Everyday Practice, Hanen <i>Learning Language and Loving it</i> and Updated Aistear Introductory)		√	√	√	

Section 6

Indicators	Pillars				
	1	2	3	4	5
Increased number of unique ELC services that engage with their local library service. (Engagement classified as use of educator membership and other indicators)		√		√	
Increased proportion of early years educators that indicated elements such as supporting children's early learning of content areas (e.g., language, numeracy, science, art, etc. and using digital resources and tools to facilitate working with children) included within professional learning programmes undertaken by them		√			
Increased proportion of early years educators that indicated that these professional learning programmes positively impacted on their work with children		√			
Increased positive dispositions towards and motivation among learners in primary and post-primary schools for mathematics				√	√
Increased time learners in primary and post-primary schools spend reading and writing for enjoyment				√	√
More positive attitude among learners, parents and teachers towards the Irish language in primary and post-primary schools.	√	√	√	√	√
Maintained levels of students taking higher level mathematics for Junior Cycle and the Leaving Certificate				√	√
Improved quality of Irish learning experiences and outcomes in English-medium primary and post-primary schools				√	√
Improved teacher awareness and usage of digital literacy resources in primary and post-primary schools		√			
Improved supports at primary and post-primary levels for Traveller and Roma learners and their families	√	√	√	√	√
Improved teacher awareness of supports in recognising and countering disinformation in primary and post-primary school		√			

Indicators	Pillars				
	1	2	3	4	5
Increased usage of the library service by primary and post-primary learners, teachers and schools		√	√	√	√
Continued professional learning for teachers in primary and post-primary schools in tandem with the evolution of digital literacy, including AI			√	√	
Maintenance of high standards of reading of learners at primary and post-primary level through the promotion of higher-order comprehension and thinking skills				√	√
Reduced numbers of learners at primary and post-primary schools at the lowest level of achievement in both reading and mathematics				√	√
Improved performance by learners in DEIS schools in mathematics and reading literacy					√
Improved performance of learners in primary and post-primary schools in mathematics with particular focus on shape and space, and data				√	√
Increased numbers of learners at primary and post-primary schools at the highest levels of achievement in both reading and mathematics				√	√
Increased performance in mathematics at primary and post-primary levels with a focus on both male and female achievement				√	√
Reduced gender gap in reading literacy performance: maintain female performance and increase the performance of males				√	√

This comprehensive approach to evaluation and monitoring of progress ensures that the strategy will remain responsive to evolving needs, ensuring that every learner receives the support and opportunities necessary to thrive personally and academically in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. Through ongoing evaluation and adaptation, the strategy aims to foster a culture of continuous improvement in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy across all levels of education, from ELC to post-primary level.

The implementation of the strategy will span a period of ten years, from 2024 to 2033, supported by two implementation plans. The first plan published alongside this strategy sets out the objectives and associated actions for the next five years. Progress will be documented annually and disseminated through published reports. Furthermore, a review will take place three years into the implementation of the strategy to evaluate progress and identify any adjustments required. A second implementation plan for the remaining five years will be developed, signalling a continued commitment to strategic refinement and improvement.

Structures will be put in place involving both departments to progress implementation of the strategy and monitoring of progress. In addition, a literacy, numeracy and digital literacy implementation advisory group will be established to guide the implementation of the strategy. This advisory group will provide invaluable insights and guidance throughout the implementation process, ensuring that the strategy remains responsive to the needs and priorities of all learners. The group will play a pivotal role in enhancing the strategy's effectiveness and overall impact on learner outcomes.



Appendices

Appendix 1 - Abbreviations

AIM	Access and Inclusion Model
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DE	Department of Education
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ELC	Early Learning and Care
ESD	Educational for Sustainable Development
EYEI	Early Years Education Inspections
IPE	Initial Professional Education
ISL	Irish Sign Language
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LAOS	Looking at Our School
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied
LCE	Leaving Certificate Established
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
LNDL	Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency
NAMER	National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCS	National Childcare Scheme
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NTRIS	National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy
NPC	National Parents Council
NSAI	National Síolta Aistear Initiative
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PCF	<i>Primary Curriculum Framework</i>
PL	Professional Learning
PLC/CTB	Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile
PMC	Primary Mathematics Curriculum
SAC	School-Age Childcare
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SCR	Senior Cycle Redevelopment
SSE	School Self-Evaluation
STAR	Supporting Travellers and Roma in Education
TIMSS	Trends in Mathematics and Science Study
TY	Transition Year
UDL	Universal Design for Learning

Appendix 2 – Glossary

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)	A range of communication methods that can be used to enhance or substitute speech. Any form of communication besides spoken words used with oral speech or instead of oral speech.
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools - The Department's action plan for educational inclusion.
Digital citizens	Individuals able to use digital tools to create, consume, communicate, and engage positively and responsibly with others. Digital citizens understand and respect human rights, embrace diversity, and become lifelong learners to keep step with evolutions in society.
Digital citizenship education	A holistic approach that strives to develop the essential skills and knowledge needed in today's connected world and foster the values and attitudes that will ensure they are used wisely and meaningfully.
Digital learner	Children and young people becoming curious, creative, confident, and critical users of digital technology. Being a digital learner fosters children's ability to collaborate and thrive in a world increasingly immersed in technology.
Disciplinary literacy	Teaching language and literacy throughout the curriculum, in a manner that supports thinking and learning in different subjects.
Diverse Learners	Learners with additional educational needs, including general learning disability, mild, moderate and severe general learning disability, specific learning disabilities, including disabilities specific to literacy, numeracy and language ⁹ , those with additional needs in terms of hearing and visual impairment, those from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, those learning English as a second language and those who are exceptionally able or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition.
Early Learning and Care (ELC)	Early learning and care (ELC) is defined as regulated arrangements that provide education and care from birth to school-entry, and includes both centre-based services and registered childminders.
Educational continuum	An uninterrupted learning journey for the child from early years through to the end of formal education.

⁹ To include Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Dysgraphia

Educational disadvantage	The impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education.
Education for sustainable development	Knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.
Equal Start	Equal Start is a funding model and a set of associated universal and targeted measures to support access and participation in early learning and care and school-age childcare for children and their families who experience disadvantage.
Intercultural Education	Education which respects, celebrates, and recognises the normality of diversity in all areas of human life.
Lámh	Lámh is a manual sign system used by children and adults with intellectual disability and communication needs in Ireland to support communication.
Learning Outcomes	Describe the measurable skills, abilities, knowledge, or values that students should be able to demonstrate as a result of a completing a course/programme of learning.
Linguistic	Connected with the study of language.
Multicultural	A variety of distinct ethnic groups and cultures in early years settings and classrooms.
Multilingual	A variety of languages in early years settings and classrooms.
National Childcare Scheme (NCS)	The NCS provides financial support to help families with their early learning and childcare costs.
National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	The NCSE was set up to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs arising from disabilities with particular emphasis on children.
Oide	Oide is the support service for teachers and school leaders, funded by the Department of Education, formed from the integration of four existing support services and launched on September 1, 2023. These support services are the Centre for School Leadership, Junior Cycle for Teachers, the National Induction Programme for Teachers and the Professional Development Service for Teachers.

Parents and families	Parents refers to mothers, fathers, and those with parental responsibility in different parenting relationships. This may include foster parents, adoptive parents, step-parents, legal guardians, and carers.
Pedagogical practices	Practices acknowledged as essential to the provision of quality learning experiences.
Pluricultural	Refers to several cultures.
Plurilingual	The ability of a person to communicate in several languages.
Professional Learning	Professional development experiences, continuing professional development (CPD), training, workshops or programmes that early years educators, childminders, teachers, ELC setting and school leaders engage with that may lead to professional learning.
School self-evaluation	A process whereby schools identify and reflect on children's/students' educational experiences and outcomes, their wellbeing, their motivation to learn and their engagement in learning and subsequently programme of work to effectively progress learning.
Transitions	Transitions can be between the home and the ELC setting or school, within and between daily routines, and from one setting to another. Additionally, transitions can be between home and other places where learners spend time, ELC settings and primary school, primary to post-primary school and between classes at each school level.

Appendix 3 - Improvements in achievement for children and young people since 2011.

1. The early learning and care landscape has transformed

ELC has and continues to undergo significant changes in policy and practice. *First 5*, the whole-of-Government strategy to improve the lives of babies, young children, and their families, is a 10-year strategy published in 2018. A new Implementation Plan for *First 5* for 2023-2025 was recently published. *First 5* commits to major initiatives on family leave, children's health services, parenting supports, child-friendly communities as well as broad reform of the ELC system, seeking to further improve affordability, accessibility, and quality of ELC services. A number of commitments in *First 5* aim to support early language, literacy and numeracy development in babies and young children. *First 5* includes specific targeted actions such as the recently piloted Little Baby Bundles and the Little Library Initiative, increasing the availability of books in homes and in ELC settings. The Little Library Initiative has succeeded in gifting book bags to 60,000 young children and has seen over 30,000 four and five year olds sign up for local library membership and services, along with 4,000 ELC settings.

When the 2011 strategy was published, the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme was in its infancy, providing one year of pre-school to children. In 2016 and again in 2018 the ECCE programme was expanded. In addition, the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) was introduced in 2016 to ensure children with a disability could enrol in and meaningfully participate in the ECCE programme with an expansion beyond the programme from September 2024. The National Childcare Scheme, introduced in 2019, complements the ECCE programme, providing subsidies to reduce the costs to parents for children to participate in ELC outside the ECCE programme and in school-age childcare (SAC). The National Childcare Scheme combines both universal and targeted measures:

- A universal subsidy – currently €1.40 per hour, rising to €2.14 per hour in September 2024 – significantly reduces net costs for parents.
- An income-assessed subsidy, which provides higher rates of subsidy to families with lower incomes. Income-assessed subsidies are available to families with reckonable income below €60,000 per year. The lower the family's income, the higher the rate of subsidy. Families with reckonable income below €26,000 are eligible to the maximum rate of subsidy, thus providing the highest level of financial assistance to families experiencing poverty and disadvantage.

For some families, the National Childcare Scheme provides free access to ELC and SAC. In particular, the scheme includes arrangements for specified target groups to receive free access, where referred by a sponsor body.

Today, all children from two years and eight months can now avail of the universal preschool programme for two years prior to starting primary school and there is a commitment to put the programme on a statutory footing. Currently 96% of all children in the eligible age cohort participate in the ECCE programme. 180,000 children are expected to benefit from supports under the National Childcare Scheme this year.

There has been an expansion and strengthening of ELC regulation and inspection processes. In 2016, *Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016* were introduced. The regulations describe the standards of health, safety, welfare and development that must be in place in ELC services and introduced a minimum level of qualification, at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), for all members of staff working directly with children, for the first time. In 2016, Early Years Education Focused Inspections commenced. The inspections are designed to evaluate key aspects of education provision and to promote improvement in the ELC setting under review. While the initial focus was on assessing ELC settings participating in the ECCE Programme, in 2023 the Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) model was revised to encompass children from birth to 6 years. In 2021, the National Action Plan for Childminding 2021-2028 was published, setting out a phased approach to the extension of regulation and supports to childminding.

The ability of early years educators and childminders to support young children's literacy and numeracy skills depends on wider actions to support the quality of ELC services, particularly through the professional learning of the ELC workforce. *Nurturing Skills: The Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare, 2022-2028*, published in 2021, maps out a vision and implementation plan to meet workforce-related targets, including moving to a graduate-led workforce by 2028. It introduced a career framework and a career pathway, including supports for leadership roles. Collaboration between the DCEDIY and DE has seen the review of initial professional education programmes for the sector, and the tying of funding programmes to the new award standards. *The Professional Award-type Descriptors (PATD)* and *Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines (PACG)* saw the inclusion of a focus on early literacy and numeracy, language acquisition and multilingualism in initial professional education programmes through to level 8 on the NFQ.

ELC continues to see increased levels of public investment. The Together for Better funding model, introduced in 2022, supports improved affordability for parents, improved quality for children through, inter alia, better pay and conditions for staff, increased capacity for families, and greater financial stability for service providers. The model currently brings together: the ECCE programme, including AIM (supporting children with disabilities to participate), the National Childcare Scheme and Core Funding. Investment in ELC has quadrupled in the last 9 years from €265 million in 2015 to €1.1 billion in 2024. There is an investment target in *First 5* to close the existing gap in public investment in early learning and care against the EU average over the period 2023-2028. A fourth strand – Equal Start – will be introduced in 2024.

2. The performance of learners in Ireland in reading and mathematics is improving

The most recent results of national and international assessments show that the performance of learners in primary and post-primary level in Ireland has been improving in many areas of literacy and numeracy.

1.1 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), in which Ireland participated in 2011, 2016 and 2021, highlights the progress made in the reading performance of fourth-class pupils. In Ireland, testing was delayed to autumn 2021 due to Covid-19. Therefore, pupils in Ireland (and 13 other countries) tested at the start of 5th Grade, while the remaining (43) PIRLS countries tested at the end of 4th Grade. While the results are not directly comparable with other years and groups in 2021, Ireland retained its place among a subset of high-achieving countries in relation to primary school reading in PIRLS 21. Girls significantly outperformed boys in reading. Pupils who read for fun on a near-daily basis significantly outperformed their peers.

1.2 National Assessments of English Reading and Mathematics

The National Assessments of English Reading and Mathematics (NAMER) 2021 shows that second class pupils' overall performance on English reading was broadly similar to attainment in 2014 despite the Covid-19 pandemic and the interruption to teaching and learning. Girls performed at a higher level than boys overall and on Comprehension, while there was no gender difference in Vocabulary scores. Sixth class pupils' performance in mathematics in 2021 was broadly similar to performance in 2014. While the scores for the content areas of Number and Algebra, and Measures and Data remained similar, the score for Shape and Space was lower than in 2014. In mathematics, boys performed at a higher level than girls overall and on all subscales.

2.3 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) provides insights into the mathematics skills of students at fourth class in primary school and second year at post-primary level. TIMSS 2019 showed that overall performance remained stable and strong in the period from 2015 with the scores of boys and girls in mathematics in Ireland not significantly different. In relation to our comparison countries it suggests that our highest-performing pupils are underperforming in mathematics, relative to the achievement of the lower-achieving students and the national average achievement.

2.4 Programme for International Student Assessment

The most recent international assessment was the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022. The full Irish report *Education in a Dynamic World: the performance of students in Ireland in PISA 2022* is available here. The following tables show where Ireland was placed in the domains of reading and mathematical literacy.

Table 1: PISA 2022 reading literacy: Ireland's listings at a glance

Overall (81 countries)	OECD (37 countries)	EU (26 countries)
2 Ireland	1 Ireland	1 Ireland
from 8 in 2018	from 4 in 2018	from 3 in 2018

Table 2: PISA 2022 mathematical literacy: Ireland's listings at a glance

Overall (81 countries)	OECD (37 countries)	EU (26 countries)
11 Ireland	7 Ireland	3 Ireland
from 21 in 2018	from 16 in 2018	from 11 in 2018

While these measures in the national and international testing do not capture the full breadth of what was achieved by the 2011 strategy, the success in these areas was also evident in other domains in which targets were set.

3. There has been significant curriculum change across all levels

Continuity and progression in the development of literacy, numeracy and digital skills is now supported by the alignment of curriculum frameworks across the stages. The embedding of key competencies and skills has been central to the development of curriculum frameworks in the early childhood, primary and post-primary sectors. Literacy, numeracy and digital skills, dispositions and knowledge permeate the key competencies and curriculum specifications at all stages. They place an emphasis on the development of critical thinking skills, promotion of wellbeing, and inclusion.

3.1 The Early Childhood Curriculum

Aistear published in 2009, is the early childhood curriculum framework for children from birth up to the age of six years. *Aistear* celebrates early childhood as a time of being, and of enjoying and learning from experiences as they unfold. The NCCA is currently updating *Aistear*. The principles and themes will remain but will be revised and updated. The process also includes considerations in supporting *Aistear*, intended to inform the development of guidance materials to support early years educators and childminders as they engage with the principles and themes. These considerations are also intended to inform the development of materials for parents to support their understanding of how their baby, toddler or young child might experience *Aistear*. The updated Framework will also take account of policy changes since the introduction of *Aistear* in 2009. The proposed updates have been informed by a literature review (French and McKenna, 2022) and developed in consultation with stakeholders including babies and young children, parents, and early years educators (O'Toole et al, 2023). The NCCA will finalise the updated *Aistear* in 2024.

3.2 The Primary Curriculum

The *Primary Curriculum Framework for Primary and Special Schools* (PCF) published in March 2023, sets out the vision and principles for a redeveloped curriculum. It also sets out key competencies to empower children to act and make decisions in relation to specific learning experiences, events and situations. The *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile (2019)* and the *Primary Mathematics Curriculum (2023)* have already been introduced. These outcomes-based curricula also contain progression continua which describe aspects of the learning outcomes in more detail and outline a sample learning trajectory. The remaining primary curriculum specifications will be introduced to schools in the 2025/2026 school year.

3.3 The Framework for Junior Cycle

The *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015*, set out a clear vision of how teaching, learning and assessment practices will evolve in the first three years of post-primary education to ensure a learning experience for young people that is appropriate to the needs of the 21st century.

Learning in the junior cycle is informed by:

- Eight principles that underpin the entire Framework for Junior Cycle
- Twenty-four statements of learning that are central to planning for the students' experience of, and the evaluation of the school's junior cycle programme
- Eight key skills that are required for successful learning by all students.

The principles, statements of learning and key skills provide a structure for schools to design their junior cycle programme. New subject specifications are underpinned by the eight key skills with a greater emphasis placed on the teaching and consolidation of literacy and numeracy as key skills across all aspects of the junior cycle curriculum. Short courses were also developed with new Learning Programmes (Level 1 Learning Programme (L1LP)¹⁰ and Level 2 Learning Programme (L2LP)¹¹ and associated Priority Learning Units (PLUs) developed and introduced to support the learning needs of students at Junior Cycle.

3.4 Senior Cycle Redevelopment

The NCCA is currently redeveloping Senior Cycle. This will involve new specifications for existing subjects and the introduction of new subjects. The key competencies of Senior Cycle build on those of the Junior Cycle programme. Literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy are foundational in the development of the key competencies of Senior Cycle.

3.5 Transitions across levels

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has provided guidance to support progression in learning through the effective management of learners' transitions across the sectors. This includes the Mo Scéal reporting templates and the Education Passport materials which support the transfer of learner information. The Education Passport became a mandatory requirement from 2014/2015. *First 5* commits to developing a national policy on transition from home into and through ELC and onto primary school. Work toward the development of this national model is underway.

¹⁰ L2LP Students undertaking a L2LP are those with learning disabilities in the low mild to high moderate range of abilities.

¹¹ Level 1 Learning Programmes (L1LPs) have been developed for students who have learning disabilities in the range of low moderate to severe and profound

4. Supports for early years educators, ELC setting leaders, teachers and school leaders have increased

4.1 Early childhood

Better Start, a national initiative to promote and enhance inclusive high-quality early learning and care for children from birth to six years of age, was established in 2014. Better Start offers three operational programmes: a quality development service, learning and development programmes, and Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) supports. In 2016, the National Síolta Aistear Initiative (NSAI) began, to support the national coordinated rollout of Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, and Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. The initiative is underpinned by the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide, published to support early years educators in using both frameworks together. An expansion of Better Start advisory role is currently underway to integrate Equal Start supports.

4.2 Teacher education

All initial teacher education programmes were extended and reconfigured, in accordance with the 2011 Strategy and the Teaching Council's Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers (2011), with additional time for school placement and mandatory elements including literacy, numeracy, ICT and inclusive education. The development of a range of models of teachers' professional learning included blended learning approaches, involving a mix of school-based and whole-staff learning, on-line and externally facilitated models. Furthermore, a postgraduate programme to provide upskilling for out-of-field teachers of Mathematics at post-primary level was established. The National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) and subsequently Droichead, were established to support Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs).

During the lifetime of the strategy, teachers in DEIS schools were prioritised for professional learning in literacy and numeracy. The incorporation of literacy, numeracy and digital skills development in online summer courses for teachers became a requirement.

4.3 School self-evaluation (SSE)

SSE was introduced in 2012 for all primary and post-primary schools. The Department advised that schools should focus on aspects of teaching and learning, and especially (though not exclusively) on enhancing the literacy and numeracy skills of their learners. *Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Schools (LAOS)*, revised in 2022, provides a set of standards for schools to consider their performance in relation to teaching and learning. The Inspectorate undertook advisory visits to support schools in their use of LAOS and in the embedding of the SSE process.

4.4 School leadership

Building the capacity of school leadership in teaching and learning was a pillar of the 2011 strategy. The Centre for School Leadership (CSL), a partnership between the DE, the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN), and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) was established in 2015. It focused on supporting, enhancing and advising on high-quality programmes to develop and support school leadership in leading improvement in literacy and numeracy. This work is now continuing under the remit of Oide, the new support service for teachers which was launched in September 2023.

5. Opportunities for learners to engage with digital literacy in the classroom and through the curriculum have increased

The place of digital learning in ELC is complex and our understanding of it is evolving. In the *STEM Education Implementation Plan to 2026*, DCEDIY committed to carry out public consultation and develop a policy statement on the use of digital technologies in ELC, building on OECD research.¹²

Enhancing digital literacy skills in schools was an objective of the 2017 interim review. The curriculum at primary and post-primary levels offers multiple opportunities for the development of digital skills and digital literacy through integration into the curriculum and the classroom. Reform of the curriculum is already underway which will build on this provision so as to ensure that young people are equipped with the digital skills and digital literacy required to participate fully in society. The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the crucial role of digital learning. Schools were supported to develop an enhanced capacity to engage with digital technologies to support learning.

The *Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027* sets out the Department of Education's policy approach to continue the progress made in embedding digital technology across the curriculum and in all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment in primary and second level schools. Its vision is to empower schools to harness the opportunities of digital transformation and build digital competence in both teachers and learners. It takes a three-pillar approach; addressing embedding digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment, digital technology infrastructure and policy, research and digital leadership. Key to this strategy is that all learners are given the opportunity to use digital technologies in their learning to reach their full potential and provide them with the necessary digital skills needed for an increasingly digital world.

The Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 is closely aligned to the EU Digital Education Action Plan (DEAP) to 2027. It also complements and supports other strategies such as the STEM Policy Statement and Harnessing Digital: The Digital Ireland Framework.

¹² OECD (2023) *Starting Strong VII: Empowering Young Children in the Digital Age*.

6. There have been significant developments in Irish-medium education and further Irish language supports have also been provided for English-medium schools

6.1 Comprehensive plan for the Irish language in ELC settings

Work is underway towards the development of a comprehensive plan for Irish language provision in ELC settings. It is due to be published by the DCEDIY in 2024.

6.2 Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme

The Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme, launched in 2017, provided primary and post-primary schools with an opportunity to formally achieve recognition as Gaeltacht schools. Additional funding, supports and resources were provided, which included advisory visits from the Inspectorate and COGG. Schools were required to fulfil specific language-based criteria to strengthen immersion education, foster links between the sectors and to participate in the local language planning processes. Indicators of Good Practice were developed to support Gaeltacht primary and post-primary schools in fulfilling the specific language-based criteria. Many of these indicators referenced literacy and numeracy development areas.

6.3 New policy on Irish-medium education outside of the Gaeltacht

A new policy on Irish-medium education outside of the Gaeltacht is currently in development. Under this policy, supports can be provided to Irish-medium schools outside of the Gaeltacht to achieve best practice in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

6.4 Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile

The *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* (2019) promotes an integrated approach to the learning of English and Irish. Separate Irish language specifications were published in 2016 for Junior Cycle Irish in Irish-medium and in English-medium post-primary schools.

6.5 Content and Language Integrated Learning

In 2019, the DE worked with DCEDIY to launch a pilot project to support the learning of Irish through a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach in English-medium ELC settings and schools. This provides for the delivery of aspects of the curriculum through Irish. It increases the exposure of learners to Irish by extending the use of Irish as a medium of communication and instruction beyond discrete Irish language lessons.

7. Inclusion and equity in educational provision have continued to be a priority

Tackling educational disadvantage through the areas of literacy and numeracy was a priority in the 2011 strategy and the interim review.

7.1 The Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education

The Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education were introduced in 2016 to support and empower early years educators and ELC setting leaders to explore, understand and develop inclusive practices. The guidelines include resources to support cultural and linguistic diversity. Associated in-person professional learning to support the Charter and Guidelines is facilitated nationally by the City/County Childcare Committees. AIM, which ensures that children with disabilities can access and meaningfully participate in the ECCE programme, is being extended beyond the ECCE programme from 2024. In 2024 Equal Start will be introduced. Equal Start seeks to promote equitable access to and participation of children from all backgrounds in ELC and SAC, with a particular focus on children experiencing disadvantage.

7.2 DEIS Plan 2017

The DEIS Plan 2017 aimed to promote better educational outcomes for learners from the most disadvantaged communities and to maximise the chances of every child and young person to fulfil their educational potential. Schools in the DEIS programme are expected to develop an action plan for improvement encompassing a number of areas including literacy and numeracy. The School Excellence Fund (SEF), established in 2017, enabled selected ELC settings, schools and other education settings to participate in innovative programmes by adopting new evidence-based approaches to support improved outcomes in a range of areas such as literacy and STEM.

Findings from research suggest that the DEIS programme is having a positive impact on achievement in DEIS primary and post-primary schools. *The evaluation of DEIS: Monitoring achievement and attitudes among urban primary school pupils from 2007 to 2016* published by the ERC in 2017, indicated that achievement in reading and Mathematics had continued to improve in DEIS primary schools. Learners reported increased positivity towards school and education. However, there are challenges that remain including, improving outcomes in reading and mathematics for pupils in DEIS band 1 schools to close the achievement gap with other primary schools.

7.3 Special educational needs teaching resources

A new model for allocating special educational needs (SEN) teaching resources to mainstream schools was introduced in 2017. The number of additional special education teachers, special needs assistants and special classes grew significantly from 2011. By 2020, over 19% of the Department's overall budget was allocated to special education. A new inspection model focussing on SEN at both primary and post-primary was also introduced.

7.4 Supporting Traveller and Roma children and young people

The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, 2017 – 2021 (NTRIS) was developed on a cross-departmental basis. Arising from commitments in the strategy, a pilot project, *Supporting Travellers and Roma in Education (STAR)*, was established in 2019 to trial innovative approaches to improve education outcomes for Traveller and Roma pupils. A new NTRIS strategy will be published in 2024. A national Traveller and Roma Education Strategy is also being developed.

7.5 Pluricultural and plurilingualism

ELC settings and schools have become more pluri-cultural and linguistically diverse. Global trends have resulted in an increase in the number of learners with English as an additional language (EAL) during the lifetime of the strategy. Professional learning experiences and resources have supported inclusive education, incorporating the areas of SEN, pluriculturalism, educational disadvantage. These have become mandatory areas in all ITE programmes.

8. There have been developments in supports for learning outside of formal educational settings.

8.1 National policies

National policies such as *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020* (April 2014) have recognised the importance of the acquisition of literacy, numeracy and digital skills as fundamental to the life chances of each learner. Its successor, *Young Ireland National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028* identifies online safety for young people as a central concern.

8.2 Libraries

First 5 includes specific targeted actions such as the recently piloted Little Baby Bundles and the Little Libraries Initiative, increasing the availability of books in homes and in ELC settings and promoting engagement with library services. Libraries provide a space where parents and children can access free literacy and numeracy resources, including extensive digital resources. The Right to Read Programme was launched in 2017 to support reading and includes initiatives for children and families and a range of services to support schools. The *Public Library Strategy 2018-2022 Opportunities for All* promoted a collaborative approach between schools and public libraries around leading for pleasure. This strategy was replaced by *The Library is the Place: Information, Recreation, Inspiration, The National Public Library Strategy 2023-2027*. It aims to provide opportunities for everyone to develop as literate and informed individuals and to raise the profile of reading for pleasure and wellbeing in English, Irish and in other languages. It also aims to 'support lifelong learning in all its forms and be a crucial partner in enhancing digital inclusion'.

8.3 Parenting supports

Under *First 5*, the DCEDIY Parenting Support Policy Unit continues to improve existing parenting supports provided across a range of Government Departments and State Agencies through *Supporting Parents: A National Model of Parenting Support Services*. Parenting information resources have been consolidated on a new Supporting Parents website to promote healthy behaviours, facilitate positive play based early learning and create the conditions to form and maintain strong parent-child relationships

There is an increased focus in the DE in the provision of resources for parents. This includes the establishment of the Parents and Learners unit.

8.4 School-Age Childcare

In 2017, an *Action Plan on School Age Childcare* was published jointly by the DCEDIY (then DCYA) and DE. In 2019 school age childcare services were subject to regulation for the first time. In 2020 the DCEDIY published the *National Quality Guidelines for School Age Childcare Services*, which describes the features of a high quality service, including those related to the health, wellbeing, learning and development of children and young people.

8.5 Digital Literacy and Youth Organisations

Youth organisations, including Foróige, the Scouts and Guides, have developed and delivered programmes on digital literacy to their members, to help young people to safely navigate the digital world and to identify misinformation. The national network of Youth Information Centres provide support to young people in accessing reliable information online.

9. There have been significant developments in Irish-medium education and further Irish language supports have also been provided for English-medium schools

The overarching *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030*, along with the accompanying *Action Plan for the Irish Language* represents state policy for the Irish language and Gaeltacht regions, and comprises nine areas of action including education, the Gaeltacht and language transmission by the family: early intervention. The Strategy promotes a holistic, integrated approach to the Irish language which is consistent with international best practice. The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media is responsible *inter alia*, for coordinating its implementation and also provides funding to support language-centred programmes related to those areas of action including those with a particular focus on the domains of early years, family and the traditional arts by way of funding agreed work programmes with Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta; Tuismitheoirí na Gaeltachta and Ealaín na Gaeltachta respectively. These organisations provide invaluable supports for learning outside of formal educational settings.

Appendix 4 – Key strategies and policies

Department of Education
Department of Education (2017). DEIS Plan 2017
Department of Education (2016). The National Síolta Aistear Initiative
Department of Education (2020). Polasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta (2017-2022)
Department of Education Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) Pilot Project
Department of Education (2022). Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027
Department of Education and Skills (2010). Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education
Department of Education (2017). STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026
Department of Education (forthcoming). National Traveller and Roma Education Strategy
Department of Education (2017). DEIS Plan 2017, Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
NCCA (2009). <i>Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework</i>
NCCA (2023). <i>Primary Curriculum Framework For Primary and Special Schools</i>
NCCA (2015). <i>Framework for Junior Cycle 2015</i>
NCCA Senior Cycle Redevelopment. Senior Cycle Redevelopment NCCA

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2014). Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020
Department for Children and Youth Affairs (2016). Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Education and Care.
Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2015). Supporting Access to the Early Childhood Care and Education for Children with a Disability Inter-Departmental Group Report 2015
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2017). The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2019). The Migrant Integration Strategy 2017 – 2020
Government of Ireland (GoI) (2019). First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2020). The National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2021). Partnership for the Public Good: A New Funding Model for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2021). National Action Plan for Childminding 2021 - 2028
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2022). Nurturing Skills: The Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare, 2022 – 2028
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2024). Equal Start.

Other departments
Department of Social Protection (2020). Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 –2025 'Ambitions, Goals and commitments
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (2019). Action Plan for Online Safety 2018-2019
Department of Rural and Community Development. Our Public Libraries 2022: Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities and new since the publication of the literature review
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (2013). 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language
Department of Taoiseach Harnessing Digital: The Digital Ireland Framework 2022

Collaboration:
Department of Education and Skills, in collaboration with the Departments of Health and Children and Youth Affairs, and with other Government Departments and Agencies. Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice
Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science: Languages Connect, Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017 -2026 Languages Connect Implementation Plan Languages Connect Interim Review Report and Implementation Plan to 2026
Department of Education, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development - ESD to 2030

Appendix 5 - Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Steering Group

Dalton Tattan	Department of Education	Co-Chair
Annamarie Brooks	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth	Co-Chair
Martin Whyte	Inspectorate, Department of Education	
Evelyn O'Connor	Department of Education	
Toby Wolfe	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth	
Stacey Cannon/ Susan McNamara	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science	
Christine O'Sullivan	National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Department of Education	
Aidan Clerkin	Education Research Centre	
Eithne Kennedy	Institute of Education, Dublin City University	
Ger French	Institute of Education, Dublin City University	
Niamh O' Meara	Faculty of Education and Health Sciences, University of Limerick	
Jacqueline Ní Fhergusa	An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)	

Supported by

Karen Murtagh, Department of Education

Aoife Mannion, Department of Education

Noreen Fiorentini, Inspectorate, Department of Education

Jane Heffernan, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

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