



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Forbairt – Annual Statement of Priorities

2023 Q3 Progress Report



Introduction

Forbairt, the Annual Statement of Priorities, is a successor publication to the Action Plan for Education, and provides a roadmap to the delivery of the strategic and operational priorities set out in our Statement of Strategy 2023-2025.

This serves to assist us in managing the pace and sequence of change towards longer-term strategic goals and to enable us to demonstrate ongoing change and reform in the sector and report progress. It shows the range of activity we are engaged in and the path we are following to achieve the goals set out in our Statement of Strategy 2023-2025, namely:

- **Goal one:** Providing every child and young person with a learning experience that enables them to realise their potential and to develop the knowledge and skills they need to navigate in today's complex world.
- **Goal two:** Ensure equity of opportunity in education and that all children and young people are supported to fulfil their potential.
- **Goal three:** Together with our partners, provide strategic leadership and support for the delivery of the right systems and infrastructure for the sector
- **Goal four:** Working to serve the public and their elected representatives effectively, we remain committed to innovating in collaboration with aegis bodies and stakeholders to help children and young people to realise their potential.

Goal one: Provision and Quality of Education

Action No:	1
Action:	Lead the development and implementation of priority teacher supply actions that deliver in the short, medium and long term.
Progress Update:	<p>The Department continues to undertake a comprehensive programme to support the supply of teachers. A range of additional measures that operated in 2022/23, the teaching hours' extension scheme in post primary schools and measures to enable teachers who are job-sharing or on career break to undertake substitute work have been extended to 2023/24.</p> <p>Primary substitute teacher supply panels are continuing to operate for 2023/24 with 166 panels covering nearly 2,900 schools. Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers have agreed to continue to support the availability of student teachers to provide substitute cover in 2023/24.</p> <p>The Call for Tenders for an Irish upskilling programme for post primary teachers has reached the evaluation stage which is in addition to existing upskilling programmes in mathematics, Spanish and physics.</p> <p>To meet the longer term needs of schools at primary level the Minister approved additional places on ITE programmes over the next two academic years.</p>
Next Steps	<p>Planned actions for 2023/24 include allowing newly qualified teachers (NQTs) who qualify outside Ireland, and who apply before 1 February 2024, to complete induction (Droichead) in Ireland; continued engagement with the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform to extend the 50 day pension abatement waiver to 2024 and registration with the Teaching Council for this year's 3rd year student teachers, which enables them to cover substitutable vacancies.</p> <p>Other measures include developing a new "Teaching Transforms" campaign, which promotes the teaching profession and encourages students to follow a career in teaching. The procurement process for the Irish upskilling programme will also be completed.</p>

Action No:	2
Action:	Publish the Primary Curriculum Framework, and publish and commence implementation of the primary mathematics curriculum.
Progress Update:	The Primary Curriculum Framework was published in March 2023. The Primary Mathematics Curriculum was published in September 2023. A comprehensive three-phase continuous professional development (CPD) framework to support the introduction, enactment and embedding of the Primary Mathematics Curriculum commenced in September 2023.
Next Steps	Ongoing provision of support to schools.

Action No:	3
Action:	Publish the Literacy, Numeracy, and Digital Literacy Strategy
Progress Update:	Finalisation of the consultation report is well advanced and drafting of the strategy and implementation plan is underway.
Next Steps	This action is expected to be completed in Q1 2024.

Action No:	4
Action:	Publish and commence delivery of the STEM Education Implementation Plan.
Progress Update:	The implementation plan was published in March 2023 and the implementation of actions under the STEM Education Implementation Plan to 2026 is underway.
Next Steps	Ongoing implementation of actions, including a range of quality professional learning experiences for early years educators and teachers across primary and post-primary schools to support staff with STEM content knowledge, in planning and implementing integrated STEM activities across all three levels.

Action No:	5
Action:	Conduct public consultation to underpin the development of a policy on Irish-medium education outside of the Gaeltacht.
Progress Update:	The public consultation to underpin the development of a policy on Irish-medium education outside of the Gaeltacht has been completed. Analysis of responses to Phase 1 has now been completed by Sealbhú, DCU and reports have been received. Phase 2 (focus groups with key stakeholders, including children and

	young people) was completed in early June and a report has been submitted by Sealbhú, DCU on this phase. Phase 3 (bilateral meetings with relevant stakeholders) was completed in early July.
Next Steps	This action has been delivered. Results of the consultation process will be analysed by the Intradepartmental Working Group and by the Steering Group.

Action No:	6
Action:	Introduce updated Junior Cycle SPHE/RSE specifications and publish draft Senior Cycle SPHE/RSE specifications.
Progress Update:	<p>The updated Junior Cycle specification was published in May and was rolled out in September. A continuous professional development (CPD) programme for teachers took place from March to May in order to facilitate a September roll-out of the updated specification in schools and further CPD will be provided in the coming school year.</p> <p>A draft Senior Cycle specification was published in July for public consultation.</p>
Next Steps	An extended Senior Cycle specification public consultation will run until October. The NCCA will use the feedback from the consultation to finalise the Senior Cycle specification for presentation to the NCCA Council for approval.

Action No:	7
Action:	Work with our partners to promote the benefits of physical activity in our schools, including through the physical education curriculum.
Progress Update:	<p>An updated Junior Cycle Physical Specification was rolled out in September to all first year students.</p> <p>The second meeting of the Cross Departmental Committee, chaired by Minister Byrne, met in Q3.</p>
Next Steps	<p>The next meeting of the cross-departmental committee will be held in Q4.</p> <p>The Department will work with colleagues in DTCAGSM on areas of common interest, including inputting to the National Swimming Strategy and the next iteration of the Sports Action Plan.</p>

Action No:	8
Action:	Deliver the State examinations in 2023 through an agreed approach including consideration of marking and examiner supply issues.
Progress Update:	<p>Oral and practical exams have proceeded as planned with sufficient examiners. Written exams commenced on 7 June 2023. An alternative set of Leaving Certificate exams for students unable to sit one or more papers in the main exam setting due to reasons as set out in Circular S24/23 ran from 29 June until 15 July. The State Examinations Commission issued the results of the Leaving Certificate 2023 on the 25 August 2023.</p> <p>The SEC issued the 2023 Leaving Certificate Appeal results to candidates on the 29th September.</p> <p>The SEC issued this year's Junior Cycle results to candidates from their schools on the 18th October 2023.</p>
Next Steps	Continued engagement with the SEC and other relevant stakeholders in relation to all aspects of planning for State examinations.

Action No:	9
Action:	Advance delivery on the redevelopment of the Senior Cycle; including the development and implementation of process for the selection and operation of network schools.
Progress Update:	<p>On 20 September 2023, the Minister announced the decision to accelerate the national rollout of the first tranche of revised Leaving Certificate subject specifications by two years to 2025, with further tranches to be introduced each year. The first tranche of subjects are Business, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Ancient Greek, Arabic and Latin. In addition, two new subjects; Drama, Film and Theatre Studies and Climate Action and Sustainable Development, are being introduced on a phased basis. These subjects will incorporate externally assessed components outside of traditional written exams, to be worth at least 40% of the available marks.</p> <p>This means we are broadening how our students are assessed; maximising their opportunity to demonstrate their skills and learning; ensuring that their experience reflects the challenges they will face in their life beyond school and in the 21st century world; and bringing these changes forward by two years so that the maximum</p>

	<p>number of students will experience the benefits of these reforms as early as possible.</p> <p>Development of the first tranche of new and revised subjects is well advanced within the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) structures. The NCCA has recently published the list of subjects to be revised in tranche 2, which will be introduced in 2026. Development of a revised Transition Year Programme Statement and follow-on Senior Cycle modules for students progressing from Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes at Junior Cycle level is also well advanced.</p> <p>The Minister has established the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Delivery Board, which oversees the reform work and reports regularly to the Minister on progress, and the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Partners' Forum, a representative stakeholder engagement group. Both groups have met on several occasions to date, and the Minister and her officials continue to undertake significant engagement with education stakeholders.</p>
Next Steps	The Q4 work is focused on ensuring the draft specifications in respect of the tranche 1 subjects are advanced to allow for public consultations to commence.

Action No:	10
Action:	Agree the Department's implementation plan for the cross-Departmental Creative Youth Plan 2023-2027.
Progress Update:	The Creative Youth (CY) 2023-2027 Plan was launched on 28 March 2023. A DE implementation plan has been completed and approved with input from the DE Steering Group members and relevant DE colleagues.
Next Steps	A DE Implementation Plan has been agreed. The DE Steering Group will oversee implementation of DE Actions and sub-actions in the Plan and updates will be provided to the Interdepartmental Creative Youth Working Group as and when required.

Action No:	11
Action:	Promote improvement and accountability in the education system through a responsive programme of evaluation and advisory visits in early learning and care (ELC) settings, schools, centres for education and other education settings, including the reintroduction of whole-school evaluations.

Progress Update:	<p>A programme of evaluation and advisory visits in early learning and care (ELC) settings, primary and post-primary schools was completed that involved the full range of inspection models, including whole-school evaluations.</p> <p>Subject inspections with a focus on junior cycle were conducted with a view to gathering data on junior cycle provision and the implementation of the junior cycle framework.</p>
Next Steps	A programme of evaluation and advisory visits in early learning and care (ELC) settings, primary and post-primary schools for Q4 is being implemented.

Action No:	12
Action:	Implement a new School Self-Evaluation (SSE) cycle 2022-2026 to support the leadership of internal quality assurance and improvement in schools and centres of education.
Progress Update:	<p>The Inspectorate continued to support schools and school leaders in implementing a cycle of SSE 2022-26 by providing a programme of advisory visits to primary and post-primary schools; preparing a newsletter for schools which provides advice and resources to support the work of schools in relation to SSE in the year ahead and liaising with Oide on the support that it provides to schools on SSE.</p> <p>Whole-school school evaluations, DEIS inspections, curriculum evaluations (primary), and subject inspections (post-primary), take account of and report on how schools are using SSE/the DEIS action planning process to promote quality teaching and learning, wellbeing, equity and inclusion also progressed.</p>
Next Steps	This work will continue in Q4. The SSE Newsletter will be published early in Q4. In addition, the Inspectorate will work with and support a small number of schools to build their capacity to engage in SSE through the evaluation of an aspect of teaching and learning as part of the shared evaluation of learning project.

Action No:	13
Action:	Examine and promote evidence-informed actions to address impacts on teaching and learning from Covid-19.
Progress Update:	Work on the preparation of "Looking at English" and "Looking at Irish" Guides in Primary Schools is almost complete. Work

	continues on the preparation of a guide for schools to promote working together to improve school attendance.
Next Steps	<p>The “Looking at English” and “Looking at Irish” Guides for Primary Schools will be published in Q4.</p> <p>A guide will be published in Q4 for schools to promote working together to improve school attendance. This guide will include case studies of effective practice.</p>

Action No:	14
Action:	Implement the Department's Wellbeing policy to foster the wellbeing of all children and young people, and ensure that wellbeing is at the core of the culture and climate of all schools and centres for education.
Progress Update:	<p>As of September 2023 1,497 (46%) Primary & 352 (49%) Post Primary schools have completed training in using the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice to initiate a wellbeing promotion review and development cycle using the School Self-Evaluation six step process.</p> <p>The Department continues to provide a range of wellbeing supports. In conjunction with the Education Centre network, NEPS is providing training and support to school staff on a range of wellbeing related topics. Training titled "Introducing a Trauma Informed Approach, the Stress Factor: Getting the Balance Right" continues to be delivered to school leaders in acknowledgement of the important role they have in embedding practices in their schools. NEPS continue the roll out of critical incident training to all schools via an eLearning platform.</p>
Next Steps	<p>Managing Reluctant Attendance and School Avoidance Behaviour: Good Practice Guides for schools and parents in primary and post-primary will be finalised in the autumn.</p> <p>Supporting the development and review of Student Support Teams in post primary and large primary schools, to promote systems that provide for the welfare and wellbeing of all students.</p>

Action No:	15
Action:	Provide access to education to children and young people arriving from Ukraine and deliver supports to the sector on a regional basis through the Regional Education and Language Teams (REALTs).
Progress Update:	<p>17,501 Ukrainian pupils have been enrolled in schools across Ireland as of 2nd October. Out of that figure, 10,655 of these pupils have been accommodated in primary schools while 6,846 pupils have enrolled in post-primary schools. This represents a 12% increase in total enrolments since June 2023. This data indicates an enrolment rate of 91% among Ukrainian children aged 5-18.</p> <p>Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) continues to work closely with the 16 REALT Co-ordinators in the regions and request supports from the REALT when needed to assist with the enrolment of international protection applicants in schools.</p> <p>Updated guidance for primary and post-primary schools on provision of education for Ukrainian children was published on gov.ie on the 25th of September.</p>
Next Steps	<p>To assist with the transition of Ukrainian students and their families into Irish schools, Regional Education and Language Teams (REALT) continue to operate.</p> <p>Work continues to further enhance the school transport application process. Work has also commenced on reviewing the process for English as an Additional Language (EAL) and on providing supports to schools in respect of students with special educational needs.</p> <p>School building capacity planning is ongoing, including for areas under high pressure at post-primary level. As part of this work, the Department's Planning and Building Unit (PBU) engage with relevant stakeholders in relation to putting necessary accommodation solutions in place.</p>

Action No:	16
Action:	Progress the implementation plan for the Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027.
Progress Update:	The development of an implementation plan for the Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 further progressed in Q3.
Next Steps	Further engagement to finalise the implementation plan is to take place

Action No:	17
Action:	Launch an integrated Department teacher education funded service, to enhance the provision of a continuum of quality continuing professional development and supports for teachers.
Progress Update:	An integrated Department teacher education funded service was launched to enhance the provision of a continuum of quality continuing professional development and supports for teachers.
Next Steps	Work with Oide and Education Centres on any matters arising during start-up phase.

Action No:	18
Action:	Publish and commence implementation of the Initial Teacher Education Policy Statement, working towards equipping student teachers with learning experiences that will help them to embrace the evolving challenges of supporting all learners in the 21st century.
Progress Update:	The ITE Policy Statement was published by the Minister on 28 March and the implementation plan continues to be progressed. Actions underway include commissioning of longitudinal research on beginning teachers' experiences.
Next Steps	The policy statement includes a phased implementation plan. Actions from this plan will be progressing through the rest of 2023 and into 2024 as planned.

Goal two: Special Education and Inclusion

Action No:	19
Action:	Complete the review of the EPSEN Act 2004.
Progress Update:	<p>Analysis of the survey responses and open submissions has been completed and the reports have been issued to the Steering and Advisory Group.</p> <p>UCD has been appointed to conduct bespoke focus group research and these shall be held in Q3 and Q4. Beacons and Mosaic style approaches have been taken for the focus group stage. This stage will incorporate the information received in the survey stage.</p> <p>Dr Emer Ring is concluding an academic review to take account of case law of importance and other pieces of Irish and EU Legislation that needs to be considered in the EPSEN review. This will conclude in Q3 2023.</p>
Next Steps	<p>Child focus groups and an academic report will be concluded by end of December 2023. Adult focus groups will be concluded by end of January 2024.</p> <p>All information shall be considered from surveys, focus groups, academic research, NCSE policy advice and European colleagues' information and recommendations shall be outlined.</p> <p>An open policy day will be held where the initial draft report and recommendations will be made available to allow for final stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>Report shall be prepared for the Minister end of Q2 2024.</p>

Action No:	20
Action:	Deliver a revised Summer Programme 2023 and put in place effective oversight and monitoring with the assistance of the Inspectorate.
Progress Update:	<p>The Summer Programme 2023 was delivered with all staff claims submitted for the school based programme having now been paid.</p> <p>Payment of claims for the home-based programme are being processed and the first set of payments were paid on the 28th September 2023. Payments continue to issue on a fortnightly basis thereafter with over 80% of completed applications paid to date.</p>

Next Steps	<p>Other payments relating to the school-based Summer Programme (capitation, transport, reimbursement of payroll costs to ETBs) to be processed and paid.</p> <p>The majority of payment claims for the home-based Summer Programme to be processed and paid by end of Q4.</p> <p>Reviewing the 2023 Summer Programme in preparation for the 2024 Summer Programme has commenced.</p>
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Action No:	21
Action:	Complete detailed planning and take necessary action to make sufficient and appropriate provision for children with special educational needs for the 2023/2024 school year.
Progress Update:	<p>389 new special classes have been sanctioned by the NCSE for opening in the 2023/24 school year – 252 at primary and 137 at post-primary level</p> <p>Two new special schools announced by Minister Foley and Minister Madigan have been established and will operate under the patronage of the ETB – Cork ETB is the patron for East Cork Community Special School in Carrigtwohill and City of Dublin ETB is the patron for An Cosán Community Special School in Dublin 7. Each school has appointed a principal and completed its admissions process for the 2023/24 school year. East Cork Community Special School is offering 18 places while An Cosán Community Special School is offering 25 places. The recruitment process for teaching and other staff at both schools is ongoing.</p>
Next Steps	The Department continues to engage intensely with the NCSE in relation to the forward planning for new special classes and additional special school places. This work involves a detailed review of statistical data in relation to forecasting demand for special class places, consideration of improved data sharing arrangements, consideration of available school accommodation capacity, and a particular focus on the provision of special classes at post-primary level and in special schools.

Action No:	22
Action:	Develop proposals to address the particular issues facing special schools and support the development of new special schools.

Progress Update:	The Department continued to engage with NABMSE as well as directly with special schools and their patrons in Q3 with a particular focus on the teacher supply challenge. The draft action plan to address challenges generally for special schools was advanced in Q3 in tandem with proposals to support the plan from a budgetary perspective through Budget 2024. The Department continued a series of meetings with the patrons of new special schools which opened in 2022/23 and which are opening and enrolling students for 2023/24.
Next Steps	It is anticipated that the action plan for special schools will be finalised in Q4 having regard to the outcome of the budgetary process. A working group will then be established to progress the action plan. There will be continued engagement with and support of the patrons of the recently opened new schools.

Action No:	23
Action:	Review and implement key strategic policy objectives in special education.
Progress Update:	The publication of "Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations Guidelines for Schools in Supporting Students" is near completion. The Department has been consulting with education stakeholders and advocacy groups.
Next Steps	<p>Publication of the Guidelines will follow the completion of procurement for external training on de-escalation and physical restraint.</p> <p>While the procurement process is being undertaken, the Guidelines will be trialled in approximately 20 special schools. This will facilitate final amendments to the Guidelines. The schools will be supported by NEPS, the NCSE and the Inspectorate during that period.</p> <p>The Department is finalising the Request For Tender (RFT) for this training with the NCSE and it is anticipated that this will be published in November.</p>

Action No:	24
Action:	Consider and respond to National Council for Special Education policy advice on inclusive education.

Progress Update:	The Department received the NCSE Policy Advice paper on 12 January 2023. The policy advice is currently being considered by the Ministers and publication will follow on completion of this process.
Next Steps	The policy advice will be the subject of an extensive consultation process with education stakeholders and partners, as well as with disability representative organisations, and parental representatives.

Action No:	25
Action:	Implement a responsive evaluation programme of provision for children and young people with special and additional educational needs and those at risk of educational disadvantage.
Progress Update:	This priority has been fully completed for 2023. Additional inspections focusing on children and young people with English as an Additional Language Needs and children under international protection were included in the plan for Q3 and Q4. The Inspectorate has also commenced a series of inspections in Early Intervention classes for children with autism. Planning is underway for a responsive evaluation programme for 2024.
Next Steps	Planning is underway for a responsive evaluation programme for 2024.

Action No:	26
Action:	Develop a special needs assistant (SNA) workforce plan, including review of SNA contract and engage in related industrial relations (IR) negotiations.
Progress Update:	<p>The scope of the SNA related work has expanded significantly from what was originally intended.</p> <p>Approval for the development of an SNA Workforce Development Plan (SNA WDP) has been secured. The SNA WDP will be developed over the next two years in consultation and collaboration with stakeholders including SNAs, the school management bodies, the unions, schools, parents and children. As part of this process engagement with stakeholders on a range of SNA related policy matters is ongoing. Internal consultation within the Department on the SNA contract has taken place and is ongoing.</p>
Next Steps	A Steering Group will be established to oversee progress on the SNA Workforce Development Plan and associated Terms of Reference will be drafted for agreement.

Action No:	27
Action:	Publish the implementation plan for Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying, and commence delivery of the plan.
Progress Update:	The implementation plan for Cineáltas: Action plan on Bullying was published on the 10th April 2023.
Next Steps	This priority has been delivered.

Action No:	28
Action:	Publish updated anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools and provide support for an oversight of implementation through the work of the Inspectorate.
Progress Update:	Work is well advanced on the review and updating of the 2013 anti-bullying procedures for schools with the updated procedures to be published before end 2023. CPD/ training, which will be made available to all school staff, Board of Management members and parents, is currently under development.
Next Steps	Together with the education partners, continue the work underway to update the anti-bullying procedures.

Action No:	29
Action:	Publish the report and implementation plan arising from the high level independent review of the Department's Child Protection policies and processes and support oversight and effective implementation through the work of the Inspectorate.
Progress Update:	The report on the high level independent review of child protection was published on 4 October 2023. Updated child protection procedures for schools (revised 2023) and Circular 0036/2023 are effective since 1 September 2023. Work on implementing the recommendations is well advanced with all recommendations due to be implemented during 2023.
Next Steps	Together with the Education partners, continue to work on implementing the recommendations.

Action No:	30
Action:	Review resource allocation to tackle educational disadvantage both within the DEIS programme and across the wider school sector, to inform future policy on resource allocation to schools in order to provide every student with the opportunity to reach their potential.
Progress Update:	<p>The Department is continuing its exploration of the allocation of resources to schools to address educational disadvantage to develop a Policy Direction Paper on Educational Disadvantage by end Q2 2024. The review by the OECD (to inform overarching strategic policy) is underway with online stakeholder engagement taking place over the summer.</p> <p>In September the Social Inclusion Unit organised and hosted the OECD review team visit to Ireland. The team visited a selection of schools both within and outside of the DEIS program. They also had further engagements with a comprehensive range of other stakeholders including the Social Inclusion, Early Years, Special Education Needs and Inspectorate units within the Department of Education along with representatives from Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, the Child Poverty and Wellbeing unit within the Department of An Taoiseach and a team from Tusla Education Support Service.</p> <p>Detailed planning of the programme of work to advance work on reviewing resource allocation within the current DEIS programme is underway. This programme of work also includes updating of data on disadvantaged Index, the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework and work on communications, consultation and stakeholder engagement.</p>
Next Steps	The Department will continue to progress the programme of work and stakeholder engagement associated with the development of a Policy Direction Paper on Educational Disadvantage for end Q2 2024. Procurement of external resources to advance a number aspects of the projects is either underway or being considered due to the volume and complexity of work associated with the review.

Action No:	31
Action:	Develop and implement the new scheme to deliver free schoolbooks for children in recognised primary schools, including special schools.
Progress Update:	On 22 March details of the new free schoolbooks scheme in recognised primary schools and special schools were announced. The funding for the scheme was issued directly to schools in April to

	<p>support the purchase of the books and resources in time for the start of the 2023/24 school year. The funding was paid at a rate of €96 per pupil in line with validated enrolment figures for September 2022.</p> <p>In recognition of the work required in schools associated with implementing this scheme, a grant payment was put in place, for schools, for administrative support. This grant, which is based on enrolment can be used to employ an individual to work for a specified number of days from April through to August 2023 to carry out administrative work on the scheme. Funding for this grant issued to schools in June 2023.</p>
Next Steps	The guidelines for the Primary Schoolbook Grant Scheme acknowledge that there are circumstances where pupils can be enrolled after 30 September each year and therefore schools will not have been allocated a payment for these pupils as payments are based on the previous September validated enrolments. To ensure that schools do not experience hardship where a significant increase arises during a school year, a provision has been agreed to make a payment to schools who apply for additional funding.

Action No:	32
Action:	Pilot a programme of counselling supports for primary school pupils
Progress Update:	<p>Roll out of the Counselling in Primary Schools Pilot Programme is continuing at pace. Applications for counsellors in Strand 1 of the pilot have been reviewed by the Vetting Committee and the Garda vetting process of counsellors is underway.</p> <p>The National Leads for each of the four pilot areas for Strand 2 are now in place and the recruitment of the Wellbeing and Mental Health Practitioners is well advanced.</p>
Next Steps	<p>Continue to roll-out the Counselling in Primary Schools Pilot, including the publication of pre-approved panels of counsellors for Strand 1 in counties Cavan, Laois, Leitrim, Longford, Mayo, Monaghan and Tipperary.</p> <p>Continue establishment of Mental Health and Wellbeing Teams in cluster areas in Cork, Carlow, Dublin 7 and Dublin 16.</p>

Action No:	33
Action:	Strengthen the participation of children and young people in the Department and improve engagement with children, young people

	and parents during school evaluations through the development of communication and participation strategies.
Progress Update:	<p>A research project was undertaken in regard to reporting to children and young people following an inspection in ELC, primary and post-primary settings. This project will be extended in Q4 with the intent to mainstream the approach determined in Q1 2024.</p> <p>Work commenced in regard to creating webinars for ELC educators, parents and children and young people about the Inspectorate's approach to engaging with children and young people as part of a drive to increase the participation of children and young people in inspection and school life generally. The intent is to publish these in Q4 2023.</p> <p>Research is still underway in regard to enhancing parental participation in inspection. A team is currently looking at parental focus group engagement with the intent to trial enhancements to focus groups in Q4 2023.</p> <p>A report by the OECD exploring a new school community engagement model to inform local and national level policy making was published in October. A Project Working Group, consisting of representatives from Irish education organisations and networks served as a consultative platform throughout the project.</p>
Next Steps	<p>The reporting to children and young people project will be extended in Q4 with the intent to mainstream the approach determined in Q1 2024.</p> <p>The review of parental participation in inspection will continue with an intent to trial enhancements to focus groups in Q4 2023. Webinars for parents, ELC educators and children and young people will be published in Q4</p> <p>The Department will explore the recommendations contained within the OECD report during 2024.</p>

Action No:	34
Action:	Establish a dedicated unit to promote the participation and voice of children and young people in Department policies.
Progress Update:	The student participation unit has been established in the Parents and Learners' Unit. An expert group, chaired by Professor Laura

	Lundy of Queen's University Belfast, has also been established to advise on the work of the unit.
Next Steps	This priority has been delivered.

Action No:	35
Action:	Agree the Department's actions for inclusion in the new National Framework for Children and Young People.
Progress Update:	In Q3, the Department of Education liaised further with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) on DE's input to the strategy, in order to clarify queries and finalise wording.
Next Steps	DCEDIY has advised that the Framework will be finalised shortly and circulated to relevant Departments. DE will review the final strategy, with particular attention to the new Spotlight on Disability Services, and provide feedback as necessary to DCEDIY. Briefing will be prepared for the Minister.

Action No:	36
Action:	Increase choice and diversity of school type for parents.
Progress Update:	A reconfiguration pilot process involving 63 schools was completed.
Next Steps	Engagement with relevant stakeholders has been completed and a report and proposed Action Plan is being developed. Phase 1 due for implementation during Q4 2023.

Goal three: Systems Support and Infrastructure

Action No:	37
Action:	Publish the Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2023-2027.
Progress Update:	Engagement took place with the education partners regarding the review of the Governance Manual. The manual was published online on 21st September 2023. A public procurement process for printing the manual was completed in Q3.
Next Steps	Work continues towards the printing and distribution of the manual to all primary schools in Q4.

Action No:	38
Action:	Progress response to Government decisions in relation to allegations of sexual abuse, including those relating to the Spiritan Order.
Progress Update:	A scoping inquiry was established on 7 March following a Government decision in respect of same.
Next Steps	The final report of this Scoping Inquiry is due to be submitted to the Minister in June 2024.

Action No:	39
Action:	Review the School Transport Scheme to better meet the needs of students, including children with special education needs, to ensure that it is effective and that it promotes sustainability in transport.
Progress Update:	The phase 3 report has been completed.
Next Steps	The phase 3 report has been completed and has been submitted by the Steering Group to the Minister for her consideration. Subject to the Minister's approval, it is expected that the review will be brought to Government and further to Government approval, the review will be published.

Action No:	40
Action:	Deliver on the National Development Plan (NDP) to provide school places and upgrade existing infrastructure with a particular focus on provision for students with special education needs and also supporting Ireland's response to global events, for example,

	humanitarian crisis in Ukraine as best as possible and within the constraints of available funding.
Progress Update:	<p>An agreement was secured to guarantee and support the roll-out and the continuation of the Department's school building programme in 2023.</p> <p>Under the National Development Plan the department is committed to delivering 150-200 school building projects per annum and expects to meet this target again in 2023.</p>
Next Steps	Continued prioritisation and delivery of urgently required projects and programmes and engagement with DPENDR in relation to forthcoming NDP Review of capital allocations

Action No:	41
Action:	Implement Department's actions under the Climate Action Plan as best as possible and within the constraints of available resources.
Progress Update:	<p>Department of the Taoiseach has published progress confirmation for CAP Q2 2023. The Department had no actions for this period. Action 61e completed. The School Sector Climate Action Mandate was published in March 2023, it will be published annually, and updated to reflect the Climate Action Plan for that year.</p> <p>Other actions are ongoing.</p>
Next Steps	<p>Action 60a Q4 2023: This is communications on Climate Agenda in the schools' sector with a particular focus on pilot deep energy retrofit projects delivered under Pathfinder Programme in partnership with SEAI. This will be delivered in Q4 due to later completion of projects restricting quality photography of finished projects.</p> <p>Action 235c Q4 2023: It is anticipated that the final phases of the review will be completed shortly, with recommendations on the future of the Department's School Transport Scheme.</p>

Action No:	42
Action:	Deliver the Department's shared services and ICT programme of work including access to an electronic payslip for current and former

	school staff in primary, post-primary, community and comprehensive schools.
Progress Update:	<p>Work was ongoing in preparation for moving Waterford / Wexford ETB payroll services to the Department's Shared Service Unit (ESBS) in Q4 2023. A large number of reports were re-developed for ETBs for reporting purposes as the legacy system has reached end of life. Pension Statements from 2013 to 2022 were issued to Single Pension Scheme (SPS) members in Tipperary ETB. Kilkenny Carlow ETB and Kildare Wicklow ETB will be next to issue their Pension Statements (2013 to 2022) and these should issue by mid-October. Further progress is ongoing for the next tranche of three ETBs who will deliver Pension Statements. Estimated delivery is end October 2023. Engagement has also been initiated with six further ETBs for delivery of statements in Q1 2024. Annual Benefits Pension Statements for school staff payees, paid through the Athlone Payroll team, have been delivered to over 95% of payees in 2023 to date.</p> <p>The procurement process for a Payroll system for school staff payees, paid through Athlone, continues with an expectation of re-tendering in Q4 2024.</p>
Next Steps	<p>Waterford / Wexford ETB is due to go live in February with payroll services in ESBS which will also include their access to the reporting suite.</p> <p>Work will continue on the reporting & analytics project. One report (non-teaching staff quarterly) is due to be completed in Q4 2023. More generally work will continue in relation to backfilling historic data to improve future reporting.</p>

Action No:	43
Action:	Conduct consultation and deliver Statement of Strategy 2023-2025
Progress Update:	The Department's Statement of Strategy 2023-2025 has been approved by Cabinet and published.
Next Steps	This priority has been delivered.

Action No:	44
Action:	Progress the establishment of a central research repository, including data and analytics, under the new Research, Policy and Practice (RPP) Steering Group, building on collaboration between the Inspectorate, other Departmental teams, national agencies and stakeholders
Progress Update:	<p>The second meeting of the RPP Steering Group was held in Q3, and Terms of Reference for the Group were agreed. Initial work has been done to capture the breadth and depth of the work the Department is currently undertaking in terms of utilizing research, evidence, and data to support the policy cycle.</p> <p>5 aegis bodies of the Department have accepted invitations to become members of the group – Education Research Centre, NCCA, NCSE, State Examinations Commission, Teaching Council.</p> <p>The group has committed to identifying research priority areas that will align with the priority actions identified for each year through Forbairt, as well as scoping how best to capture the impact of education through qualitative and quantitative data.</p>
Next Steps	In Q4, scoping will continue regarding the nature and approach of a central research repository. The Group will build on the work done capturing the current work to inform this and to help ensure research projects across the members are prioritised and aligned with the Departments Statement of Strategy. The group will also take cognisance of the work of the DFHERIS through its Impact 2030 strategy and in particular <i>Research for Public Policy: An Outline Roadmap</i> .

Action No:	45
Action:	Progress a Periodic Critical Review of the Teaching Council.
Progress Update:	The Department has recently completed a tender process through the Office of Government Procurement and the contract is progressing to signature. Once contracts have been signed we will begin the intensive engagement on the work to complete the Periodic Critical Review.
Next Steps	Contracts to be signed with the preferred tenderer and work commence. Kick-off meeting between all parties scheduled for week commencing 16th October, 2023.

Goal four: Collaboration and Innovation

Action No:	46
Action:	Build on innovations and service improvements advancing within the Department by developing and implementing a plan to further enhance Departmental effectiveness across a number of areas.
Progress Update:	<p>The Forbairt Annual Statement of Priorities Q2 Progress Report was published to provide an update on progress towards delivery of our 2023 priorities.</p> <p>The student participation unit has been established in the Parents and Learners' Unit. An expert group, chaired by Professor Laura Lundy of Queen's University Belfast, has also been established to advise on the work of the unit.</p> <p>The Department's Statement of Strategy 2023-2025 was published.</p> <p>The consultation process for a REALT Review is ongoing.</p> <p>The Customer Service Steering Group continues to meet monthly.</p> <p>A sub-group of the Primary Education Forum met to identify and progress further enhancements to the Department's consultation engagements with stakeholders.</p>
Next Steps	<p>Reform priorities will continue to be managed and reported through the quarterly Forbairt reporting process.</p> <p>Completion of the REALT review is anticipated in Q4 2023.</p> <p>The Customer Service Steering Group is finalising a Customer Service Strategy 2023-2025 and Customer Charter.</p>