

REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF DEIS



Social Inclusion Unit

Contents

Executive Summary	2
Chapter 1 - Introduction - Background and Policy Context.....	4
1.1 DEIS - 2005 Action Plan.....	4
1.2 Learning from DEIS	5
1.3 Policy Context for the DEIS Review.....	7
1.4 Other Policy Developments	10
Chapter 2 - Structure of DEIS Review Process.....	12
2.1 Review Structure.....	12
2.2 DEIS Review Advisory Group.....	13
2.3 DEIS Review Inter-Departmental Group	14
2.4 DEIS Review Technical Working Group.....	14
2.5 Resources provided to schools under the current DEIS Programme.....	15
2.6 Current DEIS Expenditure	17
Chapter 3 - Development of a New Identification Process for Schools – Technical Group	18
3.1 Report of the Technical Working Group	18
3.2 Moving to a New Identification Process	21
3.3 Outcome of Exploratory Analysis.....	28
3.4 Overview of Proposed Methodology for the Identification Process	29
3.5 Supporting the Assessment Model Database	36
3.6 Peer Review of the Process.....	36
3.7 Communications	36
Chapter 4 - Report of the DES Advisory Group on the School Support Programme	38
4.1 Introduction	38
4.2 Implementation of the 2005 DEIS Action Plan – some issues	39
4.3 DEIS Review Advisory Group.....	39
4.4 Policy Background.....	40
4.5 Interim Changes to School Support Programme	40
4.6 Stakeholder Consultation	41
4.7 Development of a new School Support Programme Framework	45
4.8 Recommendations of the Advisory Group.....	46
4.9 Resource Allocation	76
4.10 Supports for DEIS Schools/Other measures	77
4.11 Data.....	77
4.12 Monitoring and Evaluation	78
Chapter 5 - Report of the Inter-Departmental Group	79
5.1 Cross Departmental and Interagency Collaboration – Introduction	79
5.2 Evaluation of external inputs to the SSP.....	80
5.3 View of external inputs from stakeholder consultations.....	80

5.4	National Policy Framework for Children & Young People 2014-2020	81
5.5	Individual Departmental inputs – background, discussion and recommendations	83
5.6	Integrated Service Delivery	108
5.7	Resource Allocation	108
	Appendix 1 – DES Commitments under Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (BOBF)	119
	Appendix 2 – Information on the HP Index.....	124
	Appendix 3 - Possible Additional Variables compiled by SIU	129
	Appendix 4 - List of Groups and Individuals involved in Stakeholder Consultation.....	133

Executive Summary

DEIS – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools, the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion, which was published in 2005, is the Department of Education and Skills (DES) main policy initiative to tackle educational disadvantage.

A review of the DEIS programme was initiated in 2015, following the publication of the DES commissioned ESRI Report entitled *Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS*. The objective of this review was to develop

- a new methodology for the identification of schools and,
- a renewed framework of support for schools to address educational disadvantage

This work was to be carried out in the context of the learning from evaluations of DEIS to date and relevant policy and other changes since its introduction in 2005.

The review has examined all aspects of DEIS, including the range and impact of different elements of the supports provided under DEIS, the potential for innovation within and between schools and the scope for increased integration of services provided by other Departments and Agencies in order to improve the effectiveness of the range of interventions deployed.

The review process also undertook a comprehensive examination of the options available to allow for the development of an improved methodology for the assessment of schools' levels of disadvantage. The focus in this process was to ensure an accurate, robust, responsive and independent assessment framework.

The review process was informed by extensive engagement with the education partners and other key stakeholders, including workshops with academics and practitioners, to explore the potential for innovation in future interventions in schools which cater for pupils at highest risk of educational disadvantage and of not reaching their full potential by virtue of their socio-economic circumstances.

Overview – DEIS Review Report

Chapter 1 – Introduction – Background and Policy Context

This chapter sets out the background and overall objectives of the DEIS Plan Action Plan published in 2005, the learning from the various evaluations that have been conducted to date, and the Government policies which feed into and frame the current Review of DEIS.

Chapter 2 – Structure of 2015 DEIS Review Process

This chapter outlines the structure of the Review Process including the various Groups involved, their terms of reference and provides details of the resources currently available to DEIS schools.

Chapter 3 – Development of a new Identification Process for Schools – Technical Group

This chapter describes the design of the original process to identify schools for inclusion in DEIS, the developments in data and data collection since 2005 and the potential to move towards a new methodology for the assessment of schools for inclusion in a new programme to tackle educational disadvantage. Details of the development of this new methodology and the continuing work required to refine and improve it are also outlined.

Chapter 4 – Report of the Advisory Group on the School Support Programme

This chapter sets out the various supports available under the current School Support Programme (SSP), the feedback received from comprehensive consultation with relevant stakeholders; consideration of existing and new supports and resources to best tackle educational disadvantage and the Group's recommendations in relation to these.

Chapter 5 – Report of the Inter-Departmental Group

This chapter focuses on Cross- Departmental and Interagency collaboration and contains a review of individual Departmental inputs into the existing SSP and the potential for further input and collaboration in other areas, and sets out the Group's recommendations to secure improved integration of service delivery to bring about better educational outcomes for children.

Chapter 6 –Key findings and Recommendations

This contains an overall summary of the main findings of the Report together with a summary of the key recommendations as outlined by the Groups involved in the Review.

The key recommendations contained in this Review Report are intended to inform the development of a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion. The new Plan will set out the Department's vision for future interventions in the critical area of educational disadvantage and build upon what has already been achieved by schools since the introduction of DEIS in 2005.

Chapter 1 - Introduction - Background and Policy Context

1.1 DEIS - 2005 Action Plan

DEIS – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools, the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion published in May 2005, is the main policy initiative of the Department of Education and Skills to tackle educational disadvantage.

The Action Plan focuses on addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities from pre-school through second-level education (3-18 years), and is one element of a continuum of interventions, which includes second-chance education and training, access measures to support increased participation by under-represented groups in further and higher education and the ongoing development of provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Its frame of reference is based on the definition of ‘educational disadvantage’ contained in the Education Act 1998: “... *the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools*” and it is grounded on the following principles:

- That every child and young person deserves an equal chance to access, participate in, and benefit from education;
- Every person should have the opportunity to reach his or her full educational potential for personal, social and economic reasons, and
- Education is a critical factor in promoting social inclusion and economic development.

The key objective of the Plan was to draw together the range of interventions at that time to tackle educational disadvantage and build on them within an overarching programme to provide a more integrated and effective range of educational inclusion supports to schools.

The core elements of the Plan comprised:

- A standardised system for identifying and regularly reviewing, levels of disadvantage in schools;
- A new integrated School Support Programme to bring together and build upon existing interventions for schools and school clusters/communities with a concentrated level of educational disadvantage – taking account of the differences between urban and rural disadvantage in targeting actions under the programme.

Following an identification and analysis process managed by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills (DES), 670 primary and 203 post primary schools, representing approximately 20% of all schools, were selected for inclusion in

a School Support Programme under which schools and school clusters/communities were allocated supplementary resources and supports on a phased basis, in accordance with their level of concentration of disadvantage. Primary schools were further ranked as between urban and rural schools with urban schools categorized as Urban Band 1 and Urban Band 2 with the former representing those schools with the highest concentration of disadvantage.

Primary		Post Primary	
Urban Band 1	197	Vocational	127
Urban Band 2	141	Voluntary Secondary	50
Rural	332	Community & Comprehensive	26
Total:	670	Total:	203

The identification and analysis process was underpinned by ERC Research (Sofroniou, Archer and Weir (2004)¹) which found strong evidence for the proposition that the disadvantage associated with poverty and social exclusion assumes a multiplier effect when large numbers of pupils in a schools are from a similar disadvantaged background (the “social context effect”).

In terms of timing, the DEIS Action Plan was published in May 2005 and phased implementation of the Plan began in the 2006/7 school year. A further identification process was planned for the 2009/10 school year and thereafter on a three year cyclical basis in line with a three year planning cycle proposed for schools participating in the SSP.

While all schools were subject to budget cuts introduced from 2009 as a result of the financial crisis, efforts were made to limit the impact of these cuts on additional resources available to schools participating in the SSP. Key elements of the SSP including Home School Community Liaison services (HSCL), literacy and numeracy supports and teacher professional development measures, were maintained, whereas a number of other key actions under the Action Plan were delayed or did not proceed. In particular, the planned 2009/10 identification and analysis process did not take place and no new schools were added to the SSP after September 2009.

Notwithstanding these setbacks, considerable progress was made in areas such as school planning, and pupil literacy and numeracy outcomes. Developments in these areas were noted in a series of evaluation reports produced by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) and the DES Inspectorate. Improved attendance and retention rates have also been recorded in DES and NEWB/Tusla annual reports.

1.2 Learning from DEIS

The 2011 Programme for Government committed to the development of new initiatives to deliver better outcomes for students in disadvantaged areas and to examine how to increase the effectiveness of existing expenditure on educational disadvantage.

¹ Sofroniou, N., Archer, P., & Weir, S. (2004). An analysis of the association between socioeconomic context, gender, and achievement. *Irish Journal of Education*, 35, 58-72.

Joint DES-ERC Research Seminar

In May 2014, a Joint DES/ERC Research Seminar '*Learning from DEIS*' – was held at which researchers from the ERC and the DES Inspectorate and Statistics Section presented published research to an audience of DEIS schools and other education partners. At the Seminar, then Minister for Education and Skills Ruairí Quinn TD announced plans 'to commission one further piece of research in relation to DEIS, to provide recommendations for a renewal of policy in relation to educational disadvantage, including DEIS'. The overall objective of this project was to produce a consolidated report on the DEIS programme incorporating information in relation to the various inputs, processes and educational outcomes contained in the findings from the DEIS research conducted to date. In order to provide a wider context, the report would also review other related Irish and international research on educational disadvantage together with examples of best practice.

ESRI Report

Published in April 2015, the DES commissioned ESRI Report entitled *Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS*, provided the following key findings and policy messages in terms of the future delivery of interventions to support pupils at risk of not reaching their full potential by virtue of their socio-economic background. The following is a summary of these findings and the policy implications derived from those findings:

- The ESRI noted that evaluations by the Educational Research Centre and the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills point to an improvement over time in planning for teaching and learning and in setting targets for achievement in DEIS schools.
- "Evaluations of primary DEIS schools have indicated an increase in reading and mathematics test scores over time, with a greater increase for reading than mathematics. Although in the context of the *2014 National Assessments of English Reading and Mathematics*, which shows an improvement in reading and maths scores across *all* primary schools, this means that DEIS schools have kept pace with improvements in other schools, but the gap in achievement has not narrowed."
- "The most disadvantaged schools, urban Band 1 primary schools, are found to have much lower reading and mathematics scores on average as well as a higher concentration of students with very low test scores." Students in rural DEIS schools in some cases perform as well as urban non-DEIS and higher than rural non-DEIS schools in second class mathematics, but one point lower than urban and rural non-DEIS schools in second class English. At sixth class they perform better than all other schools in mathematics and reading².
- Absenteeism rates have declined over time in urban band 1 primary schools;
- The gap between DEIS and non-DEIS schools in the proportion of students completing junior and senior cycle has narrowed over time having reduced from 8% for the 1995 student cohort to 3% for the 2009 cohort.
- At post-primary level, there has been a slight narrowing of the gap in overall Junior Certificate grades between DEIS and non-DEIS schools.

² The Report notes that these findings should be interpreted with some caution due to the small number of DEIS schools involved.

The ESRI identified the following policy implications arising from their findings:

- The continuing concentration of disadvantage in DEIS schools, especially urban band 1 primary schools, highlights the need for continued supports for such schools. Further debate is merited on the appropriate scale of funding, particularly for urban band 1 schools, given the greater complexity of need.
- There is also a case for a degree of tapering of resourcing for schools rather than the current 'cut-off'.
- Continuing challenges in the area of mathematics, highlighting the need to focus on numeracy skills in future provision.
- Research points to a number of ways of further enhancing practice in DEIS schools through changes in the use of ability grouping and enhancing the quality of teacher-student interaction.
- The lack of data on the social profile of individual students makes it difficult to measure the achievement gap specifically for disadvantaged students, and to capture the additional effect of the concentration of disadvantage in a school on achievement.

The full ESRI Report is available at <http://www.esri.ie/publications/learning-from-the-evaluation-of-deis/>

1.3 Policy Context for the DEIS Review

The following key policy documents are particularly relevant to the DEIS review and frame the context in which a New Action Plan for Educational Inclusion is formulated:

The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020 - Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (BOBF)

Specific actions relating to educational disadvantage within the five national outcomes of BOBF include:

- The adoption of strategies to strengthen transitions through the educational system;
- Supporting the development of interdisciplinary and inter-professional training programmes which encourage leadership and collaboration for professionals working with children and young people across the range of service delivery;
- Building on existing good practice around clustering of schools to enable better access to educational supports and encourage greater connections between schools, and community and State services;
- Addressing information-sharing issues across sectors and strengthen the integration of data systems, including, where appropriate, to support greater use of data to inform policy, planning and service development;
- Ensuring that resource allocation is based on current evidence of need and directed towards services and programmes that have evidence of effectiveness in improving outcomes.
- Strengthening the connections between pre-school and infant classes at primary level, including through the roll-out of Aistear and Síolta.

- Implementing strategies to improve school engagement and reduce suspensions, expulsions and early school leaving;
- Implementing the Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life Strategy.
- Providing opportunities for early school leavers to engage with further education and training;
- Strengthening social inclusion measures and re-invigorating efforts to improve educational outcomes among particular groups;
- Implementing and monitoring the National Travellers/Roma Integration Strategy, with a particular focus on the engagement of Roma in education.

See [Appendix 1 –DES Commitments under Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures \(BOBF\)](#) for further details

The Programme for a Partnership Government 2016

The Programme for a Partnership Government 2016 recognises that *“Education is the key to giving every child an equal chance in life and our ambition is that every child has an opportunity to participate in creating and sharing new wealth for our country”*.

Specific programme for Government commitments/actions related to educational disadvantage include:

- Publication of a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion within 12 months with particular focus on DEIS schools. Consideration to be given to a more broad-based package of measures which encompasses all aspects of education which are impacted by disadvantage (e.g. summer programmes);
- Smaller classes, for junior and senior infants in particular, are proven to increase pupil achievement, especially for disadvantaged children;
- Publication of a new School Completion Strategy to further improve school completion rates;
- Increasing mandatory schooling to age 17;
- Improving school attendance monitoring systems to address poor attendance within some families;
- Improved transitions to work or further education for young school leavers;
- Provision of relevant educational programmes, specifically aimed at early leavers and second chance learners should be made available throughout the year, on a modular basis;
- Improving services and increasing supports for people with disabilities, particularly for early assessment and intervention for children with special needs – with a particular focus on supports at key transition points – going to school and progressing to further training or education;
- Establishing a new in-school speech and language service to support young children as part of a more integrated support system;

- Investment in additional resources in the National Educational Psychologists Service to ensure earlier intervention and access for young children and teenagers – appoint additional NEPS psychologists to bring the total to 238 by 2021;
- Establishment of a new Schools Excellence Fund to reward new approaches – with priority for proposals to tackle educational disadvantage.

The Action Plan for Education – 2016 – 2019

Published in September 2016, the Action Plan sets out the strategic direction and goals of the Department of Education and Skills for the education system and has a strong focus on provision for disadvantaged students through harnessing education to break down barriers for groups at risk of exclusion.

The Plan sets out five high level Goals, one of which is to improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs. The Plan notes that, while significant progress has been made in advancing equity and equality, significant challenges remain. The publication of a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion is central to the provision of supports and resources to schools catering for concentrated levels of disadvantaged pupils. Among the actions directly related to tackling educational disadvantage are:

- Publication of a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion in Q4 of 2016.
- Support the implementation of Aistear and Siolta.
- Support the development of the workforce within the early year’s sector.
- Implement the national programme of early year’s education – focused inspection (EYEI).
- Continue to improve retention rates at second level in DEIS Schools.
- Improve performance in Literacy and Numeracy in DEIS schools.
- Increase participation in Initial Teacher Education by access target groups.
- Roll out of Incredible Years Teacher Programme and FRIENDS programmes to all DEIS schools as resources permit.
- Engage directly with disadvantaged communities to promote the benefits of higher education – and specifically increasing the number of Travellers in higher education.
- Increase financial supports for post-graduate students with a particular focus on those from low income households.
- Develop a cohesive life-course approach to tackling educational disadvantage, with a policy statement on interaction between measures to tackle educational disadvantage across the education continuum.

Also relevant to the Review process is the life cycle approach in the **National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, 2007-2016** and the European Commission’s Recommendation on ‘Investing in Children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage’, as part of the Social Investment Package.

Implementation of many of these commitments and actions requires a high level of cross-Government and interagency collaboration and coordination and is a feature of a number of the key recommendations of the DEIS Review process.

1.4 Other Policy Developments

There have been significant policy developments in the Department of Education and Skills and elsewhere, which have had an impact on the education system as a whole, including in DEIS schools. These include:

- The Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy, 2006.
- The transfer of HSCL and SCP from the DES to the NEWB in 2009 to facilitate the development of an integrated service delivery model for educational welfare provision.
- The subsequent transfer of functions under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 to the Minister of Children & Youth Affairs including the NEWB and its integrated education services.
- Intercultural Education Strategy 2010.
- The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme, introduced in 2010.
- The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020.
- Introduction of School Self Evaluation throughout the school system, 2012.
- Introduction of Anti-Bullying Procedures, 2013.
- The establishment of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), and the Special Education Support Service (SESS).
- The introduction of a General Allocation Model for all primary schools, from 2005 onwards and the development of a system of general allocation for post primary schools for allocation of support for pupils with High Incidence Special Educational Needs.
- The provision of very significant additional special educational needs resources for schools, including a 76% increase in the number of Special Educational Needs Assistants (SNAs) in the last 11 years, a 41% increase in resource teachers since 2011 and an increase of over 100% in the number of special classes from 2011 - 2016.

Various other policies are currently under development within the Department, which will also affect DEIS schools on implementation. These include:

- the development of a new Inclusion Support Service, which will assist schools in supporting children with special education needs and provide an integrated service within the NCSE including the Special Education Support Service (SESS), the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) and the Visiting Teacher Service for children who are deaf/hard of hearing and for children who are blind/visually impaired (VTHVI service).
- the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016, which intends to address issues such as the publication of school enrolment policies, enrolment waiting lists, introduction

of annual enrolment structures, and increased transparency and fairness in admissions for pupils and their parents.

- the requirement for every school to have a Parent and Student Charter according to principles set down in legislation that will set a national standard. Changing how schools engage with, listen and respond to parent and student concerns will be an important part of the Charter.
- the reform of the Junior Cycle, which is currently underway. This reform places the student at the centre of the learning process and envisages a modernised curriculum across all subjects.

Chapter 2 - Structure of DEIS Review Process

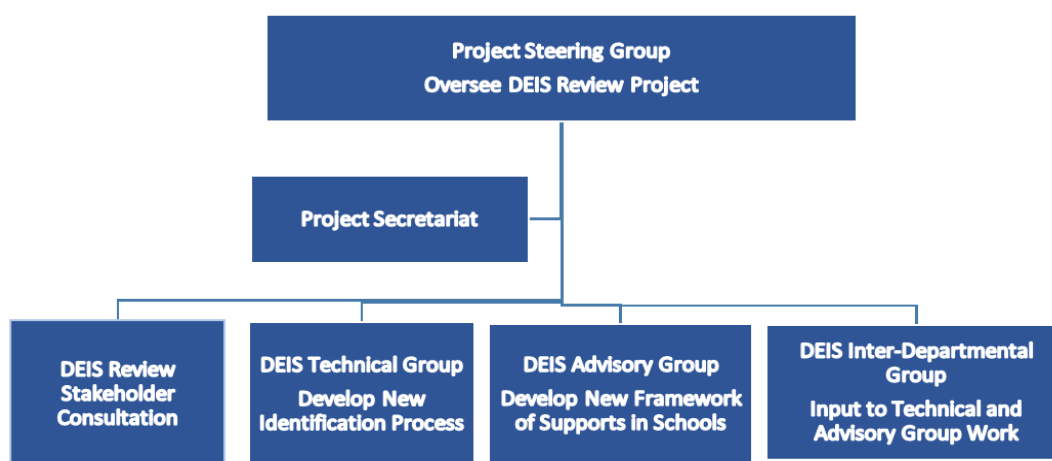
Following the publication of Learning from DEIS in April 2015, the Minister for Education and Skills Jan O Sullivan TD announced a process to review the DEIS Action Plan.

The objective of the review is to develop a new methodology for the identification of schools and a renewed framework of support for schools to address educational disadvantage in the context of learning from the DEIS programme to date and relevant policy and other changes since its introduction in 2005.

The timeline for the project envisages the publication of the revised Plan by the end of 2016 and the implementation of same from the beginning of the 2017/18 school year.

2.1 Review Structure

The Review has been undertaken within the following structure:



A **Project Steering Group** was established to oversee the Review process. Given the broad range of activities and responsibilities involved in the project, membership of this group includes members of the Department's Management Board with key responsibilities in relevant areas of provision. The group was assigned a governance and approval role to ensure delivery of the project.

A **Technical Working Group** was established to consider appropriate eligibility criteria to identify the level of need in schools and an appropriate methodology for the development of a new assessment framework.

The **DEIS Advisory Group** was established to review the current School Support Programme (SSP) and drawing together the outcomes from the various consultation processes with stakeholders, and proposals made by the Interdepartmental and Advisory Groups to inform a future framework of supports in schools.

An **Inter-Departmental Group**, involving the Departments of **Social Protection, Health, Children & Youth Affairs and Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government** was

established to examine current and potential future inputs to DEIS, to develop a framework for interdepartmental and inter-agency links and to ensure greater cohesion and cross-sectoral cooperation for future delivery of initiatives catering for those at risk of educational disadvantage.

Stakeholder engagement included:

- Invited submissions from education partners in June 2015.
- Participation in INTO/St Patrick's College Educational Disadvantage Seminar-Dec 2015.
- A follow-up education partners forum on 23rd May 2016.
- Engagement with organisations delivering interventions under the PEIP/ABC programme³ in DEIS schools.
- Engagement with the Community & Voluntary Pillar via the BOBF Advisory Council.
- Engagement with EU colleagues through the work of the EU Schools Policy Working Group on Early School Leaving.
- Engagement with education academics and practitioners in July and September 2016.
- Engagement with pupils on their experience of DEIS supports.

Details of the terms of Reference and membership of each of the review groups are as follows:

2.2 DEIS Review Advisory Group

Terms of Reference

- 1.** Review the DEIS School Support Programme in the context of available evaluations and analysis of the implementation of the DEIS Programme to date, consultations with education partners and other stakeholders.
- 2.** Liaise with the DEIS Technical Working Group and the Inter Departmental Working Group on the development of eligibility criteria for a new DEIS identification process.
- 3.** Liaise with the IDG to include proposals made by other Government Departments and Agencies in overall consideration for supports.
- 4.** Make recommendations for a new framework of supports for schools resulting from consideration of all outputs from the IDG and Consultancy Forum.
- 5.** Make recommendations on an accompanying Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, including, where appropriate, relationship protocols and service level agreements with other Government Departments and agencies and other service providers.

Membership:

- DES Social Inclusion Unit (Chair)
- DES Business Units
- DES Inspectorate

³ Prevention and Early Intervention Programme/Area Based Childhood Programme co-funded by DCYA and Atlantic Philanthropies

2.3 DEIS Review Inter-Departmental Group

Terms of Reference

1. Review reports from relevant Departments and Agencies on their current inputs to the DEIS School Support Programme in general and in the context of evaluations and analysis of such programmes to date including proposals for new or amended inputs.
2. Work in tandem with other working groups involved in the review/assessment of measures to combat educational disadvantage and contribute strategic oversight in terms of the alignment of policy development, to ensure a whole-of government approach to supporting DEIS schools and the communities they serve.
3. Develop a framework for inter-departmental and inter-agency links with a view to ensuring greater cohesion and cross-sectoral cooperation for future delivery of initiatives catering to those at risk of educational disadvantage.
4. Make recommendations to the DEIS Advisory Group on elements for inclusion in the new SSP programme.
5. Meet at a minimum, every 3 months, or more frequently with the agreement of the members, if required.

Membership:

- The Department of Education and Skills (Chair)
- The Department of Children and Youth Affairs
- The Department of Social Protection
- The Department of Health
- The Department of the Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (formerly the Dept. of Environment, Community and Local Government)

2.4 DEIS Review Technical Working Group

Terms of Reference:

1. Consider what eligibility criteria are now appropriate to re-identify the level of need in schools.
2. Examine all available data sources in order to determine an appropriate methodology for the development of a new assessment framework.
3. The assessment framework for the identification of schools for DEIS should include a review of all schools as part of the current review and options to cater for ongoing identification of newly established schools, including schools established from the amalgamation of two or more schools.
4. Develop a new identification process to produce a ranking of all schools, primary and post primary based on their assessed level of disadvantage for the purpose of allocation of resources.
5. Develop a methodology for future use in a DEIS identification process to assess new schools including schools established by the amalgamation of existing schools.
6. In the event that a survey of schools is required, due to the absence of relevant/authenticated data sources, this group will also:

- advise on the questionnaire to issue to principals to assess the schools level of educational disadvantage.
- advise how the data returned should be employed to generate a rank order of schools based on levels of disadvantage advise on quality proofing the rank order of schools.

Membership

- DES Social Inclusion Unit (Chair)
- DES Inspectorate;
- DES Statistics Section;
- DES Planning and Building Unit - Forward Planning Section;
- DES Special Education Section
- Educational Research Centre.

2.5 Resources provided to schools under the current DEIS Programme

There are 825 schools participating in the DEIS Programme in the 2016/17 school year – 640 Primary schools of which 328 are in urban areas (190 Band 1 and 138 Band 2), 312 in rural areas, and 185 Post Primary schools.

Resources for Urban Band 1 Schools

- Preferential pupil teacher ratio of 20:1 in junior schools, 22:1 in vertical schools and 24:1 in senior schools (the current ratio in non-DEIS schools is 27:1)

Resources for Urban Band 1 and Band 2 Schools

- The appointment of an Administrative Principal on a more favourable pupil enrolment threshold (Band 1 schools - 116 pupils, Band 2 schools 145 pupils) than non-DEIS schools (177)
- Access to Home/School/Community Liaison (HSCL) services
- Access to range of supports under Tusla's School Completion Programme (SCP)
- Access to additional literacy/numeracy supports
- Access to transfer programmes

Resources for Urban Band 1, Band 2 and DEIS Rural schools

- Additional funding based on level of disadvantage
- Additional funding under School Books Grant Scheme
- Access to DSP Schools Meals Programme
- Access to school planning supports
- Access to a range of professional development supports

Resources for DEIS Post-Primary schools

- Enhanced staffing schedule based on a pupil teacher ratio of 18.25:1 (compared to non-DEIS ratio of 19:1)
- Additional funding based on level of disadvantage
- Access to Home School Community Liaison services

- Access to DSP Schools Meals Programme
- Access to range of supports under Tusla's School Completion Programme
- Access to Junior Certificate Schools Programme
- Access to Leaving Certificate Applied Programme
- Access to school planning supports
- Access to a range of professional development supports
- Additional funding under School Books Grant Scheme

2.6 Current DEIS Expenditure

DEIS Expenditure 2015		
Service	Description	2015 €m
Primary Staffing	Additional Teacher Allocation	39.42
	HSCCL Teachers	13.6
	Support Teacher posts	2.46
Primary Grants	Additional School Book Grant	1.08
	DEIS Grant	10.9
Post Primary Staffing	HSCCL Teachers	11.3
	Additional Teacher Allocation	9.77
Post Primary Grants	Additional School Book Grant	1.01
	DEIS Grant	3.6
Teacher Education Literacy & Numeracy	DEIS Literacy & Numeracy Initiatives (including Reading Recovery, JSCP Literacy strategy, Library Project)	4.4
Evaluation/Research	Educational Research Centre & ESRI	0.081
TOTAL		97.62
External DEIS Supports	School Completion Programme (Dept of Children and Youth Affairs)	24.76
	School Meals (Dept. of Social Protection) Full Cost of Scheme	38.8 ⁴
		63.56
Overall Total		161.18

⁴ Refers to full programme cost, not just cost for provision in DEIS schools

Chapter 3 - Development of a New Identification Process for Schools – Technical Group

3.1 Report of the Technical Working Group

Background

Schemes and programmes to combat educational disadvantage have been included in education provision since the mid-1980s. A number of broad strengths and weaknesses were identified from earlier educational inclusion measures including the lack of a standardised system for identifying levels of disadvantage in schools.

One of the core elements of the 2005 DEIS Action Plan was to put in place a standardised system for identifying, and regularly reviewing, levels of educational disadvantage and to allocate resources to schools through its School Support Programme (SSP) to support those children and young people identified as being most in need of support.

2005 DEIS Identification Process

Two separate approaches were adopted in the 2005 process for the assessment of schools across the Primary and Post Primary sectors. At Primary level a survey of school Principals was used while at Post-Primary, a combination of data from the DES Post-Primary Pupils Database, including school-level retention rates, together with exam achievement data and exam fee waiver data, which indicated that students had a medical card, from the State Examinations Commission (SEC) was used. The objective of both methods was to capture the socio-economic variables that collectively best predict the risk of educational disadvantage. This approach was guided by the definition of disadvantage in the Education Act 1998, which makes the link between learning outcomes and social and economic factors:

“Section 2 – ‘educational disadvantage’ means the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools”

The variables used for **Primary Schools**, which were based on information provided by School Principals in the Survey were:

- % unemployment
- % local authority accommodation
- % lone parenthood
- % Travellers
- % large families (5 or more children)
- % pupils eligible for free books

The variables used at **Post-Primary** level were:

- Medical card data for Junior Certificate candidates (including Junior Certificate School Programme candidates) in the years 2002, 2003 and 2004 based on candidate applications to the State Examinations Commission seeking exemption from exam fees. (This data is subject to a spot-check of a limited number of applications, in the order of 10%, by the SEC)
- Junior Certificate retention rates by school for the 1995, 1996 and 1997 school entry cohorts
- Junior Certificate exam results aggregated to school level (expressed as an OPS – "Overall Performance Scale" - score). This was based on each student's performance in the seven subjects in which s/he performed best aggregated to school level for the 2002 and 2003 examination cohorts
- Leaving Certificate retention rates by school for the 1995, 1996 and 1997 school entry cohorts

Levels of disadvantage in post primary schools were assessed by the Educational Research Centre using the combined centralised data from DES & SEC and primary schools were requested to complete a survey by the Educational Research Centre (ERC). Special schools⁵ were excluded.

The information collected was then analysed to provide a rank order of all schools, according to a school's relative level of disadvantage against all other schools. The analysis was conducted by the ERC and verified, based on local knowledge, by the DES Regional Office Network and the Inspectorate. Schools deemed to have the highest levels of disadvantage were invited to participate in the School Support Programme and avail of a range of supports to address educational disadvantage. A follow-up Appeals process resulted in the inclusion of a further number of schools to the Programme.

This approach, which was managed by the ERC on behalf of the Department, is in line with international best practice and employed the most appropriate data sources available at that time. It was extremely resource intensive, both for participating primary schools and in terms of the quality assurance processes required, which were co-ordinated by the Department's Regional Office network and the Inspectorate.

A criticism by some schools of the 2005 process was a perceived lack of objectivity in the identification process and the fact that it was static one, providing only a point in time snapshot of the social context of a school, which was not readily repeatable. While the 2005 Action Plan provided for regular review, this did not occur, except for a small number of individual new schools or schools established by amalgamation, which were assessed for inclusion in DEIS up to 2009. Since then no schools have been assessed for inclusion in the programme.

⁵ Special Schools are recognised schools which provide specialist education for children with disabilities or special educational needs and receive specific provision for this purpose.

In summary, while the approach in 2005 was generally deemed to have accurately identified schools with the highest levels of disadvantage, it had a number of perceived shortcomings including:

- A perception that because the primary and post primary sectors were assessed differently that they were not treated equally.
- Its inflexibility and lack of capacity for ongoing assessment to capture demographic changes in school populations.
- While a limited number of schools continued to be assessed up to 2009, the assessment was on the basis of disadvantage relative to the position of other schools at an earlier point in time (2006).
- A perception that, at post primary level, the identification process may have penalised schools for doing well even though their cohort of pupil continued to be from poorer/disadvantaged backgrounds (Research Series No 6, ESRI 2009).
- The perceived subjectivity of a survey at primary level as completed by school Principals based on their personal knowledge of the school community, in particular the socio economic status of individual families.

2015/16 Work undertaken by the Technical Working Group

The Technical Working Group established under the current Review process was given the following brief:

- to consider relevant eligibility criteria for identification of levels of disadvantage in schools and to examine currently available data sources in order to determine an appropriate methodology for the development of a new assessment framework with options to cater for ongoing identification of newly established schools, including schools established by amalgamation of existing schools.

The ERC was included in the Group in view of its key role in the 2005 assessment process and its extensive research background in the area of educational disadvantage, including the ongoing evaluation of the implementation of the School Support Programme. The DES Inspectorate was included in the Group in view of its overall oversight role in teaching and learning in schools, and its evaluation work in relation to school planning in the current programme.

The work of the Technical Working Group included a review of the identification methodology used in 2005/6, and its relevance today; new options made possible by developments in data sources both internal to DES and external publically available data; consideration of the outcome of stakeholder consultations; and the input of additional technical expertise commissioned by the Group.

Consultation Process

Engagement with stakeholders and submissions received during the DEIS Review process indicated clear consensus on the need for a new approach to the arrangements for identifying

schools. There is a strong demand for a process that is seen to be fairer than that conducted in 2005 and which includes the capacity to be more responsive to demographic change within individual schools.

The main issues highlighted in extensive stakeholder consultation with education partners, academics and practitioners were:

- Overall a strong demand for an open, transparent assessment process, which is consistent across both sectors with the capacity for ongoing assessment and responsiveness to changing demographics in schools.
- The survey approach at primary level places an additional administrative burden on schools and school Principals.
- It was considered unfair to expect schools/school Principals, to gather sensitive socioeconomic data on its school community, particularly in the context of the changing demographics in schools. This was viewed as critical given that the social context is a key component in the needs analysis for DEIS.
- A new approach needs to be more responsive to ongoing changes in school communities to ensure that schools can respond more quickly to identify additional educational needs.
- Pupil achievement data should not be used as part of the identification process, but is appropriate to the measurement of educational outcomes.
- In relation to using educational outcomes as a means of identifying schools, outcomes achieved due directly to the input of specific additional resources and supports should not be used as a means to remove these supports from schools. If this occurred it could result in the removal of supports from a school on the basis of effective use of their additional resources while a school who has not made effective use of its additional resources is rewarded (i.e. perception of penalising success while rewarding failure).
- The need to resolve current anomalies whereby schools with the same or similar pupil cohorts have different resource allocations under DEIS including anomalies around feeder schools (e.g. where girls and boys attend single sex primary schools in the same area with one having DEIS status and one not).
- The need to address the issues around socioeconomic disadvantage which are particular to rural schools need to be considered.
- A number of stakeholders referred to the potential for the HP Pobal Deprivation Index (HP Index)⁶ to be used in the identification of schools – noting in particular its use by schools participating in the DCYA Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme.

3.2 Moving to a New Identification Process

Repeating the 2005 Approach?

At the outset, the Technical Working Group examined the option of repeating the process of assessment used in 2005 to identify schools by way of:

⁶ Pobal HP Deprivation Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012).

- a survey of school Principals at primary level,
- using school and exam data for post-primary schools,

It was noted that:

- this methodology had been used in 2014 in the context of the development of the new Special Educational Needs Resource Allocation Model.
- it could be carried out within the timeline of the project and provide current school-based data for analysis.
- it is a reasonable approach given that it is consistent with the assessment methodology used for the current DEIS programme and more recently for the SEN Resource Allocation Model.

However, in considering this option it was also necessary to take into account the challenges already set out above, in relation to:

- The additional administrative burden on schools.
- The difficulty for schools in compiling accurate personal data for pupils (given the observed increase in the number of Principals skipping key socio economic related items in the returns for the SEN New Model Survey).
- Resources previously allocated to a quality assurance process by the DES Regional Office Directorate and the Inspectorate are no longer available.
- The capacity to assess new and amalgamated schools into the future would continue to be difficult.

Use of Centrally Held Data – Policy Context

The approach in Ireland to the use of centralised data has evolved significantly in recent years. A number of strategic Government initiatives framed discussions and sent a clear signal to public sector organisations that their data is an important and valuable resource that must be carefully managed, exploited and shared to facilitate public sector reform, more efficient service delivery and economic growth. The most significant of these are:

- The Public Service Reform Plan 2014-2016 emphasises the need for a focus on evidence based longer-term and strategic policy making and on developing greater integration within the Public Service. The Plan contains an action to ‘improve data use and sharing, including Open Data’ and targets improved public services through the Data Sharing and Governance legislation and the establishment of the Open Data Governance Board in October 2015 responsible to lead and drive implementation of Open Data in Ireland;
- The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020 – Better Outcomes Brighter Futures has specific actions relating to supporting greater use of data to inform policy, planning and service development across sectors;
- The Civil Service Renewal Plan 2014 recognises data as a valuable asset to the civil service but acknowledges that improvements must be made to the collection, management and sharing of data in order to “increase efficiency”;

- The National Statistics Board in its Strategic Priorities for Official Statistics 2015 – 2020 sets out its vision for an Irish Statistical System (ISS) involving the use of data from across the entire public sector to produce better official statistics and the requirement for the creation of a National Data Infrastructure (NDI) involving the consistent use of permanent unique identifiers on public data sources to enable linkage of data sets and creation of a system of integrated base registers for statistical purposes;
- The General Scheme of a Bill on Data Sharing and Governance has been approved by Government and legal drafting of the Bill is expected to commence by end 2016. The Bill is part of a series of actions to improve data sharing in the Public Service to ensure more effective data sharing between public bodies, which is designed to yield substantial benefits to all users of public services. Important issues in terms of data protection, and data quality and integrity will also be addressed in the Bill; check current status

These developments have informed the Technical Working Group discussions and decision making, and underpin the development of a new approach to the identification of schools.

Potential of Centrally held Data

Developments since 2005 in the development of centrally held data provide significant opportunities to develop a more standardised and responsive model for assessing schools and ensuring more accurate targeting of resources to combat educational disadvantage.

The datasets now available and which were considered by the Technical Working Group to assist with the development of a new identification methodology include:

- The development of the DES Primary Online Database (POD) means that since mid-2016 individual pupil data at primary level is now available to the DES;
- The Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD) continues to provide individual pupil data at post-primary level to the DES;
- DES geo-mapping capacity, developed by the Department's Planning and Building Unit for school planning purposes;
- Improved CSO data from the Census of Population means that socio-economic data is now available on both an individual level, and for Small Area of Population(SAP⁷); <http://www.cso.ie/en/census/census2011smallareapopulationstatistics.aspx/>
- The development of the Pobal HP Deprivation Index (HP Index) - a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area using data compiled from the CSO National Census. Research conducted by the Technical Working Group has identified a significant correlation between the HP index and educational outcomes, particularly in urban areas. The index provides a statistical tool for the identification of geographic areas where high levels of disadvantage represent a high risk of educational disadvantage. <http://trutzhaase.eu/deprivation-index/the-2011-pobal-hp-deprivation-index-for-small-areas/>

⁷ The Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) of the 2011 Census of Population has been released at the level of 18,488 Small Areas (SAs) – In this new census geography, SAs are standardised in size, with a minimum of 50 households and a mean of just under 100, thus effectively providing street-level information on the Irish population. To protect confidentiality of individuals and households the CSO decided that no data should be disclosed where a SA comprises less than 50 households.

- The All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) mapping resources are Public Good information tools aimed at improving evidence informed planning in Ireland. Using Census data, the various modules are designed to provide support and assistance in understanding the dynamics of local areas, counties, regions and the cross-border area of Ireland. AIRO mapping resources are separated into two sections - Census Mapping and specific AIRO Research Themes. Working in close collaboration with the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) AIRO has developed mapping tools for the island of Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and every regional and local authority across the island. The mapping viewer for Northern Ireland is based on a small selection of census outputs from the Northern Ireland Census 2011. ⁸The benefits that accrue from the availability of these data sources include:
 - The possibility of conducting analysis using objective and independent data sources i.e.
 - POD & PPOD data provided by parents and schools and updated annually;
 - Small Areas Population Statistics derived from the National Census collection and updated every five years;
 - Analysis which is consistent across the Primary and Post-Primary Sectors;
 - POD & PPOD data is updated annually as part of the collection of school census data and the HP Index is updated at five yearly intervals following the National Census Collection and the production of the Small Areas Population Statistics (SAPs).
 - The capacity to review the entire school population at five yearly intervals, as new Census data becomes available, including updates to the Census SAPs information and the HP Deprivation Index;
 - Capacity to assess new schools (whether newly established or formed following the amalgamation of two or more existing schools), as required, on the same basis as all other schools at any point in time;
 - Capacity to respond to significant demographic shifts in school population using the POD and PPOD annual data collection processes;

An identification process based on these data sources has the capacity to be robust, current, accurate and sufficiently flexible to cater for both expected and unexpected changes to the profiles of individual schools.

The scope to improve accuracy in the identification of schools is greatly improved by the availability of these centralised data sources.

Initial Exploratory Analysis

At an early stage the DES Statistics Section undertook a body of work to examine whether centrally held data could be used as an alternative to a survey for the purpose of identifying

⁸AIRO Maps available at: <http://airo.maynoothuniversity.ie/>

schools for inclusion in the new programme to tackle those at risk of educational disadvantage.

In September 2015, the Technical Working Group received a presentation from DES Statistics Section on how Census Data might be used to provide the social context of Schools. The analysis was based on the underlying assumption that students attend the nearest school. Evidence shows that this is not always the case in Ireland. The initial analysis was carried out on an electoral division (ED) basis, which meant that multiple schools servicing different categories of students all would have the same social context value. While there was agreement that census data is considered one of the most reliable sources of comparable data across geographic areas and the data underpinning the analysis is available to all, facilitating true transparency, an important consideration for the Irish context is the fact that pupils are not required to attend their nearest school and in fact many do not⁹. This is borne out in research conducted by the ESRI, which found that around half of the second-level cohort do not attend their nearest school, and such active choice is more prevalent among middle-class families (Hannan et al., 1996; Smyth et al., 2004). Also at primary level where attending the local school is more common, middle-class parents are more likely to engage in active choice by registering their child at an earlier stage and/or for multiple schools (ESRI/TCD, 2013). This initial analysis being area-based rather than school-based could not take account of this factor.

In order to investigate more closely a further study was undertaken, which involved carrying out a sample geo-coding of POD data to establish a school profile based on its cohort of students at the CSO Small Area data rather than electoral division. This analysis allowed for the allocation of a “score” or “rating” to each school based on the profile of where students came from rather than where the school was located. This overcame the issue of students not attending their nearest school. Overall, this method of combining geocoded data with SA Census data was seen as being reliable and transparent, less resource intensive than a survey and could be immediately used for new/amalgamated schools. The potential for its wider use throughout the Department to improve the level of information on schools, was also noted as was the potential for improved collaboration and joined-up working both internally within the DES and between the DES and its agencies, and with other Government Departments and State bodies. It was agreed that further consideration was required as to the exact methodology to apply to assess the socio economic profile of schools and that the method used should be evaluated in terms of objectivity of data sources, transparency, fairness, resources required, scalability, reliability over time, dependence on factors outside the Departments control and overall benefit to DES.

While this demonstrated capacity for a new approach, which might not require a survey of schools, the Group agreed that careful consideration was required to ensure that such a model could correctly identify the social context of schools to ensure that supports were allocated appropriately to target those most in need of assistance.

⁹ Ireland’s commitment to school choice is expressed in both school admission policies and the ease with which groups can establish new publicly-funded schools. Parents may choose between religion-based traditional ‘national primary schools’, Irish language immersion Gaelscoileanna, or multi-denominational ‘Educate Together’ schools.

Engagement with Relevant Experts

Following consideration of the available options, the Technical Working Group embarked on a series of engagements with experts in the fields of Mapping, Census Data, data protection, geocoding, data analysis and the appropriate use of the HP Index. Consultation took place with the following:

- **Educational Research Centre:** The ERC conducted the survey and data analysis for the 2005 identification process and more recently has undertaken a 2014 Survey of Schools for the development of the New Model of Resource Allocation for Special Education. It was well placed to advise the Group on options available including challenges or issues that needed to be considered. As a member of the Technical Group, the ERC also conducted exploratory analysis of the HP Index. (The outcome of this exercise is dealt with later in this chapter.)
- **Health Intelligence Unit (HIU):** The HIU of the HSE, which is conducting various data mapping exercises in the context of the provision of Health Services, has been using the HP Deprivation Index in this work. It has also been conducting work for TUSLA to assist in the organising and planning of TUSLA's school-based services using data mapping to better manage and organise the allocation of resources. Given some commonality that existed in the HIU mapping approach, the DES was eager to explore whether any potential existed for linkages in the mapping exercises being conducted by HIU and capacity for relevant data sharing that might be facilitated.
- **Central Statistics Office (CSO):** members of the Technical Working Group met with officials from the CSO to consider whether the CSO might be in a position to provide any assistance in the context of the identification process. It transpired that the CSO was not in a position to provide direct assistance, primarily arising from limitations in school data at its disposal and confines of legislation, which prohibits the CSO providing statistics collected from a single entity, in this case schools. However, they recommended that the use of SAPs data might be appropriate and advised DES to speak directly with Mr Trutz Haase, one of the developers of the HP Pobal Deprivation Index.
- **HP Index:** Mr. Trutz Haase met with members of the Technical Working Group and presented an overview of the HP Index, including details of current use by other Government Departments and agencies including the Department of Health, DCYA, Pobal, BIM, and how it might be used in the context of educational disadvantage. It was clear from the presentation that the elements of census data used in the Index, together with the data now available from POD & PPOD, and the school data geocoded by the PBU, provided a significant breakthrough in possibilities for assessing schools' level of disadvantage.

The HP Index is constructed using a Confirmatory Factor Analysis combining three underlying dimensions of affluence/disadvantage, identified as Demographic Profile, Social Class Composition and Labour Market Situation, to achieve a balanced measure

of relative affluence and deprivation, which evenly applies across the urban-rural continuum. This dimension is an important advantage in terms of measurement of rural deprivation for accurate designation of rural schools. The use of multi-variate data analysis underpinning the HP Index facilitates the development of a robust model as a proxy for social disadvantage to identify schools and it is repeatable in line with the collection of National Census Data. Detailed information on the HP Index together with a full list of Government Departments and Agencies using the Index is contained in at [Appendix 2 – Information on the HP Index](#).

- **Data Protection:** Ensuring protection of sensitive personal or personal identifiable data was a key consideration throughout the development process. Expert legal advice was procured to review the proposed methodology to highlight any potential issues or obstacles to the approach being considered. The Department was advised that it should update the Fair Processing Notices, for collection of data under POD and PPOD, in the interest of simplifying the language for ease of understanding by parents. A key recommendation advised the development of a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) (which the Technical Working Group pursued, obtaining training to upskill key members) to examine the process at every stage of development in order to safeguard any personal data deemed necessary to the process and to ensure integrity throughout every stage. A PIA detailing the various steps has been developed in the context of the project and will be submitted to the Office of the Data Commissioner. As part of this work, data sharing agreements have been concluded to underpin use of the data by external parties assisting with the development of the model for assessing schools. The advice also indicated that the Identification Project does not appear to give rise to any red flag issues under the upcoming General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation 2016/679) (“**GDPR**”), which will come into force on 25 May 2018. An important point to note in the context of Data Protection is that while the model is based on individual pupil data contained in POD and PPOD, these data are at the outset aggregated to Small Area (SA) Population Statistics level to avoid the use of identifiable personal data in the identification methodology. A key element of the development is to keep issues relating to data protection under constant review.

[Consultation with International Officials/Experts & Desk Study of other models of deprivation in other jurisdictions.](#)

A number of other jurisdictions use centrally held census data for the profiling of socio economic characteristics of populations.

The Technical Group is aware of other models of multiple deprivation including:

- **The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD16) 2016** which is the Scottish Government’s official tool for identifying concentrations of deprivation in Scotland and is the fifth edition since 2004. The SIMD16 combines seven different domains (aspects) of deprivation comprising: Income; Employment; Health; Education, Skills and Training; Geographic Access to Services; Crime; Housing. These domains are measured using a

number of indicators to form ranks for each domain. Scotland is divided into 6,976 small areas, called 'data zones' with roughly equal population. Data zones are ranked from 1 being most deprived to 6,976 being least deprived.

- **The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2010¹⁰** is the official measure of spatial deprivation in Northern Ireland. It is made up from 52 indicators mostly relating to the period 2007-2009. The indicators are grouped into seven 'domains' of deprivation and weighted as follows:

Income Deprivation 25%
Employment Deprivation 25%
Health Deprivation and Disability 15%
Education, Skills and Training Deprivation 15%
Proximity to Services 10%
Living Environment 5%
Crime and Disorder 5%

The weights attributed to each of the domains are, as per the NIMDM 2005 and were determined by the strength of indicator data, user consultation and considerations of theory on models of multiple deprivation.

It is notable that the specific indicator measured in the primary school sub-domain of the NI Index is the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level in English, Maths and Irish (in Irish medium schools) at Key Stage 2. The post primary sub domain uses Key Stage 3 and GCSE points. However in the consultation with members of the Technical Working Group the statistician who worked on the development of the index, indicated that that there is a recommendation to move to better data in the form of individual pupil data for future indices. Schools in NI have set catchment areas and the current Key Stage 2 data is derived from the schools in that particular catchment area.

In Ireland students often do not attend their local or closest school and exploratory work undertaken by the Technical Working Group shows that the small area in which a school is located is a poor indicator of the socio economic profile of the students.

3.3 Outcome of Exploratory Analysis

On completion of the extensive examination process set out above the Technical Working Group submitted a final proposal detailing the Model proposed to be used for the identification process to the Project Steering Group for approval on 21 June 2016. A paper was also submitted to the Department's Management Board for discussion on 19th July 2016. Following approval of this proposal, preparatory work began on the development of a model based on centrally held DES and CSO data and the application of the HP Index.

¹⁰ Further information is available at the following link:
http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/archive/Updateof2005Measures/NIMDM_2010_Report.pdf

3.4 Overview of Proposed Methodology for the Identification Process

The rationale for the approach being adopted is underpinned by a requirement to identify those cohorts of pupils at risk of educational disadvantage by virtue of their socio economic background. In order to address the unique feature of school choice in Ireland, it is not sufficient to simply assess schools by virtue of their geographical location as children and young people do not always attend their nearest school.

Therefore, to build an accurate dataset of the school going population, POD and PPOD data was analysed and the process of building the DEIS identification model is described below.

Detail of the Logistical Steps involved in the Identification

In order to build the dataset with small area data the following approach was taken:

1. Identify the Small Areas from which each school draws its students
2. Match the Census data and HP score with the Small Area codes
3. Create an aggregated school record of the census small area variables and HP scores associated with each school

Upon completion of the analysis a new identification dataset was created, which allowed exploratory analysis of the link between test outcomes and HP scores and other Census variables. The results of this analysis was considered by the Technical Working Group.

Following further discussion it was agreed to examine whether other factors should also be considered as part of the model development, including the addition of further variable which might add value to the process. Such variables might include socioeconomic ones such as medical card possession, and others such as school size, and pupil gender.

This activity is discussed in further detail in **Section 8.1**.

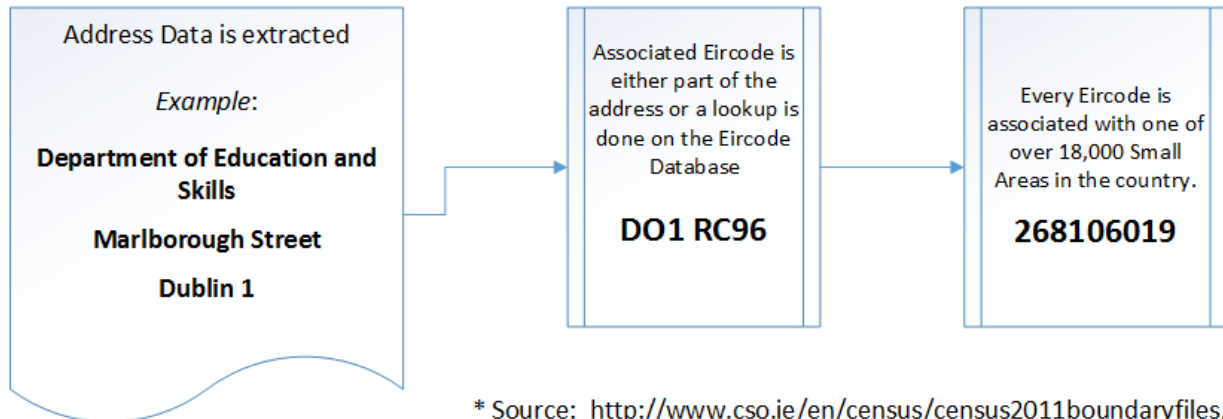
Identify the small areas from which each school draws its students:

The first task is the geocoding of 550,000 primary (POD) records and 330,000 post primary (PPOD) records to Small Area level.

The process begins by matching each address to the Small Areas (SA) that each school draws its students from. If the Eircode is provided this is a straightforward step and the SA code is easily identified. If no Eircode is provided it is necessary to look up the address on an Eircode database and cross reference this with the associated SA code. See *Figure 1 – Address Matching Overview*

Figure 1 - Address Matching Overview

Small Areas were designed as the lowest level of geography for the compilation of statistics in line with data protection and generally comprise either complete or part of townlands or neighbourhoods.*



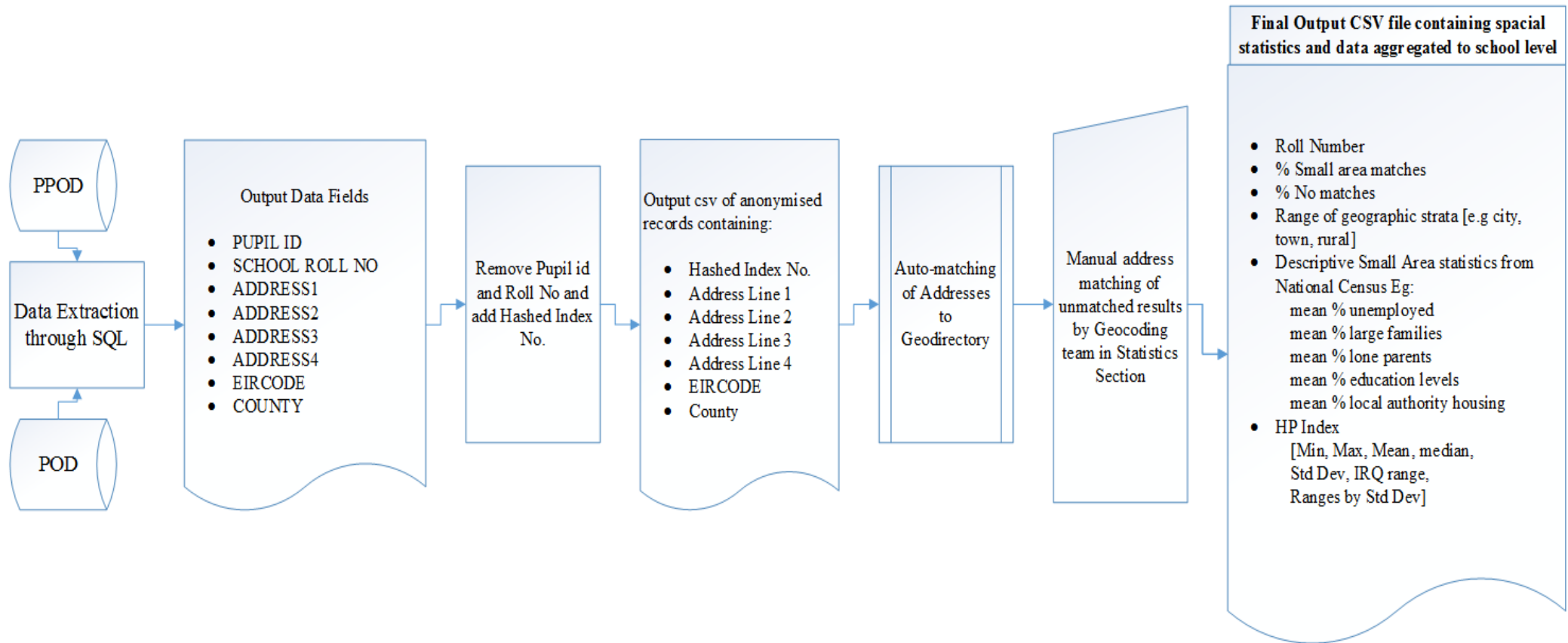
* Source: <http://www.cso.ie/en/census/census2011boundaryfiles/>

- An extract of the addresses in POD and PPOD was taken containing the following info
 - Pupil Id, Roll no., Address.
 - Pupil Id is used only for technical data reasons to monitor changes and allow updates to the overall dataset on a yearly bases (i.e. new entrants to the education system/moving schools/leaving the education system)
 - Roll no is used to aggregate small area statistics on a school by school basis
 - Address info is used to identify the small areas that each school draws their pupils from.
- Data is then anonymised to remove all personally identifiable information and to anonymise all records leaving only a list of addresses
- The anonymised records are output to a Comma Separated Values (CSV) - a simple file format used to store tabular data - containing the following data elements, anonymised Index No. Address Line 1; Address Line 2; Address Line 3; Address Line 4; Eircode and County.
- The data quality is checked and a process to clean data is carried out to improve data matching capabilities. The clean data is split further into CSV files in random blocks of 5000 records for upload to geo-matching software.
- The geocoding phase of the process involves auto-matching anonymised student addresses to the Geodirectory (Health Atlas) with the objective to match to Census Small Areas (SA) level. Where the geocoding does not automatically match addresses to the SA level a manual process is used to improve the match rate. The output from this process results in several output files containing various match levels, e.g. Exact match; Small Area match or No Address Match.
- The ultimate step in this process is to generate a final CSV file containing anonymous spatial data at school level containing the following data: Roll Number, Match Level Marker[Exact; SA2; SA3; SAED; County; No Match] & the associated Small Area code for each record

- The master CSV file is updated by merging back all the address matching values and is also merged with Original Data extract. This in turn allows the creation of a school level file containing the aggregated Small Areas census info for each school

See detail of the process involved at [Figure 2 - Geocoding Process Map](#)

Figure 2-Geocoding Process Map



The responsiveness of this methodology to meet the demands of the system and education stakeholders in particular can be facilitated and details of proposed frequency etc. of application would involve:

- Initial identification process to be applied to all recognised primary and post primary schools;
- Thereafter the database will be updated annually in terms of POD and PPOD data collection (This allows for adjustments, if required where a school's profile undergoes significant demographic change¹¹);
- A 5-yearly update, if deemed necessary, in line with the development of the HP Index following each National Census of Population;
- Newly established/amalgamated schools can be assessed prior to establishment/amalgamation on the basis of enrolment data. The proposed methodology works from the annual school census. Therefore an assessment for a new school would have to take place on pre-enrolment data and would be provisional on a subsequent evaluation of the actual position of the school following the first school census. The intention is to include capacity for submission of pre-enrolment data to the POD and PPOD database to assist with this process. In the case of amalgamations existing pupil data from the schools involved will already be available to facilitate assessment.

Relevance of using the HP Deprivation Index to assess the socio economic profile of schools

The development of the Census Small Areas Population Statistics (SAPs) and the HP Deprivation Index for Ireland has provided a significant breakthrough in identifying areas of population with the inherent characteristics that give rise to considerable risk of poorer outcomes in life including educational outcomes.

The use of the HP Index in the context of educational disadvantage is consistent with its use across a broad range of Government Departments, Agencies and various public sector entities with a requirement to identify the socioeconomic characteristics of the population for the purpose of resource allocation (e.g. D/Health, DCYA, Pobal, Tusla, BIM, Children and Young People's Services Committees, Higher Education Access Route (HEAR), Rural Transport Programme (RTP), LEADER, Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development (RAPID) Programme, Local and Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Forces). The adoption of the HP Index allows for consistency of approach in the allocation of resources across sectors to combat the consequences of deprivation and disadvantage in communities whether through education, health or other resourcing models of service provision e.g. Youth Services. It is also consistent with the view of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, under the Civil Service Renewal Plan, that Government Departments and agencies should adopt a consistency of approach in this area.

It is very clear from the exploratory analysis conducted by the Group that the Census data provided in the HP Index coupled with the DES POD & PPOD data, geocoded to SA level and

¹¹ Change that demonstrates +/- adjustment to the socioeconomic profile of a school which indicates a shift from the normal in line with the designated measurement, to be defined, which triggers DEIS additional resources.

then aggregated to school level provides a rich dataset from which to assess schools, facilitate resource allocation, and support systematic evaluation and evidence-based analysis.

In the context of educational disadvantage in schools, the index contains variables which provide a measure of the underlying risk of educational disadvantage. The exploratory analysis conducted by the ERC for the Technical Working Group shows that there is a moderate to strong correlation between scores on the HP Index and poorer educational outcomes across the school spectrum. It also shows that even stronger correlations were observed between individual components of the index and achievement. The approach taken in similar circumstances in other sectors is to use the HP Index, with the addition of suitable additional variables as required, to meet particular identification and resource allocation needs. It was noted that it would be useful to explore how and in what circumstances this issue has been dealt with in other sectors.

It was also very evident from the consultation process that schools are aware of the value of the HP Index and Primary stakeholders referred to INTO guidelines to schools for the 2014 SEN Survey and the potential to use the HP Index to provide socio economic information for their student cohort.

Consideration of other Variables as possible indicators of risk for educational disadvantage:

While it is considered that the HP Index together with DES POD and PPOD data is suitable for the identification of schools in terms of the socio economic profile of their pupil cohort, the Group also discussed whether any additional variables, not already comprehended within the HP Index, should be considered for use in the identification process and to assist with resource allocation. The Group agreed that consideration should be given to exploring a number of additional variables, which are known to be associated with educational disadvantage – e.g. local authority housing, medical card eligibility and Traveller enrolment. In this regard further exploratory analysis is being conducted by the ERC. The Group agreed that, on completion of the ERC analysis, this issue would merit a broader discussion among education experts/researchers.

An exercise completed by SIU which considers the issues associated with a number of additional variables, based on stakeholder input and available research is attached at [Appendix 3: Possible Additional Variables compiled by SIU](#)

Further consideration is also required of the distinction between urban and rural socio-economic disadvantage in the context of research, which demonstrates differences in educational outcomes for the two classifications, and also of the particular educational needs of certain vulnerable groups in terms of the nature/type of resources required to address those needs.

Research including '*Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS*' (Smyth, E., S. McCoy, G. Kingston (2015), and others such as '*Analysis of English reading and mathematics achievements in schools in the rural dimension of the School Support Programme*' (Weir, S., Archer, P., & Millar, D. (2009), and '*The achievements and characteristics of pupils attending rural schools participating in DEIS.*' (Weir, S. & McAvinue, L. (2013) have shown that there is a clear

distinction between urban and rural disadvantage. While socio-economic disadvantage exists in rural areas, these studies have shown it does not appear to have the same impact on educational outcomes as it does in urban areas. The ESRI Report also notes the particularly high complexity of need which exists in some DEIS schools in urban areas.

In view of the foregoing it will be necessary for the Technical Group to continue its work beyond the completion of the Review of DEIS, and it is proposed, as part of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, to establish a Technical Forum which will include the members of the current Technical Group, together with other research experts in this area as appropriate.

Given the volume of work associated with carrying out this further in depth analysis and the desire to ensure that those schools who have been identified as having the highest concentration of disadvantage can benefit from necessary supports at the earliest possible opportunity, a decision will be required as to whether the first round of the identification process should be carried out purely on the basis of the application of the HP index. This would facilitate those most at risk benefiting from supports from September 2017.

Application of the new Assessment Model

There are three distinct areas of application for the proposed new assessment model based on the HP Index and DES Pod and PPOD data:

(i) Identification Process

An application of the HP Index together with POD and PPOD data to provide a socio economic demographic profile of each school.

(ii) Resource Allocation

The database created to support the assessment model is also capable of being expanded to include a range of information in relation to individual schools in terms of both DES supports and those provided by other Departments and Agencies, as well as NGOs and other organisations in receipt of State funding. This means that, for the first time, the DES will have the capacity to map the full range of resources available to schools.

In terms of allocation of resources under the SSP, the further consideration of possible additional variables, as noted above, will be required.

(iii) Monitoring and Evaluation

A key element of the new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion will be a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to ensure the effective and efficient use of the significant resources allocated to schools and to ensure value for money. In this regard reporting and other arrangements will be aligned to DES evaluation structures under the School Self Evaluation and Whole School Evaluation processes and to the BOBF reporting structures to avoid duplication of effort and provide clear lines of communication for stakeholders. It is intended that input to the development of this framework will be provided by the Educational Research Centre, the DES Inspectorate, other relevant Government Departments and agencies, including Tusla, together with data and research provided by academics and other sources.

Critical to this activity will be the availability of up to date information on school planning, deployment of resources and educational outcomes. Of particular relevance to the successful implementation of the framework is the availability of analytics and other research resources within the DES to assess the data collected.

3.5 Supporting the Assessment Model Database

In the context of its work on the DEIS Review and the development of the model for the identification of schools, the Technical Working Group has identified a requirement in the DES for a specific data analytics function.

The data sources developed for the DEIS Identification Process also have wider application to support evidence-based policy making across DES business units and in the wider education sector. It is critical that these and any additional data sources developed are available in usable format and that a currency of information is maintained. Accordingly, it is essential that the relevant DES data collection and analysis functions are properly resourced with appropriately qualified staff to manage and interrogate the data as required for ongoing DES business needs.

This function will be a key resource both for the current project in the context of ongoing monitoring and evaluation and to support the wider application of these data within the DES.

3.6 Peer Review of the Process

The methodology being adopted for the identification of schools for a new DEIS programme is a completely new departure from methodologies adopted in the assessment of schools for previous schemes to combat educational disadvantage. It has been made possible by the advancement and availability of relevant centralised data sources including the CSO Small Areas Population Statistics and the development of the HP Deprivation Index.

Research has shown that children from poorer backgrounds are likely to have poorer outcomes including educational attainment. To mitigate this, it is imperative that resources are targeted at those most at risk. The new methodology can help achieve this by facilitating the accurate identification of schools based on the socio demographic of its pupil cohort.

To ensure that this methodology continues to maintain high standards of quality, improves on performance as data sources improve, and continues to have validity in accurately identifying the correct schools, it is planned to put in place a process to peer review the Identification Framework within 3 years.

3.7 Communications

The overall objective of the DEIS Review Technical Working Group is to put in place a methodology for the identification of schools for additional support in recognition of their pupil cohort that is fair, transparent and responsive to demographic change in a schools situation over time. This addresses a key demand voiced during the consultation with various stakeholders during the review process.

In coming to its final decision on the methodology now being proposed, the Technical Working Group took into account the views of stakeholders in the consultation process, sought the advice of a range of experts and carried out a review of methodology in use in other jurisdictions for the identification of need in schools that prompts the allocation of additional resources.

It is intended to engage again with the education stakeholders directly to communicate the technical process involved. It is also planned to develop on-line resources that will be available to schools to ensure that all schools are aware of how the assessments were carried out and the various data sources used to identify levels of disadvantage in schools.

The DES would also welcome any assistance in communicating the message to schools through existing communication channels available to Schools Management Bodies and Representative Bodies or National Associations and will explore this with relevant organisations.

It is also intended that analysis conducted by the Technical Group and the follow-on Technical Forum will, subject to data protection/sharing rules, be published in periodic reports under the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

Recommendations of the Technical Group

The Group is satisfied that the HP Index together with DES POD and PPOD data is a suitable basis for the identification of schools in terms of the socio economic demographic profile of their pupil cohort, and recommends:

That the HP Index together with DES POD and PPOD data is suitable for use as the basis for the assessment of schools in terms of the socio economic profile of their pupil cohorts.

The Group is also satisfied that there is merit in further consideration of the possible value of applying a number of other variables with a view to improving the identification methodology and follow-on resource allocation, and recommends:

That further analysis be conducted to examine other variables which are known strong predictors of educational disadvantage

The Group noted that the assignment of a specific DES analytics function is a pre-requisite for the initial and ongoing identification of schools, follow-on resource allocation process, and ongoing data analysis need in the context of a new Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and recommends:

The appointment of a specific DES data analytics function to support the identification and resource allocation processes, and to meet ongoing SIU and Inspectorate data analysis needs in the context of a new Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

Chapter 4 - Report of the DES Advisory Group on the School Support Programme

4.1 Introduction

The 2005 DEIS Action Plan provided for the introduction of a *“new integrated School Support Programme (SSP) which will bring together, and build upon, existing interventions for schools and school clusters/communities with a concentrated level of educational disadvantage. The differences between urban and rural disadvantage will be taken into account in targeting actions under the programme.”*

The development of an integrated School Support Programme was based on the principle of the Whole School approach to provision of services to address educational disadvantage and underpinned by action planning for improvement by individual schools under the DEIS School Action Plan.

The schemes and programmes which were integrated into the SSP included the following:

- Early Start
- Giving Children an Even Break (incorporating the primary Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and Breaking the Cycle)
- The Support Teacher Project
- Aspects of the Early Literacy Initiative, including the Reading Recovery initiative and the Junior Certificate School Programme Literacy Strategy and Demonstration Library Project
- The Home School/Community Liaison Scheme
- The School Completion Programme
- The Disadvantaged Areas Scheme for second level schools and related projects in second level schools supporting access to third level.

The following additional supports were provided under the DEIS SSP:

- Reduced class size (Primary Band 1 schools only)
- Allocation of Administrative Principals on a lower pupil enrolment threshold (Primary Band 1 and 2 schools only)
- Additional funding in the form of a DEIS grant;
- Access to school planning supports;
- Access to literacy/numeracy programmes and professional supports for their implementation
- Access to the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme
- Access to a range of supports under the School Completion Programme (SCP)
- Access to the School Meals programme
- Additional funding under the School Books Grant Scheme
- Access to a range of professional development supports.

As explained in Chapter 2, schools were identified for inclusion into the School Support Programme in terms of their relative levels of concentrated disadvantage and categorised accordingly. Primary schools were further ranked as between urban and rural schools, with urban schools categorised as DEIS Band 1 and Band 2, with the former representing the highest concentration of disadvantage. There was no such categorisation for Post Primary schools.

It is important to note that schools participating in pre-DEIS disadvantage schemes were allowed to retain resources allocated to them under those schemes, in addition to the resources allocated under the DEIS School Support Programme. As of the 2016/2017 school year, approximately 144 of these posts still remain in the system.

4.2 Implementation of the 2005 DEIS Action Plan – some issues

While the majority of supports under the SSP were rolled out to schools as planned, it is also important to note a number of planned interventions and other activities, which were included in the 2005 Action Plan School Support Programme, were not subsequently progressed, either due to changes in policy or for financial reasons. These included:

- *A sabbatical leave scheme to be introduced to create opportunities for principals and teachers who have served for a defined period in schools participating in the SSP, to undertake a period of development to enhance their own learning and effectiveness, and to bring subsequent benefits to their students and their school.*

It was envisaged that this scheme, would provide sabbatical leave arrangements for 50 teachers annually, and would be extended to all SSP schools on a phased basis.

- *A proposal to extend the Early Start Scheme to all DEIS Band 1 schools.*

The decision not to proceed with this proposal was taken in light of the introduction of the universal ECCE programme, initially for 1 year and for 2 years from September 2016.

- *A planned report on the work of a number of centres for young school leavers supported by the DES to inform the most appropriate arrangements for future supports to this group.*
- *Development by the DES Regional Offices Directorate of an overall plan for addressing service integration and partnership working issues.*

4.3 DEIS Review Advisory Group

On foot of the publication of the ESRI's "*Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS*" (April 2015) and the Minister's subsequent announcement of a plan to review the current DEIS programme, an Advisory Group consisting of a number of DES business units was established with the following brief:

- To review the DEIS School Support Programme in the context of available evaluations and analysis of the implementation of the DEIS Programme to date, consultations with education partners and other stakeholders.
- To liaise with the DEIS Technical Working Group and the Inter Departmental Working Group on the development of eligibility criteria for a new DEIS identification process.
- To liaise with the IDG to include proposals made by other Government Departments and Agencies in overall consideration for supports.
- To make recommendations for a new framework of supports for schools resulting from consideration of all outputs from the IDG and Consultancy Forum.
- To make recommendations on an accompanying Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, including, where appropriate, relationship protocols and service level agreements with other Government Departments and agencies and other service providers.

The Advisory Group, chaired by the Social Inclusion Unit, met on six occasions in plenary session to review the current suite of supports against a backdrop of new and innovative Government strategies and various published research reports. There were also a number of bilateral meetings with individual Business Units to explore particular interventions in more detail.

4.4 Policy Background

As already noted, the key policy and other documents, which are particularly relevant to the discussions of the Group and frame the context to the design of future DES interventions under a new School Support Programme are:

- (i) **The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020 *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (BOBF)***
- (ii) **ESRI Report *Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS, 2015***
- (iii) **The Programme for a Partnership Government 2016**
- (iv) **Action Plan for Education 2016 – 2019**

4.5 Interim Changes to School Support Programme

Since the introduction of the School Support Programme in the 2006/7 school year, a number of budgetary and other changes have impacted on the range of resources available to schools participating in the programme:

- 31st August, 2009 - withdrawal of DEIS programme funding from non-DEIS schools (including “dispersed” SSP Grants)
- 1st September, 2009 – decision not to include any further schools in the School Support Programme.
- 31st August, 2011 – withdrawal of the Rural Coordinator service from rural DEIS schools.
- 31st August, 2012 – phased withdrawal of some Legacy Posts from schemes prior to the implementation of DEIS arising from Budget 2012 announcement

- 1st September, 2012 – in order to simplify and streamline the allocation of the Administrative Principal post, the allocation of the post to DEIS Band 1 and Band 2 schools became enrolment based (116 pupils for Band 1 schools and 144 pupils for Band 2 schools).

4.6 Stakeholder Consultation

Details of the individuals and groups consulted are at [Appendix 4 - List of Groups and Individuals involved in Stakeholder Consultation](#)

Feedback on current DEIS provision

The following are the main issues on the current provision raised by education stakeholders and other groups.

The existing programme is seen as an important and valuable support to tackling educational disadvantage and is making a positive difference to students learning and well-being in DEIS schools. DEIS has played a large part in improving school climate and this is a key lever in retention but not measured or reported on. Additional literacy and numeracy supports provided under DEIS received widespread support. The key points raised were:

- Urban Band 1 DEIS schools face a particularly complex range of issues and challenges and may require extra more targeted supports to achieve improvements.
- Schools on their own cannot tackle disadvantage and they need to be supported by wider social policies addressing socio-economic disadvantage with buy-in from families.
- While the additional funding provided through the DEIS grant is welcome, many felt it was not sufficient.
- The promotion of parental involvement in DEIS is seen as a very positive aspect that should be maintained.
- Schools need flexibility in implementing DEIS to best meet the particular needs of targeted students. The amount of time for the administration and planning associated with DEIS was raised and the fact that no time or additional resources are allocated for its co-ordination.
- The importance of school climate and the impact on students of teacher/parent/peer expectation levels was noted in a number of submissions.
- Concerns were raised about the level of rigid ability grouping or pupil streaming in DEIS schools.

Proposals/Key points from stakeholders on future provision

Reduced Pupil Teacher ratios, workload for principals, possibility of an allowance for working in DEIS schools, professional development and lack of middle management structure and ability/streaming of classes were among the issues raised.

(1) Teaching Resources and Supports

The key points raised were:

- High quality, regular professional development required for staff in DEIS schools to enable them to positively influence school climate and respond to the complex issues which arise in DEIS schools. A future DEIS programme should include requirements for teachers' professional learning.
- DEIS schools should have additional learning support teachers to implement literacy and numeracy support programmes.
- The investment in the development of leadership capacity in DEIS schools should be a priority.
- DEIS teachers should have access to counselling and other professional supports to help staff deal with challenging behaviour of pupils. The proposal contained in the initial DEIS programme to provide a sabbatical scheme should be actioned in the interests of teachers' mental health and well-being, which needs to be supported, through appropriate professional development.
- Given the considerable additional workload associated with DEIS, the point at which Administrative Principals are appointed should be reduced and/or additional release time granted for teaching principals.
- DEIS schools need highly qualified administrative staff to support the Principal.
- Several submissions reported a large turnover of staff in DEIS schools and emphasised the need for this to be addressed.
- An additional allowance for teachers in DEIS schools or other incentives should be considered.
- The possibility of appointing a DEIS coordinator given the amount of additional work associated with the co-ordination and implementation of DEIS should be explored.
- There is scope for a DEIS support and advisory service which could share proven ideas among principals and teachers for tackling educational disadvantage.
- Streaming to lower ability/grade classes can negatively impact self-esteem.

(2) Funding

The following points were made in relation to funding:

- Funding levels are insufficient given the fact that DEIS schools find it much more difficult to fundraise in their local communities. The appropriate scale of funding especially for Urban Band 1 should be examined.
- There is some evidence that current funding is used to make up the shortfall for school running costs (such as heating and electricity) and is not being directed to teaching and learning supports.
- Funding provision for school books is inadequate.
- Future funding should be 'tapered', with a sliding scale of supports extending to disadvantaged children in non-DEIS schools.

(3) Initial Teacher Education

- The commitment of colleges who provide initial teacher education courses to give student teachers experience in diverse settings is seen as an important initiative, although the difficulty in securing placements because of high student numbers was noted.
- Initial teacher education should include compulsory modules on educational disadvantage and related topics so that student teachers can understand the factors that impact on teaching and learning and gain opportunities to develop strategies.

(4) Career Guidance and Counselling

- The majority of the submissions received referred to the fact that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds rely heavily on school guidance counsellors and that the reduced allocation for guidance counsellors in post-primary schools in recent years has had a negative impact on these students.
- All schools need access to comprehensive pastoral structures as well as career guidance.
- An immediate properly resourced guidance service is required from the very early stages of post primary education for students in DEIS schools.

(5) Ability Streaming

- The practice of ability grouping and streaming should be phased out or brought into line with non-DEIS schools.

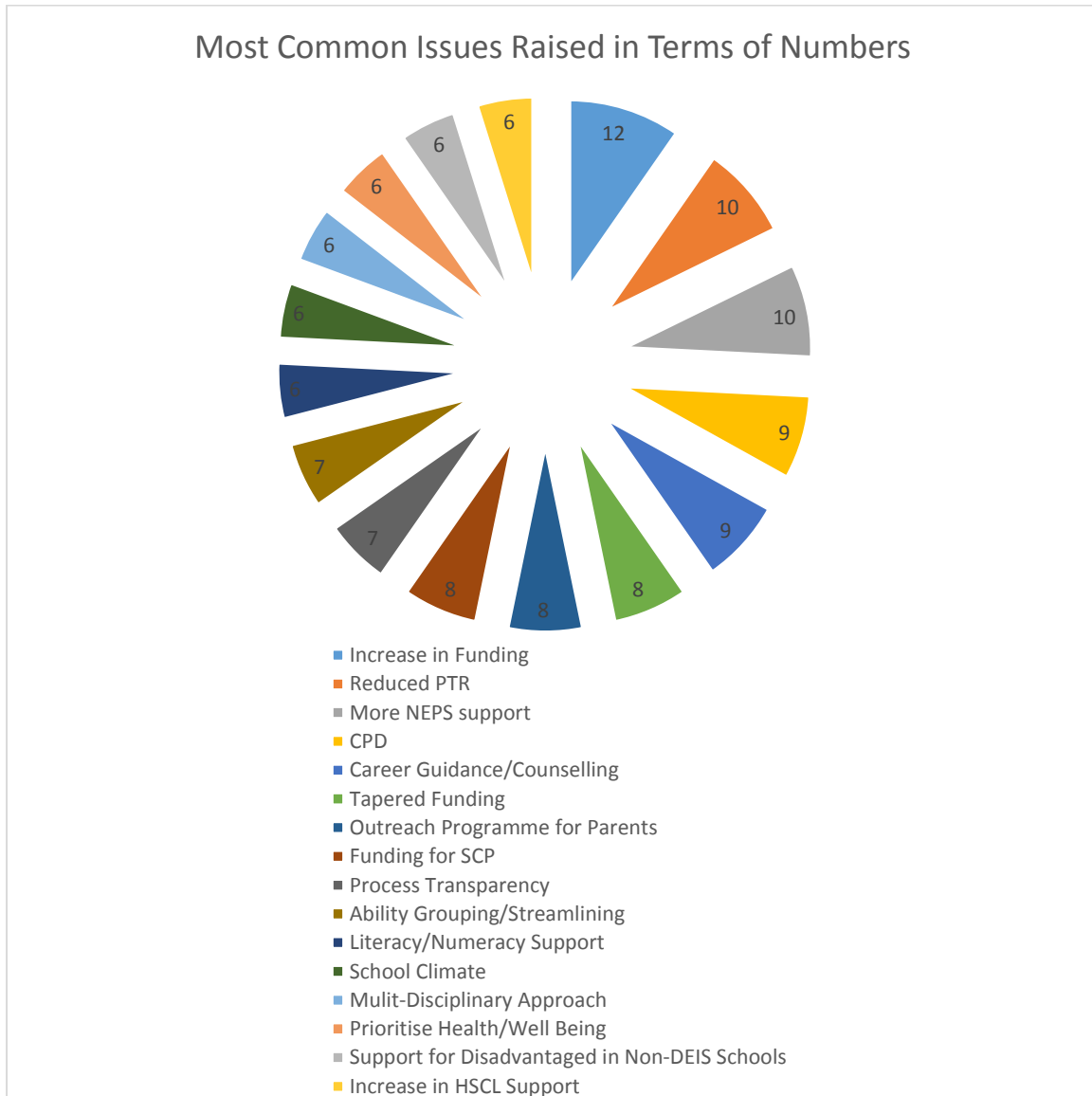
(6) Special Educational Needs

- In view of the relatively high number of children with SEN in DEIS schools compared to non-DEIS schools, there should be an increase in the number of resource teachers provided to DEIS schools.
- Parents of students in DEIS schools often cannot afford to pay for private educational psychological assessments so there is a strong possibility that there are significant numbers of undiagnosed SEN students in these schools.
- More targeted action is required for students who are both socio-economically disadvantaged and have special needs.

(7) Travellers

- The level of early school leaving and overall poor engagement with education of Travellers was noted.

Table 2 – Most Common Issues Raised Stakeholders



4.7 Development of a new School Support Programme Framework

Discussion and Recommendations

Following careful consideration of evaluations of the programme to date, other available research, stakeholder consultation and formal submissions and discussions, the Group presents the following detail of its discussions on individual elements of the School Support Programme (SSP).

At the outset, the Group noted that the improved information on schools, both from the new assessment model described in Chapter 3, and better collation of existing DES data, would facilitate an improved and more equitable allocation of resources, including better informed decisions around allocating particular resources to meet particular identified additional learning needs.

Piloting new Approaches/Interventions in SSP

The Group also noted the announcement made in May, 2016 by the Minister that a new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion would include provision for the piloting of new approaches to teaching and learning and other innovative interventions aimed at tackling educational disadvantage. It is envisaged that the pilot programme under development will include the following key elements:

- Leveraging evidence-informed good practice of what interventions are effective in meeting the needs of students at risk of educational disadvantage
- Developing and building on relationships in the community and local business to support the work of schools, including before and after school provision
- Encouraging strategic clustering of small groups of schools in acutely disadvantaged areas
- Connecting schools with the supports and resources that are tailored to their needs, through individualised brokerage and constructive challenging
- Supporting schools to continuously improve the service they provide to their students
- Enhancing school leadership and better equipping teachers in meeting the needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Enhancing teaching capacity in meeting the needs of students who experience challenges in mental health and wellbeing
- Improving parental engagement and participation in student learning
- Supporting transitions across the education continuum
- And that pilot programmes will focus in particular on interventions in schools serving the most disadvantaged communities in inner city areas.

The Group welcomed the proposal for piloting interventions and noted the scope for such an arrangement to test new approaches. It also noted the scope for testing new approaches in the context of the planned School Excellence Fund.

4.8 Recommendations of the Advisory Group

Interventions chosen for piloting should be targeted, meaningful, based on research, including international research, evidence based best practice, be strictly time bound and subject to rigorous monitoring and evaluation

In choosing pilot programmes, there should be a particular focus on interventions in schools serving the most disadvantaged communities in inner city areas.

Additional Financial Assistance/Grants

Most stakeholder inputs have called for an increase in the funding provided to DEIS Schools - based on the fact that these schools do not have access to the same level of fundraising opportunities or voluntary contributions as other schools. The ESRI *Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS* Report identified this as a particular issue, particularly for Urban Band 1 primary schools and recommended consideration of the appropriate scale of funding for those schools given the greater complexity of need. The ESRI, education partners, and other stakeholders recommended that consideration be given to a tapering of funding for schools rather than the current 'cut-off' of financial support.

Under the current School Support Programme a **DEIS Grant** is payable to all DEIS schools based on the pupil enrolments and a schools' level of disadvantage as assessed in 2005. The DEIS grant is paid in addition to the mainstream rate of capitation. This means that a certain element of 'tapering' of funding is already built into this support and is likely to continue as a result of the proposed methodology to be applied under the new identification process described in Chapter 3.

In its discussion on funding, the Group considered the outcome of the analysis undertaken by SIU on a survey of a sample of schools in relation to their expenditure of their DEIS grant. This showed the funding is used to pay for a wide range of services including utilities, food, school uniforms, psychological assessments, ability testing, transport, therapies, CPD for teachers and extracurricular activities. The Group noted that, while the information available from the survey provides some useful insight into the value of this additional funding, it did not provide sufficient information to decide whether an increase to the current rate of funding was warranted. It was agreed that better reporting by schools on expenditure of the DEIS Grant should be a pre-requisite of future funding arrangements.

There was a strong view that available funding should be targeted at those most in need and that an increased rate of payment to schools serving the very highest levels of children at risk of educational disadvantage was probably appropriate. It was also noted that this was an issue for consideration in the context of the development of a new identification process, and the availability of improved data on the overall resources available to individual schools, as between DES supports, and those provided by other Government Departments and agencies and NGOs.

The scope for streamlining overall DES payments to DEIS school was noted and it was agreed that the DEIS grant should be integrated with overall capitation funding at the earliest opportunity.

The scope for monitoring the deployment of future funding to schools in the context of improved monitoring, evaluation and reporting arrangements under DEIS was noted.

Recommendations

Financial assistance to schools participating in the School Support Programme should be continued as resources permit – with priority being given to schools with the highest concentrations of pupils from disadvantaged communities.

Future additional funding under the SSP, should be integrated with overall capitation grant payments to schools.

Guidelines should be issued to schools in relation to appropriate use of additional funds provided under the SSP.

Traveller Capitation

In accordance with the Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy, 2006 the mainstreaming of education provision for travellers means that all segregated provision is to be phased out. In recent years a Traveller Capitation grant of €70 (primary) and €201 (post-primary) per pupil continues to be paid to all schools in respect of pupils who self-identify as Travellers. Additional pupil capitation for Travellers in 2015/2016 amounted to approximately €1.1 million and this was based on the 10,896 pupils who self-identified as Travellers. The purpose of this continued payment is to assist schools to mainstream provision and to facilitate tracking of traveller pupils through the education system. Improved pupil database information (POD and PPOD) means that information from schools on the numbers of traveller pupils enrolled is now more accurate.

The Group noted that the most significant issue for traveller children in the education system is that of school attendance, retention and participation. The role of the Education Welfare Service Integrated Service Delivery Model in Tusla in supporting particular groups at risk of educational disadvantage such as Travellers is dealt with in Chapter 5.

It was agreed that the forthcoming new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy should provide a renewed impetus for engagement with Traveller representative group in relation to education provision for Travellers and Roma; that this engagement should fully cover the continuum of education from early years through to FET and higher education, and that the question of whether current additional financial supports provided by DES and other Government Departments and agencies were correctly matched to identified educational needs.

Recommendation

The DES to engage with Tusla and Traveller Representative Groups on measures to improve Traveller engagement with education in the context of the forthcoming National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy and School Completion Strategy.

The Traveller Capitation Grant to be examined under the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in the context of its objective of supporting Traveller children’s school attendance, participation and retention.

Enhanced Funding for School Books

The Book Grant (Circular numbers: 30/2015: Primary and Circular 46/2013: Post Primary) is paid to all schools in the country, with DEIS Schools receiving an enhanced rate per pupil under this scheme, rather than on the basis of the assessed level of disadvantage of the school. The purpose of the book grant scheme is to provide assistance towards the cost of school books. Schools are encouraged to establish a book rental schemes but this is not compulsory. This enhanced funding has resulted in DEIS schools receiving additional payment of €1 million at primary and €1million at post primary levels. Funding allocated to schools is on per capita basis and is not related to the level of disadvantage in the school.

The Group noted the Action Plan for Education, 2016 commitment to increase funding for this scheme as resources permit. (Objective 4.2.86)

Recommendations

Schools participating in the SSP should receive enhanced payments under the Book Grant Scheme taking account of the level of disadvantage present in the school.

Operation of a book rental scheme should be mandatory requirement for schools participating in the SSP.

Consideration to be given to integrating the Book Grant with the capitation grant as part of an overall streamlining of DES payments to schools.

ICT Funding

Since 2005, the Department has continued to pursue a Digital agenda for schools, with the SMART SCHOOLS = SMART ECONOMY policy. ***A Report of the ICT in Schools Joint Advisory Group to the Minister for Education and Science*** document was published in 2009. This policy document also reaffirmed the importance of ICT in schools in addressing educational disadvantage. Some €92m in ICT Equipment grant funding was distributed to schools on foot of the Smart Schools = Smart Economy policy between 2009 and 2010. Under this scheme, DEIS schools received additional funding above that given to non-DEIS schools. The ratio of computers to pupils has continued to improve since the publication of that report, in line with

policy recommendations, with the 2013 ICT Census in Schools showing a more favourable ratio in DEIS schools.

All recognised primary, post-primary and special schools are now included in the Broadband for Schools Programme funded and managed by the Department. This includes the provision of High Speed Broadband to all post-primary schools. The Department will continue to seek to improve the broadband connectivity to primary schools and is also committed to enhancing broadband speeds to primary schools in collaboration with the Department of Communications Climate Action and Environment, in the context of the National Broadband Plan Implementation.

The Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 *Enhancing Teaching Learning and Assessment* published in October 2015, contains a series of policy objectives that will build on the work of the Smart Schools = Smart Economy policy, and emphasises the role that ICT has in providing for personalised and differentiated learning to the benefit of all learners. Specific policy objectives will ensure that all learners are supported to achieve the best outcomes based on their individual needs. In addition, the Scoilnet website resource, operated by the Professional Development Service for Teachers – Technology in Education on behalf of the Department, provides access to Digital resources including Britannica Schools with content that allows for differentiation according to learner ability and requirements (text to speech functionality for example). Access to Scoilnet and Britannica Schools is available free (i.e. no subscription cost) outside of school for students and parents in the home, enabling parental involvement in their child’s education.

Some €210m in funding for ICT Equipment will be distributed to schools over the five years of the Strategy, commencing with €30m for 2016-2017 and rising to €50m by the 2020-2021 school year. Consideration will be given to providing additional funding for schools participating in the new plan to tackle educational disadvantage in developing the parameters for the ICT Equipment Grant scheme.

Recommendation:

The impact of the prioritisation and targeting of schools with the most concentrated levels of disadvantage under new Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 should be assessed and reported on under the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

School Class Size

While the allocation of additional teaching resources to DEIS primary schools with the highest concentrations of children at greatest risk of educational disadvantage has served to improve learning outcomes, achievement levels in these schools are still low and warrant a continuation of current supports. However, there is also a need to take a closer look at current class size in terms of the support it offers, particularly in relation to exemplars of good practice in this area.

Current additional teacher allocations to DEIS Band 1 schools under the 2005 DEIS Action Plan are made to facilitate the following class size:

- 20 in junior schools (classes from junior infants to 2nd class)
- 22 in vertical schools (classes from junior infants to 6th class)
- 24 in senior schools. (classes from 3rd class to 6th class)

This enhanced provision compares to a class size of 27:1 in DEIS Band 2, Rural DEIS primary schools and non-DEIS Primary Schools.

The Group noted that many DEIS schools hold legacy and other posts additional to their general allocation and their additional teaching posts under DEIS¹² and SEN, with effective PTRs of less than 10:1 in some situations. These posts are additional to the lower PTR available under DEIS. This means that some DEIS schools have effective PTRs as low as 8:1

This creates an inequity between these schools and schools, which did not exist when those earlier schemes were in place, although they may now serve the same pupil cohort. It also means that the provision recommended in the 2005 Action Plan has not been implemented – or tested in terms of its impact on teaching and learning outcomes.

The Group also noted the fact that early years education provision had improved considerably since 2005, particularly under the ECCE programme. This means that children are likely to be more school-ready in light of current supports in that area.

In addition, the Group noted the Programme for a Partnership Government commitment – *“Smaller classes, for junior and senior infants in particular, are proven to increase pupil achievement, especially for disadvantaged children. Gains from smaller class size in early years are shown to carry forward into future years. Research shows pupils are more likely to stay in school longer and earn better results”*.

Input from education partners at primary level considers the reduced class size DEIS Band 1 schools to be a key support and suggest that the even lower class size of 15:1 facilitated by pre-DEIS disadvantage schemes should be restored.

The Group noted that increasing demographics at primary level are expected to peak in 2018 and at post primary level in 2025 – and the consequent impact on staffing requirements for schools should be borne in mind.

Having examined teacher provision in other jurisdictions it is evident that there is a wide variance in class size with little or no commonality across countries - ranging from a 13:1 to 20:1, in circumstances which are not all comparable to the Irish education system. It is difficult to draw any conclusion in terms of an optimum class size given the diversity within the structure of education provision in the countries examined.

The Group agreed that further research is required to establish what is appropriate for the Irish situation. It noted the scope for resolving the current inequity of allocation between schools in DEIS Band 1 in the context of the overall resource allocation under a new DEIS Actin Plan.

¹² Schemes that pre-dated DEIS, *Breaking the Cycle* and *Giving Children an Even Break* provided for reduced PTR of 15:1 and 20:1 in junior classes, respectively and 27:1 in senior classes.

Recommendations

A new Monitoring and Evaluation Framework should include evaluation of the level of teaching resources for schools participating in the SSP to inform future policy in this area.

Pending any change to the recommended teacher allocation for urban primary schools supporting the highest levels of pupils at risk of educational disadvantage, the current recommended class size for these schools should apply.

Additional Teaching Supports – Administrative Principals/Support

The current School Support Programme provides for the appointment of an Administrative Principal on an enrolment of 116 pupils in DEIS Band 1 schools and 144 pupils in a DEIS Band 2 school as opposed to an enrolment of 177 pupils in rural DEIS and non-DEIS schools. The Group noted that an Administrative Principal is allocated to all second-level schools.

The Group noted the issue raised by education partners of the considerable administrative burden associated with DEIS i.e. coordinating the various interventions and services to schools. Stakeholder requests on this issue included:

- The appointment of highly qualified administrative staff to support Principals;
- The point at which Administrative Principals in primary schools are appointed should be reduced and/or additional release time for teaching principals should be considered.
- Consideration should be given to the appointment of a ‘DEIS Coordinator’ given the amount of additional work associated with the co-ordination and implementation of DEIS.
- The additional workload generated by participation in the SSP could be addressed by the lifting of the moratorium on the recruitment of middle management posts in schools.

The Group considered that the current point at which an Administrative Principal is appointed in schools supporting the highest level of educational disadvantage is appropriate. It observed that the issue raised is one of time to carry out certain duties, and that such tasks should be assigned within the overall school staff allocation, as required, and as provided for in the School Plan.

In terms of additional posts in DEIS Schools, the group noted the key role school leadership has in promoting a school environment which is welcoming, inclusive, accountable and focused on high quality teaching and learning. In this regard, it also noted the Budget 2017 commitment for a new package of supports in the critical area of school leadership.

Recommendation

An Administrative Principal should continue to be allocated to urban/town primary schools with the highest concentrations of pupils from disadvantaged communities on a lower pupil enrolment threshold than those which apply in primary schools generally.

Streaming/Ability Grouping

One of the issues raised by the education partners is ability grouping and the negative impact it may have on students in the lower streams. In considering this issue, the Group took account of the findings of relevant research, and the views of the DES Inspectorate:

The ESRI report *Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS, 2015* points to a higher prevalence of ability grouping in DEIS post-primary schools than is found in non-DEIS post-primary schools. It notes that ability grouping is relatively rare at primary level. Findings from myriad research in this area suggest that there is no one system of organisational grouping or student placement that works equally well for all students. It suggests that the success or otherwise of ability groupings depends less on the actual grouping itself than on the philosophy and purpose underpinning the grouping, and how the composition of the class groups and the quality of teaching reflects the intended philosophy.

Research published by the ESRI *Improving Second Level Education – Using evidence for policy development, 2011* indicates that the streaming of students by ability in Ireland has an adverse effect on overall education standards. This research shows that students in lower ability streams tend to perform more poorly when grouped together while students assigned to higher ability classes do not make corresponding gains, hence average student performance falls. Similar to research elsewhere, the ESRI review shows that teacher-student interaction is crucial to student outcomes and that the teaching methods employed by teachers make a difference in this regard.

In light of these findings many post-primary schools have started to move from strict streaming of their students in first year and now group their students according to mixed ability for much of the junior cycle. However, it needs to be noted that mixed ability settings can take many forms. The DES Inspectorate does not favour one system of ability grouping over another. Schools are advised to adopt flexible grouping strategies that reflect individual needs and strive to improve educational outcomes for all students. Schools are also advised to ensure that groupings are regularly monitored to enable changes to be made where necessary.

Recommendations

Schools should be advised to adopt a pragmatic approach to grouping students, which reflects a commitment to improving outcomes for all students. This may include varying degrees of individual, small group, segregated and mainstream provision, team teaching and/or in-class cooperative support.

Streaming in a specific subject area should be based on achievement in the individual subject as well as other factors, and not solely on the results of a cognitive ability assessment

Teachers in schools participating in the SSP should be provided with CPD to facilitate upskilling in their teaching methods to effectively support pupils of differing abilities

All forms of support for pupils, which involve the grouping of pupils according to ability whether through setting, streaming or in-class ability groups should be documented, carefully planned and regularly reviewed in light of pupils ongoing achievement levels.

School Leadership

School leadership is recognised as being key to the success of the implementation of programmes and supports to increase the quality learning experiences of the children attending schools. In the case of DEIS schools, this is even more crucial. Various evaluations have highlighted that where good school leadership was in evidence, the school climate was better, planning was more effective and the learning and other outcomes were more favourable.

The Group noted the Department’s policy of investing in the capacity of educational leaders through professional development and ongoing support in order to achieve a quality education system. While this is an issue for the overall school system, the Group noted particular challenges faced by principals in urban DEIS schools and the need for account to be taken of this in the delivery of training and in the prioritisation of SSP school leaders.

The Group also noted the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 and its objective of “developing the continuum of teacher education to equip teachers with the right skills for the 21st century” under which the DES will action the following:

- Expand the range of supports available through the Centre for School Leadership.
- Introduce on a phased basis, a mentoring programme for newly appointed School Principals.
- Introduce a professional coaching service for serving principals, allowing up to 400 principals per annum to access professional coaching.
- Introduction of a postgraduate qualification for aspiring school leaders.

Recommendations

Priority should be given to Principals and teachers from schools supported under the SSP in accessing professional leadership training, preparation courses for newly appointed principals, mentoring and coaching courses etc.

Planning for, and outcomes of, such training should be set out in the School Plan.

Staff retention in DEIS schools

The issue of staff retention in DEIS schools was raised by a number of stakeholders, with particular emphasis on the level of ‘burnout’ following many years working with very challenging pupils. The difficulty of taking time out through career breaks etc. when seniority cannot be maintained was also raised.

The implementation of the **Sabbatical Leave scheme** included (but not actioned) in the current DEIS Action Plan is strongly supported by the education partners. It was intended that the introduction of a sabbatical leave scheme would create opportunities for principals and teachers who have served for a defined period in a school participating in the SSP, to apply to undertake a period of development to enhance their own learning and effectiveness, and bring subsequent benefits to their students and schools.

The Group noted that the general issue of staff wellbeing and classroom challenges is being considered by the DES and that the outcome of these deliberations would be relevant to all schools, particularly schools participating in the SSP with the highest concentrations of disadvantage.

Recommendation

Further consideration to be given to the possibility of a sabbatical leave scheme for SSP schools in the context of any overall measures to be introduced by the DES.

Additional financial allowance for teaching in DEIS schools

Stakeholders suggested that there should be an allowance for teachers employed in DEIS Schools.

The Group noted that there is no other comparable allowance in the system, e.g. teachers working in special schools do not attract any such allowances. The Department has also put in place a number of supports for DEIS schools including a reduced PTR in DEIS Band 1 schools, priority access to CPD for teachers, together with a range of other in-school supports. Taking this into account, the payment of an additional allowance to teachers working in one particular subset of schools is not recommended by the Group.

Recommendation

The payment of an allowance to teachers employed in schools participating in the SSP is not recommended.

Early Education Provision

Additional DES resources specifically allocated to address educational disadvantage in early year's settings is confined to the following two schemes:

- **Early Start** was established in 1994 and provides pre-school services in 40 DEIS primary schools in areas of urban disadvantage in Cork (6 schools), Dublin (26), Galway (1), Limerick (3), Louth (2), Waterford (1) and Wicklow (1). It is a one-year early intervention scheme to meet the needs of children of pre-school age who are at risk of not reaching their potential within the school system. The project involves an educational programme to enhance overall development, promote positive educational outcomes and offset the effects of social disadvantage.
- **The Rutland Street Project** has been funded by the DES since 1974 to meet the needs of preschool children in disadvantaged communities in central Dublin and it has also been used to pilot approaches to educational disadvantage. It is a 2 year pre-school programme for 95 children between the ages of 3 – 5 years.

The Group noted that the 2005 DEIS Action Plan commitment to extend access to Early Start to children in all DEIS urban primary schools has been overtaken by other policy developments in terms of the introduction of the Department of Children & Youth Affairs (DCYA) ECCE scheme. Government investment in the early year's sector has been primarily focussed on the provision of a universal pre-school programme (ECCE) and the DES is working closely with the DCYA to build capacity in the ECCE sector, particularly around the quality of educational provision in ECCE centres. In Budget 2016, the free pre-school year has been expanded to give parents up to 76 weeks (2 years) of early education for their children, depending on their child's month of birth.

DCYA has developed a new Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) to support children with a disability in ECCE and will be considering further the development of the ECCE programme in areas of disadvantage to consider what additional provision may be required/approved to mitigate educational disadvantage. The Group noted that the work of the PEIP/ABC early intervention programmes are particularly relevant to early year settings servicing disadvantaged areas, and in particular the National College of Ireland early learning initiative and similar programmes developed as part of Limerick Regeneration (See Chapter 5).

Recommendation

Provision in the Early Start and Rutland Street programmes should be kept under review in the context of the development of targeted supports to tackle educational disadvantage in ECCE settings.

Wellbeing

National Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion developed by NEPS, DES, DOH and HSE have been issued to Primary and Post Primary Schools. These guidelines outline the vital role played by schools in the promotion of well-being and positive mental health in children and young people. Schools can also provide a safe and supportive environment for building life skills and resilience and a strong sense of connectedness to school. These guidelines will assist schools in strengthening their practice with regard to mental health promotion¹³.

NEPS has published Guidelines on the Development of Student Support teams at Post Primary Level which are a vital structure in a whole school approach to well-being and mental health promotion.¹⁴

Wellbeing is prioritised in the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015), where it is one of the eight principles that inform the new programme. Wellbeing is defined as including physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing. Students will undertake learning in a new area entitled Wellbeing throughout the three years of junior cycle. The NCCA's draft *Guidelines on Wellbeing in the Junior Cycle*, which will assist schools in drawing up a Wellbeing programme, have Physical Education, Social Personal and Health Education and Civic Social and Political Education as central elements.

The Group noted the particular importance of wellbeing in the school climate of schools serving children from the most disadvantaged communities and the need for them to prioritise supports for mental health and other aspects of wellbeing in the context of existing supports and guidance material. In this context, the Group noted the additional NEPS supports for DEIS schools provided for in the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 – and set out in section (v) below. Supports for the well-being of school staff are also of paramount importance.

¹³ Relevant Links:

<http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Well-Being-in-Primary-Schools-Guidelines-for-Mental-Health-Promotion.pdf>
http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education_Reports/Well_Being_PP_Schools_Guidelines.pdf

¹⁴ Relevant Links <http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Student-Support-Teams-in-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf>

Recommendations

SSP schools should strengthen links with the relevant support services

SSP schools should continue to provide a safe and supportive environment for staff members. It is crucial that staff members are supported in maintaining their personal health and well-being.

All SSP post primary schools should implement a Junior Cycle wellbeing programme for students entering first year in September 2017.

Behavioural Supports

The group noted that behavioural issues are particularly acute in DEIS schools and the subject of consistent demands for additional supports. *Learning From the Evaluation of DEIS*, states – “Of particular interest is evidence of greater focus on behavioural difficulties in the most disadvantaged primary school contexts, where children are more likely to be identified with behavioural problems than similar children attending other schools (McCoy et al., 2012a). Further analysis highlights disproportionality in teacher identification of emotional behavioural difficulties (EBD) among Irish primary school children (Banks et al., 2012)”.

The Group noted that the DES is currently in the process of developing a new *Inclusion Support Service* which will incorporate the following three existing services: the *National Behaviour Support Service*, the *Special Education Support Service* and the *Visiting Teachers for Hearing and Visual Impairment Service*. The new service will come under the remit of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

The overall issue for the DES is an articulated policy in relation to behaviour supports for schools, both primary and post-primary sectors.

The following is a synopsis of the behavioural supports currently available:

(i) National Behaviour Support Service

The National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) provides support and expertise to partner post-primary schools on issues related to behaviour. The NBSS currently partners with 101 self-selected post primary schools to promote and support positive behaviour for learning and this represents 14% of all post primary schools. Of the 101 post primary schools which receive support, 89% of these are DEIS schools.

The service provides support on three levels:

- School-Wide Support
- Targeted intervention support to small groups of students
- Intensive, individualised support for individual and small groups of students.

NBSS Speech and Language Therapy Service provides services to DEIS partner schools as follows:

- Specific Speech and Language Therapy for target students

- CPD for SEN, English and Behaviour for Learning teachers
- Specific projects on the development of communication friendly schools in order to promote oracy and language development
- Research and implementing interventions and strategies to address student speech, language and communication needs
- SLT guidelines for teachers on teaching and learning strategies.

NBSS Occupational Therapy Service provides the following services to all partner schools:

- Sensory regulation strategies
- Handwriting improvement techniques
- Social Skills Training
- Strategies to enable students displaying challenging behaviour to actively engage in learning
- Assisting schools with the development of a positive peer culture
- Anxiety management
- Student balance and coordination strategies
- Classroom and school environmental audits and follow up action
- Continuing Professional Development for teachers on strategies and programmes to promote student self-regulation
- Direct work with students to improve self-regulation and help them to actively engage in learning

(ii) The Special Education Support Services

The role of the Special Education Support Service (SESS), which was established in 2003, is to enhance the quality of learning and teaching in relation to special educational provision. The service co-ordinates, develops and delivers a range of professional development initiatives and support structures for school personnel working with students with special educational needs in mainstream primary and post-primary schools, special schools and special classes.

The SESS aims to provide a quality service that is inclusive, promotes collaboration and co-operation and provides for equality of access. Since DEIS schools tend to have a higher concentration of SEN pupils this service is a particularly important resource for these schools.

(iii) The Visiting Teachers for Children with Hearing and Visual Impairment Service

The Visiting Teachers for Children with Hearing and Visual Impairment (VTHVI) in Ireland provides support for the education of children who are deaf or hard of hearing, and children who are blind or who have significant visual impairment. Support is provided at the pre-school stage, and at primary and post-primary school levels.

(iv) Support Teacher Project

In 1995, the Support Teacher Project was established in order to assist primary schools with children who experience emotional and behavioral difficulties. The purpose was to cater for the holistic development of both disruptive and withdrawn pupils, and to promote the

implementation of measures which would alleviate the effects of the behaviour of those children on their own education and on the education of others.

Over time, teachers were provided to 41 primary schools and represent an allocation to individual schools. While individual posts are managed within schools, it is understood that there is currently no national management structure to support this service. Given the rationale for these posts (to address emotional and behavioural difficulties in schools) the Group agreed that consideration of the future deployment, and supports for, this service should take place in the context of arrangements for the establishment of an Inclusion Support Service under the NCSE.

Recommendations

While it will be a matter for the NCSE to reconfigure the services within the Inclusion Support Service, there is a need for greater cohesion across the service provision for schools participating in the SSP.

Existing good practice in SSP schools availing of the services of the NBSS should be captured, collated and used to inform future practice.

Review the Support Teacher Service provision for emotional and behavioural supports within some SSP primary schools, in the context of the introduction of the new Resource Teacher Allocation model and the planned establishment of the Inclusion Support Service.

The group noted the range of services provided to schools from a variety of service providers and recommend that formal interagency working arrangements be put in place for service provision in SSP schools.

(v) NEPS – National Educational Psychological Service

One of the areas, which was identified in consultation with stakeholders and in internal discussions as needing particular attention, was the psychological supports provided by NEPS – the National Educational Psychological Service. NEPS supports schools to maintain a safe and caring environment that fosters a sense of belonging and promotes academic, social and emotional growth, and general well-being of all learners, having particular regard for those with SEN and those who are at risk of marginalisation.

In light of the particular challenges expressed by schools participating in the SSP, NEPS has provided a detailed proposal to progress a standardised, progressive universal approach to supporting those schools which involves:

- *Doubling the current pupil weightings for DEIS schools:* : This would increase NEPS time to DEIS schools by between 40 and 50% and in so doing, greatly enhance the level of access of DEIS schools to the range of NEPS in-school supports including assessment,

consultation, intervention, training and supporting communities of practice. This proposal is dependent on an additional 16 posts.

- *Providing for a targeted roll-out of Evidenced-based Support and Development programmes to DEIS Schools over a 3-year period to include:*
 - Delivery of **The Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programme**. Provision of 2-day training to teachers in the delivery of the **Friends Programmes**.
 - Training for Schools on implementation of a **Continuum of Support and Effective Individual Support Planning & Monitoring and Evaluation of Outcomes** using the **NEPS Student Support File**.
 - Training and Support for Schools on implementing and evaluating **Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers** and the **Balanced Approach to Literacy Development in the Early Years Group Consultation** – a specific consultation for teachers seeking support to improve their practice in meeting the needs of, and including diverse groups of, children.

These programmes are aimed at building teacher and school capacity in promoting academic, and social and emotional competence. They encompass a range of evidence-based approaches to the application of psychology in improving schools' capacity to identify and respond to pupils experiencing barriers to learning, through offering a continuum of research and evidence-based supports. As NEPS has the personnel with the expertise to deliver these programmes, NEPS would have the capacity to guarantee the roll-out to all DEIS schools who wish to avail of these programmes within a 3-year time-frame. This guarantee is dependent on an additional 12 posts which are required to leverage the existing capacity of trained personnel and a dedicated non-pay budget for substitution.

- *Review and enhancement of collaborative and coordinated working with DES sections and support services and external HSE/Tusla/Local Partnership services.*
 - NEPS current protocols for liaison and collaboration with NCSE, NBSS and SESS will be up-dated and enhanced in the context of the development of the ISS.
 - NEPS will continue to develop protocols for liaison and collaboration with the range of HSE/Tusla sponsored services for pupils, i.e. EWS (including SCP and HSCL), Network Disability Teams, Primary Care Teams (Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Psychology Services), CAMHS and Jigsaw.
 - NEPS will be represented at, and contribute at local level on, relevant committees and sub-committees of CYPSCs, Local Area Partnerships and Meitheal, with particular focus on the needs of disadvantaged communities.

Context: The Programme for a Partnership Government includes tackling disadvantage among its priorities for education. Related priorities include prioritising early years and improving provision for pupils with SEN. In investment terms, the programme commits to increasing NEPS staffing by 65 posts by 2021. NEPS current provision to DEIS schools is 49 posts, with 20 of those additional to what a non-DEIS school receives. NEPS service to DEIS

schools is hindered by the lack of a dedicated non-pay budget for teacher substitution costs and by the lack of capacity to target all DEIS schools in a standardised, systematic manner¹⁵.

The Group also noted that substitution is not currently available to teachers wishing to avail of NEPS training and that this is a factor in the number of schools availing of this service.

Recommendations

The Group recommends implementation of the NEPS proposal to expand its provision in DEIS schools as resources permit.

It is also recommended that a model of provision which includes teacher substitution should be developed in the context of a pilot project in a single school cluster.

Literacy and Numeracy Supports

The group noted that national policies such as *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2014-2020)* have recognised developing good literacy and numeracy skills, including digital literacy skills and oral language skills, as fundamental to the life chances of each individual and essential to the quality and equity of society.

A number of key national education and training strategies underpin work in this area and drive the significant changes that are being planned and implemented across the continuum of education through a “whole-of system” approach.

One of the key objectives of the Action Plan for Education, 2016-2019 is to ‘*significantly reduce the gap between low achieving students in literacy and numeracy in DEIS and those in non-DEIS schools.*’

The National Strategy on Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life (2011-2020) aims to improve literacy and numeracy standards among children and young people in the education system. The Strategy takes a broad approach to literacy and numeracy, seeking to raise standards for all young people and involving all educational settings, parents, national and local agencies, across early years, primary and post-primary.

The DEIS School Support Programme already includes a range of measures to support Literacy and Numeracy which have contributed to the overall improvements in this area to date.

¹⁵ NEPS currently has no non-pay budget to cover release of teachers and material costs of delivery of programmes. Access to many NEPS programmes is governed by schools willingness to cover teacher release and pay a fee to cover basic programme delivery costs. In a number of DEIS areas local area partnerships have supported access to the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programme as part of a wider multi-agency rollout of the school, child and parent strands of this programme. NEPS has also partnered with NBSS, SESS, local HSE services and ETBs to deliver the IY and Friends programmes, mental health awareness training and to develop a training programme for Post Primary Student Support Teams.

The *2014 National Assessments on Literacy and Numeracy Report* noted that while there have been improvements in reading in DEIS schools since National Assessments 2009, there has been no real reduction in the gap between pupils in DEIS urban Band 1 schools and pupils in other school types. The large proportion of very low achievers in reading in DEIS urban Band 1 schools is a particular concern. With some exceptions, performance in Mathematics in DEIS schools is still well below national standards. It shows that “despite the improvement, it is of concern that substantial gaps between DEIS Urban Band 1 schools and other schools remain”.

This report, while subject to certain limitations regarding the interpretation of data for DEIS schools, provides insights about context factors and practices that impact on pupil’s achievement and identifies a range of actions that could be taken to further improve standards in the critical areas of reading and maths. These actions include additional and focused professional development for teachers in areas such as the teaching of problem-solving in maths. They also include helping parents to support their children’s learning, ensuring sufficient time for learning of reading and maths, and improving the assessment tools available, particularly standardised tests.

In terms of literacy and numeracy in DEIS schools, the Group is satisfied that there should continue to be a focus on full implementation of the National Strategy on Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life (2011-2020). All schools are required to monitor the progress they are making on the goals they have set for improving literacy and numeracy as part of their SSE process and this should be a particular focus of the new Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

The Group noted the focus of the DCYA-supported Prevention and Early Intervention and Area Based Childhood Programmes on literacy and numeracy supports for children from disadvantaged urban areas and their families and the body of research now available to provide an evidence-base for these interventions in the school context. Discussion in the Group however emphasised that schools should focus on interventions that are aligned to and complement DES policy, particularly those which have been found to be effective in the DEIS context.

The Group also noted that the Interim Review of the Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life is being finalised. In accordance with commitments in the Action Plan for Education, 2016-2019 this interim review will seek to improve performance in DEIS schools to maintain focus on reducing the gap between DEIS and non-DEIS schools in line with revised targets set under the Review.

Recommendations

The National Strategy on Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020 should be fully implemented by all SSP Schools.

In their School Plan, SSP schools should clearly set specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time specific targets for literacy and numeracy and evaluate them annually.

Implementation of the L&N Strategy in DEIS Band 1 schools should be a particular focus of the DEIS/SSP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

Literacy and Numeracy programmes/supports should be considered in the overall context of matching resources to identified need and alignment with DES policy and practice on teaching and learning in this area.

Engagement through a partnership approach which involves schools, parents, and national and local agencies is a priority of the Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life Strategy (2011-2020) – opportunities for cross-learning to benefit all SSP schools, in particular, should be considered.

Schools should consult the *Special Educational Needs – A Continuum of Support* to access information on assisting pupils with difficulties in the area of Literacy and Numeracy.

JCSP Library Project

The Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), introduced in 1996, is particularly targeted at junior cycle (lower secondary) students who are identified as being at risk of early school leaving. There are 231 schools in JCSP, of which 176 are DEIS schools. There are 30 librarians working in 30 DEIS post primary schools in order to support the JCSP Demonstration Library programme. It is planned to undertake a review of the JCSP, which will take account of changes as a result of the Framework for Junior Cycle and the operation of the JCSP to date, including the JCSP Library Project element. The needs of DEIS schools will be considered, within this review.

Library / school partnerships have been established under the National Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life (2011-2020) to engage young learners with an important local resource, including those from DEIS Schools.

Recommendation

The DES review of the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP), including the JCSP library services, should take account of the ongoing needs of DEIS schools.

English as an Additional Language Support

In order to access the education system in Ireland, a pupil must be able to speak through the medium of English or Irish. Education partners and other stakeholders have drawn particular attention to deficiencies in the current level of provision of English as an Additional Language (EAL) supports, particularly at second level.

Inclusive education, which incorporates multiculturalism, is now a mandatory area in all Initial Teacher Education programmes approved by the Teaching Council. The needs of EAL children have been identified as a necessary focus of pre-school education and the new primary language curriculum encourages the use of pupils' home language as a classroom resource.

The needs of 'English as an Additional Language' (EAL) students are the subject of a specific Action in the National Strategy: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life. Findings from both NAERM 2014 and PISA 2015 show that these students perform significantly lower than other pupils in English reading. Consultations with stakeholders on this point seem to suggest that there is a particular issue at post primary level in terms of pupils achieving proficiency in the language of instruction. Supports for this group are particularly important in the context of DEIS schools as they cater for large numbers of children for whom English or Irish is not their first language.

Apart from cultural and other considerations, the main issue for DEIS schools is the need to ensure that the additional needs of children whose first language is not English or Irish are being met, EAL resources are provided under the GAM with additional posts available on appeal to Schools Division. HSCL and SCP are particularly important interventions for this group to assist in engaging families with education and in supporting that engagement beyond the school day.

The Group noted that the provision of EAL within the GAM means that statistics/data on EAL provision in Ireland are not available, and that this needs to be addressed to ensure that the identified educational needs of these pupils are being met.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the level of EAL provision at second level be reviewed with a view to establishing whether the academic learning needs of pupils in SSP schools are being met

Arrangements should be made for the collection of data on EAL inputs, outputs and outcomes in all schools, with particular emphasis on provision in schools with the highest concentrations of pupils from disadvantaged communities to establish whether the needs of pupils are being met.

Adult and Family Literacy Provision

Supporting parents and family literacy is one of the 12 key elements of the Further Education Training Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. Actions on family literacy are being prioritised in 2016/17, including enhancing partnerships between schools and Further Education and Training to highlight opportunities for adult learners and a focus on family literacy in NALA's 2016/17 awareness campaign. Parents will also benefit from the broader implementation of the Strategy, including a focus on more intensive provision and group engagement, improved initial assessment arrangements and a range of other developments.

The Group noted that adequate provision of literacy supports for adults whose first language is not English or Irish is also important in the context of supporting parents to engage with their children's education.

Recommendations

Adult and family Literacy service providers should formally engage with related support services (HSCL, SCP LCDCs and CYPSC's) to ensure the family literacy is fully supported and engagement with education is improved

Planning for engagement with adult and family literacy services should be included in the School Plan.

Data on service inputs, outputs and outcomes should be collected and reported under the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Initial Teacher Education

The Group noted that inclusive education, incorporating the areas of SEN, multiculturalism and disadvantage is now a compulsory element of all ITE programmes approved by the Teaching Council. The Group noted that while opportunities for student teaching experience in DEIS schools is limited, it cannot be made compulsory in view of current student numbers. It agreed however, that notwithstanding current placement difficulties, all students should be encouraged to undertake their teacher training in as many different school settings as possible.

Recommendations

Initial teacher education should focus in particular on training around educational disadvantage so that future teachers will understand the factors which can impact on teaching and learning and be better prepared to develop appropriate strategies.

Schools participating in the SSP should be encouraged to provide placements for trainee teachers – and should record this activity in their school plan.

In line with the *Action Plan for Education 2016-2019* objective of “developing the continuum of teacher education to equip teachers with the right skills for the 21st century and learning and improve school leadership”, it was noted that the DES will build upon the concluded pilot phase of Droichead and conduct the growth phase between 2016-2018 of “Droichead”, the national induction process for all newly qualified teachers.

Professional Development

As the continuing professional development (CPD) needs of schools have evolved over time, so too has the teacher-education framework. The intensive training and support phase of CPD for specific DEIS programmes, in line with commitments in the DEIS Action Plan 2005, is now complete. A general CPD framework, based on transformative models of support, is in place for all schools. This framework focuses on building capacity within and across schools through strengthening whole-school collaborative approaches and fostering networks and communities of practice across schools. This support will continue to be targeted at schools with the greatest need. A key feature of the work of support services is the adaptation of these models to suit individual schools’ contexts and teachers’ needs.

Models of CPD will be underpinned by a facilitative style of support, which will focus on raising teachers’ expectations and encouraging schools to harness their internal knowledge and expertise that can be applied to their specific contexts. This approach recognises schools as equal partners in the process, focusing on capacity building, leadership enhancement and collaboration. Schools will be enabled to avail of a range of elective supports across a wide variety of areas, in addition to the roll-out of CPD frameworks to support curriculum reform at both primary and post-primary level. Some specific interventions and programmes will continue to be provided exclusively to schools participating in the School Support Programme (SSP).

The Group noted that additional capacity may be required to accommodate new schools coming into the SSP.

Recommendation

Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) should continue to prioritise development support for teachers in schools participating in the SSP including targeted support for new schools participating in the SSP.

Supporting Transitions

Periods of transition from one level of education to another can be a challenge for students and families. Supporting successful transition at every level of the education continuum is rooted in the underlying conviction that giving every child high-quality support from the start of their education can improve their chances of success later in their educational career.

There are a number of key transitions for learners as they move across the education continuum:

- From home to pre-school setting
- From pre-school to the junior year of primary school
- From junior to senior classes at primary level
- From primary school to post primary school
- From junior to senior cycle within post primary school
- From post primary school to further and higher education and the world of work

Successfully negotiating the transfer from one level to the next is important to all students but is vital in the case of students from disadvantaged areas where retention and progression are 2 of the key DEIS themes.

The Action Plan for Education includes specific actions to improve transitions between pre-school and primary schools, with more information being provided to parents on their children's' achievements and progress.

The transition from preschool to primary school is recognised nationally and internationally as a very important time in children's lives. This transition is a priority area of work in the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's Strategic Plan, 2015-2018. A coordinated information-sharing process between the preschool and primary school is an important way of supporting children making successful transitions. As part of the implementation of Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life, the NCCA has undertaken research to prepare draft templates for consultation and the preparation of reporting templates based on research and trialling is ongoing in 2017. Online reporting templates will be available for use by practitioners in 2018. At second level, the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement will be awarded under the new Framework for Junior Cycle. A new grading system and common point's scheme will be implemented from 2017 as part of improvements to the transition from second level to higher education.

There are a number of key actors to support transitions and assist with successful progressions through the education continuum:

- The **Home School Community Liaison Scheme** which is discussed in Chapter 5 has a very important role to play in supporting pupils and their families in transition through the various stages of education. HSCL staff have a particular role in working with parents and pre-school settings in relation to school readiness for transition to primary and thereafter in supporting transitions from primary to post-primary and within post-primary from Junior Cycle to Senior Cycle. They also work with school Guidance Counsellors and Higher Education Access programme staff to facilitate onward progression to further and higher education.
- **School Guidance Counsellors, Higher Education Access Officers, and Education and Training Boards PLC and FET staff** each have particular roles to play – as outlined below.

The restoration of the Career Guidance/Counsellor posts in Post Primary schools is one of the main issues raised in the context of consultations with stakeholders. Many are of the view that guidance counselling should be a separate support in schools. In 2012, as part of budgetary measures, Guidance posts were no longer allocated to schools on an ex-quota basis. However, all 195 DEIS schools were effectively sheltered from these changes as a result of the more favourable staffing schedule of 18.25:1. This represented a 0.75 point improvement compared to the PTR of 19:1 that applied in other second level schools.

In Budget 2016, DEIS Schools benefited from the overall 0.3 improvement to the staffing schedule (in respect of guidance) which gave them an enhanced allocation on the basis of 17.95:1 in respect of the current school year.

The 2015 ESRI Report, *Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS*, notes that, “given the greater reliance of working-class young people on formal guidance within the school (see Chapter Four), the withdrawal of the ex-quota allocation for guidance will have had particularly serious implications for young people in DEIS schools (McCoy et al., 2014c). Furthermore, many DEIS schools had previously been in receipt of additional guidance resources through the Guidance Enhancement Initiative; its abolition is likely to lead to even greater difficulties in combining the educational guidance and personal counselling elements of the guidance counsellor role in the context of reduced resources.” The report goes on to state that students in disadvantaged schools lack the “insider” knowledge through the family networks available to their middle class peers and are more reliant on formal school based guidance. Therefore, career guidance in DEIS schools takes on particular importance as many of the salient adults in DEIS pupil’s lives have not accessed third level education and as a result the support/guidance is not available in the same way as pupils in non-DEIS schools.

One of the objectives in the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 is to “enhance support for learners to make informed career choices”. In order to do this a “Review of guidance services, tools and career information for school students and adults and recommend changes to improve services” will be completed by 2019.

As a result of the Budget 2017 decision to further enhance the guidance allocation to schools and provide schools with a separate allocation for guidance outside the quota, the pupil teacher ratio will revert to 19:1 for all post primary schools with effect from September 2017.

The guidance allocation will be shown separately on the staffing schedules. DEIS Schools will have a guidance allocation of 1.15 of the PTR which represents a total of approximately 230 posts for the provision of guidance to this cohort of schools (as opposed to a guidance allocation of 0.4 for non-DEIS schools).

Recommendations

Subject to the outcome of the Review of Guidance Services all post-primary schools participating in the School Support Programme should have access to a dedicated career guidance counsellor.

The School Plan should provide for formal engagement between Guidance Counsellors, HSCL Coordinators and Further Education & Training and Higher Education access officers to support successful transitions between post-primary and further education and higher education.

Arts Initiatives

The arts have a particular role to play in tackling educational disadvantage. Learning experiences in the arts contribute to the development of academic skills, including reading and writing. It is further shown that the arts nurture a motivation to learn by emphasising active engagement, creativity and innovation, disciplined and sustained attention, persistence and risk taking, among other competencies. The integration of the arts in education is also part of an inclusivity strategy and can result in strong positive cognitive, emotional, social and collaborative changes in learners in all schools and particularly in DEIS schools. A number of schools have developed particular music, drama and other arts initiatives, which involve both pupils and parents in activities to support their engagement with education (e.g. Creative Engagement, CRAFTed, FÍS, Creative Schools Award, All-island Schools Drama Competition, All-island Song Competition All-island Art Competition, All-island Poetry Competition, Texaco Art Competition, Scór, Siansa Gael Linn, Digital Schools Initiative and Music Generation). All schools in Ireland now have access to the Arts in Education Portal¹⁶, which was launched in May 2015, as an Arts in Education Charter initiative.

One of the objectives under the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 is to create a stronger focus on Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation by implementing the Arts in Education Charter, launched in 2013, and by the expansion of Music Generation Music Education Partnerships. A mapping exercise will be undertaken under the Arts in Education Charter, which will highlight areas of the country with poor arts in education access and participation for young people. This may highlight disadvantaged schools and areas with a view to using the data to improve access and participation for young people to the arts in those areas highlighted. Devising an integrated implementation plan for arts in education is a priority for the Creative Ireland Programme 2017-2022 under Pillar 1. The plan – Arts Rich School Award ARÍS - will be launched in co-operation with the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in September 2017.

¹⁶ www.artsineducation.ie

Recommendations

Ensure that initiatives under the Arts in Education Charter take account of the needs of DEIS schools so that these schools have the opportunity to participate fully, e.g. in the ARÍS Arts Rich School Awards – which will be launched in co-operation with the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs under Pillar 1 of Creative Ireland Programme in September 2017. DEIS schools to be prioritised in any initial roll out.

Ensure that interventions developed by SSP schools around the arts are included in school planning and reporting under the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Transition Year Programmes in DEIS Schools

The Group noted the attention drawn for the first time in the DES 2016 Retention Report to a possible link between Transition Year and improved retention rates for second-level pupils. Data for the 2009 entry cohort show that, within DEIS schools, 39% of pupils followed the Transition Year programme. This compares to 61% of pupils in non-DEIS schools. Higher Leaving Certificate retention rates for pupils who followed the Transition Year programme were observed in both DEIS and non-DEIS schools. The Leaving Certificate retention rate for pupils who followed Transition Year in DEIS schools was 89.5%. This compares to 78.3% for those who did not follow a Transition Year programme.

The Group agreed that further consideration of this issue is needed to explore more fully the impact of TY in DEIS schools – and that this should be undertaken in the context of school planning and reported under the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

Recommendations

The Group recommends that SSP schools should consider the potential of a Transition Year Programme where one does not exist in order to discourage early school leaving.

SSP schools should consult teachers/students and their parents/guardians in the development of a new TY programme or in the review of a current TY programmes in order to raise participation levels.

Reduced Timetables

Concern has been raised by stakeholders regarding the increased use of reduced timetables for pupils in schools. The position of the DES is that all pupils who are enrolled to a school should attend school for the full day, unless exempted from doing so for exceptional circumstances, such as medical reasons. No provision exists for the use of reduced timetables for particular pupils or groups of pupils. Reduced timetables should not be used as a behavioural management technique, or as a *de facto* suspension or expulsion.

Notwithstanding this position, the DES is aware that some schools may apply a shorter school day in limited circumstances. Such arrangements should only be put in place in order to assist a pupil to return to school, where a pupil has been experiencing an absence due to a medical or behavioural related condition. Any such arrangement should be a transitional arrangement, which is designed to assist the reintegration of a pupil to a school environment. Schools should have already requested support from NEPS in relation to pupils exhibiting behavioural difficulties of such an extent that a shortened day or reduced timetable is being considered. In making any such arrangements, school authorities should be mindful of the best interests of the child and of the child's right to a full day in school.

Recommendation

Tusla should require schools to report on the number of pupils who are on a reduced timetable.

School Improvement Plan

Schools self-evaluation empowers a school community to identify and affirm good practice and to identify and take action on areas that merit improvement. Currently, all schools are required (Circulars 39/12; 39/16) to complete action plans known as the school improvement plan under the school's self-evaluation (SSE) guidelines. School self-evaluation is primarily about schools taking ownership of their own development and improvement. The self-evaluation report and school improvement plan set out clearly what needs to be done to further improve the work of the school. Schools participating in the current SSP are required to develop and implement three year improvement plans as a condition of their participation in DEIS. These plans are the school's improvement plan for the purposes of school self-evaluation, and no additional or separate improvement plan is required. DEIS schools are required, within their own particular context, to take note of the emphasis that the school self-evaluation process places on the core activity of any school: teaching and learning. They should ensure a focus on teaching and learning wherever relevant when planning for improvement in literacy, numeracy, attendance, retention, examination attainment (post-primary schools only), progression and partnership with parents and others. DEIS schools should ensure that their action plans for improvement have a robust evidence base, and are clearly targeted at pupils requiring specific interventions and supports.

The Group noted the progress made by SSP schools in school planning - as set out in the DES Inspectorate reports for both Primary and Post Primary Schools¹⁷. The approach to school planning taken under the DEIS Programme has become the template for school planning in the wider school system so that schools new to the SSP should already be familiar the planning process.

¹⁷ <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/?pageNumber=2>

Recommendations

Schools participating in the new SSP should continue to use their School Self Evaluation Plans for improvement to incorporate their plans for literacy, numeracy, attendance, examination attainment (post-primary schools only), retention, progression and partnership with parents and others.

Plans should clearly state how additional resources allocated under the SSP are being deployed and identify related outcomes.

Special Education

Funding for special education provision in 2016 will amount to some €1.5 billion, which is equivalent to 18% of the gross overall current allocation for education and training. The funding includes:

- 12,900 Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)
- Over 11,800 learning support and Resource Teacher posts in mainstream primary and post primary schools
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE) allocated 7,015 Resource Teaching posts to mainstream schools for September 2016
- Over 1,100 teachers in 125 special schools
- 150 new Special Classes will be opened for the 2016/17 school year, which means there will be over 1,150 special classes in place
- Assistive technology/ Specialised equipment
- Special school transport arrangements
- A visiting teacher service for children who are Blind/Visually Impaired or Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- Teacher training and continuing professional development in the area of special education through the Special Education Support Service (SESS).
- Enhanced capitation grants for special schools and special classes attached to mainstream primary and post primary schools

Schools classified as DEIS urban Band 1 have a much higher concentration of disadvantage than other schools and also cater for more complex needs, with a greater prevalence of students from Traveller backgrounds, non-English speaking students and students with special educational needs (*Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS*).

In 2014, the National Council for Special Education published a report recommending a new model for the allocation of resources for children with special education needs in mainstream schools. Work on implementing this new model is well underway and it has been piloted in a number of primary and post primary schools. The findings of the pilot will guide the Department in developing a new allocation model while consultations with education partners will also continue prior to the implementation of a new model.

This work is relevant to the review of the DEIS programme as there is potential to align the allocation of resources under both the Special Education model and DEIS SSP.

The Group noted that this will be dealt with by SIU and Special Education Section in the context of resource allocation under the new DEIS identification process.

Recommendation

Formal engagement to take place between relevant DES Business Units (Special Education Section, Social Inclusion Unit and Teacher Allocations Section) to ensure alignment of resources deployed to DEIS Schools.

Further Education and Training (FET)

Further Education covers education and training which occurs after second level schooling but which does not form part of the third level system. There are a number of providers of Further and Adult Education and Training and a wide variety of schools, organisations and institutions are involved in the delivery of continuing education and training for young school leavers and adults.

The Further Education and Training Strategy sets out a comprehensive reform programme across 5 strategic goals, including supporting the active inclusion of a wide range of learners in FET programmes. Research is being undertaken on the barriers various disadvantaged groups experience in accessing FET and this will inform programme provision, structures and supports. Full details of Further Education and Training provision can be found on the various ETB websites and on the SOLAS website.¹⁸

The Youthreach programme will be reviewed in 2017 to examine its effectiveness in supporting the inclusion and progression of early school leavers and to make recommendations for further development. More broadly, work in this area will be informed by the Review of the Further, Adult and Community Education sector by the Oireachtas Committee on Education, as set out in the Programme for a Partnership Government.

Arrangements for data collection from ETBs/SOLAS on transfer and progression rates from second level to further education and training was examined. Capturing of this information is problematic as there is no central application system for FET and while new FET data systems may capture whether a starter is a school leaver, unemployed, etc., it will not record the previous school attended

The Group noted the significant role of the ETB sector in further education and training. Considering the provision of post-primary level by the ETB sector there may be an opportunity

¹⁸ www.SOLAS.ie.

for the ETB to facilitate career pathways in further education within these schools. The Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020 sets a target of 50,000 enrolments on apprenticeships and traineeships over the period of the plan. This will involve more than doubling the number of apprenticeship and traineeship programmes available.

The group noted that there is no formal arrangement or service to provide outreach into the school system by PLC and FET providers, similar to the Higher Education Access Programme.

The PLSS (Programme and Learner Support System) will capture individualised data for every FET participant and will be fully live for the calendar year 2017. PLC data for the PLSS will be drawn from PPOD.

Recommendations

Education and Training Boards should establish formal outreach arrangements to schools to encourage access through its existing education pathways.

The FET Programme and Learner and Support System (PLSS) should be fully rolled out from 2017 to assist with better data collection on participation in FET programmes.

Access to Higher Education

The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, 2015-19, provides the framework for progressing towards a higher education population that is more inclusive and reflective of society as a whole. The vision of the Plan is ‘to ensure that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland’s population’.

The Plan contains 5 key goals and more than 30 actions. It also contains targets for a number of groups that are currently under represented in higher education:

- Socio-economically disadvantaged students
- Mature students
- Students with a disability
- Part-time and flexible students
- Travellers
- Students progressing from Further Education

Progress in implementing the National Access Plan is currently being monitored by a steering group chaired by the Department of Education and Skills.

The Department of Education and Skills is providing in excess of €400 million in targeted supports for students from under-represented groups in the 2016/17 academic year.

The principal support, in financial terms, is provided for under the student grant scheme, which makes available means-tested financial assistance to less well-off students in both

further and higher education. Support towards maintenance, the student contribution and in some cases support towards fees is provided.

Other targeted access supports include the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD), the Student Assistance Fund (SAF) and a programme of bursaries for disadvantaged students. The existing bursary scheme provides in the region of 100 bursaries each year, at €2000 per student, for students who are from disadvantaged families and attending DEIS schools.

Institutional funding for access is also made available through the Higher Education Authority as part of the core funding of higher education institutions.

The Minister for Education and Skills announced an additional €8.5 million in Budget 2017 for access measures. A key element of this package will be the introduction of a new bursary scheme to mark the centenary of the 1916 Rising. This new scheme will provide bursaries to 100 students each year and will be targeted at specific groups that are currently under-represented in higher education. In particular, the bursaries will be targeted at lone parents, Travellers, mature students, students with disabilities, as well as people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Each bursary will be worth a maximum of €10,000 in value. Those students to whom bursaries are awarded are also entitled to apply for student grants towards the cost of maintenance and the student contribution or fees.

Other key strands of the Budget 2017 access package relate to the reintroduction of maintenance grants for the most disadvantaged post graduate students, €2.5 million to incentivise Higher Education Institutions to attract 2,000 more ‘access’ students into higher education, and the provision of €1 million for targeted supports to facilitate lone parents’ participation in higher education.

At local level, it is important to recognise that many third level institutions already have a high level of successful engagement with DEIS schools. Access Officers often work closely with local HSCL Coordinators and school Guidance Counsellors in order to target resources effectively and complement each other’s efforts.

The new Action Plan for Educational Inclusion provides an opportunity to build on current models of collaboration, and to encourage the establishment of more formal networks of collaboration between HSCL Coordinators, Guidance Counsellors and further education providers with regional clusters of higher education institutions. This will help advance more coherent, best practice models, supporting equity of opportunity for students in target schools.

Planned input to a **new Action Plan** under this heading is as follows:

- **Targeting disadvantaged communities:** Under the new national access plan there is an objective of engaging directly with disadvantaged communities to promote the benefits of higher education. It is intended to incentivise HEIs to develop innovative means of engaging with local communities in order to attract more ‘disadvantaged’ students into higher education. This will build on the funding provided to HEIs in 2016 under strand 1 of the *Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Fund* to support projects that increase access to initial teacher education by students from the target groups identified in the National Access Plan. The additional funding of €2.5million provided in Budget 2017 will facilitate progress in this area.

- **HEI ‘access’ partner for every school in the new action plan:** This will involve ensuring that every post primary school in the new Action Plan is linked to a HEI provider or a HE cluster of providers for ‘access’ purposes. Linked to this, is the need to ensure that the significant access work being undertaken by higher education complements the social inclusion supports being provided in the schools sector. As part of this process it is proposed to identify and disseminate good practice where the combined supports provided by access offices and schools have resulted in improved outcomes for target students.
- **Extend College Awareness Week (CAW) to each school in the action plan.** CAW is a national initiative that is supported by DES, HEA, NAPD and some corporate sponsors. The overall objective is to celebrate and promote the importance of going to Further Education and Higher Education, showcase local role models and create a ‘college-going culture’ in communities, particularly those with low levels of participation at present. The third year of CAW took place in November 2016. In 2015 events took place in 27 counties during CAW. A key element in CAW is to encourage active participation in local community events by individual students who have ‘succeeded’ in progressing from DEIS schools to 3rd level.
- **Extend mentoring programmes in post primary schools in the action plan:** a number of successful mentoring programmes for students in second level have already been developed by higher education institutions. Efforts will be made to promote the establishment of mentoring programmes in all post primary schools included in the action plan. The National Access Plan has set a target that opportunities to participate in mentoring programmes be available to students in at least 50% of DEIS schools by the end of 2017 and to 75% of schools by the end of 2019.

Recommendation

Formal arrangements should be put in place for engagement between the key actors in supporting transitions - HSCL Coordinators, School Guidance Counsellors, FET providers and Higher Education Access Officers, to ensure a consistency of provision across the country and to ensure that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, including under-represented groups, are fully supported.

4.9 Resource Allocation

Following a briefing on the work of the Technical Group, the Group discussed the allocation of resources to schools under a new SSP in terms of the logistics of accommodating new schools, maintaining supports to schools due to continue receiving supports, and reducing supports to schools identified as having a reduced need.

In particular, it noted the impact that improved DES data on the socio economic demographic of schools would have, not just on the assessment of schools for inclusion in the programme, but on the scaling of resources to meet particular identified needs. It also noted the capacity of the new assessment process to inform resource allocation in the context of location

(urban/rural) school size, over-representation of particular groups such as Travellers and pupils in need of EAL provision.

The Group noted the further work to be undertaken by the Technical Group in terms of additional variables and other factors that might be appropriate to refine the identification process.

4.10 Supports for DEIS Schools/Other measures

Information portal

A key issue that emerged from stakeholder consultation was the need for better information in and around the School Support Programme including DES services and supports and those of other agencies.

This is also borne out by the findings of the survey of DEIS schools where there is a clear need for both improved guidance, and information, to enable schools to make more effective use of resources.

Recommendations

The DES should establish a DEIS ‘portal’ to provide information for all SSP supports including external supports

The portal should be interactive, with a social media content to facilitate engagement and information sharing at local level on local services in and around schools.

SIU to consult with IT section on the development of this resource.

4.11 Data

Apart from data collected by the ERC and the DES Inspectorate as part of the evaluation of DEIS, and survey data collected from schools by SIU regarding expenditure of the DEIS grant there is very little statistical information available for analysis on individual elements of the SSP. The lack of comprehensive input, output and outcome data on the range of resources deployed by the Department in SSP schools is seen as a significant gap to be addressed under a new SSP. The Group noted the relevance of this issue to the work of the Department’s Data Knowledge Management Unit and to the arrangements being recommended by the Technical Working Group for the managements and development of data for the identification of schools for inclusion in the SSP.

Recommendations

Engagement between SIU and the appropriate business units to ensure the availability of a comprehensive up to date and accessible database of the amount and deployment of all DES resources deployed in schools.

The allocation of sufficient IT and other staff resources to ensure the maintenance of such a database to meet the ongoing monitoring, evaluation and other research needs of the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion.

Issues relating to Data Protection and the collation of Data by the DES Statistics Section are dealt with in Chapter 3.

4.12 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Group noted the challenge presented to those monitoring and evaluating the 2005 SSP by the absence of adequate relevant centrally held data. In the context of the current review, this has limited the amount known about which interventions work best in addressing educational disadvantage, and which are not as effective. The Group agreed that a new SSP should be supported by a strong Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and that the data now available to the DES and its agencies, and to other Government Departments and agencies, make this possible (it also noted the related resource requirements already mentioned).

The Group noted that the outline arrangements for a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework would be set out in the new Action Plan, with further detail contained in the follow-up Implementation Plan.

Recommendation

SIU, Statistics Section, Inspectorate and the ERC to develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for a new SSP.

Chapter 5 - Report of the Inter-Departmental Group

5.1 Cross Departmental and Interagency Collaboration – Introduction

The 2005 Action Plan for Educational Inclusion noted that:

“The education system operates in a context of broader social and economic circumstances. A wide range of issues such as poverty, family breakdown and health problems, can adversely affect the learning capacity of pupils. The education system cannot resolve these issues single-handedly, nor can it be expected to, but it must adopt a leading role in influencing interventions that directly impact on the ability of pupils to derive maximum benefit from educational provision.”

A key objective of the 2005 Action Plan was to enhance integration and partnership working, both within the education sector itself and between it and all other relevant Government Departments, agencies, organisations and groups. However, for a number of reasons including the closure in 2009 of the Department’s Regional Office Directorate, and other constraints in service provision due to the financial crisis, the scheduled development of an overall plan for addressing integration of services and partnership working issues at local level did not take place.

In addition, a number of Government and other policy decisions in recent years mean that a number of key supports to the education system, which were delivered by the DES in the early years of the DEIS programme, are now within the policy remit of other Government Departments and Agencies. These include:

- 2009 transfer of HSCL, SCP and the VTTS from DES to the NEWB to achieve service integration;
- 2009 transfer of Youth Policy remit from DES to the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC);
- 2010 co-location of DES Early Years Education Policy Unit in the DYCA to support the development of overall Early Childhood Care and Education Policy;
- 2010 introduction by the OMC of the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme;
- 2011 transfer of NEWB to newly-established DCYA ahead of planned single agency for State supports for children and families;
- 2013 establishment of the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and dissolution of the NEWB.

In light of these changes, and in view of other policy developments including the publication of Better Outcome Brighter Futures (BOBF), the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020, a comprehensive cross-Departmental input to the development and implementation of any future strategy to tackle educational disadvantage is seen as critical.

5.2 Evaluation of external inputs to the SSP

As stated previously, evaluations of the implementation of the DEIS programme by both the ERC and the DES Inspectorate note the difficulty in assigning credit for positive teaching and learning outcomes to any one particular SSP intervention. The ESRI in its *Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS* Report notes that “ The nature of the programme means that it is not possible to disentangle which particular elements of the programme work best; rather any changes in student outcomes in DEIS schools reflect the comprehensive package of supports put in place.”

Also relevant to the work of the Group is research conducted by and on behalf of other Government Departments and agencies on service delivery to children and families in the wider areas of family supports, particularly early intervention measures.¹⁹

Ongoing *Growing Up in Ireland* research publications by the ESRI also provide valuable research on the range of factors which place certain children at risk of educational disadvantage (e.g. growing up in one-parent families, home environment, early language and cognitive development, attitudes and disposition to school and learning) which help to inform policy making.²⁰

5.3 View of external inputs from stakeholder consultations

Consideration of external inputs to the SSP by the IDG was based on:

- learning from the implementation of the programme to date as set out in ERC, Inspectorate, ESRI and other evaluations,
- submissions received from Education Partners and other stakeholders and
- ongoing engagement with these groups over the course of the Review process.

This included engagement with the NGO sector through BOBF structures, in particular the BOBF Sub-group on Child Poverty.

Main issues raised throughout the consultative process

The main issues raised for consideration were:

- The importance of early years education and its role in improved school readiness;
- The importance of prevention and early intervention in the 0-6 age-group – as evidenced by the learning from the DES Early Start scheme, ECCE and DCYA’s PEI and ABC programmes;

¹⁹

<http://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2F20160729ABCProgrammePublications.htm&mn=ared&nID=8>
http://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2FResearch%2FResearch_Programme_Briefing_notes.htm&mn=resj&nID=8

²⁰ <http://www.growingup.ie/index.php?id=7>

- The cost of accessing education (uniforms, school books, transport, voluntary contributions etc.) and the particular challenge this poses for poorer families;
- The importance of the key DEIS supports of HSCL and SCP with particular concerns about ongoing funding cuts to the latter;
- The need for improved behavioural and emotional interventions in schools – to support the wellbeing of both pupils and teachers;
- The role played by the School Meals Schemes in pupil attendance, participation and retention, and in addressing hunger for children living in poverty; requests that consideration be given to locating policy and overall service delivery of school meals in a single Government Department/Agency;
- The value of providing in-school SLT and other therapeutic services, and the importance of adequate access to HSE CAMHS services;
- The importance of library services in assisting with family literacy and engagement with education;
- The need for improved and more accessible information for schools on the availability of State and other supports both nationally and locally.

5.4 National Policy Framework for Children & Young People 2014-2020

Better Outcomes Brighter Futures– National Policy Framework for Children & Young People 2014-2020

As noted in Chapter 1 *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020* (BOBF), is the national framework for the delivery of key Government commitments to children and young people across 5 national outcome areas, which are:

- Active and healthy with physical and mental wellbeing
- Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development
- Safe and protected from harm
- Economic security and opportunity
- Connected, respected and contributing to their world.

BOBF takes a whole of Government approach to improving outcomes for children and young people. Each of the 163 commitments is assigned a lead Department or Agency, which has overall responsibility for progressing the commitment. In some cases partner Departments or Agencies are identified to support the lead, as shown in the example below:

Commitments <small>[bold tick indicates lead Government department or agency]</small>	DCYA	DES	DH	DJE	DSP	DECLG	DPER	DJEL	DCENR	DF	DTTS	DAFM	DAHG	HSE	Tusla	Local Gov	AGS	Others	All
	Goal 1: Support Parents																		
G1 Develop a high-level policy statement on Parenting and Family Support to guide the provision of universal evidence-informed parenting supports. This should address parental and familial factors impacting on parenting capacity and family functioning (e.g. mental health and substance abuse) and identify responses required for 'at risk' children, families and communities.	✓																		
G2 Ensure planning and coordination of parenting supports at local level through Children's Services Committees.	✓			✓										✓	✓	✓			
G3 Continue to support parents financially with the costs of rearing children through the provision of Child Benefit.					✓														
G4 Evaluate current policy in relation to maternity and parental leave with a view to giving consideration to the introduction of paid paternity leave.	✓			✓			✓	✓											
Goal 2: Earlier Intervention and Prevention																			
G5 Work towards a rebalancing of resources to place a greater emphasis on prevention and earlier intervention.	✓	✓	✓	✓										✓	✓				

Implementation is overseen by a whole of Government Children and Young People's Policy Consortium. A subgroup of the Consortium, the Sponsors Group, is made up of Departments with responsibility for a national outcome:

- Active and healthy with physical and mental wellbeing – Department of Health
- Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development – Department of Education and Skills
- Safe and protected from harm – Department of Children and Youth Affairs
- Economic security and opportunity – Department of Social Protection
- Connected, respected and contributing to their world – Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

In order to progress implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, the Sponsors Group identified a set of cross-sectoral priorities for progression across government. The cross-sectoral priorities for 2016 are:

- Department of Health: Obesity
- Department of Education and Skills: Review of DEIS
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs: Prevention and early intervention
- Department of Social Protection: Child poverty
- Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government: Homelessness

5.5 Individual Departmental inputs – background, discussion and recommendations

Dept. of Children & Youth Affairs/TUSLA

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) supports and services to schools participating in the DEIS School Support programme extend across a number of policy areas – Early Years Care and Education, Prevention and Early Intervention, Youth Services, Educational Welfare and After-School Care. It also oversees the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020 *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (BOBF)* and the Children and Young Peoples Services Committees. The latter bring together the main statutory, community and voluntary providers of services to children and young people to enhance interagency co-operation and realise the national outcomes set out in BOBF.

Under the Programme for Government, the following commitments, which are relevant to DCYA policy development, are set out:

- The quality of the first pre-school year and the application of the Aistear curriculum will be reviewed and assessed;
- The inspection regime (for early years providers) will be reviewed and reformed with funding being withdrawn from providers that do not meet quality standards;
- The Government will look to publish a National Parenting Support Plan with a range of practical and supportive measures for all parents;
- Child poverty will be tackled by increasing community-based early intervention programmes;
- A new scheme to ensure access to the Early Childhood Care and Education programmes for young children with disabilities is commencing this year. The Government will ensure the further development of this initiative;
- The Government supports the introduction of a robust model for subsidised high quality childcare for children aged between 9-36 months in line with OECD recommendations that this approach is the best way to achieve affordability and quality at the same time;
- Support will continue to be provided to support subsidised childcare places for low income families;
- An expansion of Youth Services/Groups that support, in particular, early school leavers into employment, and in recognising the value of such services and groups the potential for greater linkages between agencies for development of wider opportunities will be examined;
- Programmes in disadvantaged areas similar to those currently supported by Atlantic Philanthropies will be supported and continued;

- The Government will also provide ongoing support to Tusla in delivering targeted intervention services;
- Publish a new School Completion Strategy to further improve school completion rates, particularly in disadvantaged areas;
- The mandatory school age will be increased to 17;
- School attendance monitoring systems to address poor attendance within some families will be improved;
- A new system to support and expand quality afterschool care for school aged children will be introduced.

Early Years Care and Education

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) has lead responsibility for ensuring access to quality and affordable early years care and education.

The introduction of the universal Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) in 2010 marked a major milestone for early years in Ireland. ECCE has had a 96% uptake level to date. From September 2016, it is available to all children from age three until they start in primary school. Following the recent publication of *Supporting Access to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme for Children with a Disability* – a new model of supports to enable children with disabilities to fully participate in free preschool in mainstream settings was introduced in September 2016. The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) ensures that children with a disability can fully participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme.

In 2017, Ireland’s first ever Early Years Strategy will be finalised. The Strategy is intended to be cross-cutting in nature, with a whole of Government approach to all of the areas that impact a child’s development during the first six years of his or her life.

A further major policy priority in 2017 is the development of the Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS). This will replace existing childcare subsidisation schemes for targeted/low-income groups (excluding ECCE) and provide a single, streamlined programme. The initiative represents a major step forward in making childcare more affordable and accessible, and will enable both universal and targeted subsidies for parents towards childcare costs. It is estimated that 79,000 children will benefit from the scheme when it is introduced in September 2017. Further information on the Single Affordable Childcare Scheme can be found on the DCYA website.²¹

Most early childhood care and education is funded by the DCYA under grant agreements administered through Pobal. In addition, the DES directly funds 40 Early Start centres in DEIS schools and a pre-school in Rutland Street in Dublin. The future of current DES early years’ pre-school provision is being considered in the context of the ongoing development of DCYA’s ECCE scheme.

21

<http://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2Fearlyyears%2F20161011SingleAffordableChildcareSchemeMainPage.htm&mn=chif&nID=8>

The DCYA also plays a lead role in advancing the quality agenda for Early Years Care and Education. Quality initiatives include:

- new regulations
- an enhanced Tusla Early Years Inspectorate
- funding of the DES educational focused Inspections
- Learner Funds for upskilling of the workforce
- payment of higher capitation to incentivise the employment of graduates in ECCE services; and
- funding of Síolta and Aistear Coordinators.

The DES contributes to the quality agenda within the sector through implementation of *A Workforce Development Plan for the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector* and on the implementation of Síolta – the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, and Aistear, the early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Funding was secured by DCYA in Budget 2016 for a Síolta/Aistear initiative which will co-ordinate the implementation of both frameworks throughout the sector over the coming years.

The Group noted that it is an objective of the DCYA to utilise centrally held CSO and pupil data (in a similar way to the new methodology developed by the DEIS Technical WG) to inform future policy development with regard to funding of community services, particularly in relation to the sustainability of services within designated disadvantaged areas with a focus on families at risk of educational disadvantage. In this context, there is a need to re-state the role of the HSCL coordinators in engaging with parents in relation to primary school-readiness particularly in light of the changed pre-school landscape arising from the increased availability and take-up of ECCE provision.

The Group also noted the particular role assigned in BOBF to early years education in targeting vulnerable groups such as Travellers, Roma and Migrants, to improve educational outcomes and integration.

Recommendations

School planning should identify formal and informal links between early year’s settings, schools, parents, families and communities in order to support children in periods of transition.

The role of the HSCL Co-ordinator in supporting transitions between Early Childhood Care and Education settings and the formal school environment should be specifically referenced in the school plan.

Future resource allocation for pre-school services in disadvantaged communities should be informed by centrally held CSO small area and pupil data.

Prevention and Early Intervention

As noted above, DCYA’s cross-sectoral priority under *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* for 2016 is prevention and early intervention. *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* advances a model where universal services are the main providers of prevention and early intervention services but are combined with targeted effective intervention to further support children at risk. There are several relevant commitments in the policy framework related to prevention and early intervention such as:

- Re-balancing resources to place a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention
- Exploring the provision of enhanced maternal ante-natal and early childhood development service
- Providing universal and targeted evidence-informed parenting programmes
- Increase investment in high quality early years care and education
- Profiling key risk factors for poor outcomes among children and young people.

The ultimate goal is to enable all services regardless of geographical areas to reverse and prevent poor outcomes among children. This is helped by the current robust efforts to mainstream existing and emerging learning from initiatives to support prevention and early intervention in policy, provision and practice. An EU Peer Review on prevention and early intervention services was held in February 2016, and the following key learning from a range of EU Countries and NGOs was identified²²:

- The pre-birth and 0-3 years are vital to a child’s future development. Prevention and early intervention are a real long-term investment;
- Political will is important to ensure adequate resources and a long term approach. This needs to be built and constantly reinforced;
- A broad holistic policy mix is essential, as well as support for parental employment and adequate child and family benefits;
- Develop a system-wide approach that is multi-dimensional, strategic and integrated;
- Combine universal and targeted services as this will increase public support and help to improve the quality of services;
- Focus on local level and coordination is important;
- Reach out to children and families most at risk;
- To ensure quality, invest in building capacity across agencies, including training and mentoring for professionals;
- Data and evaluation is important for evidence-based policy, as is involving stakeholders;
- Foster the participation of children, parents and communities, for better service delivery;

²² Frazer, H. (2016) Prevention and early intervention services to address children at risk of poverty. European Commission.

- Put children’s rights at the heart of policy and programme development;
- Working with families is vital but not a substitute for children’s rights and services;
- The EU level can provide valuable support through, for example, benchmarking, monitoring and recommendations to Member States;
- It is necessary to strengthen the status of social policies vis-à-vis economic governance;

Initiatives based on prevention and early intervention approaches aim to address the early indicators of problems being experienced by children and young people. These initiatives are beneficial not only for the child or young person, but for their families and the community in which they live. Significant investment has been made in prevention and early intervention approaches and has resulted in a strong emphasis on the development of evidence informed services for children and young people.

The ABC Programme²³ is a prevention and early intervention initiative consisting of committed funding for an area-based approach to improving outcomes for children, young people and families and thereby contributing to addressing inter-generational child poverty. The ABC Programme builds on the work of the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme 2007 - 2013. The ABC Programme involves joint investment by DCYA and The Atlantic Philanthropies of €29.7m in evidence-informed interventions to improve outcomes for children. It is time-bound and the co-funding arrangement between Government and The Atlantic Philanthropies is in place until 2017.

The focus of the work under the ABC Programme covers in the main: Child Health and Development; Children’s Learning; Parenting; and Integrated Service Delivery. Areas are implementing a range of evidence-based and evidence-informed programmes and services to achieve better outcomes for children and families in these domains. These programmes and services are being delivered in a variety of settings including schools, early year’s settings, and in the home. Emphasis is being placed on enhancing interagency collaboration to ensure services being delivered are timely, accessible, and have the potential to become mainstreamed.

As part of its stakeholder engagement, the Advisory and Inter-Departmental Groups received presentations from representatives of the three original Atlantic Philanthropy/DCYA-funded Prevention and Early Intervention (PEIP) Programmes in Northside Dublin (Preparing for Life), Tallaght (CDI Tallaght) and Ballymun (Youngballymun). These sites, which are now part of the Area Based Childhood Programme (ABC), gave presentations on a range of interventions which are provided in family homes, early year’s settings and DEIS primary schools in these areas. Interventions include home visits from birth onwards, early year’s interventions, school age literacy & numeracy programmes, including teacher CPD for same; and behavioural supports. The information provided was considered by both Review Groups together with previously published evaluations and other PEIP reports and has informed the recommendations contained in this report.

²³ Full details of the programme are available at:

<http://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2F20160729ABCProgrammeActivities.htm>

A number of approaches and programmes have been shown to impact positively on school readiness, literacy, classroom behaviour and to mitigate barriers to educational achievement including:

- Parent supports informed by programmes and initiatives evaluated by the ABC programmes such as Triple P, Incredible Years, Parents Plus and PAX Good Behaviour Game;
- Supporting Parents through Home visiting Programmes such as those delivered by the Preparing for Life programme;
- Moving towards strengths based prevention and early intervention model of speech and language therapy with small numbers of children with specific problems in speech and language accessing specialist supports, strengthening capacities in parents and transferring skills from speech and language therapists to educators;²⁴
- After School Support for Children with a focus on literacy and numeracy.

DES resources leveraged by the PEI and ABC programmes to date include teacher secondment for literacy and numeracy interventions, other teaching supports and use of school premises both during the school day and afterwards. The group agreed that there was a strong need to ensure that the learning from these programmes was available to schools and other service providers in a way that facilitated inter-agency working to ensure cohesion of future supports, to avoid duplication and assist better decision-making on what approaches and programmes best meet identified educational needs.

In planning for the allocation of additional resources provided under the School Support Programme, schools should note the work of effective and evidenced prevention and early intervention initiatives, particularly focusing on learning from the evaluation of the various initiatives and consider its application, where appropriate, to meet the identified educational needs of their pupil cohorts and school community in general. This might include facilitating access to school premises to allow for services to be provided within the school environment (where this has proven useful for reaching children and families) and/or encouraging pupils and parents to engage with locally provided services which support and augment in-school programmes.

• ²⁴ see research papers at:
<http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/20160729ReviewofApproachesOralLanguageDevelopFullReport.pdf>

Recommendations

Schools should acknowledge, support and promote related prevention and early intervention initiatives – even where these are funded and provided by other providers.

Schools should ensure that when engaging external service providers that account is taken of evidence based learning from any such services/supports

Schools should give particular consideration to currently provided evidence-informed provision which is well evaluated and is delivering measurable improvements in the outcomes sought for the pupil cohort

School policies should identify responsibility for creating formal and informal links between early year's settings, schools, parents and families in order to support children in periods of transition.

Specific regard should be given by schools supported under the SSP to the existing initiatives funded under the ABC Programme.

Existing local ABC pilots should be considered for SSP support where they are relevant to the needs of the children of the school. Learning to date from the ABC sites, where relevant to the pupil cohort identified, should be incorporated into current teaching and learning in schools and into relevant support services for schools.

The local CYPSC planning and infrastructural arrangements should be engaged with to ensure maximum use of existing resource and expertise and to avoid duplication or the risk of competing programmes.

A new SSP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will include provision for assessment of the outcomes in SSP schools including, where relevant, the impact of the various interventions supported by other service providers.

At a national level arrangements will be made, where appropriate, for the incorporation of good practice into mainstream provision. Current examples of this include the Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life Strategy and the delivery of Incredible Years Teacher Management Programme and Friends Programmes by NEPS.

Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC)

Children and Young People's Services Committees are the key structure identified by Government to plan and co-ordinate services for children and young people in every county in Ireland. The overall purpose is to improve outcomes for children and young people, aged between 0 – 24 years, through local and national interagency working. They provide a forum for joint planning and coordination to ensure that children, young people and their families receive improved and accessible services.

CYPSCs are chaired, in the main, by an Area Manager from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, and deputy chaired by a representative from the relevant Local Authority. Each CYPSC has a local coordinator. Broader CYPSC membership includes senior managers from the major statutory, community and voluntary providers of services to children, young people and their families. These include An Garda Síochána, HSE, Probation Services, Local Community & Voluntary Service Providers for Children & Young People, Educational Welfare Services, the Irish Primary Principals Network, Education & Training Boards, City & County Childcare Committees and Social Inclusion Partners.

Each local CYPSC is charged with the development and oversight of the implementation of a 3 year Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) designed to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families in their own area. The CYPP outlines the CYPSC’s priorities and includes a detailed action plan. The actions and priorities identified by each CYPSC are derived from a local needs analysis and national priorities arising from Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.

The CYPP action planning process is guided by the five national outcomes: the action plan will specifically address issues around ensuring children are “Achieving full potential in learning and development”. A sub-group of the CYPSCs drawing on a wider membership is created in each CYPSC locale to support the implementation of this element of the action plan.

Along with the opportunity to engage with those stakeholders immediate to the schools, CYPSCs also provide an opportunity to build a wider series of supports addressing the various needs to children and young people comprehended by the DEIS Action Plan.

Examples of relevant work would include coordination of parenting and family learning programmes, supporting transitions (particularly of vulnerable groups), increasing awareness of literacy and numeracy supports amongst professionals in various key sectors and coordinating measures to address early school leaving.

Six commitments in [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures](#) specifically relate to CYPSC:

- G2 – Ensure planning and co-ordination of parenting supports at local level through Children’s Services Committee.
- G47 – The roll out nationally of Children’s Service Committees in a coordinated fashion connecting them with Local Government and Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.
- G48 – Put in place an agreed resourcing framework for Children’s Services Committees drawing on existing financial support from Tusla, Local Government and DCYA
- G52 – Streamline planning and decision making structures at local level, including Children’s Services Committees, to be consistent with the Government’s public sector reforms and specifically the alignment of local Government and Local Community Development Committees
- G62 – Deliver the County-level Data Analysis Initiative to support the Children’s Services Committee
- G68- Use the intelligence from Children’s Services Committees in relation to local need and priorities to inform the allocation of national and local funding streams

Key priorities of the CYPP are agreed between the CYPSC and the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) for inclusion as a component of the community element of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) of the local authority. These agreed priorities contribute to the overarching Sustainable Community Objectives in the LECP. CYPSC and LCDC engage on an on-going basis on the implementation of the agreed priorities in the LECP.

The IDG noted that local structures for interagency working already exist through the LCDC and CYPSC. They provide an avenue for SSP schools, and additional supports to schools under the SSP, in particular the School Completion and HSCL services, to engage with other service providers to improve overall service provision to pupils at risk of educational disadvantage.

Family Resource Centre Programme

There are 109 communities supported through Tusla, the Child and Family Agency's Family Resource Centre Programme (FRC programme) providing services and supports to local communities. The FRC programme is Ireland's largest family support programme delivering universal services to families in disadvantaged areas across the country based on a life-cycle approach. The aim of the FRC programme is to combat disadvantage and improve the functioning of the family unit.

Each FRC operates autonomously working inclusively with individuals, families, communities, and both statutory and non-statutory agencies. The programme emphasises involving local communities in tackling the problems they face, and creating successful partnerships between voluntary and statutory agencies at community level. The primary role of the Family Resource Centre Programme is prevention and early intervention. Because of this role, the programme is perceived as non-stigmatising, offering an 'open-door' to all families in their community.

The overall remit of the FRCs includes a strategic focus on achieving the five National Outcomes set out in *"Better Outcomes Brighter Futures – The national policy framework for children and young people (2014 – 2020)"*.

FRCs are an integral part of the Child and Family Agency's Local Area Pathways model and act as a first step to community participation and social inclusion. The purpose of the Local Area Pathways is to deliver an integrated service to children and families in need of support with the aim of improving outcomes across the Five National Outcomes. Key services provided by FRCs include:

- Information, advice and support for groups and families at local level,
- Assistance to community groups (such as training and the shared use of facilities),
- Education courses and training opportunities,
- Childcare facilities for those attending courses provided by the FRC,
- After-school clubs.

FRCs have a broad range of involvement with children and young people and work closely with many local schools. The range of interventions include early childhood care and education, initiatives to retain children and young people in school, breakfast clubs, homework clubs, youth cafés, community based youth work, facilities and services for young

people, work with particular target groups of vulnerable young people and work on issues of particular concern/risk to young people e.g. alcohol and drugs prevention etc.

Recommendations

Schools should engage with local structures for service delivery such as LCDCs and CYPSCs to maximise use of existing resources and expertise and to avoid duplication of provision. The role and funding model of the School Completion Programme and the functions of HSCL Coordinators in this regard is particularly relevant.

These service delivery structures should, in turn, ensure that supports which they are providing in and around schools are not duplicating existing provision.

DCYA and Tusla to consider the incorporation of certain ABC programmes/activities such as the Home Visiting Programme within the Family Resource Centre Programme - in accordance with Goal 2.6 of BOBF.

Youth Services

The 2005 DEIS Action Plan noted the important role youth work can play in complementing young people's formal education and sought to achieve an increased alignment of particular Youth sector measures, such as Special Projects for Disadvantaged Youth and projects managed by Léargas, with actions being taken by schools and school clusters/communities participating in the SSP to tackle early school leaving.

The Youth Work Act 2001 defines youth work as a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is:

- (a) complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and
- (b) provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.

As youth work takes place in informal education settings there is no specific programme of engagement between youth services and Tusla. With regard to funding and service provision in the youth sector, DCYA administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities. The funding schemes support national and local youth work provision to some 380,000 young people and involves approximately 1,400 youth work staff in 477 projects and 40,000 volunteers working in youth work services and communities throughout the country. In 2016, funding of €51m (current) and €3m (capital) was provided by the DCYA to support the provision of youth services, by the voluntary youth sector, to young people throughout the country, including those from disadvantaged communities.

Tusla Educational Welfare Services

Functions of Tusla’s Educational Welfare Services (EWS) are governed by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, which facilitates the protection of the constitutional right of every child to an education. While the functions under the Act are broad-based, including a role to advise on all matters, the primary function of the EWS in relation to educational welfare lies in addressing non-attendance at school through its expert workforce adopting a ‘welfare based’ approach to tackling non-attendance. EWS staff have a role in relation to all children who are enrolled in a recognised school. These protections also extend to young people who choose to leave school to enter the workforce after reaching the compulsory school leaving age of 16, having completed three years at second level schooling, whereby the EWS are required to assist them in planning for continued education and training

The 2005 DEIS Action Plan provided for the integration of a number of existing schemes and programmes within the School Support Programme on a phased basis up to 2010. These include the Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL) and the School Completion Programme (SCP). Previously individual programmes located within the DES, both HSCL and SCP, together with the Visiting Teacher for Service for Travellers (VTST) were transferred in 2009 to the National Educational Welfare Board in order to become part of that agency’s new integrated service delivery model for educational welfare services. The integrated EWS comprises the Education Welfare Officer Service, HSCL and SCP.

In 2011, responsibility for the NEWB, including the key DEIS supports of HSCL and SCP, were transferred to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, in preparation for the establishment of a new Child and Family Agency. In January 2014, the statutory functions of the NEWB under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, were transferred to the newly-established Child and Family Agency – Tusla and the NEWB was dissolved. At the same time, responsibility for the operation of the HSCL and SCP programmes were transferred from the DCYA to Tusla.

The overall aim of the transfer of EWS functions to Tusla was to co-locate an integrated EWS within a larger organisation with a remit to support children and families. This means that the educational welfare service will be able to work more closely with Tusla social care and other services working with families, whilst at the same time fulfilling its statutory functions under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

Home School Community Liaison (HSCL)

As a key element of the DEIS School Support Programme, the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme is a central component of the DES approach to combating educational disadvantage, through a range of interventions and strategies designed to improve educational outcomes for children. The underlying vision and thrust of the HSCL Scheme is preventative; therefore, it seeks to promote and develop real partnership between parents, teachers and communities, in order to enhance pupils’ outcomes and learning opportunities, through improved attendance, participation and retention in the education system.

All DEIS Urban Primary and DEIS Post Primary schools are currently included in the HSCL Scheme, which serves 528 schools. The scheme is delivered by 400 full-time HSCL Coordinators who are teachers in these schools and assigned to HSCL duties either in

individual schools or clusters of schools, according to pupil numbers. The role of the HSCL Coordinator is to work primarily with the salient adults in the child's life, in order to empower them, so that they can better support their children to attend school, participate in education and develop positive attitudes to life-long learning. Central to the HSCL initiative, is the identification of educational needs and the provision of a tailored and proportionate response to those needs, through a range of interventions, which are evidence-based, focused and structured.

The HSCL Coordinator post is rotated at least every 5 years in order to provide greater opportunities to gain HSCL experience, and, in turn, to bring experience gained in the role back into the school to complement teaching and learning in the classroom. This arrangement serves to develop experience and build capacity within the teaching staff in the important area of parental engagement and identification of the challenges in the home background of particular pupils.

HSCL Coordinators, as agents of change in schools, work in an integrated way with all other support services, particularly School Completion Programme staff and Educational Welfare Officers, to implement a whole-school approach to improving attendance, participation and retention in education for the most marginalised and educationally disadvantaged pupils. They also have a critical role in supporting the development, implementation, evaluation and review of the school's DEIS Plan, particularly through parental involvement interventions that are designed to improve literacy, numeracy and positive engagement.

HSCL Coordinators also play a key role in effecting successful transitions through the education continuum – from pre-school to primary school, from primary school to second level, within second level from Junior to Senior Cycle, and onwards through appropriate pathways to further and higher education. The role of the HSCL coordinator is to ensure that parents are linked in with the various stages of the education continuum by facilitating engagement between teaching and other staff and parents.

Stakeholder consultations have identified the role of HSCL in DEIS as being particularly significant and effective. Schools report better relations with parents and greater involvement by them in school life and in the education of their children.

The Group noted the need for a possible re-alignment of HSCL clusters in the context of a new identification process for schools and the potential this exercise might offer for an alignment of HSCL clusters with SCP clusters in an overall school clustering or network.

Recommendations

A re-statement of the role of the HSCL Coordinator is required to provide clarity to teachers taking on HSCL duties – and clarify for other service providers the role of HSCL in supporting transitions across the education continuum.

An examination of HSCL clusters is required to ensure that they are aligned with arrangements for school networking and clustering under the new SSP – and with SCP clustering arrangements.

School Completion Programme

The School Completion Programme is a target support service which aims to have a significant positive impact on levels of young people’s retention in primary and post-primary schools and on the number of pupils who successfully complete Senior Cycle or equivalent (DES, 2008). The programme provides a range of local interventions in schools serving disadvantaged communities designed to support the retention of young people in education. It involves provision for target groups across four pillars of activity – in-school, after-school and holiday time and other out of school supports.

The SCP is organised within school clusters – currently 124, serving some 37,000 children and young people. Each cluster has a Local Management Committee to develop and implement a retention plan targeting children and young people most at risk of early school leaving, and an SCP Coordinator to identify appropriate supports to meet the identified educational needs of the pupil cohort.

The aims of the School Completion Programme are:

- To retain young people in the formal education system;
- To improve the quality of participation and educational attainment of targeted children and young people in the education system;
- To bring together all relevant local stakeholders (home, school, youth, community, statutory and voluntary) to tackle early school leaving;
- To offer positive supports in primary and post-primary schools towards the prevention of educational disadvantage;
- To encourage young people who have left mainstream education to return to school;
- To influence in a positive way policies relating to the prevention of early school leaving in the education system.

Consideration by the Group of the input of the SCP to the DEIS SSP took place against the background of the 2015 Review of the SCP undertaken by the ESRI. The central aim of the ESRI study was to review existing provision and to make recommendations regarding the appropriate nature of structures and provision for the future. It also examined the kinds of activities provided by the programme, how SCP relates to other aspects of the DEIS SSP and identified key strengths and weaknesses of the programme as currently constituted.

According to practitioners the most effective strategies (in order of frequency mentioned) were:

Extra-curricular activities; after-school/homework clubs; personal development work; Breakfast/lunch clubs; counselling and therapeutic interventions; summer programmes; learning support; attendance tracking; transfer programmes; staff resources; interagency collaboration; family supports; behavioural management; targeting at-risk students; mentoring; transport.

The main recommendations of the SCP review can be summarised as follows:

- Governance is seen as the major weakness of the programme. A single clear and consistent governance structure to be applied across all SCP clusters is recommended; (this recommendation reinforced by a subsequent SCP Employment Audit)
- School clusters within SCP should be reorganised to better accommodate target groups and reflect the neighbourhood and patterns of school transfers. This should be done in tandem with any reorganisation of schools groups within the DEIS SSP;
- Schools should treat SCP as an integral part of school planning, reflecting the integration of EWS services;
- Notwithstanding significant cuts to funding, there is a case for rebalancing, and even increasing funding for those schools serving very complex student needs and those serving the most disadvantaged communities;
- The development of an outcomes focused framework to help review best practice in the kinds of interventions provided by clusters and by individual schools is recommended. As is the use of an online forum or community of practice to exchange ideas and experience;
- A guiding principle of SCP provision should be that it is complementary to the activities otherwise provided in the school setting. It is recommended that SCP retain the capacity to respond to situations where children are in crisis but that interagency collaboration should aim to enhance the complementary role of SCP in integrated service delivery. Greater coordination with other aspects of DEIS planning would enhance the complementarity of SCP supports for learning and reduce any potential duplication;
- It is recommended that review be undertaken of the role of out of school supports in the continuum of SCP provision and in relation to other alternative education provisions;
- It is recommended that timelier and more detailed national school attendance data be made available to schools in order that they can assess their own progress.

Attendance data currently collected relates to absences of 20 days or more and is provided by each school as an aggregate figure for its pupil cohort. The Group noted the agreement of Tusla to a 2012 DES recommendation that more detailed data be collected to provide information by school class/year (to show trends in disengagement), and in bands beyond 20 days (e.g. 20-30, 30-40, 50/60+). Collection of this improved data is contingent on required improvements to Tusla's IT/data systems.

The Group noted the role of the SCP in the delivery of the DSP School Meals Scheme both in schools and after-school provision. The importance of food in improved school attendance, participation and retention rates was also noted. The particular importance, at second level, that the provision of food at midday plays in mitigating the risk of non-return in the afternoon

was noted. It was agreed that consideration of this was appropriate to the planned School Completion Strategy.

The Group noted that implementation of the SCP Review recommendations would also have to take account of commitments contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government relevant to early school leaving including the development of a School Completion Strategy, an increase to the legal school leaving age, and improved data collection to address poor school attendance.

BOBF commitments for delivery by Tusla include:

2.4 – Implement strategies to improve school engagement and reduce incidences of suspensions and expulsions and early school leaving through engaging parents in schooling, strengthening transitions, promoting different styles of learning to better engage boys and fostering inclusive school environments where all pupils flourish, irrespective of social and ethnic background or disability.

2.14 – Build on existing data collection systems and, using the public service identifier, strengthen the collection of data and information on primary and post-primary pupils in order to inform future policy making

2.17 – Provide opportunities for early school leavers to engage with further education and training within the framework of youth and educational welfare services, Educational Training Boards and SOLAS

The Group noted the key role of SCP which is to work in tandem with schools to add value to teaching and learning in the school by providing for activities that extend the school day and support the engagement and participation of children and young people in education. It also noted the parallels between some SCP activities and those of LCDC and CYPSC and the potential for duplication of services to schools.

In the context of relevant commitments under BOBF, the Programme for a Partnership Government and stakeholder consultations on the SSP, the Group agreed the following recommendations:

Recommendations

Implementation by DCYA/Tusla of the PfG commitment to develop a School Completion Strategy – in the context of the recommendations of the ESRI Review of the School Completion Programme.

In particular, a School Completion Strategy should deal with:

- **future funding of the programme in the context of new SSP requirements;**
- **resourcing of the Tusla Senior Management Team (to fill posts);**
- **the need for a set of core activities for delivery by SCPs – with a further list of agreed optional activities to be provided as appropriate to particular local circumstances, and with regard to existing services;**
- **engagement between Tusla, DSP D/Health and the DES on future arrangements for the delivery of the School Meals Schemes.**

The need for Tusla to collect and provide more detailed school attendance data in its Annual School Attendance Report to support a greater focus on outcomes for schools and ancillary services.

DCYA to engage with DOH and DSP and DES on the development of guidelines on food health and nutrition for food provided in schools, including guidance for suppliers/purchasers.

Business Input to the SSP

The School Completion Programme also funds the **Schools Business Partnership** which is a joint initiative with the **Business in the Community** organisation to help students in DEIS post primary schools understand the world of work through mentoring and work experience programmes and management training for teachers. Its key role is to mitigate early school leaving and encourage retention and progression to Leaving Certificate and Further Education.

Over the past 15 years, the programme has facilitated over 320 partnerships between schools and businesses, impacting over 28,000 students.

At primary level, the main intervention is the **Time to Read** Literacy Programme, which provides children in second class, aged 7-9 with reading support from a business volunteer over a 20 week programme. The programme aims to increase the enjoyment of, and confidence in reading, whilst encouraging self-discovery for the participating children.

At Post Primary level the **Skills @ Work Programme** provides students with a unique insight into the world of work. A number of volunteer employees partner an entire class in either 5th or 6th year. Over five sessions, students are provided with the opportunity to learn about the partnering company and its business and to consider careers and further study options available to them when they finish school. Development of skills in CV preparation and mock interviews are also supported.

A **Student Mentoring Programme** strives to encourage students to stay in school, increase their self-esteem and develop an awareness of the workplace over the course of their senior cycle. The Mentoring programme involves a two year commitment from an employee who agrees to be a mentor to one student during their senior cycle in school.

Management Excellence for Principals and Teachers are programmes which provide principals and teachers access to workshops delivered by senior business leaders. It involves them sharing their expertise and experience with educational leaders through a series of workshops over the school year. Workshop topics include: Leadership, Time Management, Performance Management and PR & Marketing. Over two thirds of Ireland’s 730 post primary principals have participated to date. The Schools Business partnership receives funding from the DES for this programme which is also available to schools outside the SSP.

The Group noted the very positive impact of the work of the Schools Business Partnership and noted the need for adequate SCP co-funding to cater for any new schools participating in the SSP.

Recommendation

Current supports for the Schools Business Partnership should continue, with sufficient Tusla funding to ensure that it is in a position to cater for any additional schools included in the SSP.

After School Care

The Programme for a Partnership Government commitment on after-school care is currently being implemented by DCYA and the DES Early Years Education Policy Unit is engaging with that process in relation to service provision in schools. This Action Plan will focus on provision of childcare to school age children. It will not replace the role of the SCP and other initiatives in supporting educational disadvantage. The Action Plan will reference how families in need of school age childcare may have that care subsidised.

The DES is collaborating with the DCYA on the interdepartmental group, which is being led by DCYA and which is developing an action plan for school age childcare in Ireland. Ensuring the development of a quality framework to underpin the delivery of school age childcare services is a priority for both Departments. An initial consultation process with key stakeholders and with children has been carried out. It should be noted that many schools at both primary and post-primary level are already facilitating the use of their school buildings for out of hour’s activities, including activities funded by the SCP. It will be important in the development of a school age childcare system, that existing activities in this regard are not displaced, and that a diversity of options are available to children out of school hours.

Department of Health (DoH)

The core aim of health policy is to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland. It encompasses increasing healthy behaviours, focusing on prevention and early detection, reducing health inequalities and improving the health status of vulnerable groups and

providing children with a healthy start to life, helping older people, those with disabilities and those affected by mental illness to live as independently as possible. The Group noted that provision by the Department of Health and the HSE in these areas is on a universal basis and does not target particular groups such as disadvantaged communities.

Healthy Ireland

Healthy Ireland is the national framework for action to improve the health and wellbeing of the country over the coming generation. Based on international evidence, it outlines a new commitment to public health with a considerable emphasis on prevention, while at the same time advocating for stronger health systems.

It sets out four central goals and outlines actions under 6 thematic areas, in which all people and all parts of society can participate to achieve these goals. Its main focus is on prevention and keeping people healthier for longer. Healthy Ireland's goals are to:

- Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life
- Reduce health inequalities
- Protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing
- Create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland

Healthy Ireland takes a whole-of-Government and whole-of-society approach to improving health and wellbeing and the quality of people's lives. It provides for new arrangements to ensure effective co-operation between the health sector and other areas of Government and public services, concerned with social protection, children, business, food safety, housing, transport, the environment and other areas across government and society. It also invites the private and voluntary sector to participate through well-supported and mutually beneficial partnerships. In particular, it establishes arrangements for increased co-operation between the education and health sectors in order to ensure increased clarity of roles and responsibilities between education and health, better planning, coordination and utilisation of resources, joint working and collaboration where appropriate, increased capacity-building including the sharing of good practice and provision of consistent messages to schools.

The Department of Health will continue to liaise with the DES Curriculum & Assessment Policy and Teacher Education Sections in respect of coordination of respective responsibilities in relation to the SPHE and RSE curriculums and wider health promotion issues in school settings. This will include joint working on implementation of the actions committed to in the Programme for a Partnership Government and in particular implementation of *Get Ireland Active – the National Physical Activity Plan*, *A Healthy Weight for Ireland - the Obesity Policy and Action Plan* and the *National Sexual Health Strategy and Action Plan*.

Also under the Healthy Ireland agenda, the Department of Health will engage with the Department of Social Protection, Tusla (SCP) and DES on the development of technical guidelines on food health and nutrition for food provided in schools, before, during and after the school day, including guidance for suppliers/purchasers and service delivery (by SCP and other groups under the SICAP).

Supports for Children with Special Educational Needs

Most children with a disability or developmental delay will have their needs met by their local primary care services and specialist multidisciplinary disability teams who look after all children with more complex needs in a defined geographic network area, regardless of the nature of their disability.

The HSE is also currently engaged in a major re-organisation of its existing therapy resources for children with disabilities, including autism, aged up to eighteen years, into geographically-based specialist multi-disciplinary teams. This is part of its National Programme on Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (0-18 years).

The key objective of the Programme is to enhance equity of access to disability services and consistency of service delivery, with a clear pathway for children with disabilities and their families to services, regardless of where they live, what school they go to or the nature of the individual child's difficulties, with health and education working together to support children to achieve their full potential.

The transition to this new model is taking place on a phased basis and includes consultation and engagement with stakeholders, including service users and their families. The Programme is a key priority for the Executive's Social Care Directorate.

€8 million in additional funding was invested in 2014 and 2015 to fund 200 additional posts to support the implementation of the new model. A further €4 million in additional funding was provided for 75 therapy posts in 2016. Fifty of these 75 posts are contributing towards developing early intervention services to facilitate the implementation of the new Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) to allow children with a disability to participate in the ECCE programme in pre-schools. It is anticipated that this additional investment will have a positive impact on the provision of clinical services to all children with disabilities, including those in need of speech and language therapy inputs.

In-School Speech and Language Service

The Programme for a Partnership Government commits to the provision of a new in-school - School Speech and Language service. As Speech and Language Therapists are currently employed by the Health Service Executive (HSE), officials at the DES are currently engaging with colleagues in the Department of Health and the HSE to develop a plan for the implementation of this commitment. The implementation plan will identify the actions to be taken and the specific timeframe for the delivery of this commitment. In the interim, DES continues to provide an extensive range of supports for pupils with Specific Speech and Language Disorder (SSLD). This includes provision for the establishment of special classes for pupils with SSLD in primary schools.

The Group noted a number of models of in-school delivery of SLT which have already been trialled by e.g. the NBSS, the PEIP/ABC Programmes and as part of the education component of Limerick Regeneration. The DCYA has recommended that models of SLT delivery in schools developed in the PEIP/ABC Programmes should specifically be examined as providing a potential model of delivery to meet this commitment. The NBSS provides specific in-school speech and language therapy for target students under its behavioural support programme.

Under the Limerick Regeneration programme, in-school therapeutic services have been provided in the Southside Education Camps, Limerick through philanthropic funding.

The Group noted the D/Health position that the Progressing Disabilities Programme, which is being implemented across all children's disability services, is based on the core concept that children with a disability are provided with services based on need – not on what school they go to.

Recommendation

The DES to work with the HSE on its review of current Speech and Language Therapy provision and consider proposals arising from that review.

Further piloting of previously trialled Speech and Language Therapy interventions should be undertaken in individual schools or school clusters, where evidence is available of their success, and where this does not involve a duplication or displacement of existing services.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Since 2012, around €115 million has been added to the HSE Mental Health Budget, which totals €826 million in 2016. Budget 2017 will increase HSE mental health funding to around €850 million in 2017. Steady progress has been made in progressing the Programme for a Partnership Government commitments in mental health, which give a clear commitment to increasing the mental health budget annually, as resources allow, to expand existing services. The additional funding for 2016 has allowed progression of Programme for a Partnership Government commitments such as enhancing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Teams (CAMHS) and new Jigsaw sites. It also allows for improved GP access, improved 7/7 services, better retention and recruitment of mental health staff, particularly consultant psychiatrists. Also, in September 2016, the National Task Force on Youth Mental Health was established.

The HSE Service Plan 2016 provides for an extension of counselling in primary care to under 18s. Budget 2017 approved funding for construction of a new 120-bed hospital at Portrane, to replace the existing Central Mental Hospital at Dundrum. This project includes a new 10 bed Forensic CAMHS unit.(Phase 1 comprises core forensic project requirements at St. Ita's, Portrane for a 120-bed National Forensic Hospital, along with a 10-bed Mental Health Intellectual Disability (MHID) Unit and a 10-bed Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS).

The National Office for Suicide Prevention and the HSE funded the development of National Guidelines on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention for post primary schools, which were published in 2013, and these guidelines set out good practice in this area. The work was done in partnership with HSE Health & Wellbeing, Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Health. The guidelines reflect a whole of school approach as promoted by both

HSE Health and Wellbeing and Jigsaw. The Department of Education and Skills adapted the guidelines in 2015 for primary schools.

In 2015 the National Office for Suicide Prevention provided funding for a number of youth focussed services/initiatives, including for: Childline, the National Youth Council of Ireland, ReachOut.com, Spunout.ie and Young Social Innovators (YSI).

Launched in June 2015, Connecting for Life is Ireland’s National Strategy to Reduce Suicide (2015-2020). This National Strategy is being led by the Department of Health and involves actions assigned to the HSE and various Government departments. A Cross-Sectoral Steering Group has been established to implement the Strategy. Given the cross-departmental dimension to Connecting for Life, it has been selected as one of the Pathfinder Projects as part of the Civil Service Renewal Plan.

On a general information point, it was noted that the HSE provides a school screening programme for all children attending public primary schools (including schools participating in the SSP). School health screenings are conducted by public health nurses and area medical officers who are employed by the HSE. These screenings are carried out on the school premises and the school principal is advised of the date in advance so that parents can be notified. Parents are also entitled to be present if they so wish. Children’s hearing and vision are examined and where requested by the parent or deemed necessary, a physical examination may be carried out. The HSE also runs a school immunisation programme in primary and post-primary schools.

The DOH will continue to liaise with NEPS in relation to cross-Departmental cooperation on the provision of mental health services for children and young people in the education system.

Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government (DHPCLG)

A key principle of the work of the DHPCLG is to support and enable communities themselves to identify and address social and economic issues in their own areas. In particular, it supports communities that are vulnerable, disadvantaged or under threat through a range of provision.

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

The **Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)** aims to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality through local, regional and national engagement and collaboration. The programme, which commenced on 1 April 2015, is a programme funded and overseen by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government formerly the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (the Department was renamed as the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government with effect from 23 July 2016) and had a total budget of €45 million for 2015. SICAP was delivered in all areas of the country with the exception of one, which was the subject of a deliberative process in 2015. It is led locally by Local and Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and delivered by 45 Programme Implementers (PIs) across 50 Lots. The SICAP allocation to all lots for 2015 (for the 9 month period April to December) amounted to some €28 million.

Local Community Development Committees (LCDC's)

Putting People First Action Programme 2012 for Effective Local Government set out reforms to improve

- the delivery of services for the citizen,
- deliver greater efficiency and effectiveness, and
- give local government a more central role in local development and community development.

It represents a significant change in government policy in relation to local government for the purposes of placing local government as the main vehicle of governance and public service at local level – leading economic, social and community development, delivering efficient and good value services, and representing citizens and local communities effectively and accountably.

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 gives legislative effect to the commitments in 'Putting People First' including the establishment of LCDCs in each local authority administrative area.

LCDCs have now been established on a statutory basis in all 31 local authorities for the purpose of bringing a more coordinated and joined-up approach to local/community development at local level. Membership includes local authority elected members and officials; State and non-State local development agencies; community and voluntary organisations; and other representatives of civil society, including business interests, farming interests, etc.

LCDCs will draw on the expertise and experience of public and private actors within the relevant local authority area to provide effective and efficient services to citizens, and particularly those more in need of those services.

The working and planning of **LCDCs and CYPSCs** in respect of children and young people is framed by Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. DECLG and DCYA are in the process of finalising a guidance document/MOU to ensure that local county level implementation and monitoring of LCDCs and CYPSCs is formally linked and the priorities of the LECP and CYPSC plans are aligned. This will include the development of the CYPSC plan within the broader LECP process with a reporting to the LCDC on the priorities and actions assigned to the CYPSC (also under DCYA).

Library Services

Interventions/services provided through Libraries.

1. Right to Read Campaign
2. DEIS Literacy and Numeracy Summer Programme Library Camp
3. DEIS Literacy and Numeracy Summer Programme Library Camp
4. Public Library Services to Schools

Library Services Initiatives will:

- Continue to build on the existing cooperation between libraries and schools and particularly in areas of social disadvantage
- Continue to support the Right to Read Campaign (National Framework managed by the DHPCLG)
- Continue to support the DEIS Literacy and Numeracy Summer Programme Library Camp
- Continue with current programme of library services to primary and post primary schools initiated in 2015

JCSP Library Project

DHPCLG will liaise with DES Curriculum & Assessment Policy Unit to determine if there is overlap between the Public Library Services to School initiative and the JCSP librarians. DCYA has suggested that consideration be given as to how to link and brand school-based initiatives, library based initiatives and parent/adult initiatives to create whole community interlinked literacy activities which are mutually reinforcing and support an improved home learning environment generally for disadvantaged children and families. The PEIP/ABC programmes have adopted/adapted existing programmes to achieve these linkages.

DHPCLG are to consider appropriate arrangements for future supports for DEIS schools by the Library Service. (SIU has provided the ABC policy area of DCYA with information on the HSCL One Book Project family/community literacy initiative HSCL as an example of an existing initiative which works well)

The Group noted the following actions in respect of DHPCLG:

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) – agree to liaise with DSP and DCYA/Tusla to ensure coordination with Early Years, Youth Services, EWS services and School Meals provision.

DHPCLG are to consider the inclusion of educational disadvantage as part of the wider socio economic profile (to ensure a balanced social mix) as a consideration in the development of future **housing policy**.

School Fruit & Vegetable and Milk Programmes – DECLG will engage with DCYA/Tusla/ DSP on School Completion Programme delivery of school meals, School Fruit & Vegetable and Milk Programmes to ensure consistency of approach and avoid duplication of provision.

Department of Social Protection (DSP)

The Department of Social Protection (DSP) has a key role in promoting active participation and inclusion in society through the provision of income supports, employment services and other services including a range of services to children of school going age and their families.

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA)

This allowance is available to parents to assist with the cost of back to school clothing and footwear. Over 163,800 families, with over 260,000 children, were supported by the scheme in 2016 at a cost of over €39.7 million. The rate of payment is €100 in respect of children aged 4 to 11 and €200 for children over 12 years in second level education. The allowance compares favourably to the prices of clothing/footwear generally.

One of the objectives in the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 is to ensure that the voices of the parents/children are made more central to the system by developing a Parents and Learners' Charter on a statutory basis. The DES will issue a new circular to School Authorities and ETBs regarding School Uniform Policy and other costs and the need to put a greater emphasis on reducing the cost of school uniforms and other costs. The views of the National Parent Councils and other Education partners will be considered and will feed into the development of the circular.

School Meals:

BOBF commitments in relation to school meals are as follows:

1. Support children, young people and their parents to make healthier choices through education, addressing food poverty and ensuring that all educational and State institutions providing food and drink to children, whether directly or through franchised commercial services on-site, have a Healthy Foods policy and provide food that meets basic nutritional standards. (DYCA/DES/DSP)
2. Continue to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the School Meals Programme and consider inclusion of DEIS schools not currently benefitting under the programme, subject to resources becoming available. (DSP)

The Group noted the strong campaign mounted by the Children Rights Alliance, Barnardos and others in relation to both the costs for families of attending school, and the issue of food poverty, and the role of schools in addressing both issues.

School Meals are provided under two DSP schemes:

The school meals local projects scheme – funding is provided directly to participating schools and local and voluntary community groups who are responsible for the operation and administration of their school meals project. Funding under the programme is for healthy food costs only and payment is based on a rate per meal, per child, per day. In recent years, priority for new applications for funding has been given to DEIS Schools.

The scheme is administered by schools in a variety of ways and depends on the needs, capabilities and resources of the schools/groups. Examples of delivery modality include:

- Full canteen services, operated by either school staff itself or outsourced to private catering firms;
- Purchase of prepared meals by the school from specialist school meals suppliers;

- Purchase of prepared meals by the school from local suppliers such as cafes, restaurants or delicatessens;
- Purchase and preparation of meals by school/group staff or volunteers.

The urban school meals scheme - is operated by local authorities and part-financed (50%) for food costs by the DSP and provides meals to primary schools. There are currently some 300 schools in the scheme at a cost of €1m per year.

In 2016, these schemes benefited over 200,000 children in 1,700 schools at the cost of €42m. Budget 2017 provided for an additional €5.7 million in funding to further support DEIS schools and also towards the extension of breakfast clubs in some non-DEIS schools commencing from September 2017.

The Department of Social Protection commenced an inspection programme of schools/organisations participating in the school meals scheme in 2012 which included on-site inspections. The inspection programme was further expanded in 2015 to facilitate a three year inspection programme of all participating schools and organisations.

The Group noted the view expressed by a number of stakeholders that full kitchen facilities should be provided all schools. The position of the DES Planning and Building Unit is that in all new primary schools, a servery is provided whilst a kitchenette is provided at Post Primary level. However, these are not intended as facilities where food is prepared or cooked for the student population generally.

The Group noted the comments of a number of stakeholders, both as part of the DEIS review and within the BOBF structures, including the Child Poverty Sub-Group, that responsibility for policy and operational matters relating to school meals should be brought within the remit of a single Department/Agency. It was agreed that consideration of this matter was appropriate to the implementation of the PfG commitment on a School Completion Strategy - to be developed by the DCYA.

Given the spread of policy and operational responsibility for this key support, the Group noted the importance of improved interagency collaboration from the outset, to ensure that the recommendations below are progressed.

Recommendations

DSP funding for school meals should continue to be targeted at schools participating in the DEIS School Support Programme (SSP) with a particular focus on the promotion of breakfast clubs.

DSP to engage with DES regarding the allocation of school meals funding to non-DEIS schools to support breakfast clubs from September 2017.

DSP to engage with DCYA/Tusla/DHPCLG/DES on the arrangements for future delivery of the School meals schemes in the context of the development by the DCYA of a School Completion Strategy.

DSP to engage with DOH and Tusla (SCP) and DES on the development of guidelines on food health and nutrition for food provided in schools, including guidance for suppliers/purchasers.

5.6 Integrated Service Delivery

Noting the range of service provision in and around schools, both current and proposed, and the varying levels of integration between service providers to date, the Group identified a need for a formal structure to improve the effectiveness of services, and to gather data to inform future policy. The Group noted that a number of agreements are already in place – such as the MOU between the NCSE and Tusla Educational Welfare Services.

5.7 Resource Allocation

Noting the resource allocation arrangements proposed in **Chapter 4**, the Group agreed that similar phasing arrangements would be appropriate in the case of some particular Departmental/Agency services. This is particularly relevant to the School Completion Programme where a considerable change agenda is in place and it may not be practical to initiate new projects in September 2017.

Chapter 6 – Key Findings and Recommendations

6.1 Overview

The process to review DEIS – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools

Some of the key elements involved in the Review of DEIS were:

- **A new methodology for the identification of schools**

Improved centrally held data means that there is now a better way of identifying schools that is more responsive to demographic and other changes. It is now possible to move away from the quite rigid and inflexible system for identification of schools and resource allocation that has operated to date. A new identification process based on centrally held CSO and DES data has been developed which will form the basis of a robust yet flexible and responsive system for the future identification of schools in terms of educational disadvantage.

- **A more effective system of resource allocation to ensure that resources are matched to identified educational need in schools**

Improved data also means that it is possible to more closely match resources to need, ensuring that those in greatest need receive suitable supports for the appropriate length of time. Findings from the evaluation of the DEIS programme indicate that while the gap between DEIS and non-DEIS schools is narrowing, overall achievement in reading and maths, particularly in Band 1 schools, remains below that in other schools. This identifies the need to introduce further targeted measures to help to reduce that gap. It also indicates that the impact of socio-economic factors on educational outcomes can be different as between urban and rural settings and it will be necessary to take account of that.

- **Better interdepartmental and inter-agency working to achieve more effective delivery of services in and around schools**

There are a range of state agencies and state-funded Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working in and around schools to support those at risk of educational disadvantage. Improved arrangements for interagency working and collaboration mean that these supports can be more effective. Accordingly actions aimed at improving the school readiness of pre-school children, increasing the effectiveness of behavioural and therapeutic supports and integrating services that support school attendance, retention and progression need to be considered in terms of future service delivery.

- **A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to gather better information on school performance**

Throughout the Review Process it was evident that, while the overall impact of supports under the DEIS Programme has been positive, there is still not enough known in terms of the effectiveness or impact of particular impacts on individual schools. This limits the capacity to make evidence based decisions as to how best to prioritise particular interventions and resources to maximise outcomes.

In order to address this, a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will be established to gather information and data on all aspects of the new SSP and this will be used to facilitate the necessary assessment and evaluation of particular elements of the SSP.

An improved communication network will also be developed to ensure improved sharing of information between all relevant stakeholders.

6.2 Key Findings and Recommendations

Identification of Schools

- Developments in both CSO and DES centrally held data combined with the use of the HP Deprivation Index mean it is now possible to develop a more robust, responsive system for assessing the level of disadvantage in a school based on its student cohort.
- The HP index together with DES POD and PPOD data is suitable for use as the basis for the assessment of schools in terms of the socio-economic profile of their student cohort.
- That further analysis be conducted to examine other variables which are known strong predictors of educational disadvantage.
- The appointment of a specific DES data analytics function to support the identification and resource allocation processes, and to meet ongoing SIU and Inspectorate data analysis needs in the context of a new Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

Financial Supports

- Financial assistance to schools participating in the SSP to continue as resources permit, with priority being given to schools with the highest concentrations of pupils from disadvantaged communities.
- Future additional funding under the SSP should be integrated with overall capitation grant payments to schools.
- Guidelines should be issued to schools in relation to appropriate use of additional funds provided under the SSP.
- Schools participating in the SSP should receive enhanced payments under the Book Grant Scheme.
- Operation of a book rental scheme should be a mandatory requirement for schools participating in the SSP.

Pilot Programme

- Interventions chosen for piloting should be targeted, meaningful, based on research, including international research, evidence based best practice, be strictly time bound and subject to rigorous monitoring and evaluation
- In choosing pilot programmes, there should be a particular focus on interventions in schools serving the most disadvantaged communities in inner city areas.

Enhanced PTR/Teacher Allocations

- The new Monitoring and Evaluation Framework should include evaluation of the level of teaching resources for schools participating in the SSP to inform future policy in this area.
- Pending any change to the recommended teacher allocation for urban primary schools supporting the highest levels of pupils at risk of educational disadvantage, the current recommended PTR for these schools should apply.
- An Administrative Principal should continue to be allocated to urban/town primary schools with the highest concentrations of pupils from disadvantaged communities on a lower pupil enrolment threshold than those which apply in primary schools generally.

School Leadership

- Priority should be given to Principals and teachers from schools supported under the SSP in accessing professional leadership training, preparation courses for newly appointed principals, mentoring and coaching courses etc.
- Planning for, and outcomes of, such training should be set out in the School Plan.

Initial Teacher Education & Professional Development

- Initial teacher education should focus in particular on training around educational disadvantage so that future teachers will understand the factors which can impact on teaching and learning and be better prepared to develop appropriate strategies.
- Schools participating in the SSP should be encouraged to provide placements for trainee teachers – and should record this activity in their school plan.
- In line with the *Action Plan for Education 2016-2019* objective of “developing the continuum of teacher education to equip teachers with the right skills for the 21st century and learning and improve school leadership” it was noted that the DES will build upon the concluded pilot phase of Droichead and conduct the growth phase between 2016-2018 of “Droichead”, the national induction process for all newly qualified teachers.
- Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) should continue to prioritise development support for teachers in schools participating in the SSP including targeted support for new schools participating in the SSP.

Staff Retention

- Further consideration to be given to the possibility of a sabbatical leave scheme for SSP schools in the context of any overall measures to be introduced by the DES.

Supporting Transitions

- Subject to the outcome of the Review of Guidance Services all post-primary schools participating in the School Support Programme should have access to a dedicated career guidance counsellor.
- The School Plan should provide for formal engagement between Guidance Counsellors, HSCL Coordinators and Further Education & Training and Higher Education access officers to support successful transitions between post-primary and further education and higher education.

Tusla Educational Welfare Services

HSCL

- A re-statement of the role of the HSCL Coordinator is required to provide clarity to teachers taking on HSCL duties – and clarify for other service providers the role of HSCL in supporting transitions across the education continuum.
- An examination of HSCL clusters is required to ensure that they are aligned with arrangements for school networking and clustering under the new SSP – and with SCP clustering arrangements.

SCP

- Implementation by DCYA/Tusla of the PfG commitment to develop a School Completion Strategy – in the context of the recommendations of the ESRI Review of the School Completion Programme.
- In particular, a School Completion Strategy should deal with:
 - future funding of the programme in the context of new SSP requirements;
 - resourcing of the Tusla Senior Management Team (to fill posts).
 - the need for a set of core activities for delivery by SCPs – with a further list of agreed optional activities to be provided as appropriate to particular local circumstances, and with regard to existing services.
 - engagement between Tusla, DSP, D/Health and the DES on future arrangements for the delivery of the School Meals Schemes.
- The need for Tusla to collect provide more detailed school attendance data in its Annual School Attendance Report to support a greater focus on outcomes for schools and ancillary services.

Business Involvement in DEIS Schools

- Current supports for the Schools Business Partnership should continue, with sufficient Tusla funding to ensure that it is in a position to cater for any additional schools included in the SSP.

School Meals

- DSP funding for school meals should continue to be targeted at schools participating in the DEIS School Support Programme (SSP) with a particular focus on the promotion of breakfast clubs.
- DSP to engage with DES regarding the allocation of school meals funding to non-DEIS schools to support breakfast clubs from September 2017.
- DSP to engage with DCYA/Tulsa/DHPCLG/DES on the arrangements for future delivery of the School meals schemes in the context of the development by the DCYA of a School Completion Strategy.
- DSP to engage with DOH and Tusla (SCP) and DES on the development of guidelines on food health and nutrition for food provided in schools, including guidance for suppliers/purchasers.

Early Years

- Provision in the Early Start and Rutland Street programmes be kept under review in the context of the development of targeted supports to tackle educational disadvantage in ECCE settings.
- School planning should identify formal and informal links between early years' settings, schools, parents, families and communities in order to support children in periods of transition.
- The role of the HSCL Co-ordinator in supporting transitions between Early Childhood Care and Education settings and the formal school environment should be specifically referenced in the school plan.
- Future resource allocation for pre-school services in disadvantaged communities should be informed by centrally held CSO small area and pupil data.

School Improvement Planning

- Schools participating in the new SSP should continue to use their School Self Evaluation Plans for improvement to incorporate their plans for literacy, numeracy, attendance, examination attainment (post-primary schools only), retention, progression and partnership with parents and others.
- Plans should clearly state how additional resources allocated under the SSP are being deployed and identify related outcomes.

Ability Grouping

- Schools should be advised to adopt a pragmatic approach to grouping students, which reflects a commitment to improving outcomes for all students. This may include

varying degrees of individual, small group, segregated and mainstream provision, team teaching and/or in-class cooperative support.

- Streaming in a specific subject area should be based on achievement in the individual subject as well as other factors, and not solely on the results of a cognitive ability assessment
- Teachers in schools participating in the SSP should be provided with CPD to facilitate upskilling in their teaching methods to effectively support pupils of differing abilities
- All forms of support for pupils which involve the grouping of pupils according to ability whether through setting, streaming or in-class ability groups should be documented, carefully planned and regularly reviewed in light of pupils ongoing achievement levels.

Transition Year

- The Group recommends that SSP schools should consider the potential of a Transition Year Programme where one does not exist in order to discourage early school leaving.
- SSP schools should consult teachers/students and their parents/guardians in the development of a new TY programme or in the review of a current TY programmes in order to raise participation levels.

Reduced Timetables

- Tusla should require schools to report on the number of pupils who are on a reduced timetable.

Wellbeing

- SSP schools should strengthen links with the relevant support services.
- SSP schools should continue to provide a safe and supportive environment for staff members. It is crucial that staff members are supported in maintaining their personal health and well-being.
- All SSP post primary schools should implement a Junior Cycle wellbeing programme for students entering first year in September 2017.

Behavioural Supports

- While it will be a matter for the NCSE to reconfigure the services within the Inclusion Support Service, there is a need for greater cohesion across the service provision for schools participating in the SSP.
- Existing good practice in SSP schools availing of the services of the NBSS should be captured, collated and used to inform future practice.
- The group noted the range of services provided to schools from a variety of service providers and recommend that formal interagency working arrangement be put in place for service provision in SSP schools.

- The Group recommends implementation of the NEPS proposal to expand its provision in DEIS schools as resources permit.

ICT Policy

- The impact of the prioritisation and targeting of schools with the most concentrated levels of disadvantage under the new Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 should be assessed and reported on under the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

Literacy and Numeracy

- The National Strategy on Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020 should be fully implemented by all SSP Schools.
- In their School Plan, SSP schools should clearly set specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time specific targets for literacy and numeracy and evaluate them annually.
- Implementation of the L&N Strategy in DEIS schools should be a particular focus of the DEIS/SSP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.
- Literacy and Numeracy programmes/supports should be considered in the overall context of matching resources to identified need and alignment with DES policy and practice on teaching and learning in this area.
- Engagement through a partnership approach which involves schools, parents, and national and local agencies is a priority of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (2011-2020) – opportunities for cross-learning to benefit all SSP schools, in particular, should be considered.
- Schools should consult the *Special Educational Needs – A Continuum of Support* to access information on assisting pupils with difficulties in the area of Literacy and Numeracy.

Family Literacy

- Adult and family Literacy service providers should formally engage with related support services (HSCL, SCP LCDCs and CYPSC's) to ensure that family literacy is fully supported and engagement with education is improved.
- Planning for engagement with adult and family literacy services should be included in the School Plan.
- Data on service inputs, outputs and outcomes should be collected and reported under the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

In-School Speech and Language Therapy

- The DES to work with the HSE on its review of current Speech and Language Therapy provision and consider proposals arising from that review.
- Further piloting of previously trialled Speech and Language Therapy interventions should be undertaken in individual schools or school clusters, where evidence is available of their success, and where this does not involve a duplication or displacement of existing services.

Special Educational Needs

- Formal engagement to take place between relevant DES Business Units (Special Education Section, Social Inclusion Unit and Teacher Allocations Section) to ensure alignment of resources deployed to DEIS Schools.

Traveller Capitation/Participation

- DES to engage with Tusla and Traveller Representative Groups on measures to improve Traveller engagement with education in the context of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy and School Completion Strategy.
- The Traveller Capitation Grant to be examined under the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in the context of its objective of supporting Traveller children's school attendance, participation and retention.

English as an Additional language (EAL)

- It is recommended that the level of EAL provision at second level be reviewed with a view to establishing whether the academic learning needs of pupils in SSP schools are being met.
- Arrangements should be made for the collection of data on EAL inputs, outputs and outcomes in all schools, with particular emphasis on provision in schools with the highest concentrations of pupils from disadvantaged communities to establish whether the needs of pupils are being met.

Arts in Education

- Ensure that initiatives under the Arts in Education Charter take account of the needs of DEIS schools so that these schools have the opportunity to participate fully, e.g. in the ARÍS Arts Rich School Awards, which will be launched in co-operation with the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs under Pillar 1 of

Creative Ireland Programme in September 2017. DEIS schools to be prioritised in any initial roll out.

- Ensure that interventions developed by SSP schools around the arts are included in school planning and reporting under the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

JCSP Library Project

- The DES review of the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP), including the JCSP library services, should take account of the ongoing needs of DEIS schools.

Prevention and Early Intervention Programmes

- Schools should acknowledge, support and promote related prevention and early intervention initiatives – even where these are funded and provided by other providers.
- Schools should ensure that when engaging external service providers that account is taken of evidence based learning from any such services/supports.
- Schools should give particular consideration to currently provided evidence-informed provision which is well evaluated and is delivering measurable improvements in the outcomes sought for the pupil cohort.
- Specific regard should be given by schools supported under the SSP to the existing initiatives funded under the ABC Programme.
- Existing local ABC pilots should be considered for SSP support where they are relevant to the needs of the children of the school. Learning to date from the ABC sites, where relevant to the pupil cohort identified, should be incorporated into current teaching and learning in schools and into relevant support services for schools.
- Local CYPSC planning and infrastructural arrangements should be engaged with to ensure maximum use of existing resource and expertise and to avoid duplication or the risk of competing programmes.

Integration of Local Service Delivery

- Schools should engage with local structures for service delivery such as LCDCs and CYPSC to maximise use of existing resources and expertise and to avoid duplication of provision. The role and funding model of the School Completion Programme and the functions of HSCL Coordinators in this regard is particularly relevant.
- These service delivery structures should, in turn, ensure that supports which they are providing in and around schools are not duplicating existing provision.

- DCYA and Tusla to consider the incorporation of certain ABC programmes/activities such as the Home Visiting Programme within the Family Resource Centre Programme

Further Education and Training

- Education and Training Boards should establish formal outreach arrangements to encourage access through its existing education pathways.
- The FET Programme and Learner and Support System (PLSS) should be fully rolled out from 2017 to assist with better data collection on participation in FET programmes.

Access to Higher Education

- Formal arrangements should be put in place for engagement between the key actors in supporting transitions - HSCL Coordinators, School Guidance Counsellors, FET providers and Higher Education Access Officers, to ensure a consistency of provision across the country and to ensure that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, including under-represented groups, are fully supported.

Communications/Information

- The DES should establish a DEIS information portal to provide information for all SSP supports including external supports and to facilitate engagement and information sharing at local level on local services in and around schools.

Data

- Engagement between SIU and the appropriate DES Business Units to ensure the availability of a comprehensive up to date and accessible database of the amount and deployment of all DES resources deployed in schools.
- The allocation of sufficient IT and other staff resources to ensure the maintenance of such a database to meet the ongoing monitoring, evaluation and other research needs of the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion.

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

- SIU, Statistics Section, Inspectorate and the ERC to develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for a new SSP.

Appendix 1 – DES Commitments under Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (BOBF)

Commitments (bold tick indicates lead Government department or agency)	DCYA	DES	DH	DJE	DSP	DECLG	DPER	DJEI	DCENR	DF	DTTS	DAFM	DAHG	HSE	Tusla	Local Gov	AGS	Others	All
Goal 2: Earlier Intervention and Prevention																			
G5 Work towards a rebalancing of resources to place a greater emphasis on prevention and earlier intervention.	✓	✓	✓	✓										✓	✓				
G8 Continue to increase investment in high-quality Early Years care and education for all children, prioritising families on low incomes. Introduce a second free pre-school year within the lifetime of this Framework, once the required quality standards are achieved and subject to resources becoming available.	✓	✓			✓										✓				
G11 Training and up-skilling of professionals across formal and non-formal educational settings to be in a position to identify potential child welfare and mental health issues, and to provide preventative and early intervention support.	✓	✓	✓											✓	✓				
G12 Profile key risk factors for poor outcomes for children and young people and develop practice tools to assist professionals in identifying and – working with families – mitigating these risks.	✓	✓	✓											✓	✓				
G13 Implement the Area-Based Childhood Programme to address the impact of child poverty and improve child outcomes in 10 or more areas of disadvantage and mainstream the learning from the programme to services throughout the country.	✓	✓	✓																✓
Goal 3: Listen to and involve children and young people																			
G17 Create mechanisms to provide children and young people with the opportunity to be heard in primary and post-primary schools and centres for education through Student Councils or other age-appropriate mechanisms.	✓	✓																	
Goal 4: Ensure Quality Services																			
G25 Continue to improve the quality and timeliness of services for children and young people, ensuring that State-funded programmes and services are outcomes-focused and can clearly demonstrate that they improve outcomes.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓								✓	✓				
G27 Support the monitoring and full implementation of National Standards in relation to children (child and family services, health and disabilities services, early years, education and youth work).	✓	✓	✓	✓															
G29 Develop quality standards and training for all professionals working directly with children and young people, ensuring a highly trained, supported and professionally aligned workforce.	✓	✓	✓											✓	✓				

Commitments (bold tick indicates lead Government department or agency)	DCYA	DES	DH	DJE	DSP	DECLG	DPER	DJEI	DCENR	DF	DTTS	DAFM	DAHG	HSE	Tusla	Local Gov	AGS	Others	All
Goal 5: Support Effective Transitions																			
G33 Bring a stronger focus on effective transitions, particularly within education, health, child welfare and youth justice services.		✓	✓	✓															
Goal 6: Cross-Government and interagency collaboration and coordination																			
6.1 People																			
G38 Support the development of interdisciplinary and interprofessional training programmes which encourage leadership and collaboration for professionals working with children and young people across the range of service delivery.	✓	✓	✓	✓										✓	✓				
G39 Develop and implement a multidisciplinary workforce development plan on a phased basis for all professionals working with children and families, including staff within Tusla, The Child and Family Agency and other key professionals.	✓	✓		✓										✓	✓				
6.2 Infrastructure																			
G50 Build on existing good practice around clustering of schools to enable better access to educational supports, particularly for children with special educational needs, and explore the potential for further development of cluster arrangements, to encourage greater connections between schools and community and State services, including sharing infrastructure.		✓	✓											✓	✓	✓			
6.3 Evidence and Data Analysis																			
G54 Address information-sharing issues across sectors and strengthen the integration of data systems, including, where appropriate, through utilisation of the Public Sector Identifier for children to support greater use of data to inform policy, planning and service development.	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓							✓	✓				
G55 Develop information protocols to assist the sharing of information, where appropriate, in respect of particular children who are vulnerable and at risk.	✓	✓	✓	✓											✓		✓	✓	
G56 Develop a comprehensive set of indicators to support the Framework and to track progress across the aims of each of the 5 national outcome areas.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓													
G61 Develop shared systems for coordinating and facilitating statistical analysis from across Government.	✓	✓	✓																✓
6.3 Funding and Finance																			
G67 Improve the effectiveness of overall expenditure on children in achieving better child poverty outcomes.	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓												
Outcome 1: Active and healthy																			
1.1 Tackle the issues of childhood obesity and obesogenic environments through a mix of legislative, policy and public awareness activities and will give active consideration to the introduction of fiscal measures to support healthy lifestyles in the context of the annual budgetary process.	✓	✓	✓							✓				✓	✓				✓

Commitments (bold tick indicates lead Government department or agency)	DCYA	DES	DH	DJE	DSP	DECLG	DPER	DJEI	DCENR	DF	DTTS	DAFM	DAHG	HSE	Tusla	Local Gov	AGS	Others	All
1.9 Ensure there is equity of access to child and adolescent mental health services for all children, in particular those aged 16 and 17 years.		✓	✓											✓					
1.13 Enable hard-to-reach groups to access services by making health services (including mental health services) available in youth-friendly, accessible and inclusive environments.	✓	✓	✓											✓		✓			
Outcome 2: Achieving full potential in learning and development																			
2.1 Develop and implement a National Early Years Strategy for all children aged 0-6 years, covering all aspects of children's experiences in their early years and their inclusion in Early Years care and education services.	✓	✓																	
2.2 Strengthen the connections between pre-school and infant classes at primary level, including through the roll-out of Aistear and Siolta.	✓	✓													✓				
2.3 Build children's emotional literacy in pre-school and primary school as a core foundation for educational attainment.	✓	✓																	
2.4 Implement strategies to improve school engagement and reduce incidences of suspensions and expulsions and early school-leaving through engaging parents in schooling, strengthening transitions, promoting different styles of learning to better engage boys, and fostering inclusive school environments where all pupils flourish, irrespective of social and ethnic background or disability.	✓	✓													✓				
2.5 Implement the Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life Strategy.	✓	✓																	
2.6 Continue to implement the new framework for Junior Cycle, which is structured around a set of key principles and statements of learning and which will allow students to develop key skills, such as effective communication, collaborative working, independent thinking, problem-solving and analytical skills.		✓																	
2.7 Continue to develop, evolve and implement curricula in the education system and to support initiatives in out-of school settings, to teach children knowledge and skills relating to information management, new technologies, coding and digital literacy.	✓	✓							✓										
2.9 Implement a whole-school approach to health and well-being to bring about a cultural focus on well-being as a basis for effective learning, strengthening the collaboration	✓	✓	✓											✓	✓				

Commitments (bold tick indicates lead Government department or agency)	DCYA	DES	DH	DJE	DSP	DECLG	DPER	DJEI	DCENR	DF	DTTS	DAFM	DAHG	HSE	Tusla	Local Gov	AGS	Others	All
between the education, health, youth and social sectors to provide multidisciplinary supports when problems arise.																			
2.14 Build on existing data collection systems and, using the public service identifier, strengthen the collection of data and information on primary and post-primary pupils in order to inform future policy-making.		✓																	
2.16 Consider the recommendations of the review of the DEIS Programme and use it as a platform for the new initiatives to deliver better outcomes for students in disadvantaged areas.		✓																	
2.17 Provide opportunities for early school-leavers to engage with further education and training within the framework of youth and educational welfare services, Education and Training Boards and SOLAS.	✓	✓																	
2.22 Strengthen social inclusion measures and re-invigorate efforts to improve educational outcomes among, and integration of, Travellers, Roma and migrant children and young people, and all those with special needs, including gifted students, recognising an enhanced role for Early Years education in targeting these groups.	✓	✓		✓		✓										✓			
2.23 Ensure quality education is available to all children and young people in detention and in hospital and respite settings, and that additional supports are available to help them overcome gaps in their schooling.	✓	✓	✓																
Outcome 3: Safe and protected from harm																			
3.5 Prioritise access to health, education and therapeutic services for children in care.	✓	✓	✓											✓	✓				
3.16 Provide an integrated and comprehensive service response to children under 18 presenting as out of home (as for all children in care) in keeping with the findings and recommendations of the <i>Review of the Implementation of the Youth Homelessness Strategy</i> .	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								✓	✓		✓		
Outcome 4: Economic security and opportunity																			
4.1 Adopt a multidimensional approach to tackling child poverty, building on the life cycle approach in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, 2007-2016 and informed by the European Commission's Recommendation on 'Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage', as part of the Social Investment Package.	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓			✓				✓	✓				
4.9 Implement and monitor the National Travellers/Roma Integration Strategy, with a particular focus on Traveller accommodation and the engagement of Roma in education.	✓	✓	✓	✓												✓			
4.11 Promote vocational education and training through the Educational Training Boards, encouraging the development of entrepreneurship skills among young people, promoting the development of in-school internship programmes and	✓	✓														✓			

Commitments (bold tick indicates lead Government department or agency)	DCYA	DES	DH	DJE	DSP	DECLG	DPER	DJEL	DCENR	DF	DTTS	DAFM	DAHG	HSE	Tusla	Local Gov	AGS	Others	All
strengthening the links between local businesses, schools and youth organisations.																			
4.12 Develop and implement an action plan to support youth employment, including the EU Youth Guarantee, and having regard to the development of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities and how it applies to those young people under 25 years of age.	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓											
4.13 Draw on the strengths and reach of youth work services and local development companies in working with public agencies and employers to promote the training, employment and entrepreneurship of young people.	✓	✓			✓	✓										✓			

Appendix 2 – Information on the HP Index

In terms of the value of the HP Index to this process it should be noted that the HP Deprivation Index is based on Small Areas (SA), the new census geography developed jointly by the Ordnance Survey of Ireland (OSI) and the Central Statistics Office (CSO) for the publication of the Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) from the 2011²⁵ Census of Population.

The Pobal Haase-Pratschke Deprivation Index (HP Index) currently comprises successive deprivation indices based on the Census of Population, 1991-2011. The indices were developed by Trutz Haase and Jonathan Pratschke and funded by Pobal. Based on the data released from the 2011 Census of Population, the index shows the level of overall affluence and deprivation at the level of 18,488 Small Areas in 2006 and 2011, using identical measurement scales.

There are three indices relating to the latest available census data:

- The ***Pobal HP Deprivation Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012)*** is the core index for the Republic of Ireland and covers the 18,488 small areas (SA) of the 2006 and 2011 Census.
- The ***All-Island HP Deprivation Index (Haase, Pratschke & Gleeson, 2014)*** provides consistent deprivation scores for the whole of Ireland, based on the 2011 Census and covers 23,025 small areas North and South.
- The ***Longitudinal HP Deprivation Index (Haase & Pratschke 2014)*** continues the ED level analysis over the five census waves 1991 – 2011. Whilst restricted to the level of 3,409 electoral divisions, this index facilitates the analysis of the effects of 15 years of economic boom and the subsequent collapse of the Celtic tiger.

Unlike other deprivation indices, which are generally based on Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), the HP Index uses Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), which is a special case of the wider class of Structural Equation Models (SEM). A CFA model, involves the development of a structural model based on theoretical grounds, specifying the required latent variables and constructing a set of indicator variables for each of these. Empirical data is then used to test whether the observations support the postulated model. This approach permits greater control over the concepts/dimensions included in the model by contrast with data-driven techniques like EFA. In Ireland, the importance of this approach lies in its capacity to achieve a balanced measure of deprivation across the urban-rural spectrum. All other published deprivation indices are subject to urban bias, to the extent that they fail to account for the nature of rural deprivation.

The 2011 Pobal HP Deprivation Index is constructed on the basis of a *prior conceptualisation* of the underlying dimensions or factors of deprivation. Based on earlier deprivation indices for Ireland, as well as analyses from other countries, three dimensions of affluence/disadvantage are identified: **Demographic Profile**, **Social Class Composition** and **Labour Market Situation**.

Demographic Profile is first and foremost a measure of rural affluence/deprivation. Whilst long-term adverse labour market conditions tend to manifest themselves in urban areas in

²⁵ In terms of the longitudinal evidence derived from the Index for socio economic status of an area in the last 15 years it has been observed that deprivation is relatively stable over time with minute variations from one census to the next.

the form of unemployment blackspots, in rural areas, by contrast, the result is typically agricultural underemployment and/or emigration. Emigration from deprived rural areas is also, and increasingly, the result of a mismatch between education and skill levels, on the one hand, and available job opportunities, on the other. Emigration is socially selective, being concentrated amongst core working-age cohorts and those with further education, leaving the communities concerned with a disproportionate concentration of economically-dependent individuals as well as those with lower levels of education. Sustained emigration leads to an erosion of the local labour force, a decreased attractiveness for commercial and industrial investment and, ultimately, a decline in the availability of services.

Demographic Profile is measured by five indicators:

- the percentage increase in population over the previous five years
- the percentage of population aged under 15 or over 64 years of age
- the percentage of population with a primary school education only
- the percentage of population with a third level education
- the percentage of households with children aged under 15 years and headed by a single parent
- the mean number of persons per room

Social Class Composition is of equal relevance to both urban and rural areas. Social class background has a considerable impact in many areas of life, including educational achievements, health, housing, crime and economic status. Furthermore, social class is relatively stable over time and constitutes a key factor in the inter-generational transmission of economic, cultural and social assets. Areas with a weak social class profile tend to have higher unemployment rates, are more vulnerable to the effects of economic restructuring and recession and are more likely to experience low pay, poor working conditions as well as poor housing and social environments. *Social Class Composition* is measured by five indicators:

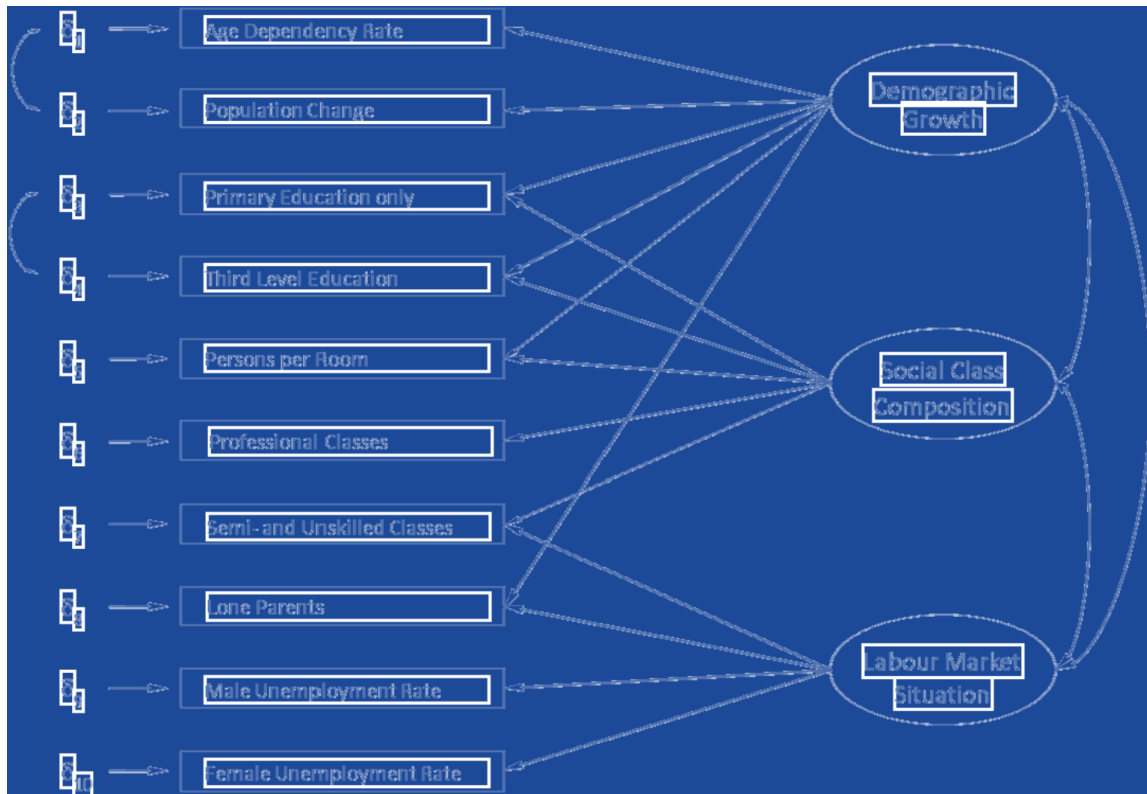
- the percentage of population with a primary school education only
- the percentage of population with a third level education
- the percentage of households headed by professionals or managerial and technical employees, including farmers with 100 acres or more
- the percentage of households headed by semi-skilled or unskilled manual workers, including farmers with fewer than 30 acres
- the mean number of persons per room

Labour Market Situation is predominantly, but not exclusively, an urban measure. Unemployment and long-term unemployment remain the principal causes of disadvantage at national level and are responsible for the most concentrated forms of multiple disadvantage found in urban areas. In addition to the economic hardship that results from the lack of paid employment, young people living in areas with particularly high unemployment rates frequently lack positive role models. A further expression of social and economic hardship in urban unemployment blackspots is the large proportion of young families headed by a single parent. *Labour Market Situation* is measured by four indicators:

- the percentage of households headed by semi-skilled or unskilled manual workers, including farmers with less than 30 acres

- the percentage of households with children aged under 15 years and headed by a single parent
- the male unemployment rate
- the female unemployment rate

Figure 1: Basic Model of the Pobal HP Deprivation Index



Each dimension is calculated in the same way for each census wave and then combined to form an Absolute Index Score and Relative Index Score. The **Absolute Index Scores** have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of ten in 2006, with varying means and standard deviations in 2011 that reflect the underlying trends. The **Relative Index Scores** are fully standardised, with a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 10 for each wave, in order to remove temporal trends and highlight differences in relative deprivation between areas at a single point

The 2011 Pobal HP Deprivation Index for Small Areas (SA) covers the following datasets:

- Four composite index scores (one Absolute Index Score and one Relative Index Score for each of the 2006 and 2011 census waves) and the Changes in absolute and relative scores between 2006 and 2011;
- Ten individual indicator variables which are used to construct the index;
- Additional variables which show how each indicator has changed over the preceding 5-year period.

The full SA-level data for all of the underlying indicator variables and the Absolute and Relative Index Scores can be accessed on the interactive mapping site <http://maps.pobal.ie/#/Map>. All

supporting material concerning the Pobal HP Deprivation Index may be downloaded from www.trutzhaase.eu.

Since establishment in 1995, over 200 assignments have been carried out for more than 50 separate clients. Clients for whom significant projects were undertaken are:

Irish Government Departments

- Department of Children and Youth Affairs
- Department of Education and Skills
- Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
- Department of Finance
- Department of Health
- Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Department of Social Protection
- Department of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister)
- Revenue Commissioners

Irish State Agencies

- Central Statistics Office
- Combat Poverty Agency
- Family Support Agency
- Forfás
- Health Services Executive
- Homeless Agency
- National Advisory Committee on Drugs
- National Economic and Social Forum
- National Transport Authority
- Pobal
- Bord Iascaigh Mhara

Regional and Local Authorities

- Border, Midland and Western Regional Assembly
- County Councils and County Development Boards

Non-Government Organisations

- The International Fund for Ireland
- International Centre of Local and Regional Development
- Local Development Partnerships
- Barnardos
- Irish Hospice Foundation
- Irish Cancer Society
- Accord
- Marriage and Relationship Counselling Service
- Respond! Housing Association
- The Alzheimer Society of Ireland

- Energy Action
- Dublin Employment Pact

Trade and Professional Bodies

- Irish Universities Association

International Organisations

- OECD
- Special European Union Programmes Body
- Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
- European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

Corporate Sector

- Bank of Ireland
- First Active
- Ulster Bank
- Royal Bank of Scotland
- Volkswagen Ireland
- IKEA
- Fastway Couriers

Appendix 3 - Possible Additional Variables compiled by SIU

There was considerable discussion within the Group as to whether any additional variables, not already comprehended within the HP Index should be considered for use in a finalised identification process. It was agreed that consideration should be given to exploring a number of additional variables which might be appropriate as accurate predictors of educational disadvantage. This was done as follows:

1. Educational Outcomes

- Previous interventions to tackle educational disadvantage have used achievement data as a variable in the assessment of schools;
- Including educational outcomes would demonstrate school performance and allow for targeting of resources to schools with poorest outcomes;
- An educational outcome variable in the model would constitute a direct link to education;
- Consistent with approach used for post-primary schools in 2005 only (as no educational outcome data used at primary level).
- The essential consideration for the inclusion of educational outcome as a variable is the extent to which it strengthens the capacity of the model to accurately identify those at risk of educational disadvantage - there are a number of considerations in this regard:
 - The strong view from the consultation process with education partners, academics and practitioners, was that it was not appropriate to use educational outcomes as a means of identifying schools' levels of disadvantage.
 - A perception that schools would be penalised for achieving good education outcomes.
 - Penalising schools who are achieving good outcomes where these are linked to effective use of supports and the inherent risk that schools with similar supports but with poorer outcomes continue to be rewarded.
 - Schools with poor educational outcomes but with no significant level of socio-economic disadvantage might be incorrectly identified as requiring supports when the objective is to identify and support those at risk of educational disadvantage.
 - It could have a disproportionate negative impact on all-girls schools due to the differential in education achievement related to gender
 - Issues related to ability grouping, which is more prevalent in DEIS schools (Learning from DEIS, ESRI 2015), may skew the educational outcome data of a school.
 - Impact of mainstreaming policy for pupils including pupils with SEN, those for whom English or Irish is not their first language and Traveller pupils may skew achievement data disproportionately in some schools
 - Outcome data may relate to students who have already left the school and therefore the educational outcomes for the school are not relevant to the existing or future intake cohort.
- Educational attainment could be more appropriately used as a measurement tool to determine the effectiveness of the resources allocated – and also in the allocation of resources;
- Using educational outcome data at primary level should be approached with caution due to schools having access to two different tests – and the impact of ‘teaching to the test’;
- The 2016 Inspectorate report on standardised achievement tests showed that achievement at national level is well to the right of the theoretical normal distribution

(Bell Curve). The report suggests that this may point to teacher and pupil familiarity with the format of the tests. The report recommended that the existing tests should be updated and consideration be given to the design of one set of normed tests.

- At post-primary level, the availability of State Examinations Junior Cert, Leaving Cert and Leaving Cert Applied data, is more reliable to the extent that it is independently regulated. However, there remains a perception that if used for identification process schools are penalised where they achieve good outcomes.

2. Local Authority Housing

- Local authority housing historically has had the strongest relationship with educational outcomes in empirical research on the issue over the past two decades (see some references below). For that reason it would seem unwise to omit it from consideration;
- This variable is not included in the HP Index and therefore there is no concern around duplication of relevant data.
- Concerns remain in terms of the strong interrelationship with unemployment, lone parent status and the fact that its use in the past as a proxy for low socio economic status is unnecessary as this is fully comprehended in the HP Index.
- There are complications associated with the use of benefit data in an identification model given that the eligibility criteria or provision of Local Authority Housing may change which would alter the basis of the index and could skew results.
- Different LA's have different levels of social housing provision (some have made no provision at all in recent years); the increase in the numbers in receipt of Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) or emergency accommodation given the current housing crises may not be captured adequately which could skew the results of analysis.

3. Medical Cards

- This variable has traditionally shown a strong correlation to educational outcomes and was used in the 2005 process to identify post-primary schools. The data used in 2005 is still collected by the SEC as part of the State Examinations process where the data is provided by applicants seeking exemption from exam fees. There is a data protection issue in terms of whether the data can be used for a purpose other than that for which it was collected (it is unclear whether this issue was dealt with in 2005). In terms of reliability of the data, the SEC has confirmed that it undertakes a validation spot-check of the information supplied on a small sample only (10%) of each year's data;
- Medical card data has been used in the past as a proxy for low socio economic status which is fully comprehended in the HP Index;
- There are complications associated with the use of benefit data in an identification model given that the eligibility criteria or provision of Medical Cards may change which would alter the basis of the index and could skew results;
- The change in Government Health policy in recent years towards universal provision with medical cards being made available incrementally to all children, negates the use of this variable as a proxy for socio economic status.

4. Traveller data

The ERC advise that in 2005, the number of travellers in a school made a significant and unique contribution to predicting low achievement.

- While individual groups, including Travellers, are not distinguished separately in the HP Index their socio economic status is captured and taken account of within the overall general population. Accordingly, the inclusion of Traveller data as an additional variable would represent a double counting.

5. Other Issues

Other possible variables such as unemployment, lone parenthood and level of parental educational attainment were considered and discounted on the basis that they are already comprehended in the HP index and their further addition would represent double counting.

6. Conclusion

While it is considered that the HP Index together with DES POD and PPOD data is suitable for the identification of schools in terms of the socio economic profile of their pupil cohort, further exploratory analysis and consideration of the additional variables that might be used to achieve a more effective approach to resource allocation under the SSP is required.

Further consideration is also required of the distinction between urban and rural socio-economic disadvantage in terms of educational outcomes, and of the particular educational needs of certain vulnerable groups in terms of the nature/type of resources required to address those needs.

Ongoing research including ‘Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS’ (Smyth, E., S. McCoy, G. Kingston (2015) and others including ‘Analysis of English reading and mathematics achievements in schools in the rural dimension of the School Support Programme (S., Archer, P., & Millar, D. (2009), and ‘*the achievements and characteristics of pupils attending rural schools participating in DEIS.*’ (Weir, S. & McAvinue, L. (2013) has shown that there is a clear distinction between urban and rural disadvantage. While socio-economic disadvantage exists in rural areas, these studies have shown it does not have the same impact on educational outcomes as it does in urban areas. The ESRI Report also notes the particular high complexity of need which exists in some DEIS schools in urban areas. Consideration of the rural/urban context and the innate differences of the two in terms of educational outcomes as evidenced in research, together with the particular educational needs of certain vulnerable groups is relevant in terms of the nature/type of resources required to meet particular needs.

As noted in Chapter 3 further consideration and exploratory analysis of what, if any, additional variables should be added to the HP Index to provide a new Assessment Framework for both the identification of schools under DEIS, and the allocation of resources.

7. Relevant Research

Research studies on the selection of variables used for the identification of educational disadvantage include:

Kellaghan, T., Weir, S., Ó hUallacháin, S., & Morgan, M. (June, 1995). *Educational disadvantage in Ireland, with particular reference to its identification*. Report to the Combat Poverty Agency, Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

Weir, S. (1999). *An analysis of the application variables used to select schools for the Breaking the Cycle scheme*. Report to the Department of Education and Science. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

Weir, S., & Archer, P. (2005). A review of procedures to select schools for support to deal with educational disadvantage. *Irish Journal of Education*, 36, 63-85.

Archer, P., Sofroniou, N (2008). *The assessment of levels of disadvantage in primary schools for DEIS*, Dublin: Educational Research Centre

Weir S. (2006) *A report on the procedures used to identify post-primary schools for inclusion in the School Support Programme under DEIS*. Dublin: Educational research Centre

Weir, S., & Denner, S. (2015). *A survey of the socioeconomic profile of all primary schools in 2014 in the context of developing a new resource allocation model for children with special education needs*. Report to the Department of Education and Skills / National Council for Special Education. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

Weir, S., & Denner, S. (2016). *A survey of the socioeconomic profile of all post-primary schools in 2014 in the context of developing a new resource allocation model for children with special education needs*. Report to the Department of Education and Skills / National Council for Special Education. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

Appendix 4 - List of Groups and Individuals involved in Stakeholder Consultation

INTO (Irish National Teachers Organisation)
ASTI (Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland)
TUI (Teachers Union Ireland)
IPPN (Irish Primary Principals Network)
JMB (Joint Managerial Body)
CPSMA (Catholic Primary Schools Management Association)
ASSC (Association of Community & Comprehensive Schools)
ETBI (Education & Training Boards)
Gaelscoileanna
NAPD (National Association of Principals & Deputy Principals)
Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge
NPCP (National Parents Council Primary)
NPCPP (National Parents Council Post Primary)
Church of Ireland Board of Education
Educate Together
Disability Federation Ireland
IMPACT
Dr Gerry Mac Ruairc (Professor of Education, NUIG)
Professor Dymphna Devine (School of Education, UCD)
Dr Sandra Ryan (Chair, Transforming Education through Dialogue, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick)
Dr Selina McCoy (Research Area Co-ordinator for Education Research, ESRI)
Dr Paul Downes (Director Educational Disadvantage Centre, St Patrick's College)
Professor Emer Smyth (Head of Social Research, ESRI)
Dr Peter Archer (Director, Educational Research Centre)
Dr Susan Weir (Educational Research Centre)
Noel Kelly (Director of EWS, TUSLA)
Maria Tobin (Senior Manager, Integrated Services, EWS, TUSLA)
Germaine Noonan (Manager, Schools Business Partnership, Business in the Community)
Mark Candon (Principal, St Laurence O'Toole's CBS, Dublin)
Rosemary Gaffney (Principal St Joseph's NS, Donnybrook)
Annemarie Hogan (Principal, St Bridget's Primary School)
Clare Ryan (Principal, St Leo's College, Carlow – former Head of NEWB)
Mary Daly (Principal, St Dominic's Secondary School, Ballyfermot)
Eugene O'Brien (St Nessian's Community College, Limerick)
Sean O'Colla (Principal, Central Mixed Model School, Dublin)
Gemma Meehan (Principal, Scoil Mhuire & Chormaic)
Sue Menton (St Ultan's Primary School, Dublin)