



Department of Education and Science
An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta

Statement of Strategy

2008-2010



AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS
AGUS EOLAÍOCHTA | DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

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Foreword by the Minister



I am very pleased to publish this Statement of Strategy which describes a very challenging range of priorities for the Department over the coming three year period across all levels of the education system.

The central importance of education to so many aspects of our lives is underlined by the scale and range of activity that is encompassed by this Strategy. The mission, goals and objectives that are set out here will have a direct impact on individual opportunity and fulfilment for our citizens and on Ireland's overall future economic, social and cultural well-being.

The Strategy is framed against a background of enormous demographic and social change in Ireland which challenges the education system at all levels to adapt and respond to emerging need. The priority actions set out in this document are shaped by those forces of change. The increasingly multi-cultural nature of society, population growth and the rapid emergence of new communities, the advance of new technologies, new economic and workplace realities in the knowledge society, the continuing challenges of social exclusion and a range of wider complex social issues all require an education system response. The goals and objectives of this Strategy seek to provide direction for that.

Together with Ministers Barry Andrews, Dr. Jimmy Devins, Seán Haughey, Conor Lenihan and John Moloney, I look forward to working with the Secretary General, staff of the Department and its agencies and all of our partners in education in seeking to deliver on the crucially important agenda that has been set out in this Statement of Strategy over the next three years.

Batt O'Keeffe T.D.
Minister for Education & Science

Introduction by the Secretary General



This Statement of Strategy sets out the mission, goals and objectives that will guide the work of the Department of Education and Science over the three year period 2008 to 2010. The Strategy provides an important frame of reference for all of those with an interest in Irish education, whether as customers, clients or learners, education providers, employees, partner agencies or wider interest groups. The goals and objectives set out here link to the policy and operational environment that shape them. They take account of the priorities and commitments in the Agreed Programme for Government, the National Development Plan and the social partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*, as well as a range of other approved Government strategies and policies.

The period of this Strategy will bring a range of important challenges for the education system as we respond to wider societal changes, accommodate growth in numbers at all levels of the system, meet the skills and innovation needs of the economy and strive to enhance the quality of education experience for every individual. The Department itself is going through a phase of substantial internal change as we prepare for the re-location of functions to Athlone and Mullingar as part of the Government's decentralisation programme. We are welcoming many new colleagues as part of that process. As we manage this change, we will require a strong focus across the Department on achieving business continuity and maintaining our quality of service.

This Statement has been developed through a wide ranging consultation process involving the Minister, Ministers of State, staff throughout the Department, partner Government Departments and agencies, and wider education partners. I am very grateful to all concerned for their very valuable inputs. That spirit of partnership will now be essential in delivering on what we have set out to achieve. The challenges involved are many and varied. It is only through the support, flexibility and hard work of everyone concerned that we can achieve our goals.

Brigid McManus
Secretary General



Our Mission and Goals

Chapter 1

1. OUR MISSION AND GOALS

The mission of the Department of Education and Science is to provide for high-quality education, which will:

- Enable individuals to develop their full potential and to participate fully as members of society, and
- Contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development.

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

1. Support and improve the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of education for every learner in our schools¹.
2. Enhance opportunities in further education and youth services.
3. Sustain and strengthen higher education and research.
4. Support the delivery and development of education through policy formulation, high-quality planning and a strong customer focus.

In support of these high-level goals, the Department is engaged in a wide range of activities at all levels of the education system, including:

- The provision of high-quality policy advice to the Minister and Government and as an aid to decision making and accountability to the Oireachtas;
- Conducting research, review, evaluation and development of policy relating to all areas of education;
- Ensuring high-quality education through the role of the Inspectorate at first and second levels and through partnership with responsible authorities in higher and further education and the Youth sector;
- Discharging a wide range of operational, resourcing and support functions relating to the funding of the sector, the payment of teaching and non-teaching staff and grants to schools and other education bodies, the allocation of teaching resources and other supports, the provision of psychological and school transport services and performing a range of personnel and staff relations functions;
- Planning and provision of education infrastructure to support the delivery of high-quality education at all levels;
- Enhancing education through co-operation on a North-South basis and through active involvement in a variety of EU activities and with a number of other international agencies.

¹ Where the term 'schools' is used in a general context throughout this publication, it is intended to be all embracing, encompassing primary schools, post-primary schools and centres for education as referred to under the Education Act 1998.

Purpose of this Strategy Statement

This Statement of Strategy sets out the key objectives and related strategies of the Department for the period 2008 – 2010. It has been prepared in the context of Government policy priorities. The Strategy provides a framework within which sections in the Department can develop and implement appropriate business plans. The business plans are used as a basis for the individual work programmes for staff members in their annual role profiles.

In preparing this Statement of Strategy, a wide range of stakeholders were invited to make submissions to the Department on the key issues to be addressed over the period. The Minister and Ministers of State, management and staff of the Department were also consulted.

The Environment in which we operate

Chapter 2

2. THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH WE OPERATE

Ireland's education system enjoys a strong international reputation for high quality based on the excellent calibre and efforts of many thousands of teaching, academic and other staff over a number of decades. Irish society has always placed a very strong value on the importance of education for personal development and opportunity. Education continues to grow in its importance to Government economic and social policy. For example, educational opportunity has a significant contribution to make in addressing many of the root causes of poverty, disadvantage and crime. Through its impact on the lives of individuals, education helps to shape our values as a society, promote good citizenship and enrich our culture. Future jobs, investment and the strength of the Irish economy now depend on the quality of our educated workforce and on our capacity for research and innovation.

The education system itself is adapting and responding to those wider needs of society and the economy. This can be seen in the very substantial programme of curriculum change across both primary and post-primary levels, the development of new learning opportunities outside the traditional post-primary system, the expansion of third level, the growth of a new fourth level and new opportunities for adult and further education.

Enrolment at all levels of education is projected to rise over the next decade in line with population growth and demand. Following a temporary decline in births in the 1980s and early 1990s, the numbers enrolled at primary level have been rising since 2000. Increases at second-level are already evident since 2006, while at third level rising proportions of 'mature' students and higher proportions of school leavers entering further and higher education are driving increases in numbers. The projected growth in numbers at all levels will have a range of implications, including increased pressures on school accommodation, capital demands in higher education, further growth in demand for the provision of special education needs supports and pressures on teacher supply.

In addition to increasing numbers of learners, wider changes in the landscape of Irish society provide a backdrop for the challenges facing our education system over the period of this Strategy. Within a relatively short space of time, Ireland has become a richly diverse society, with a new mix of languages, cultures and expectations. The education system is at the very fore of the Government's efforts to successfully integrate newcomers into Irish society. The current scale of involvement of the main churches in providing and managing schools cannot be relied on into the future. Recent demographic changes and economic developments have brought a very rapid growth of commuter belt towns and new urban areas. These developments place demands on the ability of the system to plan and provide for emerging education needs in a timely way.

Wider societal changes also impact directly on the education environment. For example, changing lifestyles, youth culture and influences can impinge on student classroom behaviour and challenge teachers to adapt. Technological and telecommunications advances are changing our approaches to learning throughout life and invite us into a global community of quickly and easily accessible knowledge. Education providers are operating in an increasingly complex regulatory environment. Learners (or their parents) now have a stronger sense of their rights and responsibilities as partners in education. Rapid changes in the workplace are bringing the importance of lifelong learning into sharper focus. Policy responses to social issues such as drugs, road safety and suicide prevention contain education system dimensions.

In seeking to meet these complex challenges and to deliver on the commitments in the social partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*, the Department will rely on high quality interaction with all of the partners in education. This partnership continues to be a unique strength of our education system. The achievement of improved system wide performance, in terms of objective measures such as educational attainment in the population or the results of OECD PISA surveys, requires collaborative effort and consensus on the priorities for change. While it can be perceived to delay the pace of progress, the partnership approach provides a mechanism for achieving lasting change and improvement in the delivery of education services. Our strategy is to engage proactively with the partners to ensure effective relationships and positive outcomes for all involved in the education system.

The performance of the Irish economy is a determinant of the level of funding available for investment and service provision in the education sector. In turn, the long term economic impact of investment in education is extremely positive and essential in maintaining and enhancing Ireland's international competitiveness. The Programme for Government and the National Development Plan 2007 – 2013 are indicators of the Government's commitment to invest in education. The degree of progress in delivering on the strategies outlined in this document will depend on the level of resources available to the Department over the period.

Supporting School Communities

Chapter 3

Goal 1
Support and improve the
quality, relevance and
inclusiveness of education for
every learner in our schools

3. SUPPORTING SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Policy context

For the individual, initial educational attainment has a broad-ranging impact on many aspects of life, from personal development to civic engagement and economic well-being. For society, education is an invaluable resource in seeking to address and alleviate the causes of social exclusion, promote good citizenship, enrich culture and underpin economic development.

Towards 2016, the National Development Plan and the Programme for Government set out a range of measures to support school communities. A continuing programme of curriculum reform is already under way. In particular, significant reform of the key subjects, Mathematics and Science, will be progressed over the period of this strategy statement. These curricula reforms will be progressed in tandem with enhancement of initial teacher education and in-service courses to support teachers.

The priorities for primary and post-primary education over the coming years are to promote quality, relevance and inclusiveness by supporting schools in developing an inclusive environment for all learners, targeting interventions to address educational disadvantage, raising educational attainment, meeting the needs of learners with special education needs, providing supports for newcomer children, progressing the modernisation agenda, enhancing teacher education and professional development, promoting ongoing curriculum development, school evaluation and quality improvement, and providing high-quality school accommodation, administrative and financial supports.

GOAL 1

Support and improve the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of education for every learner in our schools

OBJECTIVES

- Develop appropriate policy initiatives and responses to underpin the effective management and operation of schools including the provision of a range of financial, staffing and administrative supports.
- Promote the quality of teaching and learning.
- Provide targeted resources to promote social inclusion in our schools.
- Provide appropriate accommodation and facilities for the delivery of quality education.
- Provide a range of resources and supports for learners with special needs.
- Provide targeted resources and supports for newcomer children.
- Support the development and provision of quality early childhood education.

OUTCOMES

- Quality of education provision and additional supports contribute to the personal, social and educational development of learners in school setting.
- Curricula which maintain relevance to changing needs, are subject to continuing review and are based on international best practice.
- Assessment arrangements in place which are consistent with learning objectives.
- An inclusive and intercultural environment developed in schools.
- School improvement as a result of effective school self-evaluation and development and improved teacher performance.
- Ongoing development of an effective policy and administrative framework for the delivery of high quality education in all schools.
- Increased integration of ICT into teaching and learning.
- Enhanced and new school facilities to support the delivery of high-quality education in schools.

Objective 1.1

Develop appropriate policy initiatives and responses to underpin the effective day to day management and operation of schools including the provision of a range of financial, staffing and administrative supports.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
<p>Allocate resources (both staffing and financial) to schools and Vocational Education Committees (VECs) in a manner which is equitable, transparent and efficient.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification of allocations and payment of financial supports within required timeframes. • Operation of appropriate appeals processes.
<p>Support the effective governance, management and operation of schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies, regulations, circulars and guidelines prepared in consultation with education partners and circulated to schools. • Supports for management and parental bodies in place.
<p>Deliver comprehensive, effective, efficient and high quality payroll, personnel and pension services to full and part time teaching and non-teaching staff and retired teachers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary and pension payments to serving and retired teachers and non teaching staff paid through the Departments payroll service on a fortnightly basis. • Update statutory schemes and introduce new pension schemes for part-time and unqualified teachers, and for ancillary school staff. • Conduct and publish a review of the Early Retirement Scheme for Teachers. • Discharge an appellate function in respect of pensions determinations by certain bodies.
<p>Provide, through Bus Éireann, a school transport service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe and efficient school transport service operated by Bus Éireann within available resources. • Review the school transport scheme including catchment areas as provided for in the Programme for Government. • Operate an appeals system for students/parents in relation to school transport.

Objective 1.2

Promote the quality of teaching and learning.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
<p>Provide, in conjunction with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), curricula and syllabi that are relevant to the educational needs of learners at first and second-level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of financial and other supports to the NCCA. • Phased implementation of revised syllabi at second-level. • Support the implementation of standardised testing in primary schools and notification of results to parents.
<p>Support the State Examinations Commission (SEC) in providing an objective and transparent State Examinations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of financial and other supports to the SEC. • Ongoing development of overall policy framework for the delivery of assessment arrangements.
<p>Support the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) in providing resources, training and supports to guidance counsellors in schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of financial and other supports to the NCGE. • Ongoing development of overall policy framework for the delivery of guidance services.
<p>Support An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) in providing advice, research, resources and texts in Irish and support services for teaching of Irish and through Irish.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of financial and other supports to the COGG. • Ongoing development of overall policy framework for development of the Irish curriculum.
<p>Support the work of the Teaching Council in promoting teaching as a profession and maintaining and improving the quality of teaching.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of financial support until the Council becomes self-financing in 2008. • Provision of administrative supports to the Council. • Ongoing development of overall policy framework for teacher education in context of the developing role of the Teaching Council.

Objective 1.2

Promote the quality of teaching and learning.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Promote School Improvement and Continuing Professional Development of Principals and Teachers and support Principals and Teachers in their work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commencement and progression of a programme of structural reform of in-service training programmes. • Provision of a range of induction, in-service teacher education and leadership development programmes through the Teacher Education Programmes, Education Centres and Support Services for teachers at Primary & Post-Primary Level. • Provision of an occupational health service for teachers. • New procedures in place for dealing with underperformance.
Operate a programme of external evaluations of schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluations conducted in schools including Whole-School Evaluations, Subject Inspections, thematic evaluations and inspection of individual teachers with appropriate follow up.
Report on compliance by schools with provisions of legislation and with Departmental regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations in evaluation reports relating to compliance lead to altered school practices.
Evaluate the quality of school self-evaluation and foster school improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of the use by schools of the Looking at Our School self-evaluation guidelines. • Specific recommendations in school evaluation reports relating to school leadership, school planning and review.
Publish inspection reports on schools and on aspects of educational provision in the education system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports published presenting recommendations for schools and evidence-based policy advice in relation to the quality of leadership, management, teaching, learning, special educational needs and other aspects of educational provision.
Promote the further development of gender mainstreaming in education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of gender mainstreaming guidelines and resources to primary and second-level schools.

Objective 1.2

Promote the quality of teaching and learning.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Continue to deliver and develop the psychological service provided by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessments and consultations in relation to specific pupils.• Support and advice to school staff in relation to pupils and educational issues.• Promotion of continuum of assessment and intervention.• Provision of critical incident support to schools.
Publish new ICT in Schools Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Strategy published.• Provision of financial supports for schools to develop their ICT infrastructure within available resources.
Promote, in conjunction with the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE), the integration of ICT in teaching and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provision of financial and other supports to the NCTE.• Ongoing development of overall policy framework for use of ICT in schools.• Maintenance and development of the Schools National Broadband Network.

Objective 1.3

Provide targeted resources to promote social inclusion in our schools.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Continued implementation of DEIS action plan for educational inclusion including provision of a range of in-service teacher education and development programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of measures as set out under the DEIS action plan for schools in the School Support Programme. • In-service and development programmes provided for teachers. • Implementation of monitoring and evaluation processes for DEIS.
Support the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) in delivering the services set out in the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide financial and other supports to the NEWB. • Ongoing development of overall policy framework to promote social inclusion.
Enhance access and education service delivery for Travellers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase out pre-schools for Travellers. • Phase out current segregated provision at primary and post-primary and have all Travellers integrated into mainstream primary and post-primary schools. • Provide additional learning support on basis of identified education need and not traveller identity.
Provide book grants for needy pupils and grant scheme for seed capital for book rental/loan schemes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants issued to schools.

Objective 1.4

Provide appropriate accommodation and facilities for the delivery of quality education.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Plan and provide for emerging accommodation needs arising from changing demographics in accordance with NDP priorities and funding levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requirements for additional school places identified and prioritised.• School places to be provided through the provision, where possible, of sustainable buildings with an emphasis on promoting energy efficiency where appropriate, buildings to be procured using innovative methodologies such as off-site construction, Generic Repeat Designs and Public Private Partnership.
Continue to improve existing accommodation through the schools modernisation programme in accordance with NDP priorities and funding levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing school facilities modernised through the use, where possible, of schemes involving devolution to schools.

Objective 1.5

Provide a range of resources and supports for learners with special needs.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Support the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in its role of allocating additional teaching and care supports for learners with special needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of financial and other supports to the NCSE. • Ongoing development of overall policy framework for the delivery of resources and supports for learners with special needs.
Continue implementation of the Education for People with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commencement of sections of the EPSEN Act. • Appropriate services and procedures in place to give effect to provisions of the EPSEN Act. • Appropriate arrangements in place for co-ordination of services with the Health Sector.
Development of appropriate arrangements for education sector input to implementation of the Disability Act 2005.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective implementation of provisions in the Disability Act relating to assessment of education needs and education elements of service statements.
Provide a range of in-service teacher education and development programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for in-service and development programmes focusing on needs of learners with special needs.
Provision of targeted financial supports for learners with special needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptive technology grants to support learners with special needs at second-level. • Provision, through Bus Éireann, of school transport services and transport grants for learners with special needs.

Objective 1.6

Provide targeted resources and supports for newcomer children.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Provide targeted resources, supports and in-service teacher education and development programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate Language Support Teachers to schools with learners whose first language is not English. • Provide curricular and other supports to schools with learners whose first language is not English. • In-service and development programmes provided for all language support teachers. • Provision of support for school-staffs in developing an inclusive and intercultural environment.

Objective 1.7

Support the development and provision of high-quality early childhood education.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Provision of targeted pre-school education to children from urban primary school communities covered by the DEIS action plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Pre-School Education Advisor Service provided to pre-schools identified as feeder pre-schools for DEIS Urban Band 1 schools.
Develop a new National Childcare Training Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare Training Strategy developed and implementation plan in place.
Support the work of the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of financial and other supports to the CECDE. • Ongoing development of overall policy framework on early childhood education.

Performance Indicators

Teaching and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress in implementing revised curricula and syllabi at second-level. • Number of teachers for whom appropriate professional development has been provided and feedback from course participants. • Effective and efficient implementation of a programme of external evaluations of schools aimed at promoting high-quality teaching and learning. • Number of schools and learners provided with service by NEPS. • Language Support Teachers and other resources in place to support newcomer children. • Roll-out of Pre-School Education Advisor Service to DEIS Band 1 Urban primary schools.
Social Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the DEIS Action Plan. • Results from monitoring and evaluation of DEIS measures. • Phasing out of segregated education provision for Travellers.
Special Education services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Support/Resource Teachers and SNAs in place in schools. • Policy reviews completed.
Use of ICT in Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced ICT facilities in schools. • Number of schools connected to National Broadband Network.
School Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers of school places being provided. • Number of modernisation projects being provided in existing schools.
Financial and administrative support for school communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely and efficient provision of services and allocation of financial and human resources to schools to meet existing and emerging demands.

Performance Indicators

Financial and administrative support for school communities.

- Appropriate policies, regulations, directions and guidelines in place to support the effective management and operation of schools.
- Percentage of awards to pensioners determined within 6 weeks of their retirement (target 90%).
- Feedback from education partners and service recipients on quality of services provided.

Further Education and Youth Services

Chapter 4

Goal 2
Enhance opportunities in
further education and
youth services

4. FURTHER EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES

Policy context

The National Development Plan sets out the priorities for the development of further education and youth services over the period to 2013. Educational investment for the benefit of young people who leave school early and for people of working age is a major priority of the NDP in promoting both social inclusion and productive capacity. There will be significant investment over the lifetime of the Plan on increasing the number of places available on a range of further education programmes. These programmes play an important role in enabling individuals to participate in lifelong learning and providing opportunities for up-skilling and re-skilling the workforce in line with objectives in the National Skills Strategy.

Priorities for further education over the coming years are to increase and widen participation, to promote the quality of educational provision and to develop the sector in areas such as quality assurance.

The Youth Work Act, 2001, and the National Youth Work Development Plan (NYWDP) provide a framework for the development of youth work in Ireland. The National Development Plan supports the development of the youth work sector under the Youth Sector Sub-Programme for the period 2007-2013. Funding under the NDP will deliver a number of initiatives in the youth work sector and further roll out of provisions of the Youth Work Act.

Priorities for the youth work sector include the continued roll-out of the Youth Work Act, 2001, and NYWDP as appropriate, on a phased and prioritised basis within the resources available, and the development and implementation of a Quality Standards Framework for and with the Youth Work sector.

GOAL 2

Enhance opportunities in further education and youth services

OBJECTIVES

- Promote the quality of education provision.
- Promote access and participation in further education.
- Support the development of youth work services.

OUTCOMES

- Provision of high-quality Further Education opportunities that will
 - enable learners to access, transfer, gain accreditation and progress to employment or further studies.
 - provide learners with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, confidence and competence to participate more fully in society and the economy.
 - further enhance access to Lifelong Learning opportunities for all.
- Provision of high-quality youth work services that will contribute to the personal and social development of young people through non-formal education.

Objective 2.1

Promote the quality of education provision.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Review and develop policies to support high-quality further education provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policies reviewed and developed in key areas including literacy and disability.• Policy on the provision of English language support for immigrants.
Support providers to continuously improve the quality of provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provision of financial and other supports within required timeframes.

Objective 2.2

Promote access and participation in further education.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Support providers in the development and delivery of a suite of Further Education programmes to meet the needs of early school leavers and adults requiring second chance education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of financial and other supports within required timeframes.
Support the work of the NCGE in providing adult education guidance services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of financial and other supports to the NCGE. Ongoing development of overall policy framework for the delivery of guidance services.
Support learners participating in further education programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of financial support to provide for payment of allowances and provision of childcare for participants on further education courses.

Objective 2.3

Support the development of youth work services.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Review and develop policies to support a high-quality youth work service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies reviewed and developed in key areas including the implementation of the Youth Work Act, 2001 and National Youth Work Development Plan on a phased and prioritised basis within resources available. Pilot and roll-out a Quality Standards Framework for the youth work sector. Active contribution to the development of EU policy in relation to youth work.
Support youth work organisations to deliver high-quality youth work provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of financial and other supports.

Performance Indicators

Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of further education courses accredited by FETAC. • Appropriate policies developed and implemented. • Implementation of a Quality Standards Framework in the youth work sector.
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation rates for further education courses – Back to Education Initiative, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme, Youthreach, Post Leaving Certificate courses, adult literacy courses and English language provision. • Participation rates for adult Travellers in adult and further education programmes including participation in back to education initiatives. • Completion and certification rates for further education courses. • Number of learners in receipt of support services, including guidance, childcare and allowances. • Participant rates in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Service Grant Scheme, • Special Projects for Youth (SPY) Scheme, • Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund. • Participation rates in appropriate education and training programmes of young people who have left school early to take up employment.

Higher Education and Research

Chapter 5

Goal 3
Sustain and strengthen higher
education and research

5. HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Policy context

The capacity and quality of our higher education system has never been more central to Ireland's economic, social and cultural development. Higher education plays a critical role in the development of individuals as independent and creative thinkers and in deepening and enriching our understanding and appreciation of the world around us. It is also central in advancing Ireland's economic development in this knowledge age, where innovation, creativity and workforce skills are our main source of future competitive advantage.

The priorities for the sector over the coming years are to widen and increase participation, to reform and modernise programme delivery and to achieve world-class quality at all levels from undergraduate education to advanced fourth level research. A major process of reform and modernisation is underway throughout the sector to support higher education institutions in meeting the challenges involved.

The Government's National Skills Strategy (2007) has identified very significant needs for enhanced skills in the Irish economy in the period to 2020. The 2006 Government's Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (SSTI) also sets ambitious targets for the development of a world class system of research and innovation in Ireland, including a doubling of PhD graduates by 2013. This aims to provide a foundation for Ireland's future growth and prosperity.

The achievement of these strategies will rely on the capacity and quality of our higher education system.

GOAL 3

Sustain and strengthen higher education and research

OBJECTIVES

- Enhance the quality of higher education and its capacity to respond to changing needs.
- Significantly increase PhD numbers and research activity.
- Promote access to higher education particularly for under represented groups and provide flexible learning opportunities.

OUTCOMES

- Development of higher education institutes in line with national strategy.
- Increased participation in higher education by students from disadvantaged backgrounds, mature students and students with disabilities.
- Increased participation in part time study by targeted groups.
- Sustained progress in eliminating infrastructural deficits within the higher education sector while meeting the challenges of growing participation rates.
- Adequate skilled workforce to meet demand.
- The provision of core capacity and capability within the higher-education sector to enable world class research, to support innovation and to respond to the wider needs of society and the economy.

Objective 3.1

Enhance the quality of higher education and its capacity to respond to changing needs.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
<p>Work with the Higher Education Authority in providing effective policy support, oversight and leadership for the higher education sector in meeting the needs of the learner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Quality Assurance process at institutional level with the HEA. • Develop proposals for a means-tested free fees system for approved part-time courses at third level. • Continuing implementation of the Bologna process reforms in the sector. • Liaison with other Government Departments in maintaining the relevance of higher education policy to wider social and economic need.
<p>Support the ongoing operation of Higher Education Institutions, in close collaboration with the HEA for designated institutions, and through direct provision to other institutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely provision of resources.
<p>Develop a national strategy for higher education to guide the future development of the sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with stakeholders and agreement on strategy objectives.

Objective 3.1

Enhance the quality of higher education and its capacity to respond to changing needs.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Continue a programme of investment in mainstream higher education infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of a range of priority projects that provide modern fit for purpose facilities. • Provide financial and other supports to the Grangegorman Development Agency.
Support collaboration, innovation and change across higher education institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued implementation of the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF). • Delivery of projects under SIF for teaching and learning innovations, internal structural change and system wide quality improvements. • Implementation of revised Higher Education Authority model for the funding of higher education institutions.
Support the implementation of the National Skills Strategy and meet the future skills needs of identified sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of recommendations of Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and other sectoral reports. • Provision of additional places in line with targets. • Work with other Government Departments, agencies and training bodies on planning for and delivering training in accordance with identified skills needs.
Reform and expand medical education and training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the Fottrell recommendations, including the expansion of places, introduction of a new graduate entry programme and reformed entry procedures for undergraduate medicine.
Ensure that teacher education at primary and post-primary levels is relevant to modern classroom needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of adequate numbers of well-trained newly qualified teachers through the Colleges of Education and other competent providers. • Work with the Teaching Council on the ongoing evaluation and review (including reform where necessary) of teacher training courses having regard to assessed educational needs, international best practice & developments.

Objective 3.2

Significantly increase PhD numbers and research activity.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Support Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation (SSTI) objectives of developing world class research in higher education institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivery of research facilities and equipment within higher education institutions.• Increase PhD output towards SSTI targets.• Effective operation of inter-departmental and inter-agency arrangements for delivery of SSTI.• Structures and policies to support development of Fourth Level system and enhanced opportunities for researchers.• Enhanced arrangements for technology transfer.

Objective 3.3

Promote access to higher education particularly for under represented groups and provide flexible learning opportunities.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Promote equity of access to higher education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding provided for financial support schemes. • Provision of continuing support for the National Office for Equity of Access in the HEA. • Targeted actions, initiatives and interventions to promote access and retention among under-represented groups in higher education. • Enable lifelong learning opportunities through support for more flexible approaches to learning in higher education.
Implement a programme of legislative and administrative reform of student maintenance grants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Student Support legislation. • Provision of a new single unified scheme for student maintenance grants to be administered by the VEC sector. • Improvements in consistency, client accessibility and quality of service in the delivery of grants.
Work to ensure wider access to primary teacher training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of recommendations of Males in to Primary Teaching report. • Graduate and distance-learning Primary Teacher training courses available. • Promotion of Direct Entry Scheme to Colleges of Education.

Performance Indicators

Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement of targets to meet identified skills needs, including those of the health sector, teaching and apprenticeship. • Achievement of SSTI and other targets for increased graduate output up to PhD level. • Funding provided for priority projects for core under graduate teaching and learning facilities. • Completion of existing cycles of PRTLTI.
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of progress on implementation of programme of legislative and administrative reform of student maintenance grants. • Service improvements in the administration of grants including percentage of grants processed and paid by target date. • Achievement of SIF performance targets.
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation rates in part time study by targeted groups including Travellers. • Participation rates of students from under-represented groups including students from disadvantaged backgrounds, mature students and students with disabilities.

Improving and Developing Services

Chapter 6

Goal 4

Support the delivery and development of education through policy formulation, high-quality planning and a strong customer focus.

6. IMPROVING AND DEVELOPING SERVICES

Policy context

Learners, parents, educators and others rightly expect high standards of service, greater accountability and quality planning to meet future educational needs. Rapid economic and social changes have heightened public awareness of educational standards, while providers of education have to deal with an increasingly complex and diverse environment. The Department is committed to delivering high-quality services that meet the needs of our customers and clients, particularly learners, at all levels. The Department is also fully committed to the continued implementation of the Government's programme of modernisation across the public sector.

The priorities for the Department over the period of this Statement of Strategy are to improve and develop the services we deliver, develop and review policies for the education system, to continue implementation of the modernisation agenda and implement the Government's decentralisation programme.

GOAL 4

Support the delivery and development of education through policy formulation, high-quality planning and a strong customer focus.

OBJECTIVES

- Deliver effective policies to address existing needs and emerging challenges in the education sector
- Support the modernisation of the education sector through a partnership process that promotes good industrial relations practice.
- Support and develop staff and seek continuous improvement in the effectiveness, value and quality of our services.
- Manage the Department's response to initiatives for the redress of child abuse in residential institutions.
- Contribute to the development of
 - North/South cooperation through the exchange of information and learning and joint action in agreed areas of common interest.
 - Education through cooperation and decision making at EU and international level.

OUTCOMES

- Effective HR and training policies contribute to personal and skills development of staff.
- Development of appropriate policies and plans to address priority system improvement issues and respond to emerging needs.
- Improved availability and use of data for policy development, policy review and reporting.
- Clearly defined financial allocations, efficient payment operations, regular effective financial reporting and preparation of the Appropriation Accounts.
- Enhanced operation of the Department's business units and improved service delivery through the use of ICT systems.
- Improved access, transfer and progression for learners and enhanced mobility.
- Involvement in OECD and Council of Europe activities contribute to high-quality policy development for the Irish Education system.
- Effective cooperation on North / South initiatives.

Objective 4.1

Deliver effective policies to address existing needs and emerging challenges in the education sector.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Support research, evaluation and planning to ensure an effective policy framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund and manage a programme of research into key issues in education. • Improved dissemination of the findings of education-related research conducted or commissioned by the Department and other relevant national bodies. • Complete Value for Money (VFM) Reviews and policy reviews that impact on value for money and implement recommendations arising from these reports.
Support the Educational Research Centre in coordinating Ireland's participation in international studies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) and the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS).

Objective 4.1

Deliver effective policies to address existing needs and emerging challenges in the education sector.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Implement Department's Data Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of specific projects identified in the Department's Data Strategy.
Support interagency cooperation to ensure effective implementation of policy at point of service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop interagency cooperation in service delivery through collaborative working arrangements and protocols for agencies providing services in the Education sector.
Develop appropriate structures and plans to meet emerging needs throughout the education system arising from changing societal and demographic needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of projected enrolment levels. • Establishment of a new Developing Areas Unit in the Department to work with local authorities and other relevant bodies to procure sites and to manage the delivery of education facilities across the country. • Delivery of accommodation needs. • Agreement of necessary arrangements and introduction of pilot patronage model.
Support the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, the Further and Higher Education and Training Awards Councils in promoting the development and implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of financial and other supports to the NQAI, FETAC and HETAC. • Ongoing development of overall policy on assessment and the recognition of qualifications.
Contribute to the work of the Office of the Minister for Integration to coordinate integration activities and address priority integration issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the range of educational policies across different areas of the Department and the bodies under its aegis take account of the need to integrate immigrants and their families. • Develop policy on the educational integration of immigrants and their families.

Objective 4.2

Support the modernisation of the education sector through a partnership process that promotes good industrial relations practice.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Co-ordinate and manage industrial relations with employer groups and unions in the education sector through agreed processes and structures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum industrial action. • Settlements within pay policy guidelines. • Resolution of issues through agreed industrial relations processes.
Promote and foster modernisation and the development of partnership structures in all publicly funded education institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of modernisation programmes. • Successful operation of partnership arrangements.

Objective 4.3

Support and develop staff and seek continuous improvement in the effectiveness, value and quality of our services.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Monitor and develop organisational processes and procedures relating to financial, ethical and statutory requirements and governing the Department's relationship with its agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Internal Audit Plan developed, audits completed and recommendations implemented. • Risk Register maintained and reviewed and appropriate action taken to address identified issues. • Guidelines and procedures in place for strong corporate governance practice. • Responses to Freedom of Information requests and Data Protection access requests. • Compliance with health and safety requirements.
Develop and implement a comprehensive IT strategy and an action plan to support the business needs of the Department.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT Strategy and Action Plan. • Implementation of Action Plan on a phased basis.

Objective 4.3

Support and develop staff and seek continuous improvement in the effectiveness, value and quality of our services.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Develop and implement a Training and Development Strategy and provide training for identified needs and competency training, as identified through PMDS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and Development Strategy. • Training programmes delivered.
Implement programme of decentralisation of Department's functions to Athlone and Mullingar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progressive transfer in of staff willing to decentralise to appropriate sections of the Department. • Progressive transfer out of Dublin based staff wishing to remain in Dublin, to departments remaining in Dublin. • Accommodation needs addressed with OPW. • Implement new working arrangements to enable the Department to carry out its functions when fully decentralised.
Prepare annual financial Estimates and regularly monitor and report on expenditure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material underpinning estimates of expenditure and submissions to Department of Finance in support of demands. • Regular expenditure monitoring reports. • Report and monitor progress on agreed targets and objectives for programmes funded under the NDP, National Strategic Reference Framework and related drawdown of EU aid.
Develop and implement a Corporate Procurement Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Procurement Plan. • Implementation of recommendations in the Department's Corporate Procurement Plan.
Develop and implement a new Customer Service Charter and Action Plan for the period 2008 – 2010.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Charter and Action Plan. • Implementation of the Action Plan.
Support the delivery of services through Irish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued implementation of the Department's existing Scheme for the delivery of services through Irish. • Develop and implement new scheme for the period 2009 – 2011.

Objective 4.4

Manage the Department's response to initiatives for the redress of child abuse in residential institutions.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
Support the work of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, the Residential Institutions Redress Board and the Education Finance Board.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial and administrative support provided to these organisations.• Publication of Report of Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse.
Support and liaise with former residents of institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide appropriate funding to groups and arrange regular meetings

Objective 4.5

Contribute to the development of

- North/South cooperation through the exchange of information and learning and joint action in agreed areas of common interest.
- education through cooperation and decision making at EU and international level.

Strategies/Actions	Outputs
<p>Liaise with the North/South Ministerial Council Secretariat and the Department of Education Northern Ireland in relation to sectoral meetings of the North/South Ministerial Council (Education Sector) and co-ordinate developments in bi-lateral contacts with officials in the Department of Employment and Learning and the Department of Education in Northern Ireland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a joint review of the appropriate mechanisms to coordinate and manage effective North/South cooperation activity in the education and youth sector. • Areas for common action identified and agreed. • Co-funding of joint initiatives. • Support the ongoing development of Middletown Centre for Autism.
<p>Develop and administer co-operation initiatives between the USA and Ireland, North and South, including the Mitchell Scholarship Programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised agreement in place between the Department and the US Ireland Alliance. • Legislative amendment to George Mitchell Scholarship Act.
<p>Contribute to and influence the formulation of EU policy on education and training through the EU Council, Education Committee and other EU Committees and other international organisations such as the Council of Europe, OECD and UNESCO.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and implementation of policy initiatives and programmes which take account of Ireland's national position. • Participation in projects and programmes of the Council of Europe and the OECD.
<p>Promote Ireland as a centre for international excellence in education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of education and culture agreements with other countries. • Establishment of Education Ireland. • Provide financial and other supports to the Advisory Council for English Language Schools. • Implementation of commitments in the Asia Strategy. • Implementation of education and culture agreements with other countries.

Performance Indicators

Policy Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and Value for Money reviews completed and recommendations implemented. • Number of research projects completed and disseminated. • Progress in implementing the Department's Data Strategy. • Number of students receiving certification under the NQAI framework, FETAC and HETAC. • Progress on implementation of new policy initiatives.
North / South, EU and International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress in agreed areas of North / South cooperation. • Establishment of Education Ireland. • Increase in number of International students choosing to study in Ireland.
Customer Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Service Charter and Action Plan developed and implemented. • Scheme for delivery of Irish services developed and implemented.
Corporate Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of commitments provided for in the Department's corporate strategies and plans. • Decentralisation of the Dublin offices of the Department to Athlone and Mullingar in accordance with DIG timeframes. • Preparation, management and reporting on Department's budget allocation within national and EU financial requirements. • Implementation of recommendations arising from audit reports. • Number of staff training days provided. • Number of staff training days per employee.
Modernisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment of wage increases on dates outlined in national wage agreements. • Verification of progress on modernisation by the Education Sector Performance Verification Group and Civil Service Performance Verification Group • Organisational change delivered through partnership process. • Transfer of responsibility for the IoTs to the HEA completed.

Supporting Delivery

Chapter 7

7. SUPPORTING DELIVERY

Organisation capacity

Every organisation must evolve and improve in order to meet emerging challenges and to take advantage of new opportunities. The Department has been engaged in a major programme of structural reform over the last number of years. This has involved the establishment of a number of agencies, including the State Examinations Commission, the National Council for Special Education and a network of Regional Offices. It has involved the recent transfer of responsibility for administering the Institute of Technology sector from the Department to the Higher Education Authority. There has also been internal restructuring in the last year and reorganisation of responsibilities at top management level. The purpose of this structural reform is to enable the Department to focus on policy formulation, evaluation and planning at a strategic level.

The Department faces growing pressures in managing the increased volumes of operational activity that are associated with the expansion of staff and learner numbers in the education system. There are significant organisational challenges in delivering on the agenda for modernisation across the education sector, in supporting a system of school governance that relies heavily on volunteerism and in responding to the complex environmental challenges outlined in section 2, including changing demographics, increasing parental and learner expectations, a more rigorous regulatory environment and the impacts of wider societal changes.

We will continue to assess, on an ongoing basis, organisational structures and processes to ensure that they meet the needs of the organisation in that context. As part of this, during the period covered by this Statement of Strategy, the Department will participate in the Organisational Review Programme recently announced by An Taoiseach.

Decentralisation

The implementation of the Government's decentralisation programme will present a particular organisational challenge for the Department over the period of this strategy statement. Arrangements for the re-location of a number of business units from Dublin to Athlone in 2008 and movement of the Department's headquarters to Mullingar in 2010 are ongoing. The Department is already experiencing a very considerable level of staff turnover as a result of the movement of staff who have expressed preferences to either remain in Dublin or to decentralise to the various locations included in the overall Government programme. There is a need to focus on managing and minimising the impact of this considerable staff turn-over on day to day service delivery and quality. There will also be a need to look to new ways of conducting business as a decentralised organisation, in terms of both internal operations and our interaction with customers, partners and other Government Departments and agencies. The very significant scale of lost experience and expertise inevitably poses significant risks for the Department in maintaining service delivery and undertaking innovation and change. However, it is also the case that the infusion of the new thinking and new perspectives of the incoming staff will bring very positive benefits to the Department over time.

Developing People

Maintaining our existing services while also improving the way we do our work is dependent upon the commitment, knowledge and skills of all staff in the Department. We will continue to foster a high-performance culture through ongoing communication with staff, implementation of PMDS and provision of appropriate training and development programmes.

Agencies and related bodies

Implementation of many of the strategies outlined in this document is a matter for the agencies established by the Department and other bodies who receive Exchequer funding through the Department. A list of these agencies can be found at www.education.ie.

We will continue to develop, in consultation with relevant bodies, appropriate support, policy, monitoring and evaluative frameworks to underpin the delivery of high-quality services throughout the education system. In doing this, we will also continue to support the implementation of the Government's public service modernisation programme across the education sector.

Focusing on the Needs of our Customers

Chapter 8

8. FOCUSING ON THE NEEDS OF OUR CUSTOMERS

Our Customers

The Department's customer base encompasses all walks of Irish life. Everyone has a direct contact with education at some point of their lives, whether as a student, parent, teacher, employer, employee, as a member of the community or as a participant on parents associations, school boards of management or other governing boards. Each of these has a direct interest in the development and delivery of high-quality education services. The Government, members of the Oireachtas, the social partners and the Department's own staff, as internal customers, are all important client groups.

Providing a high-quality service

The Department is committed to providing high quality services to all of our customers and to continually improving the standard of services we provide. We are also committed to communicating with and delivering services to customers through the medium of Irish, where that is their preference. A new customer charter and an action plan are being developed in tandem with this strategy. These will aim to ensure that a high-quality customer service ethos runs through all areas of the Department's activity. We will report on progress in achieving the targets set out in our Customer Action Plan in our annual reports. A comments and complaints system is in place to help people who are not satisfied that the service they received was in line with our quality service commitments or generally accepted principles of equity and good administrative practice.

Use of Information Technology

Information Technology plays a key role in improving both the efficiency and effectiveness of the services delivered by the Department. The successful roll-out of the Department's first e-Government project, the Online Claims System, allows primary and post-primary schools to submit information in relation to substitute teacher appointments to the Department electronically. This information is then processed by the Department and payment issues directly to the substitute teacher. This project is the first of a number of e-services which the Department intends to make available over the coming years.

The Department will continue to increase the use of Information and Communications Technology to:

- Improve the services provided to our customers and where possible to offer a choice to customers in how they interact with us;
- Improve the information available to the Department for evaluation, planning and policy development;
- Enhance teaching and learning.

Better regulation

The Department aims to provide an effective legislative and regulatory framework to underpin the delivery of services across the education system. We want to have clear rules for our schemes and administrative procedures in order to ensure clarity about entitlement to resources and to make the process of seeking resources as straightforward as possible for our customers. In this context, we will examine placing the Department's 'rules' governing primary and post-primary schools on a formal regulatory footing.

We will introduce independent appeals processes where appropriate. The introduction of independent appeals processes ensures that customers who are not satisfied with a decision taken by the Department on a particular application can make an appeal to a body independent of the Department.

Contributing to Cross- Departmental Strategies

Chapter 9

9. CONTRIBUTING TO CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL STRATEGIES

Effective cross-departmental cooperation is essential to achieve many of the objectives outlined in this statement of strategy. In delivering effective services for our customers we are aware of the need for coherent strategies and policies and the need to coordinate the activities and interventions of key agencies that deliver related and complementary services at local level.

The role of education in supporting wider Government policy objectives is very significant and spans the full range of the agenda for economic development, social inclusion, quality of life and active citizenship. This is reflected in the key cross-cutting responsibilities of each of the Ministers of State assigned to this Department. Each of their roles involves oversight and leadership of arrangements for co-ordinating with other Departments to achieve major Government policy objectives for:

- lifelong learning (with Enterprise, Trade and Employment);
- the integration of newcomers in Irish society (with Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and Justice, Equality and Law Reform);
- developing Early Childhood Education (Office of Minister for Children);
- promoting innovation in the economy (with Enterprise, Trade and Employment); and
- interfacing effectively with the health sector in implementing the EPSEN and Disability Acts and strategies.

Other notable cross-cutting issues include interaction with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and local authorities in planning for the provision of new schools to meet the needs of emerging communities, implementing Government strategy for future skills supply and developing our research and development capacity (with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and others), advancing the broad social inclusion agenda, including the implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, (with Department of the Taoiseach and others), the development of policies to promote the Irish language, the implementation of the National Drugs Strategy, the RAPID programme (with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs), the promotion of equality measures across the education system (in liaison with the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform and the Equality Authority) and the implementation of Reach Out: The National Strategy for Suicide Prevention (in collaboration with the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive).

On these and on a range of other policy issues, Department officials are involved in regular contacts with other Departments and agencies on both a bilateral basis and through formal co-ordinating structures such as inter-departmental committees, senior officials groups and cabinet sub-committees. This Department is also represented on a number of cross-departmental groups at local and regional level. Appendix 1 lists a number of these cross-cutting policy issues and co-ordinating structures.



Monitoring and Review

Chapter 10

10. MONITORING AND REVIEW

Under the terms of the Public Service Management Act, 1997, the Department must provide an annual progress report to the Minister on the implementation of the Statement of Strategy. Our annual report will provide information on progress in achieving each of our high level goals by reference to the outputs, outcomes and performance indicators outlined in this document. We will also report on areas where progress could not be made or where particular difficulties were encountered. The annual report will also provide us with an opportunity to highlight changing needs or emerging issues which need to be addressed.

Progress will also be monitored through:

- The annual review and preparation of section business plans.
- Twice yearly formal reviews of progress by the Minister in consultation with the Management Advisory Committee.
- Regular updates to the Department's Partnership Committee.
- Progress reports to the Civil Service Progress Verification Group.
- Engagement with relevant Oireachtas Committees.
- The Department's Annual Output Statement.
- Reporting for national policy frameworks such as the National Development Plan.

In addition we are mindful of the need to keep the delivery of services under regular review in order to determine their continuing relevance and effectiveness in meeting the needs of our customers and to ensure that they deliver value for money.

Other processes which we will use to monitor our services include our programme of Value for Money reviews, policy reviews and evaluation work undertaken by various sections in the Department and our risk management programme. These processes will help us to identify appropriate changes in policy and resource allocation. We will report on findings arising from these processes, and on progress in implementing recommendations, in our annual reports.

There are also independent checks on our performance through ongoing audits and Value for Money examinations of education services by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The reports of the C&AG are made available to the Public Accounts Committee and Dáil Éireann. Certain programmes, administered by the Department and bodies funded by the Department, are also subject to audits by the European Court of Auditors.

We also cooperate with the Offices of the Data Protection Commissioner, Information Commissioner, Ombudsman, Ombudsman for Children, Ombudsman for Pensions and the Coimisinéir Teanga.

Performance Indicators

Chapter 11

11. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Department oversees the delivery of education at all levels of the education system from early childhood through to further and higher education. It provides funding and human resources. It also coordinates the development of policy in consultation with relevant stakeholders. In measuring the effectiveness and performance of the Department it is necessary to look beyond its administrative role and focus on the delivery of educational services at all levels.

A number of education related actions and targets are included in policy documents such as the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 – 2016, Towards 2016 2006 - 2015, the National Development Plan 2007 - 2013 and the Programme for Government. While in some cases the targets relate to a longer time period than that covered by this Statement of Strategy, we will report on progress made in reaching those targets over the next three years. The Department will also report on output targets in its Annual Output Statement.

A number of specific performance indicators have been identified under each High Level Goal in this Strategy Statement. At a system wide level, the following are key indices of performance for each of the main elements of the education system. Some of these indices are not measured annually as they are part of international benchmarking exercises carried out by organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The Department will report on the outcome of these exercises as data becomes available.

Education levels in the general population

- Proportion of 18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary educational attainment and not in further education or training.
- Proportion of 20-24 year olds who have completed upper secondary education.
- Proportion of the adult population aged 25-64 participating in formal education or organised training.
- Tertiary attainment in the adult population.
- Literacy levels in the adult population.

Early Childhood Education

- Measurable quality improvements in pre-school provision.
- Participation of Travellers in mainstream pre-school centres.
- Percentage of children attending infant and early start classes.

Primary and second-level

- Number of teachers undertaking continuous professional development.
- Retention rates at second-level.
- Survey-based achievement levels for all students (including percentage of 15 year olds with Reading Literacy proficiency of PISA level 1).
- Results of national assessments (using sampling) of Literacy, Maths, Science and ICT.

Higher Education

- Participation, completion and graduation rates.
- Indicators of Graduation in Mathematics, Science and Technology.
- Number of PhD graduates.
- Number of Apprenticeship places provided.

Further and Adult Education

- Participation and completion rates in continuing education and training.
- Number of participants with FETAC certification.

Youth Services

- Number of participants on youth schemes.

Cross-Departmental Activities

Appendix 1

APPENDIX 1 CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Set out below is a summary of the key cross-departmental activity which officials in this Department are involved in:

Topic	Service / Issue	Coordination mechanism
Contribute to development of policy and services across the public sector.	Workplace, competitiveness, skills issues.	High Level Group on National Workplace Strategy. National Competitiveness Council. Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. Clearing House Group. Upskilling Coordination Group.
	Cross sectoral childrens policy issues.	National Implementation Group (Lifecycle Framework for Children - Towards 2016) led by OMC. National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland Steering Group The National Children's Strategy Implementation Group led by the Office of the Minister for Children.
	Interdepartmental working group on the Sustainable Travel and Transport Action Plan led by Department of Transport.	To guide the delivery of an issues document public consultation leading to the preparation of a Sustainable Travel and Transport Action Plan which will set out proposals for transport and travel in Ireland
	Science, Technology and Innovation.	Interdepartmental group on Science, Technology and Innovation. Higher Education Research Group led by DES.
	OECD review of the public sector.	High Level Liaison Group OECD Review.
	Housing.	Cross-Departmental Team on Housing.

Topic	Service / Issue	Coordination mechanism
Contribute to development of policy and services across the public sector.	Road Safety Strategy.	Working group with the Road Safety Authority, NCCA and Second Level Support Service.
	Progress the implementation of the recommendations on Garda Vetting in relation to the vetting of persons with unsupervised access to children and vulnerable adults.	Implementation Group on Garda Vetting
	Development of the National Childcare Training Strategy.	An inter-Departmental led by OMC and supported by representative sub-groups from the awards bodies and providers.
	Coordinate emergency planning of Government Departments and essential services.	Interdepartmental Working Group on Emergency Planning
	Coordination of responses to Public Health emergency planning.	Interdepartmental Standing Committee on Public Health Emergency Planning
	Implementation of the recommendations of the Expenditure Review of the Back to Education Allowance.	Steering Committee on the Back to Education Allowance Expenditure Review led by DSFA.
	Medical Education.	Interdepartmental Steering Committee on Medical Education. National Committee on Medical Education and Training. National Medical Education and Training Workforce Planning Group.
	Structural Funds reporting.	Monitoring Committees including representatives of relevant Departments, agencies and the EU Commission.
	Representative group on developments in policy in early years childcare and education.	National Childcare Coordinating Committee led by OMC.

Topic	Service / Issue	Coordination mechanism
Contribute to development of policy and services across the public sector.	Promotion of the Irish Language.	Working group with D/CRAGA. Interdepartmental Baile Mhuirne Coordinating Group.
	Pilot project in relation to development of integrated children's services.	National Implementation Group led by OMC. Children's Services Committees.
	Advisory role in relation to Reach Out – the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention.	Expert Advisory Group of National Office of Suicide Prevention.
	Oversee implementation of Customer Service initiatives across the public sector.	Task Force on Customer Service led by D/Taoiseach.
	Oversee change management and modernisation agenda across the civil service.	Change Management Network
	Use of statistical data across government departments.	Data Liaison Group led by D/Taoiseach. Population Projections Expert Group led by CSO. Labour Market Skills Advisory Group led by FÁS.
	National Men's Health Strategy.	National Steering Group
	Coordination of information on Family Support Services.	Liaison Officers appointed in relevant Departments.
	Violence Against Women.	National Steering Committee led by DJELR.
	Equality: Sexual Orientation Ground.	Annual reporting process to D/JELR in relation to outcome of ongoing DES interaction with Gay and Lesbian Equality Network.

Topic	Service / Issue	Coordination mechanism
Contribute to development of policy and services across the public sector.	National Development Plan and National Strategic Reference Framework.	<p>High Level Group for the NDP.</p> <p>BMW Regional Operational Programme Monitoring Committee 2007 – 2013.</p> <p>S & E Regional Operational Programme Monitoring Committee 2007 – 2013.</p> <p>Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2007 – 2013.</p> <p>NDP Monitoring Committee 2007 – 2013.</p> <p>NSRF Monitoring Committee 2007 – 2013.</p>
Curriculum development and Teacher Education	Coordination of health and education initiatives in schools in the context of the curriculum.	<p>Interdepartmental Committee on Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).</p> <p>SPHE Management Committee.</p> <p>An Advisory Group comprising stakeholders including the teachers unions, parent's council etc. will feed into the Management Committee.</p> <p>DHC, Health Service Executive (HSE), SPHE Support Service, Primary Curriculum Support Service, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)</p>
	Education for Sustainable Development.	Working group led by D/Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
	Arts Education.	Liaison with officials in Arts Council and D/Arts, Sport and Tourism.
	Financial Education.	Working group with the Financial Regulatory Authority.
Special Education Needs and disability issues	Disability issues.	Senior Officials Group on Disability.
	To oversee the establishment of Middletown Centre of Excellence in Autism.	<p>Middletown Centre for Excellence Committee.</p> <p>DHC and D/Education Northern Ireland.</p>

Topic	Service / Issue	Coordination mechanism
Special Education Needs and disability issues	To co-ordinate health and education issues in relation to the establishment of Middletown Centre of Excellence in Autism.	Middletown Centre for Excellence Steering Committee. DHC and D/Education Northern Ireland.
	To consider, plan and co-ordinate cross-cutting issues arising from the joint implementation of EPSEN Act and Disability Act.	Health / Education Cross Sectoral Team on Implementation of EPSEN and Disability Act. Supported by subgroups.
	To consider work required to enable Ireland to ratify the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Convention.	Interdepartmental Working Group led by D/JELR.
	Monitoring and promoting compliance by bodies under the Department's aegis with 3% target for employment of persons with a disability (relates to implementation of Disability Act 2005).	Monitoring Committee established in accordance with provisions under the Disability Act 2005. Liaison with National Disability Authority and a wide range of bodies under the Department's aegis
	To draft guidelines for assessors carrying out assessments under the Disability Act and to draw up a training programme for HSE managers and heads of discipline regarding the Assessment of Need process.	Working Group on Assessment under the Disability Act led by the HSE.
HR, staff training and decentralisation	To review the policy guidelines of the Early Retirement Advisory Committee and the operation of the early retirement procedures in general.	Early Retirement Consultative Committee led by D/Finance.
	Identifying and meeting staff training needs.	Liaise with CSTDC directly and through Trainers Network and PMDS Network.

Topic	Service / Issue	Coordination mechanism
HR, staff training and decentralisation	Decentralisation.	Decentralisation Liaison Officers Group. Close cooperation with the Office of Public Works (OPW) to ensure the provision of high standard accommodation within the timeframe indicated in the last DIG report.
ICT	Schools Broadband Access Programme.	Steering Group to review the implementation of the joint Government/Telecommunications Internet Federation Agreement on the Schools Broadband Access Programme. Expert Group on Schools Broadband Access Programme.
	To oversee eGovernment developments and the Action Plan for Knowledge Society.	eStrategy Group of Secretaries General
Construction	Public Private Partnership (PPP) Projects.	Interdepartmental Group on Public Private Partnerships Informal Advisory Group on Public Private Partnerships
	The assessment of need for school places including site requirements for new schools.	Meetings between DES and Local Authorities (primarily in rapidly developing area) Close liaison and regular meetings at senior management level.
	Construction procurement reform and guidelines.	Government Construction Contracts Committee led by D/Finance.
North/ South, EU and International issues	Coordination of input to Lisbon Strategy in relation to the National Reform Programme and Employment Strategy.	Interdepartmental EU Coordinators.
	Coordination and exchange of information on EU business including transposition of EU Directives.	Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee on EU Affairs led by D/Taoiseach.

Topic	Service / Issue	Coordination mechanism
North/ South, EU and International issues	Preparation of trade missions accompanying and Ministerial programme.	Coordination working group for annual overseas trade mission led by D/Foreign Affairs (DFA).
	Coordination and exchange of information in relation to OECD business.	Interdepartmental Committee on OECD led by DFA.
	Coordination and exchange of information on Council of Europe business.	Interdepartmental Committee on Council of Europe led by DFA.
	Coordination and exchange of information on EU enlargement issues.	Interdepartmental Committee on Enlargement led by DFA.
	Monitoring progress on implementation of the Asia Strategy.	Asia Strategy High Level Group.
	Coordination of UNESCO issues.	UNESCO National Committee.
	Coordination and exchange of information on development education issues.	Interdepartmental Committee on Development led by DFA.
	North / South issues.	High Level North / South Coordinators Meetings North / South Coordinators meetings North / South Ministerial Council
Social Inclusion	Immigration/integration issues.	Work with D/EJR and D/CRAGA through the Office of the Minister for Integration. Interdepartmental Working Group on Newcomers. Interdepartmental Working Group on Refugee Resettlement and Integration. Cross-Departmental group on Integration Policy. Steering Committee for the Development of National Policy on the provision of English for adult newcomers.

Topic	Service / Issue	Coordination mechanism
Social Inclusion	Immigration/integration issues.	National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism. Interculturalism Advisory Group on Translations and Interpretation.
	Development of a Data Strategy to underpin the NAPS.	Office of Social Inclusion Technical Advisory Group.
	Policy Development in relation to objectives set out in social inclusion strategies.	Cabinet sub-committee on Social Inclusion Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion.
	Oversee policies aimed at improving outcomes for the Traveller community, including accessing employment and developing communications between Traveller and settled communities.	High level group on Travellers. National Traveller Monitoring Advisory Committee and sub groups.
	General oversight and policy management of Limerick Regeneration Projects.	Limerick Regeneration Agency Boards.
	Oversee RAPID Programme.	RAPID National Monitoring Committee.
	National Drugs Strategy.	National Drugs Strategy Interdepartmental Team and Drugs Task Forces and other related groups.
	Explore the potential for better coordination of services on Drugs and Alcohol related issues.	Working Group on Alcohol and Drug Synergies.
	Oversee funding of educational disadvantage projects through Dormant Accounts funds.	Dormant Accounts Interdepartmental Committee for Educational Disadvantage.

